

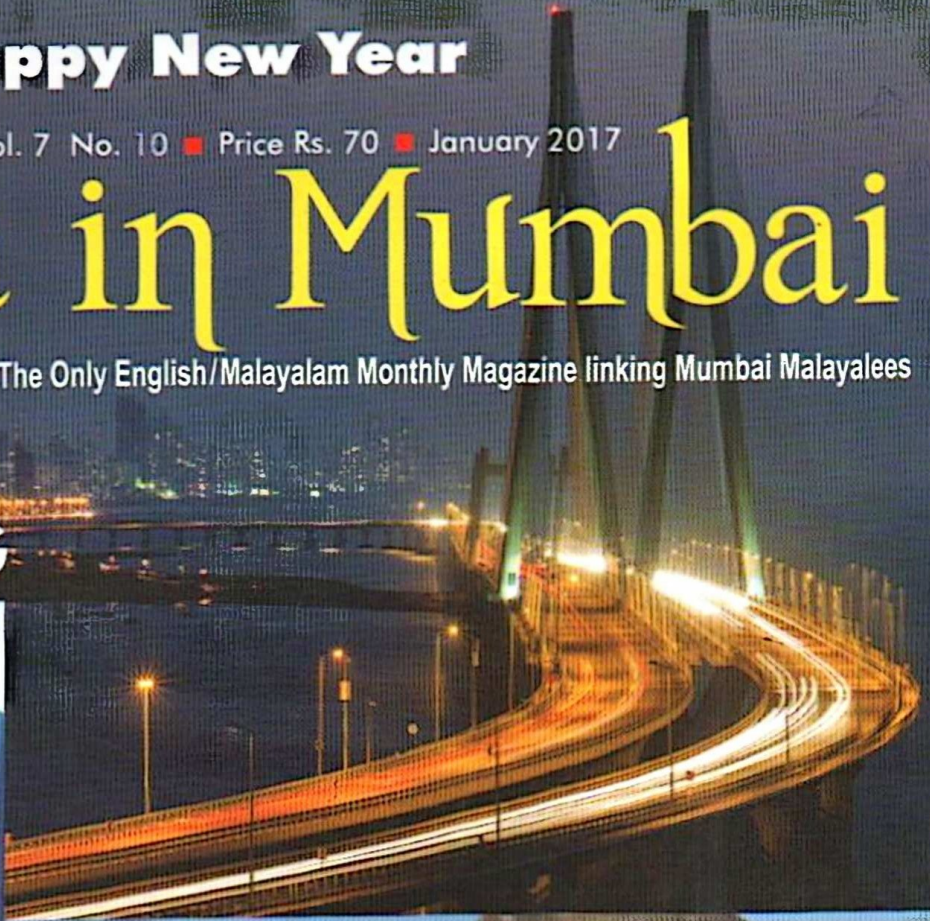
Happy New Year

■ Vol. 7 No. 10 ■ Price Rs. 70 ■ January 2017

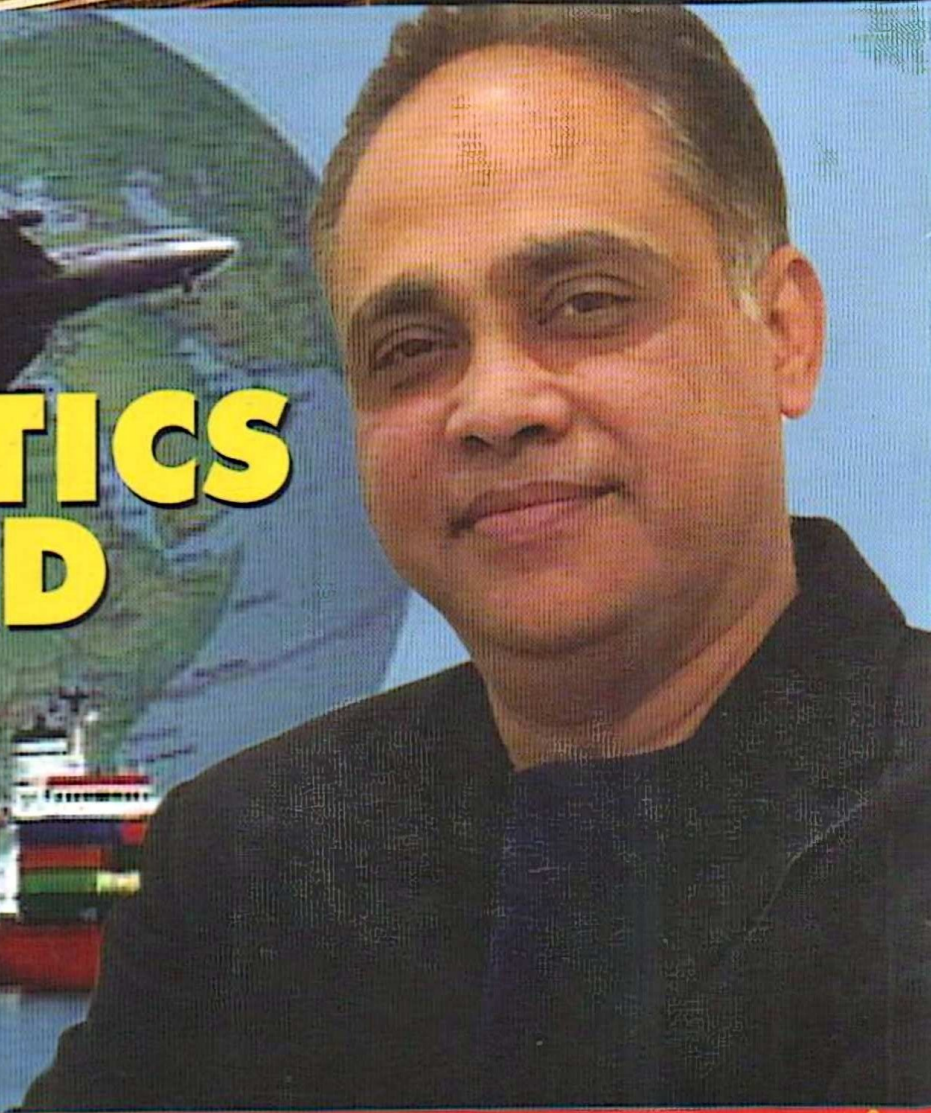
Kerala in Mumbai

The Only English/Malayalam Monthly Magazine linking Mumbai Malayalees

**MASTER OF
ENGINEERING**



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WIZARD**



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Place of Publication

B-066, Twin Arcade, Military Road
Mharol, Andheri (E), Mumbai-400 059.
Tel: 022-29209969

Printing Press

Shampruth, 13/73, Santar Niagar 1,
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vibrant

Time changes, so is style

The announcement of demonetisation of Rs.500 and Rs.1,000 currency notes on November 8 has opened a plethora of new realizations. The initiative was aimed at eradication of corruption, fake currency and black money. Nevertheless, as the days passed on, new things started unfurling before us afterwards. In less than fifty days more than sixty notifications were brought out, giving an opportunity to the opposition parties to roar that the Modi government did not do its homework properly. Modi and supporters retorted that the number of notifications was an indication of how his government was responsive to the hardship of the common people and also the government is not a victim of some dogma.

When first demonetisation was brought in in 1978, it hardly affected the common man as only the currency of higher denominations such as Rs.1,000, 5,000 and 10,000 came under it. Majority of Indians did not even know that there were currencies of such values in existence, forget having seen any of them. Even most of the people holding managerial positions were drawing less than a thousand rupees as monthly compensation. There are no accurate estimates now of how much black money was then unearthed. Those who could not produce adequate evidence of how they came to possess them, silently suffered.

From the announcement of November 8 about the demonetisation to unearth black money and fake currency, the members of public expected to hear about the quantum of accumulated denotified money coming into the open and also about the massive incarceration of fake currency. However both expectations were shattered. There is hardly any news about the denotified currency confiscated or any fake currency recovered. On the contrary, huge amount of new currency of Rs.2,000 was confiscated from all corners of the country. There were reports about the hardships faced by the people and even of a few deaths on account of fatigue, and yet people were seen standing in queues before ATM counters or banks, to withdraw or exchange money. In such cases, how come hundreds of people among them bank officers, businessmen, havala dealers, bullion merchants (who did not stand in queues) were caught red handed? The currency notes were meant to be distributed among common men standing in queues but ended up with those who did not do so. If anyone thought that Reserve bank officials, bank managers and other support staff, influential politicians and bureaucrats were involved in this racket, he cannot be blamed. If Reserve Bank has kept a record to track the movement of the new currency notes, it would not be difficult to identify the culprits provided there is a strong will on the part of the union government to unearth the illegal possession of new notes. The PM has also declared that it would be the turn of *benami* owners of ill gotten assets to suffer after the declared due date of December 30. All guilty should be caught and put behind bars to be suitably punished. Then only the law abiding public would be satisfied and the credibility of the government and of the Reserve Bank would remain untarnished.

The people of this country are aware of the burden they have to carry while bearing the cost of production of millions of currency notes (@nearly Rs.4 per piece) and they would welcome the introduction of the cashless economy in the long run, thereby saving billions of rupees for the country.

The entire India looks up to the government and hope that it would take the march forward until the entire intended exercise reach its logical end. It cannot abandon the exercise half way. May all the corrupt persons, may they be bureaucrats, politicians or businessmen, be put behind the bars so that they would get time to ponder over their misdeeds and be reformed. All guilty government employees should be terminated from the service so that it would be a good deterrent for others.

Our hardship during the last two months should not, we hope, be in vain.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On Marthanda Varma

This is in response to a letter appeared in the December issue referring to certain factual errors in my article on Marthanda Varma (September issue). The letter states: "Marthanda Varma did not annex Kochi because rulers of Kochi were all sons of Namputhiries". Nowhere in my article, the annexation of Kochi was mentioned. However, the sources which I referred to include: P. Shangunni Menon's *History of Travancore*, A Sreedhara Menon's *A Survey of Kerala History* and V Nagam Ayya's *Travancore State Manuel*. According to these sources "Marthanda Varma's alliance in 1757 with the ruler of Cochin, against Kingdom of Calicut, enabled Cochin to survive." It will be appreciated if factual inaccuracies are spelt out rather than generalizing.

V.N. Gopalakrishnan

Interesting Magazine

Kerala in Mumbai has become a household name for people like me who have left Kerala in the seventies, working in Mumbai but nostalgic about our native place. Your features are very interesting and highlight not only matters of Kerala but current Mumbai news. Keep up the good work.

Wishing you and your Team a Very Happy New Year.

Bhaskaran Nair, Nerul

A Suggestion

Prof Dr John Mathews Vazhappilly's series on self improvement and ushering positivity into our lives, 'Mine the Gold from Within You' is excellent. Though the articles are a bit long, they make interesting reading with a lot of quotations and anecdotes.

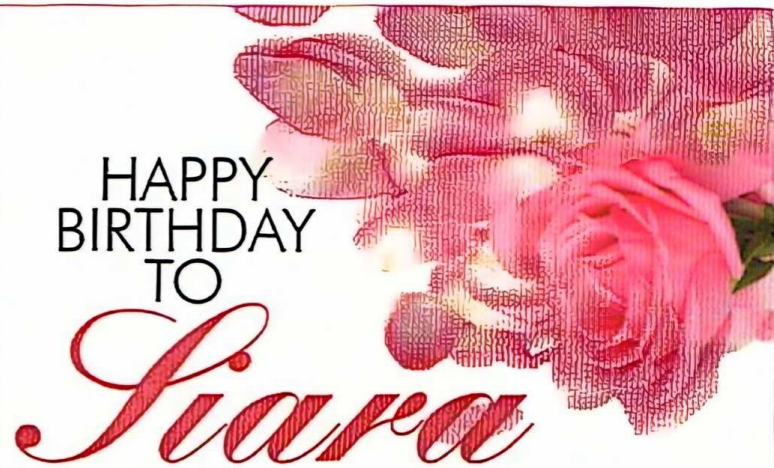
However I suggest that you condense the articles into shorter versions or publish them in two or three parts.

Rashmi Menon, Ghatkopar

Where are the Fillers?

Recently I find Kerala in Mumbai has missed out on giving recipes, jokes, health and beauty tips in their columns. Would love you to include them once again in your columns as fillers which will bring some vitality to the beautiful and colourful pages that your magazine is significant for.

Shobha Koshy, Vasai



Celebrating 1st Birthday on 21 st January 2017



loving wishes from
Parents (Divya & Sujit),
Grand Parents (Girija, Vijaykumar, Sathi & Sukumaran)
and Near & Dear ones

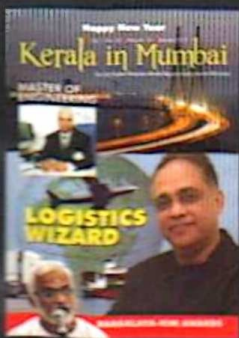
We welcome responses from readers. Please forward your responses and suggestions about various happenings concerning Malayalees residing in this part of India. You may send us your piece in either English or Malayalam. (We shall translate and publish it in English) You may send them via e-mail to keralainmumbai@gmail.com or by post to Editor, Kerala In Mumbai, 105-B, Twin Arcade, Military Road, Marol, Andheri (E) Mumbai 400 059.

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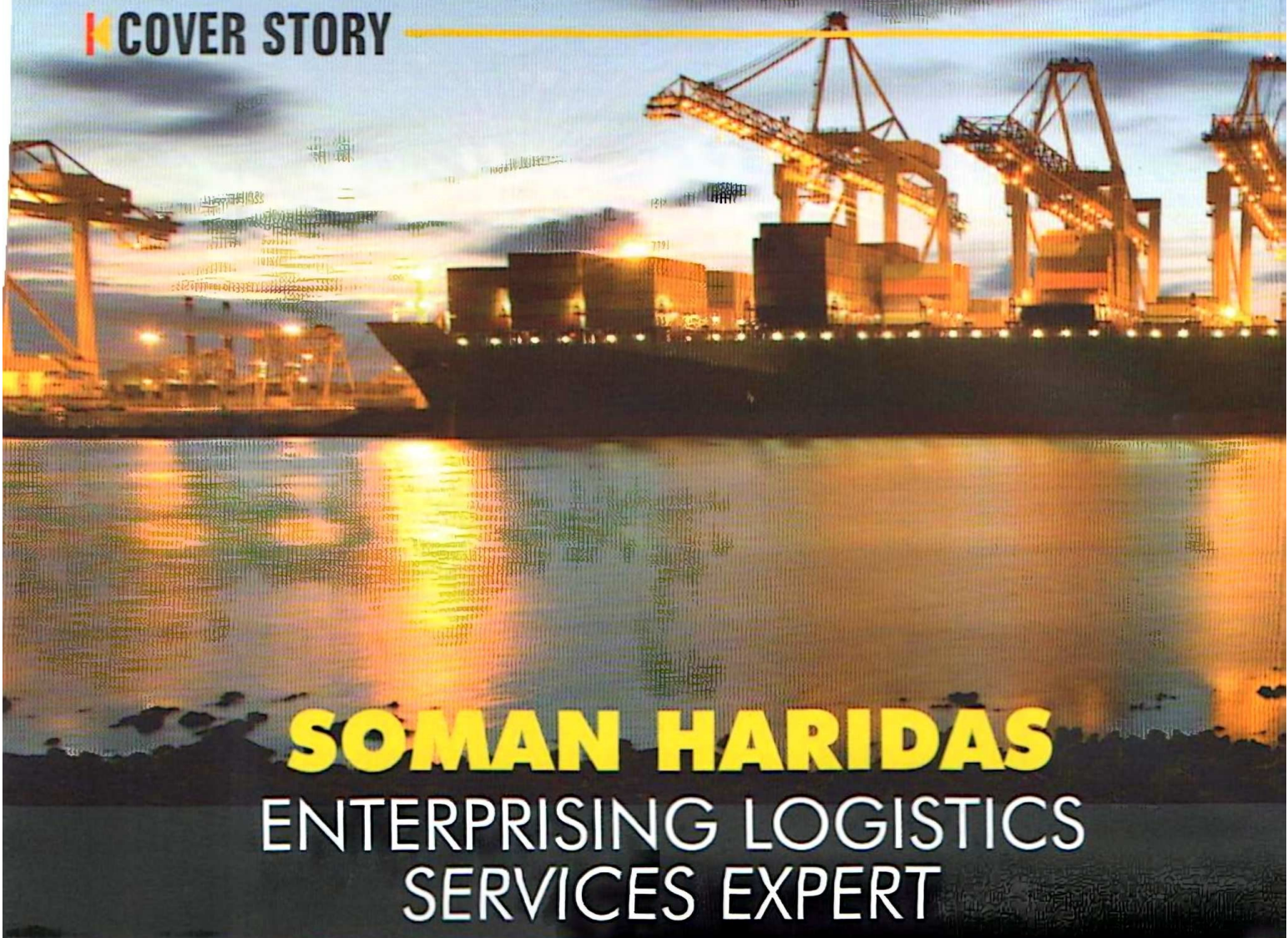
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Printed & Published by P V Vijaykumar on behalf of Vibrant Printing & Publishing Pvt. Ltd. & printed at Sharprints, 13/679, Sardar Nagar-1, Sion-Koliwada, Mumbai-400022 & published at B-105, Twin Arcade, Military Road, Marol, Mumbai-400059.
Editor: P V Vijaykumar

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SOMAN HARIDAS

ENTERPRISING LOGISTICS SERVICES EXPERT

There is an earnestness and enthusiasm about entrepreneur Soman Haridas that is infectious. And it is this remarkable trait in him that has made him a successful businessman of Mumbai.



Lakshmi Venkatachalam

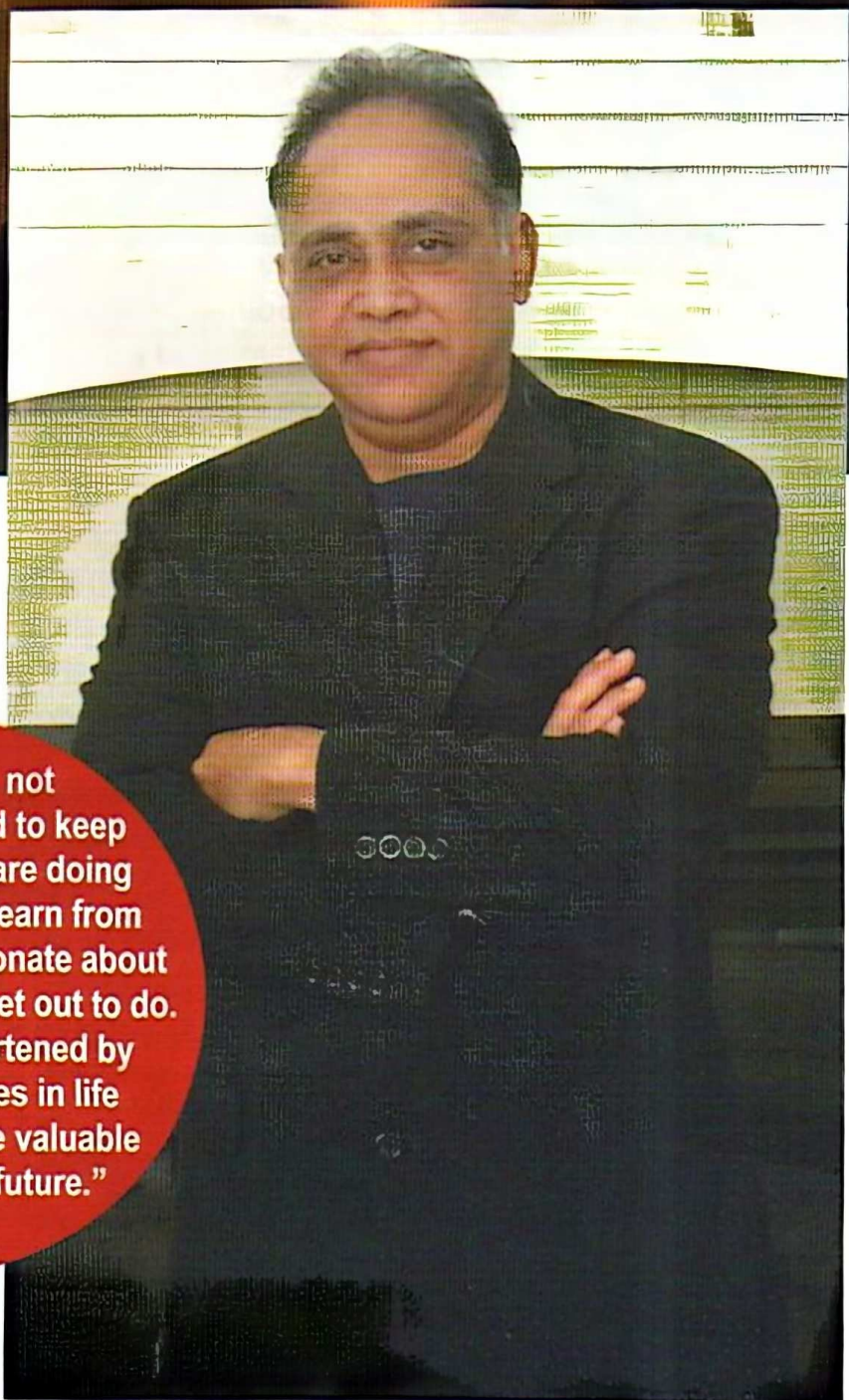
■ Soman Haridas, a Mumbai based Malayali businessman, is an example of how the city helps one to reap the rewards of one's efforts.

He is the Managing Director of Team Leader Logistics Pvt Ltd that deals with the various segments of logistics which are sea and air cargo consolidation for export and import, with clients spreading across Europe, Scandinavia and the USA.

The company, established in 2009, strives to ensure direct connectivity to major ports in the world within minimum transshipment time and re-handling formalities at trans-shipment points within reasonable rates. Its services compass NVOCC (Non-vessel Operating Common Carrier) operation, door to door, import/export consolidation, groupage, customs broker, ODC (Over Dimensional Consignment) shipments, Custom House Agency and air cargo operation among others. It maintains partnership with the world's premier air carriers and has

confirmed space allocations that guarantee flexibility in routing.

On September 24, 2016, Team Leader won the most coveted 'Outstanding achievement in Logistics Management' from Global Achievers Foundation in recognition of its expeditious growth and high quality service levels achieved within a few years of its inception. The function was held at Deputy Speaker Hall, Constitution Club of India in New Delhi and the dignitaries included Ambassador Dr V K Soni (Retd) Indian Foreign Services, Sardar Joginder Singh, former Director, CBI, Anees Durrani, Secretary, All India Congress Committee, P C Naliwal, former Vice-Chairman, Uttarakhand Prawasi Coordination and Welfare, Mrs Chennupati Vidya, former Member of Parliament, Andhra Pradesh, and Ms Samina Begum Malik, Chairperson, Minority Department, Manipur Pradesh Congress. His company has got SME 2, a high financial rating from CRISIL 2016. In November 2016, Soman Haridas was awarded the 'Great Entrepreneur of India Award', Certificate of Excellence by the Indian Organisation for Commerce and Industry for his individual



contribution for national economic and social development.

Regarding his company's policy, Soman says, "We believe in quality initiatives to constantly enhance our service levels and achieve customer delight. Team

Leader with its professionalism and deep-rooted command in the logistics business strives every day, every minute, to provide not just quality service but something exceptional altogether."

Soman has been conferred a Hon. Doctorate by the French university Ecole Supérieure Robert de Borton.

Before establishing Team Leader Logistics, Soman started TDCCL Container Line (India) in 1997. Today it is headed by his wife Anita Soman and another partner Anil Thakkar and covers the entire

"Success is not instant. You need to keep doing what you are doing consistently and learn from mistakes. Be passionate about the work you have set out to do. Do not be disheartened by temporary failures in life because these are valuable experiences in future."



Soman Haridas receiving the Global Achievers Foundation Award.

spectrum of logistics, shipping and infrastructure requirements, namely, custom broker, NVOCC, IATA (International Air Transport Association), Warehousing, consolidation and project handling. The company's project division focusses on global transportation of heavy lift units, oversized cargos, etc, a 'one window solution' for custom clearance for consignments, speedy air freight services for valuable or time sensitive goods, warehousing facilities and efficient distribution systems.

Soman has recently started another proprietorship company Green Valley Exim that exports agro products namely coconuts to China, broken rice to Dubai etc.

Soman Haridas' native place is Palakkad District and his parents are Vatsala hailing from Kannadi and father Haridas from Choolissery. Since his father was working in Mumbai, he was born and brought up in Vasai. He completed his schooling from St Augustine School, Vasai and graduation from Bhavan's College in Andheri. His parents are staying with him now.

For a short span of time he worked at Taj Flight Kitchen. Then he was employed as Asst Manger in an Italian based shipping company Lloyd Triestino for a few years. Having learnt the basics of shipping and forwarding,

Soman and Anita are dynamic personalities who have envisioned dreams for themselves and work hard to transform them into realities.

With the sincerity and dedication that they devote to their passion, they are sure to attain their goals.

exports and imports formalities, he started his own venture TICC Container (I) Line Pvt Ltd.

Soman's day begins early in the morning at 5, and ends at 10 pm, packed with his routine of physical exercises and yoga, attending business matters and extensive official tours within the country and abroad. Though his company is based in Mumbai it has branches in other cities as well.

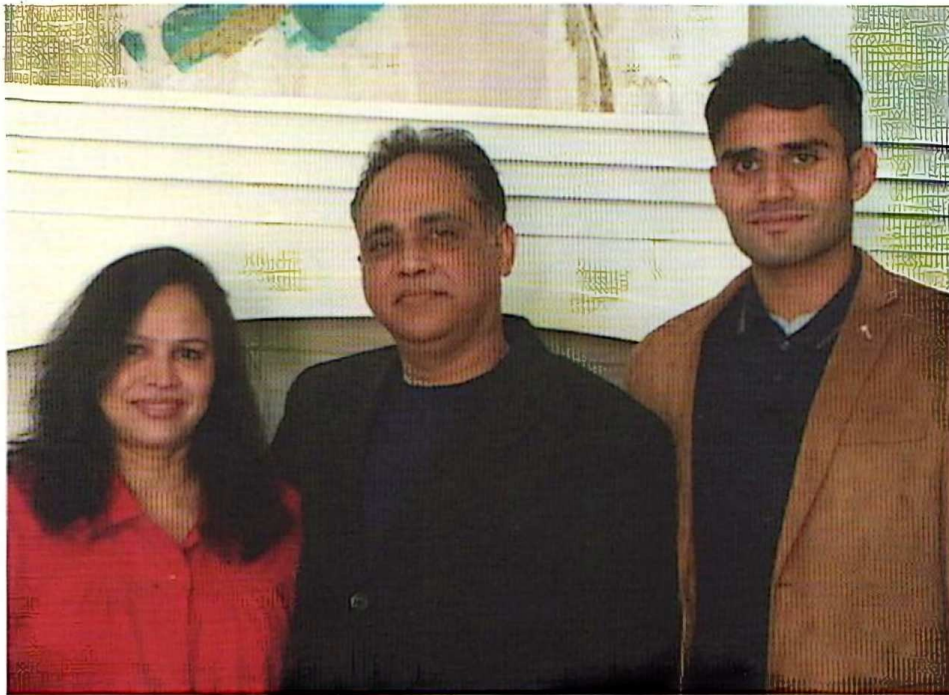
His hobbies include listening to music, reading, travelling etc.

His advice to aspiring young men and women who want to start something on their own is very simple: "Success is not instant. You need to keep doing what you are doing consistently and learn from mistakes. Be passionate about the work you have set out to do. Do not be disheartened by temporary failures in life because these are valuable experiences in future."

Soman's wife Anita is as enterprising as her husband. She is a native of Thrissur but was also born and brought up in Vasai. Her parents, Nandini and M Madhavan have been residents of Vasai since her childhood.

Anita studied at St Anthony's Convent, Vasai. She completed her post-graduation in Botany from Ruparel College and after a course in Teachers' Training she worked in the same college as a teacher. Later she left the





Soman Haridas with his wife Anita and son Arjun

college and taught High School students at St Catherine's Home, an orphanage in Andheri. Currently she is

a partner at TICC and is a part of Soman's business venture. The couple helps the orphans at St

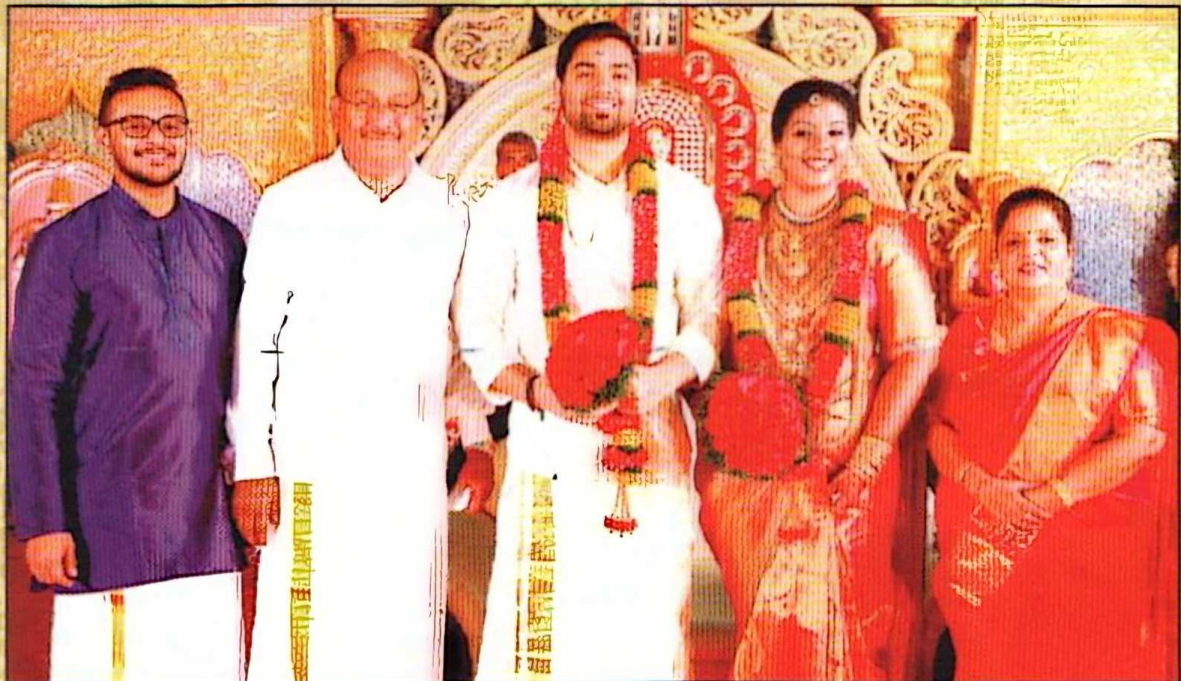
Catherine's Home and other less fortunate people by giving them financial and other aid.

Soman and Anita's son, Arjun, is a keen tennis player and is passionate about the game. His dream is to become one among the top 100 tennis players of the world for which he is putting his best efforts. He completed a two year full time tennis training course in Barcelona, Spain. Arjun completed his schooling at Podar IB School in Santa Cruz and his graduation from NMIMS. He is presently working with his father and obtaining first-hand experience in the logistics business.

Soman has two sisters living in the US while Anita has a brother who is a practising homeopath doctor residing in Vasai.

Soman and Anita are dynamic personalities who have envisioned dreams for themselves and work hard to transform them into realities. With the sincerity and dedication that they devote to their passion, they are sure to attain their goals. ■

WEDDING



Poornima, daughter of Mrs Subha and Mr K Vijayakumar (Host Group of Companies, Mumbai) got married to **Srirag** (Son of Mrs Sarada and Mr K Sreedharan Nair Gujarat) on November 27, 2016 at Thiruvambady Convention Centre Trichur followed by Wedding Reception on December 3, 2016 at Matoshree Sports Complex Andheri (East). Poornima is the granddaughter of Smt T Amma and Late Shri A K Pisharody Trichur and Late Smt Lakshmi Kutty Amma and Late Adv. N S Harihara Iyer Trichur.

FALL OF A MINISTRY AND THE DRAMA BEHIND THE CURTAINS

-Satyanath

The 104th birth anniversary of former Chief Minister of Kerala Late C Achutha Menon falls on 13th of this month. It is pertinent to remember him as the CM who had the longest continuous tenure as CM in Kerala and also who showed the way of handling a multiparty ministry successfully in India.

EM Sankaran Namboothiripad and Chelat Achutha Menon were comrades since their college days. They were classmates in St Thomas College of Trichur but their acquaintance was casual. Later when they were working for the Communist Party of India (CPI) for long years, their acquaintance did not grow into friendship, according to Menon.

1957 is known to be the year of electing Communist Party through ballot box to administer a state for the first time in the world. The Party nominated EMS Namboothiripad to head the government and Achutha Menon its Minister for Finance. While EMS also held the portfolio of Home, Menon had an additional portfolio of agriculture.

Those days almost every day the legislative party used to meet and discuss day to day affairs pertaining to the government. As Home Minister, Namboothiripad was a failure as he failed to discipline the state police.

There were rumours that more than the Home Minister, police listened to the dictates of Panambilli Govinda Menon who was not even an MLA. However none of these discussions came to light as the party was cadre based and the members were not allowed to speak about what transpired in these meetings. After three



At the CM's desk

months, Namboothiripad confessed to the party that he could no longer hold to Home Affairs and then Central Committee asked Menon to take charge of the department. Since Menon considered EMS as his political guru, he was reluctant to take over from him and so recommended V R

Krishna Iyer, a well known lawyer who knew most of prominent police officers, to be home minister. However his handling of police was not liked by the party as the clashes between the police and the people continued. During the infamous 'Vimochana Samaram' (Liberation Struggle) the Party directed

Menon to take over from Iyer. People knew little about this transition as it was not much notified in newspapers. During Menon's tenure three police firing occurred in Angamali, Pulluvila and Vettukad in Thiruvananthapuram. According to Menon, these firings were resorted to in self defence when aggressive crowds attacked the police force. Menon was complimented by the Party for the adept handling but was not liked by Namboothiripad.

In 1968 during the election campaigns, EMS repeatedly told the electorates that they would come to power and would provide a corruption free rule for five years. "Learning from the past mistakes we will not falter," he explained. They did come to power allowing their opponent Congress only nine seats. The ministry formed under



EMS Namboothiripad, Panambilli Govinda Menon, V R Krishna Iyer, Imbichibava, Abdurahiman Bafaqi Thangal, A K Gopalan

the stewardship of EMS under instruction from his party, had several heavy weights from all the seven constituents of the united front. In the first press conference held after swearing in ceremony, EMS declared, "Our administration will be corruption free. Any complaint about corruption signed by five legislators will be investigated. There will not be any compromise in this regard." And people believed him completely.

Since the ruling front had a massive majority, no one doubted about its long tenure. Nonetheless CPI(M) was childish to believe that other parties were there because of it and this unfounded confidence made them behave like an 'elder brother.' Other parties resented this attitude but could do nothing. When the stress was too much to bear, it cracked.

Then the CPI mouthpiece 'Janayugam' came out with a small piece of news that the leader of opposition demanded the resignation of minister Imbichibava as he was implicated in a court reference to the effect that the minister used undue influence on the police to save the murderer of Kochubava. In fact the Opposition leader neither made that

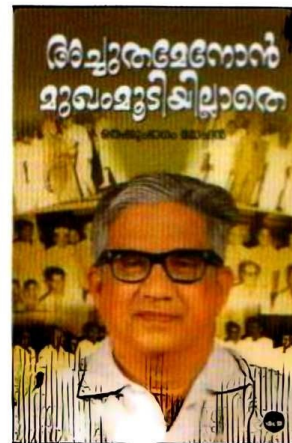
demand nor the name Kochubava was mentioned in the assembly. In the legislative assembly CPI(M) members demanded a resolution of breach of privilege against the newspaper and CPI members vociferously opposed it. Thus within two years of assuming power, sparks started flying out. Then

truce and so they put pressure on leaders of the other two countries to bring this in. Then the central Committee of CPI came out with a clarification that it would not part ways with CPI(M). This clarification further reinforced the confidence of Marxist leaders as they thought CPI would submit themselves

before them. They also calculated that CPI in no way could afford to leave the front.

On October 12, 1969, the leaders of four partners (CPI, Muslim League, RSP and PSP) of the seven party coalition secretly met at Abdurahiman Bafaqi Thangal's (President of Kerala unit of Muslim League) residence in Kozhikode and planned their move. They decided to demand an enquiry into the corruption charges against Minister Wellington within one week. However the

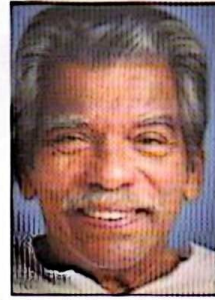
Central Committee of CPI(M) had a different view and instructed the state unit to conduct enquiry against all ministers against whom charges were raised. A K Gopalan, the state secretary of CPI(M) was against it. People were expecting a good amicable settlement once the CM returned from Berlin. But it was not to be. Namboothiripad had no idea what would come of when he



Namboothiripad flew to Berlin for medical treatment. When he was visited by officials of Russian and German Communist Parties in Berlin, they wanted the agitations between the two parties to end and they invited Bhupesh Gupta of CPI also to Berlin. The CPI (M) leaders in India mistook these discussions in Berlin and believed that CPI leaders wanted a



Achutha Menon Ministry (1970)



M N Govindan Nair, T V Thomas, N Sreekantan Nair, Baby John, K Karunakaran, Indira Gandhi

signed the orders to hold enquiry against M N Govindan Nair and T V Thomas, the stalwarts of Communist movement in Kerala and also ministers from the CPI side. Before the ink on the orders dried, he received letters of resignation from six ministers.

The leaders of CPI(M) looked forward for a notice of motion of non-confidence in the assembly and thought that if the motion was carried, they could hoodwink the electorates by claiming martyrdom. Further if the four parties join with the Congress, their front still would not have majority to form a ministry. They were also ready for another election so that they could get their candidates from the seats held by others, elected. If the ministry resigned, the governor had no other way but order by-election, they thought. Finally the rivals did not have a suitable candidate to be CM as corruption charges were levied against MN and TV, they calculated. All these anticipations soon went in smoke.

There was no motion of non-confidence but a motion demanding enquiry against Wellington was tabled by the dissidents. After three days of thunderbolts, EMS submitted the resignation of his ministry to the Governor. To its utter shock, CPI(M) found that the new mini front had another candidate to be CM, the ever resurging N Sreekantan Nair of RSP.

Sreekantan Nair never liked Namboothiripad and CPI(M) and this was exploited by the mini-front leaders to get his consent. Sreekantan Nair soon started reviewing this consent and decided to reverse it. When EMS and his ministers went in procession to Raj Bhavan to submit the resignation, Baby John telephoned to Nair to congratulate him. Nair's response was a strong 'Get Lost.'

Janardhanan, T K Karunan et al were waiting there for him. After a long discussion and loving persuasion, "it is true that I surrendered." They immediately moved to Kochi by car and then to Thiruvananthapuram by flight. K Balakrishnan of Kaumudi was present at the airport and he confronted Menon, "You should tell now, are you accepting or not." "I accept," Menon responded.

Menon put forward certain

- conditions; (1) No one facing corruption charges would be in the ministry, (2) No interference in the matter of selection of ministers, (3) A co-ordination Committee alone would guide the ministry, (4) That Committee will meet once in a week and (5) All discussions and decisions taken in the committee meeting will be totally



Achutha Menon Ministry (1968) with Governor Viswanathan

Achutha Menon was then in New Delhi as he was a member of Rajya Sabha and also a member of Central Secretariat. Menon soon realised that Party Secretary Rajeshwar Rao was planning to persuade him to be the CM and had already called a meeting next day for that purpose. To escape from this pressure, Menon immediately flew to Madras and then travelled to Trichur by train. Once the party took the decision, they were searching for Menon but none knew about his whereabouts.

By the time he reached Trichur and somewhat settled, he was taken to Party office at Trichur. K K Varier, C

confidential.

On November 1, 1968, Achutha Menon ministry was sworn in.

A K Gopalan, secretary of state committee became angry when he came to know about the developments and roared, "The day of swearing in ceremony will be observed as day of betrayal." His war against Achutha Menon Ministry continued till his last day.

It is to be noted that A K Gopalan who made Menon a member of Indian National Congress in 1934 and in that sense his first political Guru.

A highly respected Communist



First EMS Ministry (1957)

leader like AKG behaved like a child and declared war on Menon. There was a practice among CMs to call a meeting of Parliament members from Kerala at New Delhi. When Menon called a similar meeting AKG and other CPI(M) members boycotted it.

AKG, a practical communist, started placing obstacles before Menon but the latter surmounted them with alacrity. When AKG called for agitation against excess land, Menon implemented the Land Reforms Bill passed by the earlier Communist Government. This was a rebuke to AKG's call for agitation.

There is an interesting speech by T V Thomas in the assembly about the agitation called by AKG. "Haven't you heard about a telegram sent by some one? Mother is serious. Whether you receive this telegram or not, you should come immediately. The agitation for excess land called by AKG is similar to this telegram. He is telling that if you take over the excess land or not, we will agitate."

The implementation of Land Reforms Act enabled the government to corner credit which would have been theirs, infuriated the leaders of CPI(M) and they were in no mood to allow things to pass.

The sudden recommendation of Achutha Menon to the governor to dissolve the state assembly without submitting the resignation of the ministry, sent shock waves across the state. Even the opposition that demanded the resignation of the



ministry could not believe it as they were not ready to face an election. So they filed a writ petition in high court to disallow the election but the HC did not even agree to take it on record. CPI(M) was totally isolated then. Even after getting a part of Muslim League i.e., Ummer Bafaqi and Moideenkutty Hajee faction, they were not

confident enough to face the election. The change of constituency from Pattambi to Alathur (even then EMS could get a majority of 2000 votes in the 1977 election) is proof of this fear when ruling coalition could secure 110 seats out of 140.

There were a lot of criticism when Menon recommended dissolution of assembly without submitting resignation of the ministry. There was nothing against such a step in the constitution. When he was an MP of Rajya Sabha, he agreed to be CM to save the state from President rule. Had he tendered the resignation of the ministry, President rule would have been inevitable. He tendered this advice to the governor when he found the goings tough. The conditions he insisted when consented to be CM were not followed even by his own party. The co-ordination committee he wanted did not function, decisions taken were leaked soon after the meetings, indiscipline among legislators and more over the work in secretariat came to a stand still as bureaucrats turned indifferent, believing the rumours that a new government would soon take over. Further there was a corruption scandal

about the involvement of his party in the procurement of land for the proposed Agriculture University.

Though it is unbelievable yet true that PM Indira Gandhi reposed a lot of confidence in Menon. It was at her persuasion that Menon agreed to be CM in 1970. She wanted him to contest election in 1977 but he flatly refused. The domination of K Karunakaran during emergency made Menon to keep away from power. Menon considered Indira Gandhi an efficient PM but with a number negative traits such as excessive love for her children. During emergency, Kerala was the only Indian state that Sanjay Gandhi did not visit. He complimented her for refusing the advice to take away Beant Singh from her security team only because he was a Sikh. Menon was the only political leader who criticised Indira Gandhi and EMS for nepotism. Indira Gandhi during her visit to Kerala, called Menon to Government Rest House where she was resting, to persuade him to contest again. Next day newspapers flashed a photograph in which she was offering him a cup of tea. This scene that surprised all her followers and critics.

Kerala Secretariat did not have a chamber for the leader of opposition till Menon became CM. When former CM and then leader of opposition EMS was spending time without having a room to relax when he was in secretariat, Menon felt ashamed to witness that state of affairs. He ordered to find a chamber for the leader of opposition in the building and EMS had his own chamber there. This provided EMS the time and space to plan moves against Menon but it is a fact that EMS could never become CM of Kerala again. ■



raagalaya (രാഗലയം)

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13th Raagalaya Light Music Competition

The 13th Raagalaya Light Music Competition will be held at Marol Education Academy, Bhavani Nagar, Marol, Andheri (East) Mumbai on Sunday the 29th January 2017 in association with Kerala in Mumbai from 9 am onwards. As in the past the competition will be held in Six groups i.e. Group A(5 to 10 years), Group B(11, to 15 years), Group C (16 to 25 years), Group D (26 to 40 years), Group E (41 to 60 years) and Group F (61 and above). Participants are allowed to sing light music/film songs from any language preferably Malayalam since the main aim of Raagalaya is to promote Malayalam Songs. We shall be providing keyboard and tabla for support. Those who are interested may register their name with Raagalayaoffice on 022-29209959, 022-29205641. You can also download the registration form from our website www.keralainmumbai.com and return to us along with a cheque of Rs.250/- in favour of 'Raagalaya Academy of Music & Arts' to our address:

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THE MANGROVES LIFELINE OF MUMBAI



K R Narayanan

■ The present Metropolis of Bombay (Mumbai) was only a cluster of seven muddy islands, about two thousand years ago, very often described as the *Heptanesia* by the mariners of yore. It had very wide spans of mudflats and acres of mangrove forests in between and around the islands. During the course of its development into a major metropolis of India, it lost quite a lot of mangrove swamps and shingles and the environmental scientists believe that it was those mangroves which survived the developmental onslaught that had protected this island city from the cyclones and giant tidal waves from the surrounding seas.

About eleven years ago, sometime after the deadly tsunami of 2004, which brought great damages to the eastern coast of India, Indonesia and Srilanka, the honorable Bombay High Court took a monumental decision and passed an order to stop the destruction of the mangrove forests. It was then, that many administrators in the Government, public bodies, and the para-government agencies realized that intense mangrove forests and coral reefs had stronger resistance to the tidal/cyclonic waves and faster recovery in its aftermath as well.

Sentinels of the shores

Mangroves not only act as a natural

barrier against storms and tidal waves but are also important for carbon sequestration. They also act as nurseries for many species in the marine biosphere - such as fish, amphibians, worms, shellfish and such other aquatic life - making them very essential for healthy biological growth and marine fishery development. Also, the mangrove forests support a diverse flora and varied faunal group of birds, ungulates, reptiles (like the marshy crocodiles, turtles and many types of carnivorous animals. Other than these, the mangrove forests of Sundarbans are reputed as the home of the highly endangered Bengal Tiger.

Unfortunately, mangroves are being cleared at unprecedented rates the world over, on account of multifarious infrastructure development. However, thanks to the conservation orders, Mumbai and its neighboring areas can now boast of more than 5,800 hectares of mangrove land which are designated as protected forests. The Times of India in this connection pointed out that the restrictive measures had ensured more than 2,500 hectares of open green space in the city and its suburbs.

A decade or so ago, these forests were cleared for creating living spaces; but they had been given a protected status and the government decided to extend the mangrove cover in the state in the subsequent years. More than 26,000 hectares of coastal land throughout the state were identified for a similar status of protection. Through extensive satellite imagery, these

forests were identified and special Mangrove Cells were set up to oversee the protection of these forests. The corporate bodies too contributed considerably to the development of mangrove plantations and forestry along the Mumbai coasts.

The services that mangroves provide in the marine ecosystem are tremendous. It is believed that the healthy mangrove forests could be easily valued anywhere between \$2000-9000 per hectare. These forests act as natural sand berms and dykes against the tide and giant waves apart from acting as carbon sinks. By preserving mangrove forests, the city of Mumbai is said to have saved itself about \$52 million every year. The Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) played an instrumental role in achieving this.

Mangroves in India

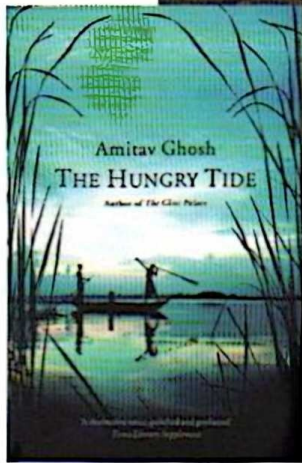
As per the surveys conducted in 2005, by the Forests Survey of India, Dehradun, Indian coasts had about 4,445 Sq.Km. of mangrove forests. About 57% of these are along the east coast, about 23% are along the west coast, and about 20% are in the Andaman-Nicobar groups of islands. The biggest and widest mangrove area in India are in the deltaic regions of the rivers of Hugli, Meghna and Mahanadi in India's West Bengal and Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. Popular as the "*Sundarbans*", this region is very famous for its very wide areas of mangrove forests, shingles, and

mudflats and provides shelter for the marsh crocodile, amphibians, estuarine fauna, the notorious Bengal Tigers and the Gangetic dolphins. In view of this, Sundarbans provided scope for very many mythical and legendary stories and has earned a place in the fictions of the reputed authors of English, Bengali and many other languages.

(Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* deals with many a myth about the dolphins, tigers and the human migration from Bangladesh to this eco-sensitive region).

The Gulf Kachchh and the Andaman-Nicobar Islands stand next to Sundarbans in so far as mangrove population in the country is concerned.

Pichavaram in the Kadaloor district, Muthupetta of Thanjavoor district and Devi Pattanam in the Gulf of Mannar area all in Tamilnadu - also sustain a rich population of mangrove forests.



communities rely on this wood for construction material as well as for fuel. These communities also collect medicinal plants from mangrove ecosystems and use mangrove leaves as animal fodder. Recently, the forests have also

been commercially harvested for pulp, wood chip, and charcoal production.

■ The dense root systems of mangrove forests trap sediments flowing down rivers and off the land. This helps stabilize the coastline and prevents erosion from waves and storms. In areas where mangroves have been cleared, coastal damage from hurricanes and typhoons is much more severe. By filtering out sediments, the

forests also protect coral reefs and seagrass meadows from being smothered in sediment.

■ Given the diversity of life inhabiting mangrove systems, and their proximity in many cases to other tourist attractions such as coral reefs and sandy beaches, it is perhaps surprising that only a few countries have started to tap into the tourism potential of their mangrove forests. Places as diverse as Bonaire offer snorkeling expeditions in and around mangroves to witness a marvelous variety of baby fish, jellyfish, and urchins against a magical background of interwoven roots delving deep into the sandy substrata. Great potential exists elsewhere for revenue generation in this manner, which values the mangroves intact and as they stand. ■

The Significance of Mangroves:

Like coral reefs, mangrove forests are extremely productive ecosystems that provide numerous goods and services both to the marine environment and coastal populations. According to a recent report, these goods and services are conservatively estimated to be worth US\$186 million each year. Some of the observations of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in this conjunction are summarized below:

■ As said earlier, the mangrove forests are home to a large variety of fish, crab, shrimp, and mollusk species. These fisheries form an essential source of food for thousands of coastal communities around the world. The forests also serve as the breeding grounds and nurseries for many fish species, including coral reef fish. Some studies made by the ocean scientists have shown that there are as many as 25 times more fish of some species on reefs close to mangrove areas than in areas where mangroves have been cut down. This makes mangrove forests vitally important to coral reef and commercial fisheries as well.

■ Mangrove wood is resistant to rot and insects, making it extremely valuable. Many coastal and indigenous



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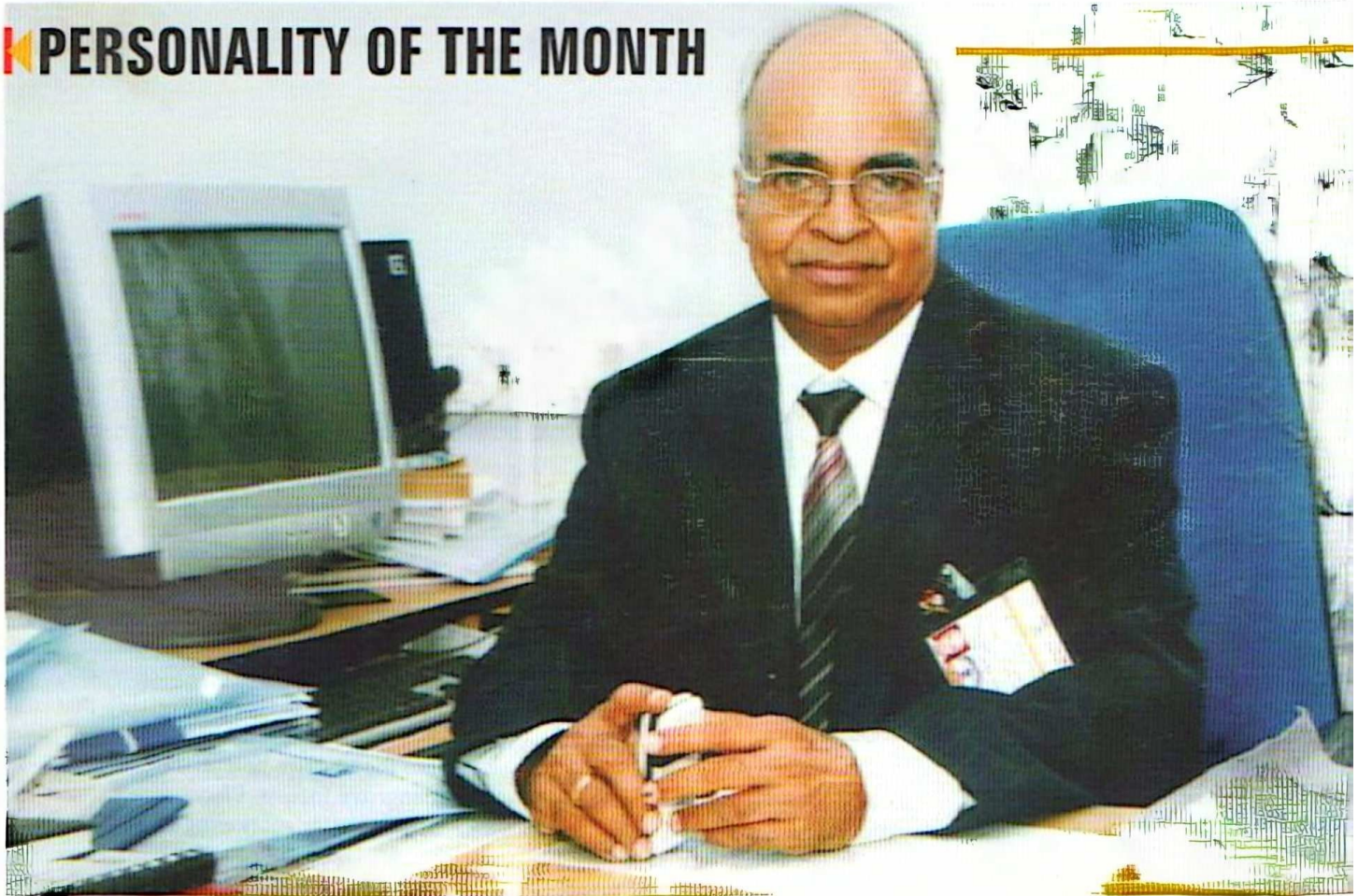
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PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH



T RAMAN A BRIDGE TO FAME

There are very few Malayalees who are lucky to impress their name in the long history of Mumbai, but definitely T Raman is one among them. He was Engineer-in-charge of the technologically acclaimed Bandra Worli Sea Link, involved in the Construction and Maintenance of Vashi Creek Bridge, widening of highways and an avid sportsman and passionate poet as well.

Kunnam Vishnu

A job is to ensure 'meeting both ends' for any person. But when the job itself is to bridge both ends of land, through hostile waterbed, with apt amount of pressure and pleasure, it could well be a bridge to fame. This is what has made T Raman a celebrity. His role model could well be that of the Metroman Sreedharan. If Sreedharan can be called the infrastructure man of India, Raman can, why not, be called the same of Mumbai, with many more feathers on his cap.

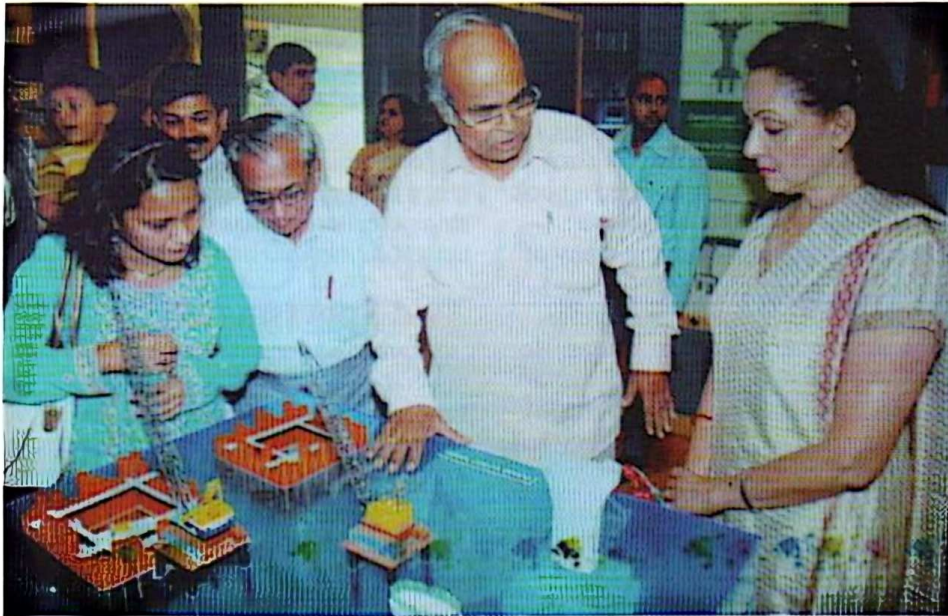
Childhood and Education

Raman was born in an ordinary Nambudiri family, Thrikkazhippurath Mana near Thrithala of Palakkad District. His parents were



With former Chief Minister Manohar Joshi during the inauguration of Thane Vashi Creek bridge.

Parameswaran Adithirippad (Adithirippad is the Malayalam version of the title Agnihotri, a Nambudiri who has performed Agnihotra Yagnam) and Leela Pathinadi of Thayampara Mana (Pathinadi is the title for the wife of Adithirippad). Raman was born on 4th April 1947, or the asterix Revathy in the Malayalam month *Meenam* (Mid- March- Mid April and hence astrologically believed to be a person of reckoning. As per the Brahmin system he had his Upanayanam (the sacred thread ritual) at an early age and his studies of Rigveda for one year. After the ritual of Samavartanam, only, was he



Raman explaining about his project to viewers

allowed to join regular school.

At the age of 12 he joined Nhangattiri School in Std VII and passed his Matriculation from Govt. High School Pattambi. Then he joined St Thomas College, Thrissur for his Pre-degree course. This self-dependant life away from home and away from the protective shades of his parents and that too in the urban atmosphere made a sea change in his outlook towards life. He passed his Pre-degree examination with flying colours and was lucky enough to be selected for the Civil Engineering course in REC Calicut. In 1970 he passed his Engineering Degree, once again with flying colours. After that he underwent a Diploma Course in Traditional Architecture at Aranmula and passed a Diploma course in Information Technology too.

Construction Genius

Raman came to Mumbai in search of a job and joined as Junior Engineer in Maharashtra Public Works Department in 1971 at the age of 24. Initially his job was routine. In due course of time he was promoted as Assistant Engineer and later as

Considering his excellence in the job at Vashi Bridge construction and maintenance, and also considering his devotion, commitment, knowledge, and experience in the construction of sea bridges, Raman was recalled from retirement by the Government as Engineer-in-charge. He was assigned the construction of Bandra-Worli Sea Link in 2005.



Vashi Creek Bridge

Executive Engineer. For quite some time he was Sub-Divisional Engineer on various projects in and around Victoria Terminus Area.

During his service period he was posted as the Sub Divisional Engineer in charge of the construction of the Second Thane Creek Bridge of Vashi which is the one presently carrying the traffic on Sion Panvel Road. His devotion and commitment towards the completion of the job as per schedule was well appreciated by the Government of Maharashtra. The then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Manohar Joshi had felicitated the entire team of Engineers. He was also handpicked and kept as Engineer in charge of Maintenance of Vashi Bridge for a term of five years. While he was Executive Engineer at Ahmed Nagar, he was appointed in charge of a challenging assignment, the widening of Ahmed Nagar-Aurangabad and Ahmed Nagar-Kopergaon Highways. This was in 1995. The authorities were very pleased by the perfection and timely completion of the work.

Raman and Vashi Bridge

The construction of Vashi Bridge was a real challenge, Raman remembers. Since the bridge stands on a creek-face, very close to the sea, with intimidating tidal turbulence and variations and on a soft soiled creek-bed, it was a challenging project. For example, when the working crew went to the span pit by boat or canoe, the return was not possible in low tide, as the boat could not approach the banks due to soggy,

muddy, marshy soil of the banks. In such situations they waited till the tide rose, so that the boat could approach the wharf. In spite of such adverse situations Raman and his team had completed the job well in time.

In 2005 he retired peacefully from his job. It was at that time, the Government

ultimately decided to construct the first

and most prestigious sea bridge of Maharashtra the Bandra Worli Sea Link. One lingering question before the authorities was who should be the Engineer on whom Government could confidently depend. They did not have to search much. Considering his excellence in the job at Vashi Bridge construction and maintenance, and also considering his devotion, commitment, knowledge, and experience in the construction of sea bridges, Raman was recalled from retirement by the Government as Engineer-in-charge. He was assigned the construction of Bandra-Worli Sea Link in 2005. He was contractually appointed to that post for six years with a challenge that it will be completed within five years. On June 30, 2009 the north gate was inaugurated by none other than Sonia Gandhi with all the pomp and galore it deserved. The inaugural plaque placed at the gate displays Raman's name as the Builder of the Bridge thus making him a significant part in the history of Mumbai.

Passionate Poet

Right from early childhood, Raman had an inclination towards literature. His elder brother (Late Vasudevan Namboodiri) was a poet and his younger brother (Aryan Kannanur) is a novelist. Raman's first poem was selected as the best in a contest and was published in Balapangkthi of the most prestigious Malayalam weekly, Mathrubhumi when he was still in school. In 1962, he contested in Thunjan Smaraka Essay competition and was declared second and in the next year he was declared first.

A Government official, that too an Engineer, is always expected to be perfectly too mundane and dry to have any interest in any form of art. But Raman is an exception. A popular and sensitive poet, Raman's talent is to create perfect and systematic verses with a tinge of satire, in rather the traditional methods.

He composes Malayalam shlokas, in tune with the grammar and rules laid down in Sanskrit, as opposed to the contemporary way of poetry creations,

which is a shuffled way of prose writing. Writing *shlokas* need extra command of language and perfect diction. Raman is absolutely at ease in writing *shlokas* and is a '*Nimishakavi*' (instant poet). He has published a book of poetry *Kuripuranam* which is a humorous creation containing many of the known Sanskrit '*vritthas* (meters). It has turned out to be wonder even for research scholar in Sanskrit Vrittas. He has also translated '*Hraswabhagavatam*' (an abridged version of Bhagavatham) consisting of 336 shlokas from Sanskrit into Malayalam.



Raman with his wife Subhashini, and son Parameswaran and daughter-in-law Parvathi.

Raman has done a few other translations from Sanskrit to Malayalam mostly shlokas. He has also translated some poems from Marathi to Malayalam and written a Marathi shloka. In addition to this, he has authored hundreds of '*mukthaka*'s (single shlokas) on contemporary subjects both published and unpublished. He has plans of compiling all his creations in book form which may see the light of the day in the near future. He is a gold medalist in various '*Aksharasloka*' (Shloka recitation)

competitions, like Kamalakara Menon Gold medal, K KRaja Gold Medal, Mamman Mappila Trophy etc. He has been attending almost all *Aksharaslokas* staged in this city for over four decades. His wife is also an equally famous shloka reciter and has won many prizes herself in *Aksharashloka* competitions.

Avid Sportsman

Raman's talent and creativity does not end with innovative ideas in Engineering and poetry. He is also a sportsman of reckonable level. During his school and College days he was a recognized Volleyball and Football player, Vice-Captain and even Captain of the School team. His interests was in games as well as sports. He was the District champion in Hop-Step-and Jump with a jump of 28' which was a record.

He did not limit himself to physical sports. He was equally at ease with Chess, which he started practising from Childhood. During his Engineering studies, he was Chess Champion of the College. During his service period, in 2000, he had represented Maharashtra in the All India Service Chess Contest held at Tripura and was a winner and a rank holder. Presently he plays in various online chess games.

Even after retirement and after the Bandra-Worli Sea Link Project, he is sought after by many Engineering companies as a Consultant. He had taken up one such assignment and continued to be a Consultant till 2015. Now he has decided to contribute all his available time to his passion of reading, researching, authoring and translating. He spends his

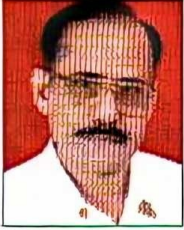
peaceful days at his Belapur residence, with his wife Subhashini (of Koshappilly Mana), who was a teacher in different schools like St. Xaviers School, Railway School Kalyan and Vani Vidyalaya of Mulund. His son Parameswaran is an Engineer (B.Tech. M.S.) working and settled in New York with his wife Parvathy.

Raman never bothered to be in the limelight but he is a source of inspiration to all who have come into contact with him. He is definitely a role model for the aspiring youth of today. ■

CHATTAMBI SWAMI

A LEARNED INTELLECTUAL GENIUS OF OUR TIMES

One of the great scholar - saints of Kerala Chattambi Swami's thoughts and works influenced several social, religious, political and literary thinkers including Sree Narayana Guru. Swami was a strong fighter against the rigid caste system of the times.



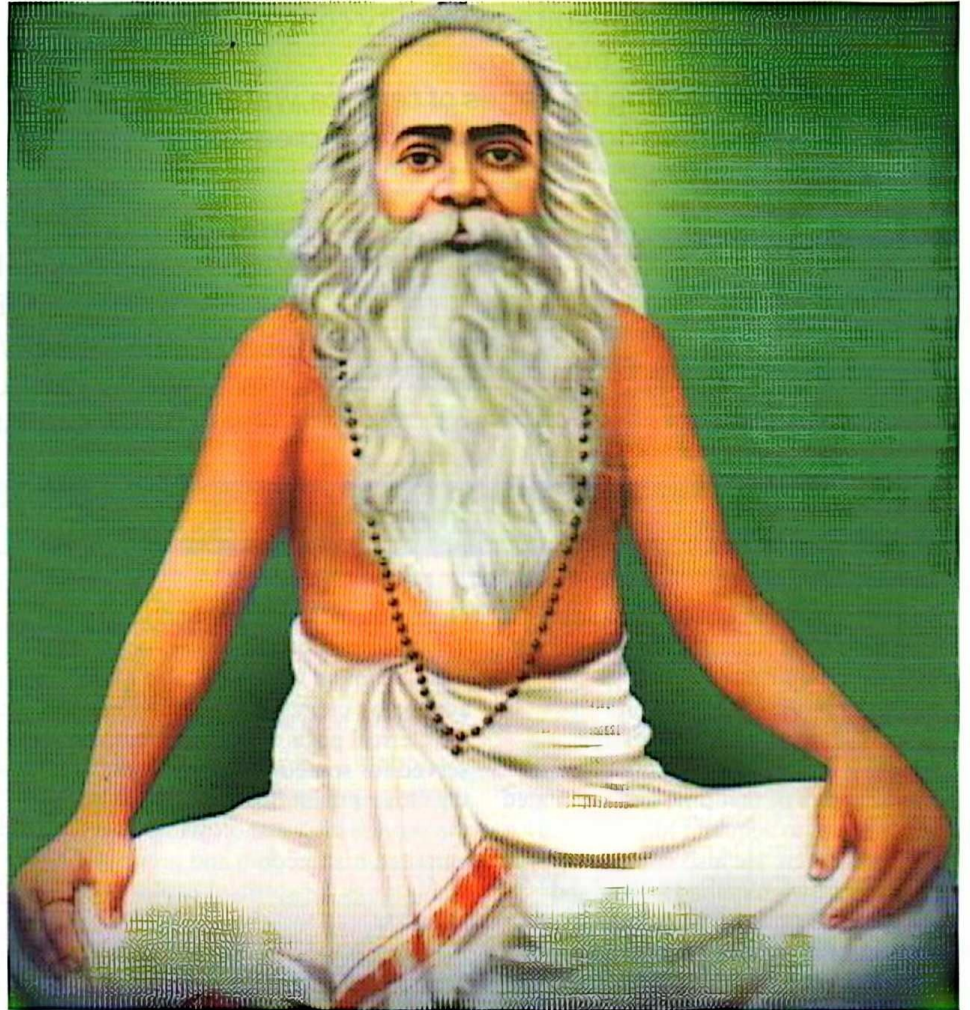
V N Gopalakrishnan

■ Sree Vidyadhiraja Parama Bhattaraka Chattambi Swamikal, popularly known as Chattambi Swami was one the greatest scholar-saints of Kerala. His thoughts and works influenced

the launching of many social, religious, literary and political organizations and movements in the state. Chattambi Swami denounced the orthodox interpretation of Hindu texts citing sources from the Vedas. He was a social reformer who succeeded in establishing cordial relations between different communities and a learned intellectual genius of our times. He also worked for the emancipation of women and encouraged them to come to the forefront of society. He fought against the rigid caste system and social vices prevalent in the society. Chattambi Swami stayed and dined with the untouchables and sent his trained disciples to teach the essence of Sanatana Dharma.

In his book '*Pracheena Malayalam*,' Chattambi Swami argues that the evil of caste and the superiority claims of the Brahmins are without any logic and severely criticized the Brahmin domination of that period. His meeting with Swami Vivekananda in Kochi in 1892 was instrumental in bringing about social changes in a caste-ridden society. On his request Chattambi Swami explained to Swami Vivekananda the esoteric meaning of *Chinmudra*. Impressed by this exposition, Swami Vivekananda later sent sanyasins to him to learn the higher stages of Yoga and Pranayama. Swami Vivekananda wrote: "Here I met a remarkable man".

Swami Chinmayananda who founded the Chinmaya Mission was given the name Balakrishnan by none other than the revered Chattambi Swami whose love and affection, he enjoyed during his childhood. Chattambi Swami attained divine knowledge without performing



penance (*thapas*). He was a 'saint without the saffron'; a sage who loved all creations in this world alike and was a great philosopher who pioneered the social relations without being a part of it.

Chattambi Swami was born in a Nair family called Ulloorcode in Kannanmoola in Trivandrum district on August 25, 1853 as the son of Vasudeva Sharma and Nanga Devi. Though his parents called him Ayyappan, he was known by the pet name 'Kunjan' or Kunjan Pillai. Due to the poor condition of his family, he could not join a school for his studies. As his parents were not able to provide him formal education, he

learned letters and words from children of his neighbourhood who attended the schools. He also learned Sanskrit by overhearing the classes at a nearby Brahmin house named Kollur Athiyar Mutt.

Knowing his thirst for learning, an uncle took him to the traditional school conducted by Pettayil Raman Pillai Asan, a renowned scholar and writer who taught him without any fees. He studied Malayalam and Sanskrit languages from this 'Asan School'. The young Kunjan Pillai supervised the class and came to be known as *Chattambi* or 'Monitor'. The title stayed on because of his daring,

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unconventional and questioning attitude.

In the 1870s Raman Pillai started a scholarly group named '*Jnanaprajagaram*' with experts on different subjects with progressive attitude. It served as a meeting place for many scholars of that time and facilitated Kunjan Pillai to acquaint himself with many great men. He also could learn Tamil from Swaminatha Desikar and philosophy from Prof. Manonmaniam Sundaram Pillai during his participation in '*Jnanaprajagaram*'.

Kunjan Pillai was introduced into the science of Yoga by Thycaud Ayyavu Swamikal, a scholar and yogi who used to give lectures at '*Jnanaprajagaram*'. At the age of 14, a wandering sanyasi who came to the temple in the village initiated him into *Balasubramanya Mantra* which confers everything one desires. He recited the Mantra one lakh times and came to be known as Shanmukhadasa. During nights, he used to meditate in a Kali temple and was found often in trance embracing the Sivalinga of the nearby temple.

As the burden of supporting the family fell on him, Kunjan Pillai took to many manual works. For several days, he served as a labourer carrying building materials for the construction of

Government Secretariat building in Trivandrum. For some time, he worked as a document writer and also as an advocate's clerk. He stood first in a test for clerical posts in Government. He also served for sometime as an Accountant in the Government Secretariat. But he left the service after a short while as it curtailed his freedom and prevented his wanderings for spiritual exploitations and research.

The Travancore Royal family used to organize annual philosophical conferences at the Palace complex adjacent to Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple. In one such conference, Kunjan Pillai met Subba Jatapadikal, a renowned teacher well-versed in *Tarka*, *Vyakarana*, *Mimasa*, and *Vedanta*. He was hailing from Kalladaikurichi in Southern Tamil Nadu. Kunjan Pillai's desire to learn at Kalladaikurichi was granted and thus he could spend many years learning under Subba Jatapadikal. There he acquired deep and extensive mastery of all Sastras in Tamil and Sanskrit. He also learned Siddha medicine, music, and martial arts. During this period, he was greatly influenced by the works of Kodakanallur Sundara Swamikal, a great scholar in Advaita Vedanta. He later translated his work *Nijananda Vilasam* containing the

essence of Vedanta into simple Malayalam to guide spiritual aspirants.

After completing his studies under Subba Jatapadikal, he spent long periods of learning under a Christian priest in a secluded church in Southern Tamil Nadu. Assisting the priest, he learned Christian meditation and learned Christian religion and philosophy. Later he lived with an old Muslim well-versed in Qur'an and Sufi mysticism who taught him the main tenets of Islam. Kunjan Pillai acquired proficiency in reading Qur'an in the traditional way. Leaving him, he wandered for months with many Avadutas in Southern Tamil Nadu and also travelled all over India.

At the end of his wanderings and quest, Kunjan Pillai at the age of 28 was led to self-realisation through Brahmopadesa by an Avaduta whom he met at a wayside in Vadaveeswaram, a village in Tamil Nadu with whom he lived for many months in the forests. It is believed that this Avaduta belonged to the line of immortal masters of South India. He also learnt the advanced techniques of *Hatha Yoga* and *Pranayama* from Atmananda Kumara Velu and Thycaud Ayyavu Swamikal. Interactions with saintly people revealed to him that the basic concepts of all religions are the



Chattambi Swami with Sree Narayana Guru and Swami Neelakanta Theerthapadar

same. It is their misinterpretation that causes conflicts and makes religion a tool for oppression and subjugation.

Kunjan Pillai transformed himself into a *Brahmajnani*, the Supreme Rishi. It was in 1882 that Chattambi Swami met Nanu Asan at the Aniyoor Temple near Vamanapuram who later came to be known as Sree Narayana Guru. Their meeting proved to be the beginning of a profound and cherished companionship, although the two were of different temperaments. In those days, Nanu Asan was a soft-spoken introvert and Swami was an outspoken extrovert. They lived and travelled for many months together. Swami introduced Asan to all arts and sciences he had mastered and also gave him the *Balasubrahmanya Mantra*. The two maintained a lifelong contact, respect and regard for each other.

On his *Shastiabdapurthi* day in 1913, at a grand meeting presided over

by Swami Dayananda Maharaj, the title of *Vidyadhiraja Theerthapada Paramabhataraka* was conferred on him by the distinguished scholars. But Swami, in his usual humility preferred to be known by the old name Chattambi.

Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Abhedananda and many other saints ascribe to Swami the responsibility for their turning to spiritual life. Swami has also many *grihastha* disciples like Bodheswaran, Krishnan Vaidyan, Kesavan Vaidyan, Kumbalath Sanku Pillai and sanyasi disciples like Neelakanta Theerthapada and Theerthapada Paramahansa who played a very important role in the renaissance and reformation in Kerala.

Chattambi Swami wrote several books on religion and spirituality. Some of his published books in Malayalam include: *Pracheena Malayalam*, *Vedadhikara Niroopanam*, *Sree Chakra*

Poojakalpam, *Christhumatha Saram*, *Christumatha Niroopanam*, *Jeevakarunya Niroopanam*, *Adi Bhasha*, *Vedanta Saram*, *Keralathile Desa Namangal*, *Devarcha Paddhatiyude Upodghatam*, *Devi Manasa Puja Stotra Vyakhyanam*, *Nijananda Vilasam*, *Pranavavum Sankhya Darsanavum*, *Moksha Pradipa Khandanam*, *Prapanchathil Stree Purushanmarkkulla Sthanam*, *Tamizhakam*, *Dravida Mahatmyam*, *Kerala Charithravum Tachudaya Kaimalum*, *Bhasha Padma Puranam*, *Malayalathile Chila Sthala Namangal*, and *Vedantasangraham*.

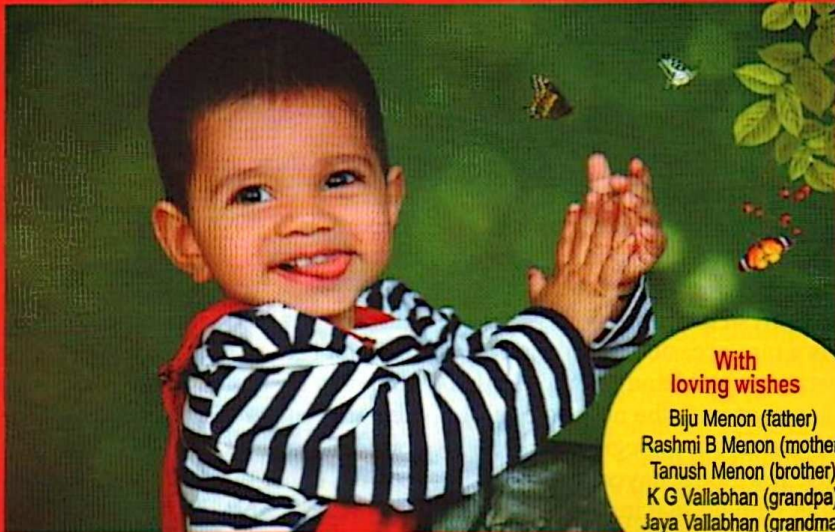
The following works are not available, except through excerpts published in various journals and books by contemporaries: *Advaita Panjaram*, *Ozhuvilodukkam (Translation)*, *Chidakasa Layam*, *Tarka Rahasya Ratnam*, *Parama Bhattara Darsanam*, *Punarjanma Nirupanam*, *Brahmatatva Nirbhasam*, *Bhugola Sastram*, *Shanmata Nirupanam*, *Sarva Mata Samarasyam* and *Stava Ratna Haravali*.

Through his work *Pracheena Malayalam*, an authoritative history, Chattambi Swami refutes the story that Kerala was a gifted land of Brahmins by Lord Parasurama. The *Vedadhikara Niroopanam* proves that Vedas are not the monopoly of Brahmins and established that even Sudras had the right to learn Vedas as knowledge is essential to all people. These two writings contributed for the social progress of Kerala by breaking the supremacy of Brahmins and by doing away with the superstitious beliefs and customs prevalent in society.

Towards the end of his life, Chattambi Swami settled down at Panmana, a village in Kollam district, enjoying the services rendered by his disciple and freedom fighter Shri Sanku Pillai. When the prophesied moment came, Chattambi Swami sat in *Padmasana* meditated on the Absolute Brahman and entered into *Mahasamadhi* on May 5, 1924. The poem that Sree Narayana Guru composed when he came to know of Swami's samadhi was the only offering he gave to any person and it reveals how he considered Swami to be a realised soul. It is the most authoritative critical assessment on Chattambi Swami ever done. His mortal remains were enshrined at his *Samadhistanam* and this site is today called Panmana Ashramam, which is a centre for social service and spiritual practices. Chattambi Swami throughout his intellectually and spiritually enriched life maintained a large number of friends from different regions of Kerala. ■

Happy 1st Birthday

Ayansh Menon (29/10/2016)



With
loving wishes

Biju Menon (father)
Rashmi B Menon (mother)
Tanush Menon (brother)
K G Vallabhan (grandpa)
Jaya Vallabhan (grandma)



ENCOUNTERS AT CASH COUNTERS

The adventures of the freshly minted crisp pink Rs 2000 note that is refused to be taken by the common man for smaller denominations - that is this writer's dilemma.



Jose Chemmassery

■ I could not listen to the announcement of demonetization made by PM on the 8th, as I was not in

India. During those days from 27 October to 11 November I was on a foreign trip visiting UK and Ireland. The news however appeared on the mobile as a Whatsapp message; I did not pay much attention then as our transactions were settled in foreign currencies. The undesirable, painful and disturbing impact of the order came to surface and registered in my mind when the driver informed me on the way from airport to home. He narrated to me the persisting chaos for want of cash/currency troubling and inconveniencing the common man. I could see long lines in front of the banks and ATMs for drawing cash and exchange of negated notes patiently surging. The long queues I witnessed while travelling was unprecedented and alarmingly agonizing. The driver's personal account about what is happening around drove me to awaken my faculties to grasp the situation. I settled his fare with whatever balance I had in my pocket in Rs.100 notes.

Since I had a few hundred rupee notes in my reserve cash for emergencies etc, I did not rush to the bank immediately further causing chaos

and frustration by standing in long queues. Then on a convenient day on the 14th I ventured to draw my ration of Rs.10000 in the late afternoon. As the bank was about to close the door suspending their operations for the day, I could manage to get my ration within twenty minutes. People depositing high value notes were jittery and frustrated as the line was moving at a snail's pace. A cashier due to the unprecedented rush over the counter and extra cash handling with speed expressed loss of RS.2000 paid extra by mistake was crestfallen and trying to identify the customer who had already left the premises. When I received the cash at my turn, it was in denominations of Rs.2000 (4 pieces) and Rs.100 (20pieces). They were fresh, crisp newly minted virgin notes radiating/spreading the nascent fragrance they acquired during their creation. I enjoyed the sight and feel of the new currencies making me proud for having fresh notes in my possession which is a rare occasion as hitherto the bank was giving old and partially soiled notes. My tryst with the new note of Rs.2000 was about to begin.

Those few notes stayed calmly in my wallet without making any agitation for their freedom of circulation. As I had no requirement for high value notes to meet major expenses, I remained

passive and calm to the chaos and confusion prevailing among the hapless crowd in the queue for the money to draw in small lots at prescribed periods. When after issuing a cheque if the bank finds insufficient balance in the account it will be dishonoured and the customer is legally liable for that. In the reverse case when the customer draws his money and bank fails to honour what is the remedy for deliberate and wrongful dishonor. The question remained unanswered and continues to be so. Denial or restricting of the amount to be drawn from one's account is a breach of contract and is against the fundamental banking principles. Trust and confidence, the basis of banking system is likely to weaken in the present scenario of limited withdrawals, although there are no alternatives.

I was at the Cochin (Nedumbassery) airport on 21st November on the way to attend a family wedding. After collecting the baggage from the conveyor belt, I rushed to the exit and halted at the prepaid taxi counter. As I was the first and only customer on the counter, the female counter clerk released a friendly customer smile. I acknowledged and replied to her query about my destination. She quoted the fare to be Rs.1400 for Thrissur. I opened my wallet, took out the new legal tender of

Rs.2000 and offered to her for the settlement. Suddenly she became grave leaving her pleasing countenance and blurted out in an angry tone, "We don't have change!" I remained calm as I was silenced by her outburst. She ordered me in a threatening tone, "You have to pay by card." I was pondering about the sudden change in her behaviour and reaction at the sight of the new Rs.2000 note. I humbly settled the payment by my card and rushed to the taxi stand as it was getting dark as night descended.

Two days later I had a meeting with an old friend of my school days. We decided to meet for lunch and spend some quality time ruminating our teenage days of pranks and frivolities. The lunch was of a long duration to accommodate recollection of past memories with the flavor and aroma emanating from the food served at the Casino Hotel, Thrissur. While earlier the dining hall used to be

entirely occupied during lunch time, now I could see only 30-40 per cent occupancy. To a polite query about this, the waiter told this is so after the cash shortage due to demonetization. A few minutes after finishing the dessert I gestured for the bill which came in a brown folder. I took the Rs.2000 note and placed inside the folder. The waiter took the folder

walked slowly to the cashier sitting in a corner not visible to us. He came back slowly and said smilingly, "We don't have change!" I sat calm and felt strange about the situation of helplessness springing from cash crunch after demonetization. As I was sitting quietly without reacting, another bearer came requesting to pay by card. He was accompanied by a ladywaiter in uniform carrying the swiping POS machine. I reluctantly took my plastic card and settled the payment. Nonetheless I wondered how many people were involved wasting their time in settling a simple transaction in the absence of cash for exchange. I felt the new high value note is not serving the purpose of currency as it remained immobile in my wallet.

On the 6th December the TV channels were paying glowing tributes to the departed charismatic leader and

the powerful Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu J Jayalalita on her funeral attended by lakhs of mourners. I had to visit the Viviana Mall at Thane and missed the mourning programme. As it was noon and pangs of hunger were ringing in my system, I decided to have lunch in a hotel there. I entered into the restaurant curiously named Sodabottle Openerwalla at the very entrance of the Mall. The ambience was similar to an Iranian restaurant of the sixties in Byculla. With continuously blaring golden hits of the era, the atmosphere was reminiscent of old days of melodious music entirely different from the present day cacophony. There were more customers, but seats were available for enjoying the Parsi food items. When the waiter approached, I placed order for Mutton Dhansak, the typical and popular Parsi food. The food arrived in a closed three layered



tiffin carrier. The tiffin carrier was glowing with a golden coloured exterior, a dramatic presentation of the most popular item. It was designed as a self-service mechanism and the bearer would not touch the contents or serve it on the plate placed on the table. The aromatic herbal culinary flavour wafted into the air as I opened the tiffin box. I was pleased with the contents, brown rice prepared in biriyani style, large pieces of mutton immersed in ground and overcooked dal and a salad of onion rings, chopped tomatoes, two pieces of green pepper, garnished with a slice of lemon and green dhania leaves finely cut. Surprisingly absence of mint leaves was conspicuous. I enjoyed the food although I found the mutton pieces too hard and labour intensive to ingest. For a happy ending of ceremony of eating I ordered *Lagannu Custard* the delicious and ceremonial sweet

preparation served on the occasion of their weddings. To be frank, I must admit it was a sweet treat to remember.

I was leisurely relaxing, gradually sipping the remaining lemon juice which I had ordered in the beginning of the lunch session. Then I gestured for the bill which was, after a few minutes presented in a creamy folder and laid on the table. I perused the contents of the bill which included more than 25 per cent taxes, levies, charges etc, the painful aspects of the bill. Then I remembered indirect taxes are regressive and painful for ordinary citizens with clean income. I opened my wallet removed the pink note and placed it inside the folder. The bearer looked at the folder; finding the pink note craning out of the folder he stared at me with a dose of displeasure, for having tendered the Rs.2000 note for settlement. Shortly bending towards me he said, "He can't

accept the note as they don't have change for balance payment." I remained on my seat and explained, "I too don't have change." After lingering for a while, he took the folder and went to the cashier sitting in the extreme corner of the hotel. The cashier went out holding the pink currency in his hand obviously making it visible to me apparently to search for change from the

neighbouring shops / banks. He returned apparently without any success and climbed to his seat in the box. He started debating the issue with his colleagues, as I observed the scene. I kept a studied silence and remained comfortably in the seat awaiting the next step to be initiated by the staff. Then a different bearer confronted me demanding the payment. When he started arguing, I told him to call his manager with whom I can discuss. A decently dressed young man, V Singh, in his thirties came to me and started explaining the shortage/scarcity of cash for exchange. He pleaded with me his helplessness of the situation. I asked him why he did not indicate that Rs.2000 note is not accepted and informing the customers that only card payments are allowed. He said he could not do such a thing as it will be illegal and against the legal tender. When the staff and a few

"MUMBAI MERI JAAN"



Biju Cherian

■ Practically every village in Kerala has someone who has travelled to Mumbai and then returned to regale his friends, neighbours and relatives with his tales of adventures

and exploits in this "Mahanagaram". Not to be left behind, short-story writers and novelists have woven many stories of Malayalee in Mumbai. Script-writers have created fantasies and Mollywood has created movies on this theme.

Kerala is celebrating six decades of existence as a State. Therefore, it is important to have a look at the past, the role that Mumbai played in shaping its destiny and learn from experiences. Malayalees and Maharashtrians, especially Mumbaikars, have had a complex relationship down the decades. But then, without Mumbai, the history of Malayalees will be incomplete. The city of Mumbai has played an enormous role in the making of modern Kerala and prosperity of Malayalees, and there is no second opinion on that. For the past one hundred years, Mumbai has been the refuge area of lakhs of Malayalees. For those who after completing their studies and did not know what to do, and for those who realized that their abilities would be better served in a big city, and for those who had a dark future in front of them, this metropolis was the answer. For those who purchased a valid ticket and reservation, and even those who managed to travel without

a ticket, this city proved an answer for their problems.

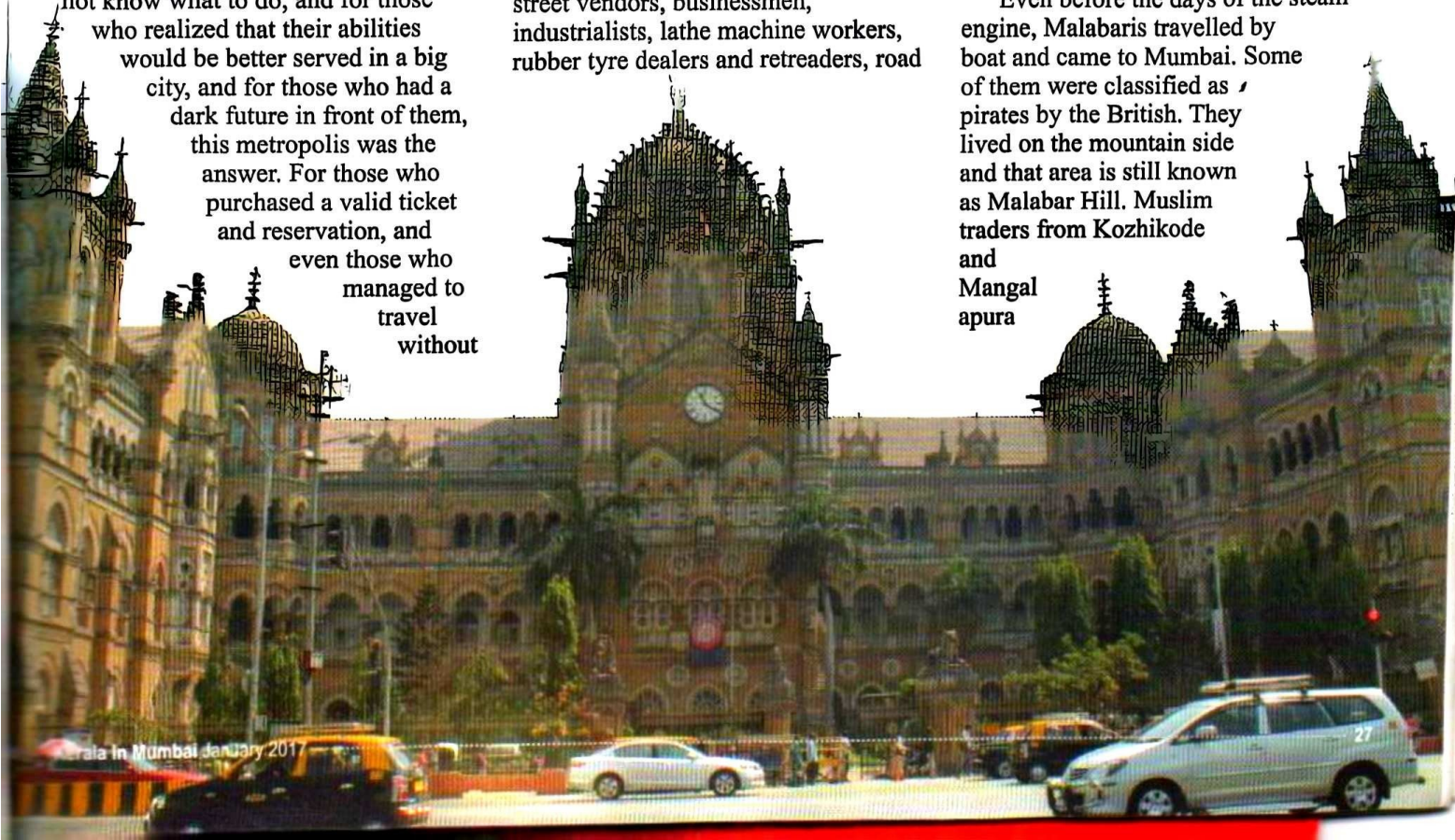
In the beginning years, for those who "completed SSLC", and for those who studied "typing-and-shorthand", this city beckoned them with opportunities because at that time Mumbai had very few educated people, especially who had a working knowledge of English. All that the applicants did was to show their certificates and appear for a test, and if they got the remark "Fit to Work" on their bio-data, it meant appointment, a regular salary and the start of a career. It was easy for those who had relatives, friends, neighbours, school-mates to come here and get a job. Practically every Malayali home in Mumbai had a newly-arrived person in search of a job. For those who did not have acquaintances, it was difficult, but not impossible. They spent their days on railway platforms, street-corners, seedy lodges, dingy chawls and rooms in slums, and even these people got jobs, earned money, got married, purchased flats and settled down. What stood the Malayalees in good stead was the general view that they are hard-working, trust-worthy and good enough for employment.

Later on, there came generations who worked as officers, hotel staff, street vendors, businessmen, industrialists, lathe machine workers, rubber tyre dealers and retreaders, road

builders, developers and factory owners. Malayalees were not only mere job-seekers but also job-providers. Then there are dozens of examples of Malayalees who started their careers as stenographers and retired as managing directors.

It was in the 1950s that the 'Gulf' became the El Dorado of Malayalees. Then Mumbai became the staging point of Malayalees en route to Dubai. At first, it was the sailing ships that carried them. Later on, it was airplanes. Malayalees came to Mumbai, stayed here and then went to the Gulf because communication in those days in Kerala was in the primitive stage. The Gulf boom led to a plethora of business houses that specialized in transporting Keralites to and from West Asia that included recruitment agencies, ticket agents, bus transporters, visa sellers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, lodge owners and intermediaries for health certificates and other related services. Mumbai became a huge dormitory for Dubai Malayalees. Even though Malayali restaurants existed for a long time, yet it was during the Gulf boom that such 'Kerala Hotels' sprung in every nook and corner of the city, from the costly ones to the cheap eateries. A lot of them survive even to this day. Thus, Mumbaikars had their first taste of original Kerala cuisine.

Even before the days of the steam engine, Malabaris travelled by boat and came to Mumbai. Some of them were classified as pirates by the British. They lived on the mountain side and that area is still known as Malabar Hill. Muslim traders from Kozhikode and Mangal apura



m came on ships with goods to Mumbai. These ships docked at South Mumbai. The area where they regularly visited is now known as Cochin and Mangalore streets. These are reminders of a bye-gone era. Their 'Jamaat' or congregation is now 75 years old. Even though Kerala is the land of nurses, yet it was in Mumbai that this profession had its beginnings. There were very few medical colleges in Kerala to train nurses. Thousands of young women came to Mumbai and completed their courses in KEM, Saint George and other hospitals. In the 1960s and 70s, students even got stipend while studying. This was an added attraction for Malayalees to come to Mumbai.

Malayalees have also borne the brunt of hatred by a section of local people. Those who wore lungis were hunted and beaten up. The various communal riots forced a section of Malayalees to move out of the city. The seeds of anti-Malayali campaign were sowed by regional leaders in 1957 itself when V K Krishna Menon won the Lok Sabha election from Mumbai. Though he retained the seat in 1962, yet it was clear that the 'sons-of-the-soil' policy would prevent him further victories. The election of Ravindra Varma to the Lok Sabha in 1980 from Mumbai also



did not go well with the local populace. Then there was the election of P C Alexander to the Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra in 2002. Apart from these leaders, no one else had any chance due to the fierce campaign from local leaders against outsiders. At the state level, the only two Malayalees who won successive elections to the legislative assembly from Mumbai are C D

Oommachen and Annie Shekhar, despite the anti-outsider rhetoric. At present, Keralites who come to Mumbai are down to a trickle. Malayalees now prefer to go abroad. In a role-reversal, Kerala has become a land of job-providers. But Mumbai will always be remembered as the city which had an important role in shaping the destiny of Malayalees. ■

PRIYANKA, daughter of Mrs Shailaja Menon and Mr Pradeep Rajan Menon, Charkop, Kandivali, got married to **SIDDHARTH** (Son of Mrs Rema S Nayar and Mr Sudhir S Nayar) on December 16, 2016 at Shree Ayyappa Temple Bangur Nagar, Goregaon (W) followed by Wedding Reception on the same day at Evershine Banquets, Malad (W). Priyanka is the granddaughter of Late Adv. Smt Rajeswari Menon and Late Shri K R Menon and Smt Gouri Panicker and Late Shri Guru Krishna Panicker.



THE POWER OF POSITIVE LOVING

A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. - *Viktor Frankl*



Prof. Dr. John Mathews Vazhappilly

■ A forgotten opal lay in a wooden case, cold, dust-covered and lusterless. One day a beautiful, young lady took it out of the case, cleared it and held it in her warm hands for a few moments and then it gleamed and glowed with all the beauty of the rainbow. All about us are thousands of human lives, which seem cold and unbeautiful, without inner radiance or gleams of indwelling divine light. What such souls need is the touch of a warm human hand, the comforting grip of love, to bring out in them, the sparkle of the inner beauty that is concealed in them. True, authentic love is the common fiber of life, the flame that warms our soul, that energizes our spirit, that enthuses our heart and supplies passion to our lives. It is our connection to God and to each other.

The Meaning of True Love

What sanctifies time most is a life of authentic love. Love is the radium that lights up the dark chambers of our life. Where genuine love is present a person desires but to give, and not sell. No devotion, no sacrifice is too great for love. Next to bread or rice, this is the food all mortals hunger for; it is the one essential vitamin of the soul. The Eskimos has 50 names for snow because it is important to them, there ought to be as many for love.

Love is the health of the soul, its

beauty and well-being. Love is like rain on parched desert land, like the warmth of a blazing flame on frozen feet in a winter night. Love is the lubricant that makes life a lot easier. Love is like a fragrant rose. You can smell it or pass it by. You can take in its sweet fragrance and look at it with delight.

The jeweled pivot on which our lives must turn is the profound perception that every person we meet in the course of a day is a dignified human soul worthy of our love. What the law of gravitation is to the stars and the sun, the law of love is to men and women. The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is transformed: there is no winter and no night: all tragedies, all ennui vanish. Love exhilarates and ennobles. Love uplifts the heart and enriches the soul. With love the burden of life is eased and more lightly and joyfully borne.

Love in its various dimensions is the oxygen of a rich and full life. Our lives are shaped by those who love us - by those who refuse to love us. All the wise poets, all the mighty preachers, all great men who set this world on fire with great and sublime thoughts would tell us gladly if they could that there is nothing more powerful and effective than true love in this world. It is love, it is love that makes the world go round. George Chapman called Love Nature's second sun :

I tell thee love is Nature's second sun,

Causing a spring of virtues where he shines.

Love gives comfort, solace and strength through a word or a smile. The touch of a compassionate hand often illuminates our paths in life like a lightning flash in the darkness. The treasures of love and compassion locked up in human hearts must be utilized for improving and bettering the condition of man in this vale of tears.

The great Shakespeare wrote, "The course of true love never did run smooth." This is very true of real love. In the course of a genuine love relationship, we will have to go through periodic winter of emotional setbacks to find a newness of our love in the spring time. The tinsel of our young and tender love is burnished by the hand of time into the solid gold of mature love. There will be certain times when negative feelings will cloud the skies of our world, but true love dispels the gray clouds of negative feelings and emerges stronger and brighter. It would be fatal to identify love with mere feelings. However it would be equally lethal to a relationship of love if there were no warm and loving feelings to take care of the tender buds of young love.

Love is Mostly a Matter of the Heart

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly: what is essential is invisible to the eye.

Antoine De Saint Exupery.
The Little Prince

The measure of a man is the measure of his heart. The heart produces its

sweetest melody when it loves, when it bleeds for others. On this earth no poetry, no song is more beautiful than those tears that come from the depth of the heart in a moment of love. Love is the most innocent quality of life. It cannot be contrived. It is the spontaneous overflow of a rich heart. A lack of love denotes a lack of life. The show of love without the substance of true love is a shame and a sham.

A loving heart embraces the whole universe: every grain of sand, every blade of grass, everywhere ray of light, each and every species of animals. Those who are restricted in their ability to love, those whose love flows only in restricted channels of isolated objects or individuals, those who can only like this or that, those who have no awareness of universal consciousness in their hearts, are like small ponds where the love can flow only as ripples and not as waves of the sea. To enjoy the ocean of love, we have to improve the magnitude of our hearts and gain the depth of an ocean, unfathomable and full.

Our daily lives should be filled with the spirit of love and gratitude. We cannot afford to forget that the superb charter of kindness include salespersons, our own domestic help, the garage mechanic, and the tailor who stitches our clothes. "I call no man charitable," said Thoreau, "who forgets that his barber, cook and hosier are made of the same human clay as himself."

A loving heart blossoms with tenderness and fine sentiments. Fine sentiments are the most beautiful flowers in the garden of life. Let us recognize the beauty, the splendour and love of true sentiments. Let us be on guard against checking or chilling a single fine sentiment. It is the delicate and tender feelings of affection and friendship that drive us to our friends and acquaintances with outstretched arms so that we steadily expand the circle of friends we know and, care about. Trying to get along without fine sentiments is like trying to live in the Gobi desert, is like trying to live in a world without roses or music or sunshine.

We tend to confuse coldness and indifference with maturity. It is neither wisdom nor virtue to choke down these natural sentiments of love and affection, tenderness and care. In our indifferent and impersonal world, what

fools we are if we don't keep shining the little candles of tender feelings, the soft, splendid light of sentiments.

In the last years of his life, Robert Louis Stevenson lived on the island of Samoa. When his friend Mataaafa, the Samoan chieftain, was put in prison by the European authorities, Stevenson, though he was then ill and tired, went again and again to visit him. Always he brought some little gift. Deeply moved by this kindness, the Samoans labored long hours to build a road for Stevenson. And when he died they buried him high on a hilltop and made a rule that no firearms should ever be used on the hill, because they wanted him to sleep in peace.

Back of many scientific discoveries is somebody's sentimental motivation. For instance, the discovery of insulin. When Frederick Banting was a young boy in Canada, he had a playmate called Janie. She used to play hockey and baseball with him. She skated and climbed hills and mountains with him. Then one summer day, Janie suddenly died, died of sugar in the blood. This painful memory haunted Banting for a long time. It was this sentimental love that motivated and inspired him to discover insulin.

Love is Proactive

*A bell is no bell
till you ring it,
A song is no song
Till you sing it,
And love in your heart
Wasn't put there to stay
Love isn't love
Till you give it away.*

Oscar Hammerstein, Sound of Music

In the great literature of all enlightened societies, love is a proactive response and not an instinctual, reflexive reaction. Love is a verb and not just an abstract noun. Reactive people make love just a feeling. We seem to equate love with some perfumed, scented, sophisticated Hollywood concept. Actually love means to treat people with common decency, with the respect due to every man as a child of God or for that matter as a fellow human being. Hollywood has generally scripted us to believe that we are not responsible, that we are a product of our feelings. But the Hollywood script does not describe the reality. If our feelings control our actions, it is because we have abdicated

our responsibility and empowered them to do so.

Proactive people make love a verb. Love is something you do; the precious sacrifices you make, the spending of your time and energy. Love is a value that is actualized through a series of loving actions. Proactive people subordinate feelings to values and deeds. Feelings are precipitated through the chemistry of self-less actions.

For without love, we lose the will to live. Our mental and physical vitality is impaired, our resistance is lowered, and we succumb to illness that often prove fatal. We may escape actual death, but what remains is a meager and barren existence, emotionally so impoverished that we can only be called half alive.

The following incident illustrate the proactive nature of genuine love. Composer Johannes Brahms' father refused steadfastly to take any money from his son, and it required all of Brahms' tact and delicacy to support him. Once, when the two parted, Johannes said, "Believe me, Father, music in every situation is the greatest comforter. Whenever you are discouraged and feel you need something to lift you up, just take my old score of Handel's Saul and read it over. I'm sure you'll find there whatever you need." Sometime later the old man had occasion to remember Johannes' words and looked through the old score. What he found was indeed the one thing he needed : his son had carefully put a bank note between each page.

The Sweet Wine of Romantic Love

*Love is short, forgetting so long.
I want to do with you what spring
does with cherry trees.*

*In one kiss, you'll know all I haven't
said.*

Pablo Neruda

Love, like a lonely mountain stream, will trace a new path, down the slope of impediments, till it meets the river of its passions. Many great men have been passionate lovers. These men and women whose names belong to the ages loved-mind, heart, body and soul. And they carried their love proudly, as an army carries its banners.

Even the men one would imagine incapable of sensitive or delicate passion, nevertheless, loved. Jonathan Swift, sometimes called "the hangman of humanity," put down his cruel pen and wrote to his beloved Stella in baby

talk, Among Swift's personal effects, found after his death, was a lock of hair, wrapped in a small scrap of paper on which he had scribbled "Only a woman's hair." Dr. Samuel Johnson was so devoted to his wife, Tetty (an unattractive lady many years his senior), that long after her death he kept her wedding ring near him. Keats, dying of tuberculosis, desperately lonely, still could write, as the end neared : "I am certain nothing but of the holiness of the heart's affections, and the truth of imagination."

True romantic love is a feature of the integrated being. It has little to do with the shapes of your beloved's nose, eyebrows or the tilt in her steps. It goes directly to the person and looks in to the soul. Soren Kierkegaard understood the ecstasy of human love : No time of life is so beautiful as the early days of love, when with every meeting, every glance, one fetches something new home to rejoice over. Romantic love is just the icing on the cake. Every romantic love should ripen in to mature, mellowed, true love. The German Poet Rainer Mari Rilke understood the depth of romantic love and wrote : Love consists in this that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.

A romantic relationship is one of self-understanding and finding one's soul mate and oneself. Your partner should help you to bring out the best in you. True love leads to reciprocal growth. Self-less love does not mean you become a doormat, nor does it mean diluting your values. It is a fine balance of maintaining your self-image and inner space while being there for your loved ones. There is an essential sanctity about romantic love as observed by William Lyon Phelps : *Two persons who love each other are in a place more holy than the interior of a church.*

I recall being extremely moved watching an interview on public television between interviewer John Callaway and actress **Helen Hayes**. At age 82, Ms. Hayes looked radiant in the garden of her New York home. She sat proudly in her chair, her face full of the strength which comes from living life fully and with dignity. Mr. Callaway repeatedly asked her very personal questions. None caused her to lose her composure until, alluding to her stormy marriage to writer Charles. MacArthur, He suggested that she had never known a totally happy day. She looked him

directly in the eyes and with great dignity responded something to the effect of, *"Perhaps not a completely happy day... but I knew moments of great ecstasy."*

Altruistic Love

There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometime lose sight of this force when there is suffering, and too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways.

Mother Teresa

A flock of wild geese had settled to rest on a pond. One of the flock had been captured by a gardener, who had clipped its wings before releasing it. When the geese started to resume their flight, this one tried frantically, but vainly, to lift itself into the air. The others, observing his struggles, flew about in obvious efforts to encourage him; but it was no use. Thereupon, the entire flock settled back on the pond and waited even though the urge to go on was strong within them. For several days they waited until the damaged feather had grown sufficiently to permit the goose to fly. Meanwhile, the unethical gardener, having been converted by the ethical geese, gladly watched them as they finally rose together and all resumed their long flight. If a flock of geese has such amazing sense of altruism can we humans lag behind in altruistic love?

Altruistic love is like the morning sunshine. It warms and heals every one of us. A life of altruistic love is full, and rich and incessantly expanding in goodness, grace, beauty and authentic power. Altruism can be achieved only by self-discipline, self-mastery, self-abnegation, and, if the need arises, self-sacrifice. The cure for the evils of life is to be found in overcoming self-centeredness.

Open your eyes and look for some man, or some work for the sake of men, which needs a little time, a little friendship, a little sympathy, a little sociability, a little human toil. It may be an old man or it may be a child. Or some good work is in want of volunteers who will devote a free evening to it or will run on errands for it. He is needed in every nook and corner. Therefore search and see if there is not some place where you may invest

your humanity.

This age in which we live could hardly be described as conducive to a sensitiveness of the needs of others. We have developed a veneer of sophistication and hardness. Abraham Lincoln once said, characteristically, "I am sorry for the man who can't feel the whip when it is laid on the other man's back." Much of the world is calloused and indifferent toward mankind's poverty and distress. There are opportunities for love everywhere. Existence is full of amazing things give love to them. Whenever you get any opportunity to love, don't let it pass, use it. For example, you are walking along the road and there is a stone on the road move it aside.

Let us begin to open ourselves up like flowers soaking up the rays of the sun. Then our entire being will blossom with self-effacing love. Egoism and individual interests will make way for pure and selfless love. The beautiful words of William Wordsworth come to my mind: The best portion of a good man's life, His little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.

An Amazing Instance of Altruistic Love

The members of a family were entertaining friends in their beautiful garden one night, Sunday, when someone at the gate asked to see the lady of the house. It was a man who looked like a tramp shabbily dressed, dirty and unshaven. The members of the family were horrified to see him, but the lady of the house said to him, "How nice to see you, Frank. Please come in."

She took him into the house, saying she was sure he would like to freshen up before dinner. After equipping him with a towel and razor and running a bath, she gave him some clothes of her husband's, matter-of-factly stating that travelling made one rather grubby. She asked him to join them on the lawn when he was ready. She explained briefly that he had once been a good friend, but he had lost his money and his wife and child when he took to drink.

When Frank appeared, clean-shaven and nicely dressed, she introduced him as an old friend. He spent the night, and when he left the next morning his eyes were full of tears of gratitude. The memory of that day perfumed Frank's entire life for the rest of his life. ■



L to R Dr A P Jayaraman, Dr V Santha, Dr M S Swaminathan, Dr Sarada Menon, Dr A R K Pillai and Sri B S Raghavan

A Day in Chennai and A Date with A Beautiful Mind



Dr A P Jayaraman

■ It was October 25th Tuesday. I got up in the small hours of the morning to catch an early flight to Chennai. I told my friends that I am off for a day to meet a great psychiatrist.

They sympathetically enquired if our departmental psychiatrist was not good enough and wished me well probably assuming that I needed serious attention. They made further loving and probing enquiries if I was travelling alone. Sensing their concern I set it aside and told them my trip is to pay tributes to a legendary psychiatrist. Their relief was palpable. The first Indian lady doctor of psychiatry, Dr Sarada Menon has to be honoured with the Mother Teresa Memorial Award of the Indian Development Foundation for her path breaking humanitarian service.

Psyche

Psychiatry means 'healing of the psyche' and psyche is the Greek goddess of the soul. It is a romantic notion that psychiatrists treat the soul. They treat diagnosable diseases of the human brain. Modern MD educated psychiatrists refuse to recognize phrenology, once fashionable nonsense and *Thalayilezhuthu*. They diagnose by standardized WHO criteria, prescribe appropriate medicines, intervene with treatment protocols and advise on

psychiatric rehabilitation. They are the angels of mental health.

Psychiatry in Art and Literature

I decided to refresh my memory with my earlier readings as I slipped into my window seat for a hundred minute breakfast free air travel. First to gate-crash my memory was William Shakespeare.

"Love is merely a madness and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do, and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love, too."

As You Like It, Act 3, Scene 2 *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* by Andrew Solomon was a compelling reading for me as the author himself was a psychiatric patient and a professor of clinical psychology describing first hand authentic experience. I had also listened to his illuminating Ted talk. *This Way Madness Lies-The Asylum and Beyond* by Mike Jay gave me shattering views in the closed space of asylums. *Bedlam: London and its mad*, reading a copy of that book written by Catharine Arnold has etched my mind with historical facts of mental illness in London. A Science fiction novel by John Brosnan and another one for young adolescents by Ally Kennen with the same title *Bedlam* had saturated my mind with

metaphors and facts. "Tom o' Bedlam", an anonymous poem and the character Edgar in the Shakespeare play *King Lear* completed my psychiatric familiarity with the literary landscape. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* written by Ken Kesey narrating dramatically the goings on in a psychiatric centre leaves behind powerful images of the tragedy being enacted there.

From the world of art, I recalled Tony Robert-Fleury's Masterpiece of Dr Philippe Pinel liberating a mad woman from her shackles. The majestic oil on canvas painting by Goya is another work of art.

On Madness

Madness, insanity, lunacy, schizophrenia, manic depression, bipolar disorder, mental health: every word has unpleasant overtones. Often we use them not knowing what they mean. We use language of mental health cavalierly. 'I go mad when traffic holds me up'. 'My child is crazy'. 'A little madness is necessary to do good things' says my mentor Dr M P Parameswaran. 'Mad monstrous world' is the description remember those words which Bertrand Russell wrote in his *A Freeman's Worship*.

Thani Vattu, Bhranthupidippikkalle, Thalayil Nellikka Thalam itanam, Ninakku Krikkuundo and so on. Then comes place names: *Kuthiravattom, Oolampara, Pymkulam, Kilpauk, Thana, Bedlam Keralamoru*

bhranthaalyam.....Aarante ammakku bhranthu pidichathu kandu chirikkan bahurasamanu. So runs a saying that it is entertaining to see another man's mother afflicted with madness.

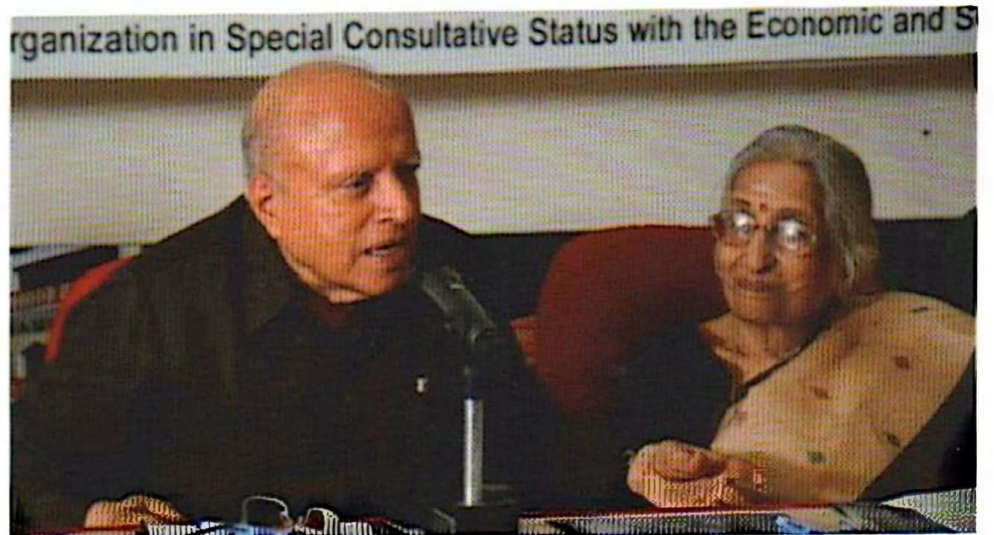
In my home town Palakkad, I have heard of Dr Parasuram who retired from the Army and was noted for his electric shock treatment. Mention Mental asylum, repugnant frowns instantly arrive. Devices of restraint manacles, shackles, belts, harnesses, straightjackets are common.

The Indigo flight started descent and soon I was out of the Chennai airport. I was first taken to Anand Bhavan where I had the carbo protein balance of three idlis and one uzhunnu vada plus a cup of aromatic brewed coffee. I must present myself at a school ten kilometres away and talk to 12th standard CBSE students and their teachers on Masala Dosa and its modified nuclear version. After three hours of interaction and finishing a standard veg *Sappad*, I reached M S Swaminathan Foudation at Tharamani.

Green Revolution

I paid my respects to Professor M S Swaminathan, the patriarch of green revolution. I also established my link with him for his casual suggestion of the idea of water lily as absorber medium for pollutants. His idea was developed into an innovation and I demonstrated an operating system for zero release of heavy metals into environment. I also informed him how I gave a NASA sponsored seminar on this topic at Knoxville, USA. In a graceful response he smiled inwardly. I raised a query whether the Green Revolution looked askance at pulses to which he showed me the brisk activity in the foundation celebrating International Year of Pulses 2016.

I moved to the adjoining room to meet and greet Dr Sarada Menon. At ninety three, she was radiating cheerful grace of confidence irradiated by her



Dr M S Swaminathan FRS pays his tributes to Dr Sarada Menon

peerless competence. She spoke in chaste Palakkadan Malayalam despite her long stay away from Kerala.

When one in my family was handed down with the diagnosis of schizophrenia, the first thing I did was to give a cold call to Schizophrenia Care and Research Foundation (SCARF) for which I got a warm reassuring response. "Come to us we will take care of her for six months. Then she can join family back." Six months of safety and security under medical surveillance was a gift in adversity. I could also get access to Dr Mary Angel of Pymkulam, Thodupuzha Rehabilitation Centre for lifelong care to which I opted.

Profile

Dr Mambillikalathil Sarada Menon is a distinguished and internationally renowned psychiatrist who has blended professional excellence with deep societal commitment. At a time when psychiatry was not the preferred choice of career in the medical fraternity, she initiated herself and dedicated her life to practice the healing touch of psychiatric medicine with a significant difference and propelled herself to the pinnacle of professional excellence.

Dr Sarada Menon was born in

Mangalore on 5 April 1923. She obtained her MBBS degree in 1947 from Madras Medical College and joined the Madras Medical Service in 1951. She secured her MD degree in 1957 and pursued a two-year specialization course in psychiatry at National Institute of Mental Health And Neurological Sciences, Bangalore. She has the rare distinction of being the first woman psychiatrist in India. Academically she has a glorious string of respectably professional letters after her name including a DSc. Government of India conferred the honour of Padma Bhushan on her for her accomplishments and community medical service in the field of mental health.

Invented tertiary space

Sensing that the human brains are in schizophrenic disorder and acutely conscious of the agony with which they are wrapped, she went through the labyrinth of diagnosis and prescribed the best remedy modern medicine could offer to alleviate suffering. Transgressing traditional boundaries of therapeutic medicine and expanding the horizons of medical management of schizophrenia, she served as a change agent and shifted psychiatry from the formidably high walls of mental



Dr. Philippe Pinel liberates a mad woman from her shackles. Francisco José de Goya's painting of a lunatic asylum



Dr A P Jayaram concludes the session

asylums to the acceptable wards of General Hospitals and then to the respectable community setting. These were paradigm shifts in the management of schizophrenic care under her transformative leadership.

She created a brave new dimension to the modalities of management of mental health care and established the gold standard of social rehabilitation space as tertiary prevention process of providing the highest possible level of functioning to the patients.

SCARF

Under her charismatic mentorship, SCARF was established in 1984 at Chennai providing a beacon of hope and holistic care to patients of schizophrenia. Her relentless endeavor to remove the stigma attached to mental illnesses is remarkable. That victorious journey in quest of peace of mind continues heroically. She keeps creative contact with schizophrenic patients who suffer from loss of contact with reality empowering them with improved quality of life otherwise abandoned to despair.

SCARF is a privileged centre of academic excellence devoted to research in disorders of the mind and rehabilitation holding hands with World Health Organization.

“A lot is being done to improve the

condition of the patients, especially those living with the acute stage of illness”, said Dr Sarada as she emphasized on the treatment of mentally ill in India. “It is of utmost importance to see that the patient's mental state is restored to his or her original state, so that they can live a fruitful and normal life within their family and society”, observed Dr Sarada Menon.

“Do you know that someone can pass MBBS course without knowing anything about psychiatry? The Indian Psychiatric Society was fighting with the Medical Council of India to include the subject in the medical curriculum.” She asked in a tone of agony and indignation.

She recalled the 1940s when she was professionally equipping herself with psychiatric education. There were no facilities available in those days. “There was just one nurse and one drug for cure and 150 patients to be treated. When I joined the hospital, there were over 1000 patients and poor accommodation food and facilities.”

Relatives would give wrong addresses of patients so that they could not be sent back. That was the reason for increasing in patient strength.

Doctor, Please don't come

Schizophrenia stigmatizes the

patient and the family. There have been attempts to change the name across the world. In 2002 Japan renamed schizophrenia from mind-split disease integration disorder. Manic depression replaced by bipolar disorder. Dr Sarada recalled instances of this inhibition. “There was a time when a father would come and hand over the marriage invitation of his daughter but would specially ask me not to come.” she narrated this to drive home the point that deep in the psyche of the society there is overarching stigma.

Great Work in progress

The advent of incredibly powerful tools to observe and alter activity in a subset of neurons, such as optogenetics has been transformational. It is allowing us to get at questions of how neural circuits produce behavioural research approach that may soon generate new treatments for psychiatric disorders. Human connectome project has scanned over 1000 brains. We are figuring out the biology of the brain through the heroic efforts of Vilayannur Ramachandran et al we have miles to go

She lamented that though there have been significant progress and invention in technology and healthcare but accessibility and affordability to the urban poor and rural are lacking.

Taunted by the unknowables, undaunted by the unknowns and firmly founded on knowns and knowables, Dr Sarada Menon continues her unyielding voyage of compassion with passion. Shaking hands with her, I took leave of her to be in time to catch my early reporting dinner serving Air India flight to back to Mumbai. A cheerful countenance radiating contentment from a beautiful mind trained on the sensitive elevations of psychiatry and practicing at the pinnacle of professional excellence still lingers in my mind.

.....In spite of the best advances in science and technology- the positron emission tomography, functional magnetic resonance imaging and optogenetics, despite the great works of neuroscientist Vilayannur Ramachandran we have not been able to conquer schizophrenia. In the beginning it was the lunatic asylums, the tall walls the Berlin walls. You demolished those despicable Berlin walls and brought psychiatry to the respectable general wards of hospitals. And then to the admirable rehabilitation space of community and home.” ■

Bayer organized an exciting science exhibition at Nehru science Centre from 10 to 13 November 2016. Professor MM Sharma FRS delivered the keynote address. He said that science has made human life happier, healthier and more secure.

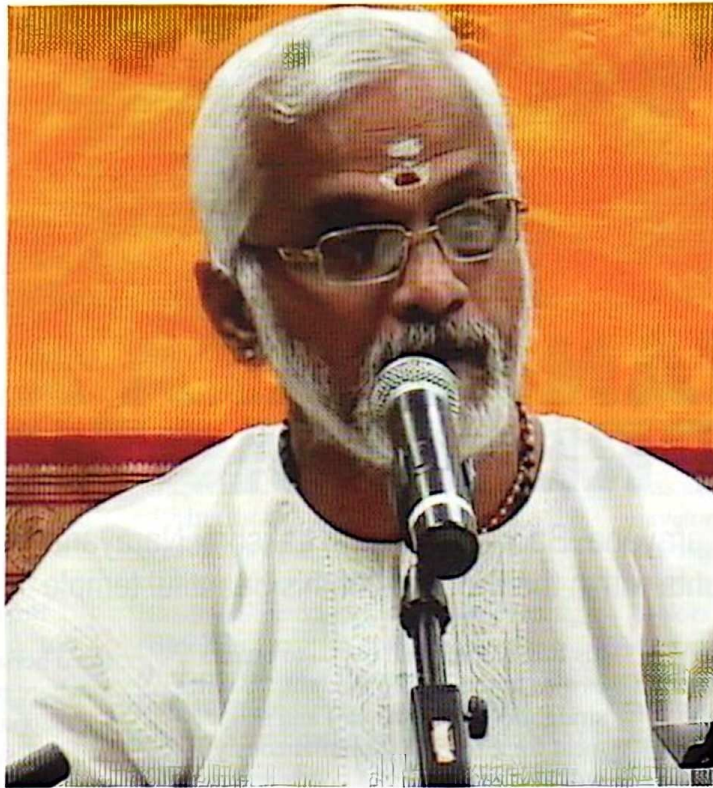
Dr A P Jayaraman evaluated the science exhibits and projects prepared by school students. He remarked that the projects have gone beyond thermocole culture and have embedded applied science, experimental science and engineering design. He also complimented the participants for their competence in Science communication.

Kerala In Mumbai Anniversary and Raagalaya Music Award

Kerala In Mumbai is now entering its seventh year of existence and to commemorate its anniversary, plans to recognise the services of eminent people of Mumbai and Kerala for the services in their chosen fields. It is being done in collaboration with its associate concern Raagalaya Academy of Music & Arts that is celebrating its thirteenth anniversary this year along with Kerala In Mumbai.

This year Kerala In Mumbai in association with Raagalaya Academy of Music and Arts is honouring with Lifetime Achievement Award an eminent personality of the art field from Kerala, T S Radhakrishnan, veteran classical and devotional singer, and music composer.

T S Radhakrishnan was born on November 5, 1957, in Kochi, Kerala. He is a music composer and producer of both devotional and film music. He has composed over 150 devotional albums. Radhakrishnan was trained in



T S Radhakrishnan

Carnatic music by Tripunithura K C Kalyanasundaram Bhagavathar, Tanjore Subramania Bhagavathar and Dr S Ramanathan.

He composed his first album 'Harisri Prasadam' with ten songs in 1980 collaborating with Malayalam lyricist

RK Damodaran and singers P Jayachandran, Kanhagad Ramachandran, Kavalam Sreekumar, Junior Mehaboob and Usha Manoharan. His earliest collaborations with K J Yesudas were for the albums 'Ganga Theertham Vol. 1' in 1989 and 'Thulasi Theertham' in 1990, both produced under Yesudas' label Tharangini Records.

Radhakrishnan played bass guitar for the western music band Hijackers for eight years before he began composing devotional music.

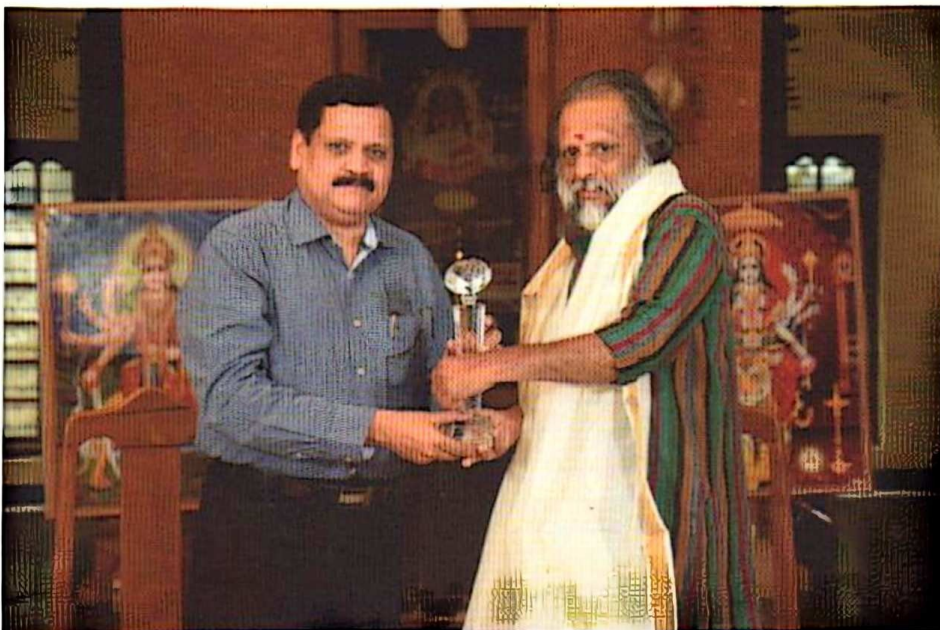
On May 11, 2006 he was conferred the title 'Bhakthiganopasakesari' for 25 years of composing devotional music by the Ernakulam Grama Jana Samooham and received the award at the hands of Dr. K J Yesudas.

In the past, Kerala In Mumbai in association with Raagalaya has honoured stalwarts like V Dakshinamoorthy, Arjunan, Johnson, K Raghavan, M S Viswanathan, M G Radhakrishnan, M S Baburaj, O N V Kurup, Sreekumaran Thampy, P Leela, S Janaki, K J Yesudas, P Jayachandran, S P Balasubramanian and K. Jayakumar.

In January 2016, Kaithapram Damodaran Namboodiri, classical vocalist, light music singer, lyricist, dramatist, story- screenplay writer of films and now a film director was honoured with the Raagalaya Lifetime Achievement Award.

Kerala in Mumbai Excellence Award

Kerala In Mumbai the most visible English Malayalam bilingual periodical of this metropolitan city has been honouring some of the distinguished personalities of this city for their meritorious services in their chosen fields. All of them are continuing to do their work with increased vigour. Some of these personalities will be honoured on January 29, 2017, in Mumbai, as in the past.



P V Vijaykumar presenting Kaithapram Damodaran Namboodiri the 12th Lifetime Achievement Award



CHOTTANIKKARA AMMA, SUPREME MOTHER

Amme Narayana, Devi Narayana, Badre Narayana, Lakshmi Narayana the air reverberates with these chants within the precincts of this beautiful temple in Kerala.



Damodaran Unny is one of the most important shrines among 393 shrines spread all over Kerala and is administered by the Cochin Devaswom Board.

■ Chottanikkara Temple, an important pilgrim centre for Hindus, is situated on the crest of a hillock, at a distance of about 15 kms from Kochi. It

his life. Kannappan began to build castles in the air. He thought, "I will straightaway kill the calf and sell the meat for a fortune. Simultaneously I will also make leather goods and make more profit and also offer the blood to the deity as I do not want to break my promise."

He forcefully dragged the calf towards his house. Suddenly there was some divine intervention and the calf

freed herself from his clutches and was nowhere to be seen. Dumbfounded, Kannappan ran desperately to his house and was surprised to see his daughter fondling the lovely calf. The daughter pleaded with her father not to slaughter this calf and asked him what he was going to gain by killing it. Although Kannappan was not happy to skip the sacrifice, out of extreme love for his daughter, he decided not to kill this calf just to please his daughter.

Unfortunately, the same night his daughter developed severe fever and succumbed to it and died. Kannappan lost interest in life now that his own daughter was no more. He decided to treat the calf as his own child and not to sacrifice cows henceforth as desired by his late daughter.

That night Kannappan had a strange dream. A woman, richly dressed with a divine glow on her face summoned him. She had a number of hands each bearing a different weapon or symbol. It was Bhagavathi herself, the patron Goddess of Parasurama Kshetra. Kannaappan prostrated before her shedding tears of joy.

Bhagavathi is said to have told him in the dream, "Do not grieve. It was I who came before you disguised as a calf and brought out total transformation in you. I will be

Origins

Legends say that Kannappan, a notorious criminal inhabited the forest. Unlike his peaceful neighbours, he used to hide in the dark dense forest and loot unwary travellers of their precious belongings day by day. But he loved his only beautiful daughter very much and showered upon her all his love. He promised the deity of the forest that he would slaughter and offer a cow every day to the deity. For this purpose he went on stealing one cow every day to keep up his promise much against his daughter's wishes.

One day his eyes fell on a man with a healthy looking calf with lovely bells on her neck and he decided to take it away. He took out his dagger and threatened the owner. The owner ran away out of fear for



present in the forest always and whomsoever come to me for worship will be blessed with health and prosperity. Kannappan woke up from his dream, sweat glistening on his face. Jumping out of his bed, he rushed to the cowshed to see the calf and he was surprised to see that the calf was missing and in its place, he found something tall and wide. When he strained himself to see this through pre-dawn darkness, in the rays of the morning sunlight, he could clearly see what was in store and he gasped in shock. Right where the calf had been tied up on a sacred pedestal stood a beautiful idol of Bhagavathi and right next to her a smaller statue of Mahavishnu. Stunned at this spectacular sight and overwhelmed with happiness and ecstasy, he prostrated before the statues. Tears ran down his cheeks at the very thought of his good fortune. Deciding to house the idols in a proper place, he built a tiny hut around the pedestal and worshipped the Goddess with all due formalities. However, with the passing away of Kannappan, the shrine fell into disuse with none to take care for it.

Years later, a low caste woman (pulaya) was busy cutting grass. She was concentrating on a particular bunch of grass and decided to sharpen her knife on an adjacent stone. Suddenly the stone started bleeding with red thick blood. Horrified at the very sight, she virtually screamed at the top of her voice and her friends clustered around her to calm her down and witness the strange and spectacular sight.

Some of the men summoned Edathu Namboothiri, a visiting priest. He soon rushed to the scene and after witnessing the energetic field decided to dig up the stone and offer prayers with some offering as he was convinced that there was absolute presence of Bhagavathi herself. Soon he went for a "Deva Prasnam" and there it transpired that the idols were that of Shakti and Vishnu and should be worshipped as Lakshmi Narayana. Namboothiri installed the idols in all its splendour and built the initial shrine for the idols and looked after them till his last breath. The word Lakshmi Narayana or rather *Amme Narayana* thus became synonymous with the prayer in the temple.

The deity is worshipped as Rajarajeshwari, the idol is swayambu, untouched by human hands. The true form of the mother can be witnessed only in the early hours of the morning prior to Nirmalya Darshanam. It is

believed that Devi takes over the diseases of the devotees on herself to cure them and relieve them of their sufferings. The idol is covered with Golden Kavacham decorated with flower garlands. Her upper hands hold the conch and the discus while lower hands are in varadha and abhayamudra poses. Interestingly, the idol is not fixed to the pedestal with astabhandhana unlike other temples but stands in loose sand. Consequently, nobody knows where the Abhishekam water goes! It is believed that they join the thirtha further down the way.

Adi Shankara is believed to have brought Devi's power to Kerala while she had decided to stay back in Kollur (Mookambika) but agreed to give Darshan to thousands at Chottanikkara as Saraswathi. Even today the temple at Kollur (Mookambika) opens only after the Saraswathi Darshan at Chottanikkara.

In Chottanikkara, the Devi is dressed in white in the morning, crimson (deep red) in the afternoon as Bhadrakali and Lakshmi in the evening (Blue). In the main complex there are shins of Shiva, Ganapathi, Subramanya, Nagadevatha etc. The place where Edathu Namboothiri unearthed the swayambhu is known as *Pavizha mallithara* which is situated at the south of the temple and devotees worship there remembering his story. The idol was subsequently reinstalled at the place where it stands now. Since Sankara brought Devi as a "Jyothi" to Kerala, it was called Jyothianakkara which subsequently became Chottanikkara.

There is one more story about how Chottanikkara name came into being. The Travancore king wanted to teach a lesson to his Kochi counterpart. When the Kochi king invited about 300 people for dinner from Travancore, instead of 300, more and more people went for the dinner with a view to creating an embarrassing situation for the Kochi king. However, the King of Kochi prayed to Devi to save him from this plight. After serving all the guests, there were more and more rice still remaining along with all other dishes sufficient to feed many more. (In Malayalam chorinnuakkarakanan pattiyilla) and hence the place became Chottanikkara.

When Devi went on a procession for some ceremonial offering of paddy to Meppazhur Nambudiri, the people accompanying the procession were attacked by some rogues and to ensure a safe return journey, the namboothiri is

said to have sent Dharmashastra with Devi as an escort. On reaching Chottanikkara, Dharmashastra however refused to go back. The Dharmashastra temple/Shrine is situated between Melkkavu and Keezhkkavu protecting Devi's devotees

Miracles

There are several miracles happening in the temples. Once some thieves entered the temple during midnight with the idea of breaking open the Bhandarams for stealing money and other valuables. They were shocked to find that the temple festival was going on with all the festivities along with several decorated elephants and thousands of devotees worshipping to the accompaniments of drums, nadaswaram, panchavadyam etc. The moment they came out of the temple, the temple had a deserted look and there was absolutely no sound. Scared, they gave up the idea of stealing and deposited whatever they had stolen elsewhere in the temple itself and went back home totally transformed.

Once the parents of a girl were very worried as they could not find a suitable bridegroom for their only daughter. They visited several temples, made several offerings, contacted so many astrologers to find out some solution. Not only were their efforts in vain but one of the famous astrologers also made it categorically clear to them that there was no vivahayoga in her horoscope and eventually, the chances of her getting married were very remote. Frustrated and totally disappointed, they almost lost hope when one of their close friends suggested to undertake Bhajan at Chottanikkara temple for some pre-decided days. As a last resort, the parents decided to conduct bhajan for 41 days at the temple and reached the temple one day in advance. They got accommodation inside the temple exclusively meant for such devotees and systematically followed all the procedure and worship expected of those who conduct bhajans for a specific purpose like attending all the poojas, taking only food prepared at the temple, singing bhajans, participating in all other rituals etc. After completing Forty days bhajan, the family was going to Keezhkkavu from Melkkavu when the daughter happened to see a glittering gold chain with Thali (Mangalsutra) attached to it on the way to Keezhkkau and picked it up. She was wondering who must have lost it. At that time she

saw a young man was desperately searching for something while coming back after Darshan from Keezhkavu. She guessed this must be the man who might have lost the chain and asked him why he was so restless. His parents who joined the conversation said that this gold thali chain was purchased for his marriage and was of sentimental value. The marriage could not be solemnized because the prospective fiancée had already expired before the marriage and they had come to the temple to spend a few days of worship there for mental solace. The lost chain was restored to the boy and the boy and parents thanked the girl and her family, exchanging phone numbers and contact addresses. The girl and her family completed their 41 days Bhajan and returned home. After about a week, they had some surprise guests at their residence. It was the boy and the parents who had come to thank them once again. They asked for the girl's hand in marriage to which the girl's parents readily agreed, regarding this development solely due to Devi's grace. The couple got married in the temple Chottanikara Amma temple, in the temple.

I myself have been witness to a miracle that happened in my life during my school days which I am proud to share with the readers especially Devi devotees. I was studying in Std VII in my local school in the village. I was preparing for the Scholarship examination. One day before the examination, I went for cycling along with my friends and cousins. Suddenly I had a fall and I almost lost my consciousness and had to be rushed to the hospital which was 3 kms away from the village. Two bones in my right hand were severely fractured and a plaster was put in place for 41 days. The Doctor advised my parents to take me to the Hospital after 41 days to remove the plaster. I not only missed my scholarship exam but Final examination also. My parents and all members of the family especially my grandfather were very much worried. After about two weeks, I got severe pain and a bad smell emanated from the joints of my right hand. We visited the Doctor once again who removed my plaster and we were shocked to see that a wound had developed in my joints of my right hand and it was almost detached probably leading to serious trouble. The doctor told us to me to an orthopaedic (bone specialist). Our entire family rushed to Ernakulam Government Hospital. The concerned



doctor after examining me make said that the condition was so bad, that I may need amputation. According to him because of our local doctor's negligence, this had happened. He advised us to keep my fingers moving throughout the night. And the next morning he would decide on the action to be taken.

My father and our entire family are devotees of Chottanikkara Devi. My father was moving my fingers and hand throughout night, reciting Devi's name along with my mother. He had a dream that night that Devi appeared before him and asked him not to worry. On waking up, father told us about his dream. After bath and prayers we went to the hospital. The Doctor was astonished to see my right hand with improved nervous system. "What a miracle. I will make this alright. It is my promise. No amputation. It is my word," he said emphatically.

My hand was thus saved by the sincere efforts of the doctor and grace of Devi. As a thanksgiving gesture my father offered me to Devi as *Adima* and then the temple authorities restored me back to my parents as a symbolic gesture. Even now me and our entire

family make it a point to visit this particular temple whenever we visit Kerala.

Keezhkavu

The keezkavu Bhadrakali temple is situated at slightly lower level to the main complex. Legend says the idol was installed by Vilwamangalam Swamiyar, a great devotee of Devi. This is the temple where exorcism by Devi takes place. This is the place for ultimate healing center for epilepsy, neuralgia, psychological ailments and mental diseases due to influence of evil spirits, black magic/wicked forces. Guruthi a mixture of lime water and turmeric are prepared in 12 pots, are offered to Devi and some of them are sprinkled all over the temple. All those who are suffering from such ailments especially those who are conducting bhajans are made to attend this pooja. It must be seen to believe that those who are possessed shake their bodies violently, jump with all their might with their unruly hair, trying to resist Devi for sometime, ultimately the spirits promising to leave the body. The possessed are then made to hit a nail into the nearby Pala tree

with full force eventually curing themselves of all mental deceases for ever. The Guruthi which resembles blood is distributed as prasada to the devotees. Like Udayasthama Pooja in Guruvayur, one has to book well in advance to offer Valiya Guruthi especially on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The Temple Pond

There is a very interesting story about Guptan Nambudiri who was very fond of ladies, but at the same time a devotee of Devi. Although well versed in Vedas and other areas familiar to Nambudiri Brahmins, he flirted with ladies whenever an opportunity arose. He was also crazy after Kathakali performances and spared no pains in attending Kathakali performances especially in Trippunithura. Once it so happened that none of his friends could accompany him for the show and he had to walk almost 3 hours through dense forest. Enroute, he came across a beautiful lady who was also waiting for some company to go to the Kathakali performance and pleaded with Guptan to take her along with him. Guptan was delighted at the very thought of walking in the moonlight with the lady.

He promised her that he would hand over the Devi Bhagavatham to his

learned master en route to Tripunithura after which they could proceed together. When the master saw Guptan at this odd hour, he was surprised. The master warned him that he was in trouble. He clarified that the one who accompanied him as varasayar was actually a Yakshi who would harm him and drink his blood. He asked Guptan to look at the lady while touching the master's shoulders and Guptan was terrified by the sight of Yakshi with fearful eyes. Master added, "Only Chottanikara Amma can now save you. I will give you a towel after some powerful mantras are chanted. Rush to the temple immediately reciting Devi's name along the way and no harm will come to you so long as you hold the towel. As soon as you reach Western gate of the temple remember to discard the towel outside, after which Devi will save you." As soon as he threw the towel outside the temple and was about to enter it, the yakshi caught him and tried to finish him off. It was dawn and the temple priest had just concluded the morning Pooja. He was surprised to witness a glittering light towards the western gate of the temple. Everybody rushed to that spot and found the spectacular sight of Devi killing the Yakshi with fury and throwing the blood in the pond thereby

while listening to the cries of Guptan to her requesting to save him. Thus Guptan's life was saved by the grace of Amma. Amma asked the chief priest to conduct one more Abhishekam and change the Robes. To commemorate this event, two Abhishekams are conducted in the morning in the temple even today.

Makam Thozhal

This is an important day in the temple. The day is celebrated in the month of Kumbha on Makam star (February normally) as a festival. It is believed that Devi in her beautiful attire and lovely ornaments gave Darshan to Vilwamangalam Swamiyar on this day. This day is specially for darshan by ladies and goes on from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. and sometimes even goes beyond 8 p.m. depending upon the number of devotees. The Devi is adorned with pretty dress and all ornaments (sarvabharanabhushitha) on this day. It is believed that Darshan on this day relieves one of the miseries of life. Amma's four hands have Abhayam, shanku, chakram and mudra. Darshan in this form on this auspicious day is considered to be very important for a long married life for ladies and to have good husband for spinsters. ■

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IN MEMORY OF THE MAHATMA

By Naduvather

It was a Friday the 30th January 1948, one of the darkest days of humanity, at around 5 p. m, when the frail body of the Mahatma was pierced by the three bullets fired at point blank range in quick succession by a religious fanatic. The right side of his chest was hit by two of the three bullets fired, one after the other, and the third hit his abdomen on the right side. Uttering the last words 'Hey Ram', he sinks down to eternal silence on the hit of the third bullet, while the first and second make his raised leg for the last step falter. The Mahatma neither spoke nor walked again.

That was the end of a great life, a life devoted to selfless service to humanity, ahimsa or nonviolence, and universal brotherhood. It is so easy to exterminate anything, particularly a life, however precious it may be. Getting such a great life may have taken several births, apart from divine blessing, but the annihilation is a matter of few seconds. For a man who took very good care of his health with a combination of diet, physical and spiritual activities, religious devotion, and a strong practice of naturopathy in life, such a tragic end was totally unfortunate and premature. He was 78 at the time of assassination and from the way he lived his life with utmost care and self-discipline, there is every reason to believe that he would have lived till 125 years or he would have become the man with longest life on this planet.

Gandhiji has proved that by taking responsibility for change, we can slowly bring in personal freedom and freedom to the society irrespective of who you are and at what level. He taught the society a new method to fight with powerful opponents, which is now a universally accepted principle called "satyagraha". He gave us a new theory, a new philosophy of life with which the poor and the oppressed, however small he may be, can fight head on with the mighty opponents; thus becoming an institution by himself. As a matter of

fact this is the biggest innovation of human mind during the last 100 years.

We all want to become leaders, we all have patriotism in our blood, and we all hope to become genuine and true human beings. However basically what we lack is clarity of purpose, determination and commitment. Again,



a purpose in some way, no doubt, exists in all of us, but the only difference is that most of us have a purpose to enrich our own life and at the most, the life of our dear and near ones, and not that of the society.

To unite the people of a country for the struggle of independence, mostly illiterate, divided into several social, and religious groups, having different individual perceptions about life, speaking different languages, living in geographically inaccessible locations, was a herculean task from practical

point of view. The Mahatma achieved this due to his personal charisma, genuineness, and his belief in selfless service to fellow human beings which was the result of a conviction that we are all children of a universal God; and all of us are brothers and sisters. This concept of universal brotherhood, which is actually the sole principle of real Hinduism, is the unique feature of Gandhiji's leadership, which has virtually helped India to build unity in diversity.

There are attempts to prove that the Mahatma was anti Hindu, a strategist, and his principles are practically irrelevant in modern life. There are even other criticisms that he was not a good husband and not even a good father. There are even expressed justifications of the deed of Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Gandhiji. There are even attempts to certify him anti Dalit, and highly caste conscious. What is the point in proving that he was not a good husband, not a good father, not even a good Indian, and so on? He was above individual perception, above family, even above nation, and he was in fact a man of universal appeal.

Leaders of universal appeal cannot be appraised as individual on the basis of individual perceptions. We should rather get inspired by his leadership qualities and value systems of highest order in life. Any attempt to make him an ordinary individual, especially by Indians, will be futile and uncalled for. Rather let us emulate his principle of simple living and high thinking, his principle of

ahimsa or nonviolence, and universal brotherhood in our life. All Indians, nay humanity needs it very badly.

Gandhiji has become a controversial brand today, but the world over he is respected, millions of people get inspired by him even today, and the world is teaching Gandhism to their children in order to make them good citizens. In the process of westernizing our culture, and in the rat-race of modernity, can we find a place for a pure Indian the Mahatma?

KELI Silver Jubilee Celebrations

■ The second phase of Silver Jubilee Celebrations of KELI was held recently at CIDCO Exhibition Centre, Vashi and Music Director Vidyadharan Master was felicitated with the Sudhanshu Award. He dedicated the award to the memory of Arattupuzha Kochakkan Asan and Devarajan Master. Sur Bhar Maestro Pushparaj Koshti presented the award. Raagalaya presented a music programme titled Vaikhari highlighting the Vidyadharan Master brand of music. The Orchestra also presented a few other songs to show how music transcends time.



Vidyadharan Master being bestowed the honours.

Volley Ball tournament

■ Dahisar Malayali Samajam will be organising a Volleyball tournament on January 26 at Dahisar Sports Foundation Grounds, 201, opp. Vidya Mandir School in Dahisar East. There are first and second prizes, including Cash awards, trophies and consolation prizes. Registration fees is Rs 500/-; last date of registration 20.1.2017. For details contact Shaji Aalappadan 9004808007/P C Joseph 9820188923.



Raagalaya team with Vidyadharan Master

Shanmukhananda Fine Arts Annual Day Celebrations

■ Well-known Mohiniattam choreographer and performer Gopika Varma presented a Mohiniattam recital in November to a packed auditorium at Shanmukhanada Hall, organized by Shanmukhananda Fine Arts Sabha during their Annual Day Celebrations. Seen here with Kalashri Lalitha Kalalayam P Nambisan who accompanied her on Edakka along with her Orchestra Groupe.

Danceuse Gopika Varma (3rd from left), Kalashree Nambisan (right) and other on stage.



Digital India Scheme for Women

■ BJP Vasai Zonal Committee started Free Computer Training for women under the Central Government's Digital India Scheme at Ashok Nagar Building in Ambadi Road, Vasai. BJP District President Subhash Satam, District Secretary Rajan Naik, Vasai Committee office bearers, Vinod Kumar, George Ukkann attended the inauguration. This initiative is one of the efforts of the Government to bring to the common men and women its welfare projects. Ramanuj welcomed the audience and Utham kumar proposed a vote of thanks.



During the opening of the training course.

Free Medical Camp

■ BJP Vasai Committee organized a free Medical Camp on December 25 to commemorate former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpai's birthday. Eye camp, Diabetes and heart check ups were conducted at Vasant Nagar in Vasai East and at its party office at Vishal Hall in Vasai West. The camp was organized by Committee President Utham Kumar.

Chembai Sangeetolsavam 2016

■ Chembai Sangeetolsavam 2016 was conducted at Guruvayoorappan Temple, Dombivli during the Guruvayoor Ekadeshi Maholsavam for four days from December 7 to 10. More than 350 artistes participated in the function under the leadership of Smt. Thara Viswanath. The orchestra accompaniments for this Sangeetolsavam had Kalashri P Nambisan, on the mridangam and Balasubramaniam on the violin. On the concluding day after the Namasankeerthanam, Certificates were distributed to those who participated in this Utsavam.



BJP Vasai Zonal Committee members under the leadership of its President Utham Kumar staged a show of Support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's fight against corruption and black money. The event was held at Ambadi Junction in Vasai West and District Vice President Ajith Asthane, State Samithi Member Sekhar Dhuri and other party workers participated.



Kalashree Nambisan (left), Smt Thara Viswanath (right) and her students during the programme

Mandala Puja in Marol

■ Marol Shree Ayyappa Bhakta Sangham celebrated its 42nd Mandala Puja celebrations on December 16, 17 and 18 at Blossom Society Grounds. The celebrations included Ganapathi Homam, Usha Puja, Deeparadhana and Athazha puja on all the three days. On 16th evening there was a bhajan programme by devotees of the Ayyappa Sangham and classical dance recital by disciples of Geeta Vijayashankar of Marol. On the 17th a dance ballet, 'Sankara sagaram' directed by Kalashri Kalamandalam Udyogamandalam Vikraman was presented. In addition there was vilakku puja by lady devotees, Narayaneeyam recital, Gita Chanting by children trained by Smt Sati Balakrishnan. On the concluding day there was Sastha Preethi (Annadanam) at Marol Education Academy's High School. In the evening there was procession of the decorated chariot with Lord Ayyappa's picture



The Sangham Bhajan group with Managing Committee members.

along with thalappoli by girls and young ladies and panchavadyam by Chithali Achutha Marar & Party and artistes from Kerala and devotees, starting from Vijay Nagar Ganesh temple to Blossom

Society via Panchavati, Bhawani Nagar and Hill View/Lok Yamuna and concluding with Mahadeepa Aradhana in which many devotees participated and sought His blessings.



Bhajan session



Gita Chanting



Guru Geeta Vijayashankar with her disciples who performed during the celebrations



Sanu Sabu President Giants group of CBD Belapur and son of Sabu Daniel Corporator NMMC receiving award from Upendra Menon Central Committee member Giants International, who along with others inaugurated Award Nite 2016 at Hotel Mahesh, Navi Mumbai



Shree Ayyappa Pooja Samithi Ulhas Nagar President Krishnan Kutty Nair presenting memento to P Ramachandran MD of Jyothy Laboratories during its Mandala Puja Celebrations.



Laksharchana in progress at Bhandup Usha Nagar Ayyappa Seva Sangham Mandala Puja celebrations.



Several devotees of Ayyappa from Matunga, Wadala and Sion areas participated in the 26th Mandala Ayyappa pooja celebration held at the Saubhtrra Nagar complex which houses Panchavati, Gokulam and Suryalaya buildings at Sion.

Handy Ready Reckoner 2017-18

■ “The purpose of this handy Ready Reckoner guide is to preserve and propagate vedic rituals and Samskaras,” says PR Rajagopalan popularly known as Kichamani Sharma in spiritual field. The book consists of Hindu religious ceremonies, importance of sankalpam, navagraha details, tharpana mantra on Amavasi days and other various subjects. Earlier families could consult priests and spiritual gurus to know anything about auspicious days and time. Now the handy reckoner serves as a guide for giving quick information

especially to youngsters where there is shortage of priests, seniors to clear their doubts.

When the joint family system was prevalent, the elders would be the guiding force. However since today's generation is invariably on their own, they pick up the almanac/spiritual guide and find out things like auspicious days, date for travel and other related queries.

Rajagopalan has circulated this



Reckoner to Indians abroad also free of cost and it is a real boon to them. Nowadays it has become popular for even the educated and those living abroad to consider auspicious beginnings for events and about religious ceremonies and auspicious timings etc. Those

who want the copy of the Reckoner can contact Dr Rajagopalan through email: iyerkrishnamani@hotmail.com after January 15, 2017. The copies are sent free of cost.

SNMS Kalina New Vanitha Vibhagam

■ Sree Narayana Mandira Samithi Kalina Unit comprising of Malabar Hill, Worli, Mahim, Bandra, Khar, Santa Cruz and Kalina, has formed a Woman's Wing and elected its Managing Committee members. Savitri Sadanandan is the Convener, Vijayamma Thamarakshan is the Jt Convener, Ambili Sivadasan Secretary and Radhamani Asst. Secretary. Mani Gangadharan, Bindu Premam, Sheeja Babu, Deepa Mahendran, Sindu Sunil, Shreeja Suresh, Sheeba Prakash and Jincy Manu are Committee members. Kendra Vanitha Vibhagam Convener Maya Sahajan presided over the meeting. Bijilee Bharathan, M I Damodaran, Adv Padma Divakaran, Raju Kesavan and others attended the meeting.



Office Bearers and members of Managing Committee

SIES Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati National Eminence Award

■ The Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis was honoured with the SIES Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati National Eminence award on December 18 at the Shanmukhananda auditorium. He was given the award in Public leadership category.

The chairman of ISRO, A S Kiran Kumar received the award for Science & Technology and Smt Kamala Murthy a Harikatha exponent from Tamil Nadu was conferred for Pravachana Katha. John Marr, received on behalf of his father Dr. John Ralston Marr (89), who could not come due to ill health.

Dr. Marr who is a rare combination of both a Tamil scholar and an Indian musician was given the International Award. He is a Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit scholar and he along with his wife Wendy Marr has been teaching Carnatic music theory for 30 years in England for the 5 year diploma course in Carnatic music and Diploma in Arts and Archaeology of the Indian Sub Continent. He is a diploma holder in Carnatic music and a BA in Tamil and Sanskrit. His Ph.D thesis was on Tamil Sangham literature. He was the recipient of Padmashri. SIES President Dr V Shankar presented the award. The awards were instituted by the South Indian Education Society in the year 1998 in memory of the late Seer of Kanchi Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati who passed away in 1994 at the age of 100. Each award carries a cash prize of Rs.2.5 lakh, a citation, a shawl and a huge ornamental lamp.



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis receiving the Award.



The awardees with SIES President V Shankar (extreme right)



Performance during Kalyan East Sree Saivinayak Ayyappa Seva Sangham's tenth year of Ayyappa Mandala puja celebrations.

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami festival in Mumbai

■ Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha conducted Sri Kanchi Mahaswami festival from December 10.

On the opening day Sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan was presented the Shanmukhananda National Eminence Award. This was followed by the Shanmukha Sangeetha Shironmani awards that were presented to Smt. K. Gayatri (vocal), Mr. Sandeep Narayan (Vocal) and Rahul Deshpande (Hindustani vocal).

Visually handicapped violin maestro Dr M Chandrasekhar from Tamil Nadu was conferred the Jagadguru Sankaracharya Sri Jayandra Saraswati National Eminence Award in Fine Arts. Having lost his eyesight at the age of two, with the help of his mother Smt. Charubala Mohan who taught him to play the violin, sing and learn Braille in which he learnt Tamil, English, Sanskrit and Telugu, the 79 year old violin exponent is the recipient of Sangeeta Natak Academi Award, Mysore Chowdaya National Award and Kalaimamani award from Government of Tamil Nadu. He was also a professor at the Palghat Music college. This award carries a cash prize of Rs. 1 lakh, a bronze lamp and a Citation.

The Kanchi Mahaswami Sangeethanjali (music performance) was presented by Smt. Gayatri Venkataraghavan who was the disciple of Palghat K V Narayanaswamy and is presently training under P S Narayanaswamy.



Violin maestro Dr M Chandrasekhar receiving the Award from V Shankar



Recipients of the Kanchi Awards



Subramania Sahasranamarchana at Vasai Sabarigiri temple during its Mandala Puja Mahotsavam

Matrimonial meet

■ Nair Service Society Kharghar will hold its eleventh Matrimonial Meet on January 26 at Sri Siddhi Marriage Hall, in Sector 12 Kharghar from 10 am to 1 pm. Interested parties may contact 93219 46718 or 98927 10542 for details.



Manasi addressing the audience

Discussion on 'Khassakkinte Ithihasam'

■ Kerala House in Vashi witnessed a lively discussion on the well known novel 'Khassakkinte Ithihasam' written during the late 1960s by noted novelist O V Vijayan. The hall where the discussion took place, for a change, was filled to the brim and it was clear that all members of the audience were keen to have an in depth analysis of the novel.

Khassakkinte Ithihasam started appearing in Mathrubhumi Weekly as a serial novel soon after Vijayan's notorious short story 'Ettukali' (Spider) courted controversy because of its elaborate description of the sexual

exploration between two spiders. The short story appeared in 'Anveshanam' a monthly published from then Madras under the editorship of Vayalar Rama Varma. The story also helped to draw the attention of curious readers. It showed a clear deviation from the ordinary narration of novels in Malayalam with an extra ordinary story line with an imaginary village near Palakkad town. Khassak was a remote village with uneducated people divided between Hindu and Muslim communities. The only school available was a few miles away and the children could not afford to go there because of

the poverty of their parents and also their negative attitude towards education. Ravi comes there as a teacher in a single teacher school and his observations and experiences form the content of the novel which ends with Ravi's waiting for a bus to leave the village, never to return.

The coordinator of the discussion, Siby introduced the main speakers to the audience. The first to address was Civic Chandran who commented on the novel as of contemporary value. It has assumed the stature of a classic that has even prompted Deepan Shivaraman to adapt into a visual play (to be staged on January 13-15 at Tandel Ground in Seawoods of Navi Mumbai) without the paraphernalia of ordinary stage presentation but under open sky with the light provided by natural means. Manasi, a writer of high calibre from Mumbai, nostalgically stated that O V Vijayan's classic showed the young writers of her time a new path in narration and style. It always opened new vistas whenever she revisited the novel.

Poet P N Gopikrishnan explained that Khassakkinte Ithihasam is quite different as it has no hero or heroine. The village Khassak itself is the motivation factor of the novel. Vijayan had gone into the details of each and every character's psyche brought them before the reader fully exposed. Though he has earlier seen the dramatic adaptation of the novel, he is waiting to experience it again, he says.

One important factor that the speakers did not mention was that all characters in the novel are speaking Tamil slang especially the Muslim characters and only the narration is in Malayalam.

The audience were invited to ask questions about the novel and the speakers answered them in detail.

Ayyappa Seva Samajam at national level

■ Sabarimala Ayyappa Seva Samajam an NGO working for the benefits of all Ayyappa devotees and other communities has decided to expand its field of activities to the national level. Recently in a meeting held at Kerala Samajam Hall, Matunga, it has formed two committees to achieve the new objective. The committees are known after Maharashtra State and Mumbai Mahanagar.

Film actor and Ayyappa devotee Vivek Oberoi is chosen as President of the state unit. Other office bearers of state unit are karate R Murugan, Chandrakant Kale, Raghu Balan-Pune (Vice presidents), N Muthukrishnan (General Secretary), Subbaiah (Jt Secretary), Pradeep Nair, N Rajendran, T K Gangadharan, Chithira Lakshman, Jayakumar Nair, S Muralidharan, Anilkumar (Nagpur), Nandakumar

(Pune), C A Manjunath Gawde (Treasurer), P Suresh Babu (Organisational Secretary) and Jayarama (Adm Secretary). Adv Vaidyanathan and Adv Pradeep Kadam will be legal advisors to State Committee. V Ranganathan IAS, Aruna Acharya and Murukesh Guruswami are the Advjsors.

Former Municipal Commissioner Nalinakshan is the Mumbai Committee President. PrakashPai (Andheri), Arunachalam (Dharavi), Arumugam (Mulund), Madhukutty (Antop Hill), K K Unni Pathramangalam (General Secretary), Sreedhar Poojari, Senthilkumar, David Swamy, Murali Panicker, Haridas Chithrapoyil (Secretaries), C A Mithesh Lodhiya (Treasurer), Adv V M Seelan and Adv Haridas (Legal advisors), Devadas Nair and Bhaskara Kurup (Advisors) are the office bearers of the Mumbai Committee.

Gurudevagiri pilgrimage from Feb 3

■ Gurudevagiri pilgrimage conducted by Sree Narayana Mandira Samiti will be held from Feb 3 to Feb 5. A celebration committee comprising of 201 persons has been formed for this purpose.

On all these three days there would be seminars, exhibitions, discourses, cultural events etc. On the first day from 3 pm to 5.30 pm there will be an English seminar for the youth on 'New footsteps in scientific and technical fields'. From 6 pm to 7.30 pm there will be discourse in Malayalam on Pilgrimage as enunciated by Gurudev. It will be followed by a musical programme by Vaikom Vijayalakshmi and her group. On second day, pooja rituals associated with the anniversary of consecration of idols in temples of Gurudevagiri and cultural events will be conducted. Last day from 8 am onwards, display of holy relics of Gurudev's denture for the public will take place. Then gurupooja will take place.

From 10 am onwards there will be the sixteenth pilgrim procession, and Mahagurupooja. This will be followed by Mahaprasadam and then pilgrimage meeting at 1 pm.

Kathayarang of Mumbai Kathavedi

■ The collective of Short story writers, Mumbai Kathavedi recently met at Lenn Library of Ulhasnagar and had an extensive discussion. Erumakkuzhi Kochkunhu Pillai, K B Sayed Mohammed, K K Shaji, Sureshkumar Kottarakkara, Joseph Sebastian, Padman Varier, Asokan Nattika, G K Nair Ambernath, Rajan Thekkummala, et al presented their stories. Editor of Jwala,

Gopi Nair presided and Suresh Varma was the moderator. T K Rajendran, Malayalabhumi Editor Sasidharan Nair, Meghanadan, E Harindranath, P K Lali, narayanan Elayathu, Kochukunhu Pillai et al spoke in the meeting. Literary figures and social activists were present. Sureshkumar Kottarakkara welcomed the audience.



Participants of Kathayarang

Malayalotsavam- Kalyan Dombivli Zone

■ Malayalabhasha Pracharana Sangham organised its fifth Malayalotsavam for Kalyan Dombivli Zone in Pandurangwadi Model School in Dombivli. Poet and dramatist P K Muralikrishnan inaugurated the event. Holy Angels School director Oommen David, Dombivli Keraleeya Samajam President O Pradeep, Keraleeya Samajam Education Secretary E V Sureshkumar spoke on the occasion. 400 participants took part in 22 items of the contests over three venues. Prize winning entries will take part in the final to be held on January 15 at Adarasha Vidyalaya, Chembur. Drama competition will be on January 1st 2017, Navi Mumbai.



During Mandala Pooja celebrations at Matunga Sree Ayyappa Bhakta Mandal

Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan

Heartfelt and Rich Tribute To A Gentle Yet Great Soul

Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan, wife of former Governor of Maharashtra K Sankaranarayanan away in Palakkad, Kerala on the morning of 24th December 2016. Sankaranarayanan was the Governor of Maharashtra from January 2011 to August 2014. The couple had their home at Mumbai Raj Bhavan for four and half years during Mr Sankaranarayanan's tenure in Maharashtra.

Officers and staff of Raj Bhavan Maharashtra paid rich tributes to Smt Sankaranarayanan at a condolence meeting held at Raj Bhavan, Mumbai on December 24.

Secretary to the Governor, Mr. Parimal Singh, Deputy Secretary Mr. Anil Singh, Comptroller Vasant Kulkarni and Public Relations Officer Mr. Kashikar made references to the various contributions made by Smt Sankaranarayanan to the beautification of Raj Bhavans in Maharashtra located at Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur in their condolence messages. They also referred to her efforts for employee welfare.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy



Secretary Parimal Singh said, "Radha Madam was like mother to the entire Raj Bhavan family. Her resplendent face reflected her transparent and caring nature. She would often visit staff quarters to participate in happy

occasions or to enquire about them when they were in distress or sorrow."

A two minutes silence was observed and floral tributes were paid to the portrait of Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan by the employees of Raj Bhavan.

In Kerala many political leaders, including former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, KPCC President V M Sudheeran, M B Rajesh, MP, former ministers C N Balakrishnan, P C Chacko and others visited the house of the deceased and paid homage to the departed soul. Her mortal remains were cremated at Ivar Madhom on the banks of the Bharathapuzha at Pampadi.

Radha Sankaranarayanan is survived by daughter Anupama, son-in-law Ajith, two grand



Floral tributes being paid to Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan's photo

in Mumbai January 2017

Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan

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Garlanding Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan's photo

daughters, sisters Dr Parvathy, Kalyani Nambiar, Parvathy Kurup and brother Gopinath.

Smt Radha

Sankaranarayanan, despite being the spouse of the former Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of Universities Shri K Sankaranarayanan, was a humble and unassuming personality.

Born on 10th May 1940 in Kerala, she obtained her Bachelor of Science Degree with Botany as major in 1960 from the University of Kerala. Thereafter she post-graduated in Botany from the Ruia College attached to the University of Mumbai in 1964.

In the same year, Smt Radha Sankaranarayanan was selected as a UG Professor of Botany in a College attached to the Madurai University in Tamil Nadu. She taught for 14 years at the same institution.

Smt Radha married Shri K Sankaranarayanan in the year 1979. Although Radha Sankaranarayanan quit her job to assume family responsibilities, she maintained and nurtured her bond with nature. She took



Condolence meeting at Raj Bhavan, Mumbai

kept interest in the creation of the biodiversity park in the Nagpur Raj Bhavan.

The Raj Bhavan Mumbai bears ample testimony of her silent yet brilliant work where she had overseen laying of beautiful patches of landscapes, created a green house for plants needing special care and identified all the trees in Raj Bhavan

with their local and botanical names.

Kerala in Mumbai has special respects and regards for Smt Radha since the magazine was launched at the hands of her husband K Sankaranarayanan who was the then Governor of Maharashtra. Smt Radha took a keen interest in the magazine and always appreciated its contents.



Fathers' Day

The intensity of sunlight has somewhat become tolerable but the indomitable fire inside the stomach is not giving any respite. Somewhere I have read that after sometime of the start of the fast, the hunger subsides and there would be only a kind of drowsiness. May be it is different for me as I was not fasting but starving.

When did I have my last food? The last one was two days ago, around ten in the morning. I had a cup of tea and four ParleG biscuits. I should have skipped that brunch and should have used that money for bus fare to reach town. But how do I know what was in store for me?

I should have come here the day before yesterday. If so, I would not have starved. I could have reached my house to join my son and his family for lunch. Sunday being a weekly holiday for all government employees, I could have had a wholesome non-vegetarian lunch. Soman is very fond of chicken and fish and his wife Radha also had the same taste buds. Rakesh being in Engineering College Hostel, will have non-vegetarian food every day.

I thought, being Sunday Rakesh would come to our ancestral home in the morning itself so that after handing over the money, he could have returned to join his wife for lunch. But he did not come. Had I known earlier, I would have used the coins for bus fare instead of spending on biscuit and tea.

Why Rakesh did not come on Sunday? He very well knew that I had run out of money that he had given me last month.

These days how long a sum of two hundred fifty rupees would last a month for an adult, even if he had no vices? May be ten days. He should complement me for stretching that amount for a month.

"Don't you know that most of the vegetables we buy from the market are full of poisonous pesticides. You should try to grow them in our own land."

"I know, I know. When I was in second year degree, we had lessons about the benefits of chemical

fertilisers. How come all of a sudden they all became dangerous, like plastics?"

"I can get you seeds of most of the vegetables so that you can cultivate them. What is in excess of your need, I can take home so that we too can have healthy vegetables." He was telling.

"Soman, you are forgetting I have already passed seventy five years."

"What is seventy five years nowadays? It was in the newspaper that a ninety year old woman is still rowing across the river to earn a living. Did you not read?" Soman was in a mood to argue with me.

"If I spend the money on newspapers, what will I spend for food? You are giving me only two hundred and fifty rupees." I reminded him of the small quantum.

He became silent.

Still two more kilometres to reach home! I started after 11 am having a



few glasses of water as fuel for a long walk.

With a bad knee, I cannot walk faster. On the contrary, my pace is tremendously slowed down. If my present house is let out, I could have easily managed my affairs without Soman's help. But he did not want that to happen. He wanted our two bed room house for himself and Radha with the excuse that often her parents are visiting them and they cannot be asked to spend their nights on the open veranda. Since

Soman's mother died a few years ago, I felt very lonely and it was then he suggested why I could not move to our ancestral house.

I wondered, how easily he suggested so. Ramani left early though she was twelve years younger to me. Even otherwise, the rule of first come first leave is not followed in life. All my savings were spent on her treatment and Soman's education. By the time he passed out of the college, she had already left this world. It was a tremendous effort on my part to pull on until Soman landed at a job under the Revenue Department.

Soman was a bright student during his education days. He was good in games and sports, in public address and writings. Several of his short stories and poems appeared in various publications. Many organisations sought his participation in their meetings, seminars and discussions. He used to get much more than my monthly allowance of two hundred fifty rupees. My encouragement and my collections of books and periodicals stood him in good stead and I am really proud of him. Nevertheless, his attitude towards me, his old aged father who needed financial support as well as warmth of love from the only son, often made me sad.

I feel so thirsty and hungry. The various excretions inside my liver demand their pound of flesh. How to satisfy them?

The sound coming through the loud speakers a little away felt familiar. Oh, it must be from the town hall where almost every day some or the other bodies would organise their meetings. But Soman's voice? Yes, today is Sunday

and he is having his weekly off. If it is indeed him, there is no sense in rushing to his house. His house? Officially I'm its owner.

Two bedrooms with attached bath, drawing room, big kitchen with an attached store room, wash place, external bathroom, a big portico and an open space of more than ten cents, all almost in the middle of the city. Today it is worth of about one crore of rupees.

Not very late since I got into the job that place came to my possession by

BEYOND THE VIEW

The new book by Girijavallabhan is a collection of his earlier writings, numbering 14, in *Malayalabhoomi* magazine. What is interesting is that almost all of them are meant for light reading. At the same time they are pieces of his past experiences. They bring out the positive aspects of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances and call for replication by others. There are some persons who are eking out a measly life but rich enough to help others who are much poorer.

Through his writings Girijavallabhan is giving us a cross section of the society. Some of the pieces are heart rendering. He aptly called it *Kazhachakkappuram* (Beyond the view). The young horse handler at Vaishnodevi, Atmaram Shinde in the Cancer Hospital, Dr Pandurang Deshpande, the young mother Anita et al are lovable and demand our respect. However, would they inspire us to follow them in deed? Doubtful! We generally express our sympathy and move away as the author did in the hospital. We readers also would do in all probability the same, asking others



to do something about it.

The money spent for extravagant weddings are eye propping. Yet how many of the Indians would attempt to curb similar extravaganza? We pay obeisance to the father of the nation

twice a year but seldom follow him in his simplicity. Most of us are like the man who flicked the Favreleuba watch.

The author should have done a little bit of research about the prohibition policy of the state government. Till the formation of Kerala state, Malabar was following prohibition and liquor consumption was abhorred. It did not mean that none used to consume liquor but it was done stealthily, not even before the family members. The article indicates that the state government makes profit out of it whereas it is the other way. The money collected from taxes and licences, does not meet the expenses incurred in treating the diseases associated with the consumption of liquor. The declared total expenditure incurred does not include the money collected by the private hospitals.

The narration is lucid and simple. Girijavallabhan is capable of doing more and better.

[*Kazhachakkappuram* written by Girijavallabhan and published by Pambungal Publications, Mumbai. Pages 60 and priced Rs.60.]

...Fathers' Day

sheer luck. The owner of the house was the manager of my company. When he suddenly got married to a very rich girl working in Europe, he was required to accompany her soon after the marriage ceremony and he was selling to it me for a throwaway price. I paid the value in about two years as and when I liked. Now that is with Soman and I am suffering in my ancestral home. May be I got it cheap and hence I had to hand over to my son without any compensation. How a father could sell his house his own son?

The voice is clearer now. There is no doubt that it is Soman's voice only. In his meticulous voice he is captivating the audience with his oratory.

“There is no doubt the god of man on this earth is none but his father and mother. More so, the father. It is his genes that man inherits and carries his legacy forward for the future generations. Father is the source and mother is the means. We need both but

more of the father. If you have gone through the original Mahabharat, you would find many important characters like Drona did not have a mother but only father. It is the prerogative of the father to choose the woman to carry his child...”

Where did Soman get this information from? Probably from Mahabharat that I bought a couple of decades ago but never bothered to read.

“Do you think Gandhari was capable of delivering one hundred children in one go? Never. However a super woman she was likely to be, it was not possible to deliver a hundred children. The meaty zygote she delivered was surgically divided into hundred pieces as Siamese children are separated these days. So Father's Day assumes more importance than Mother's Day...”

I never heard about celebrating a Father's Day though sometimes Mother's Day was celebrated. These days each and everything has an

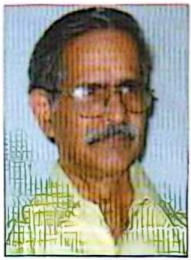
International Day. Earlier there was only an April Fool Day. Then came Valentine Day, Mother's Day etc across the continents while new celebrations found echo for most of the religious days only to boost the sale of various merchandises.

“It was my father who took care of me and provided me valuable education often keeping his own needs aside. As I can remember my mother was ill most of the times but her condition was not allowed to influence my future. My father took care of everything. Normally whatever we notice in our homes that a mother does, all of them were done by my father for me.”

I thought my son was taking me for granted and I've become an excess baggage for him. How much I misunderstood him! I always thought my wife was pampering him a lot and he might turn out to be a much indisciplined kid. How wrong I was! ■



ഹരിദാരിലേക്ക്



കുനം വിഷ്ണു

ഹിമാലയം എന്നത് സമുദ്രതലപ്പോലെ, നമുക്ക് അറിയാൻ കഴിയാത്ത നിരവധി രഹസ്യങ്ങൾ ഉള്ളിലൊതുക്കി കഴിയുന്ന മഹാത്മ്യങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നാണ്. പടിഞ്ഞാറ് ഹിന്ദുക്കുഷ് മലനിരകൾ മുതൽ കിഴക്ക് അരുണാചൽപ്രദേശ് വരെ (ഡാർജിലിങ് വരെ എന്നു പറയുന്നവരും ഉണ്ട്) നീണ്ടുകിടക്കുന്ന മലയിടുക്കുകളാണ് ഹിമാലയം. ഭൂമിശാസ്ത്രപരമായി പറഞ്ഞാൽ ഹിമാലയത്തെ മൂന്നായി വിഭജിക്കാം. ഉന്നത ഹിമാലയം, നിമ്ന ഹിമാലയം, ശിവാലിക് ഹിമാലയം. ലോകത്തിലെ ഏറ്റവും വലിയ കൊടുമുടികളായ എവറസ്റ്റ്, കെ2, നന്ദാദേവി തുടങ്ങിയവ മാത്രമല്ല, ലോകത്തിലെതന്നെ ഏറ്റവും ഉയരം കൂടിയ പത്തു കൊടുമുടികളിൽ ഒമ്പതെണ്ണവും ഉന്നത ഹിമാലയത്തിലാണ്. അതിനു താഴെ കിടക്കുന്ന, എക്കാലവും മഞ്ഞു മൂടിയ, മനുഷ്യവാസയോഗ്യമല്ലാത്ത, മഞ്ഞുപ്രദേശമാണ് നിമ്നഹിമാലയം. ഉന്നത ഹിമാലയവും നിമ്ന ഹിമാലയവും ചൈനയുടെ ഭാഗമാണ്. അതിനും താഴെയുള്ള, കുറെയെങ്കിലും മനുഷ്യവാസയോഗ്യമായ സ്ഥലമാണ് ശിവാലിക് ഹിമാലയം. ഹിന്ദുക്കളുടെ പരമോന്നത തീർത്ഥാടനകേന്ദ്രമായ കൈലാസം മുതൽ ഇങ്ങു താഴെ ഹരിദാർ, ഋഷികേശം വരെയുള്ള എല്ലാ തീർത്ഥാടനകേന്ദ്രങ്ങളും ശിവാലിക് ഹിമാലയത്തിലാണ്.

ഉച്ചമയക്കത്തിൽനിന്ന് ഉണർന്നു നോക്കുമ്പോൾ ബസ്സ് നേരെ ഇറക്കത്തിൽ തന്നെയാണ്. ഇടതുവശത്ത് ഇടക്കിടെ അതിവേഗത്തിൽ ഒഴുകുന്ന ഗംഗ. പ്രത്യേകിച്ച് ആകർഷണം തോന്നത്തക്ക ഒന്നുമില്ല. അങ്ങനെ കുറെ പോയപ്പോൾ പുഴയിൽ ഉല്ലാസചങ്ങാടത്തിൽ സാഹസികയാത്ര നടത്തുന്ന ചില വിദേശികളെ കണ്ടു. ഋഷികേശം അത്തരം സാഹസികയാത്രകൾക്കും പർവ്വതാരോഹണത്തിനും പ്രസിദ്ധമാണെന്നു കേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. സിനിമകളിലും ടിവി ഷോകളിലും മാത്രം കണ്ടും കേട്ടും പരിചയമുള്ള റാഫ്റ്റിങ് ഇതാ നേരിൽ കാണാൻ കഴിയുകയാണ്. അല്പംകൂടി പോയപ്പോൾ റാഫ്റ്റിങ്ങിന്റെ ബേസ്കയാമ്പ്. നിരവധി പേർ അവിടെ റാഫ്റ്റിങ് പഠിക്കാനും ആസ്വദിക്കാനും കൂടിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. നല്ല ഒഴുക്കുള്ള വെള്ളത്തിൽ

തുറന്ന പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് ബോട്ടിൽ അഥവാ ചങ്ങാടത്തിൽ ഇരുന്ന് തുഴയുകയാണ് റാഫ്റ്റിങ്. പുഴയുടെ സ്ഥിതിയനുസരിച്ച് അപകടസാധ്യത കണക്കിലെടുത്ത് റാഫ്റ്റിങ്ങിനെ അഞ്ച് ഗ്രേഡായി തിരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. സാധാരണയായി സവേഗം ഒഴുകുന്ന നദിയിലെ ഒന്നാം ഗ്രേഡുമുതൽ ഉരുളൻ കല്ലുകളിൽ തട്ടി വെള്ളച്ചാട്ടങ്ങളെ അതിജീവിച്ച് വളരെ ശ്രദ്ധയോടെ ജീവൻതന്നെ പണയംവെച്ച് അഞ്ചാംഗ്രേഡ് എത്തണമെങ്കിൽ ഒരുപാടു കാലത്തെ പരിശ്രമവും ഒടുങ്ങാത്ത സാഹസികതയും കൂടിയേ തീരൂ. ആ അനുഭവം കാണുമ്പോൾത്തന്നെ മനസ്സു കിടുങ്ങുമ്പോൾ അത് ആസ്വദിക്കുന്നവരെ പറ്റി പറയാൻ വാക്കുകളില്ല. എന്റെ ചോദ്യങ്ങൾക്കു മറുപടിയായി ഡ്രൈവർ പറഞ്ഞു, “ഇവിടെ ധാരാളം റാഫ്റ്റിങ്/മൊണ്ടനീറിങ്



Idol of Mansadevi

ക്ലബ്ബുകളുണ്ട്. ഈ രണ്ടു വിനോദങ്ങൾക്കും ലോകത്തിൽ തന്നെ ഏറെ പ്രസിദ്ധമായ സ്ഥലമാണ് ഇവിടം. ഭാരതീയരും വിദേശീയരുമായ ആയിരക്കണക്കിനു വിനോദസഞ്ചാരികളാണ് ഇവിടെ വർഷാവർഷം എത്തുന്നത്. ഈ സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ പ്രധാന വരുമാന സ്രോതസ്സുമാണ് ഈ കായികവിനോദങ്ങൾ.”

കഴിഞ്ഞ ഏതാനും ദിവസങ്ങളായി രാത്രി അതിശൈത്യവും ഉച്ചക്കുപോലും സുഖകരമായ തണുപ്പും അനുഭവിച്ച ഞങ്ങൾക്ക്, സത്യത്തിൽ ഇവിടെയും സുഖകരമായ കാലാവസ്ഥയായിട്ടു പോലും, ഉഷ്ണം അനുഭവപ്പെടാൻ തുടങ്ങിയിരുന്നു. കേദാർനാഥിലെ 14,000 അടി ഉയരത്തിൽനിന്ന് ഹരിദാറിലെ 1,000 അടി ഉയരത്തിലേക്കാണ് ഞങ്ങൾ ഇറങ്ങിവരുന്നത്. ഇത്രയും ദിവസം അലൗകികശക്തി അനുഭവവേദ്യമായിരുന്ന ദേവലോകത്തുനിന്ന്, വിദ്യാസമ്പന്നരെന്നും സംസ്കാരികസമ്പന്നരെന്നും അവകാശപ്പെടുന്ന (ശരിക്കു ചിന്തിച്ചാൽ രണ്ടും കഷ്ടിയായ) മനുഷ്യലോകത്തേക്കാണ് ഞങ്ങൾ ഇറങ്ങിവരുന്നത്. മെല്ലെ മെല്ലെ ധാരാളം വീടുകളും ഉടുത്തൊരുങ്ങിയ മനുഷ്യരും കോൺക്രീറ്റ് സൗധങ്ങളും കാണാൻ തുടങ്ങി. ഞങ്ങൾ ചാർഡായാത്രയിലെ അവസാന താവളമായ ഹരിദാറിലേക്ക് എത്തിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. ഒരു നഷ്ടബോധം ഞങ്ങളെ വേട്ടയാടുന്നതുപോലെ.

മൻസാദേവിയും റോപ്പ് വെയും

ഞങ്ങൾ ഹരിദാറിലെത്തിയപ്പോൾ സമയം നാലുമണി. ബസ്സിൽനിന്ന് ഇറങ്ങുംമുമ്പ് ഡ്രൈവർ പറഞ്ഞു, ഇരുട്ടുന്നതിനുമുമ്പ് മൻസാദേവീക്ഷേത്രം സന്ദർശിക്കണമെന്ന്. അതിനാൽ വേഗംതന്നെ ഇറങ്ങണം. ഞങ്ങൾ ഹോട്ടലിൽ ചെക്ക് ഇൻ ചെയ്തു. ഫ്രഷ് ആയി ഓരോ ചായ കുടിച്ച് വീണ്ടും ഇറങ്ങി. ബസ്സ് മൻസാദേവീ ക്ഷേത്രത്തിലേക്ക് പുറപ്പെട്ടു. സന്ധ്യയ്ക്ക് ഹർകി പൗഡിയിൽ ആരതി ഉണ്ട്. അതിനുമുമ്പായി തിരിച്ചെത്തുകയും വേണം.

ഹരിദാർനഗരത്തിന്റെ അതിർത്തിയിൽ വളരെ വലിയ ഒരു കുന്നിന്റെ നെറുകയിലാണ് മൻസാദേവീ ക്ഷേത്രം. സാഹസികയാത്ര ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നവർക്ക് അവിടേക്ക് കയറിപ്പോകാൻ ആയിരത്തിലേറെ പടികളുള്ള ഒരു വഴിയുണ്ട്. ഭക്തിയുടെ

നിറവിൽ നടന്നുതന്നെ ദർശനം നേടണം എന്നു കരുതുന്നവർക്ക് ആ വഴി ഉപയോഗിക്കാം. അല്ലെങ്കിൽ അവിടെ ഒരു റോപ്പ് വേ സ്റ്റേഷൻ ഉണ്ട്. ഇത്രയും പടികൾ കയറാൻ സമയവും ആരോഗ്യവും ഇല്ലാത്തതിനാൽ ഞങ്ങൾ റോപ്പ് വേ കയറാൻ കൂട്ടിയിൽ നിന്നു. നാലുപേർ കയറുന്ന ഓരോ ഡബ്ബുകളാണ്. ഞങ്ങളാണെങ്കിൽ എട്ടുപേർ. രണ്ടു പെട്ടികളിലായി ഞങ്ങൾ കയറി. യന്ത്ര ഊത്താലിൽ കയറിയ പോലെയുണ്ട് എന്നാണ് കുട്ടികൾ വിശേഷിപ്പിച്ചത്. നിങ്ങൾ റോപ്പ് വേയിൽ കയറിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ? വായുവിൽ നിൽക്കുന്ന അനുഭവമാണ്. താഴെ, വളരെ വളരെ താഴെ, മരങ്ങളുടെ തലപ്പുകൾ കാണാം. മുന്നിലുള്ള ഒരു കമ്പിമാത്രമാണ് രക്ഷാകവചം. ‘ഉയരപ്പേടി’ ഉള്ളവർ കണ്ണടച്ച് ഇരുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ തല ചുറ്റും. അതില്ലെങ്കിലോ, ആകാശത്തിൽ തുങ്ങിക്കിടക്കുന്ന ആ അവസ്ഥ, ഒരിക്കലും മറക്കാനാവാത്ത ഒരു അനുഭവമായിരിക്കും താനും.

മുകളിലെ ക്ഷേത്രത്തിനു പ്രത്യേകതകളൊന്നുമില്ല; ഒരു സാധാരണ ഉത്തരേന്ത്യൻ ക്ഷേത്രം. പക്ഷെ അവിടെനിന്നുള്ള അലൗകികമായ ആ കാഴ്ച. ഹൊ, അതു വിവരിക്കാൻ വാക്കുകൾക്ക് ശക്തി പോരാ. ഹരിദാർ നഗരവും ഹരിദാറിന്റെ കാൽ കഴുകി ഒഴുകുന്ന ഗംഗയും മനം മയക്കുന്ന ദൃശ്യമാണ്. ഒരു കുളിർക്കാറ്റ് ഞങ്ങളെ തഴുകി ലാളിക്കുന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. എന്റെ മനസ്സിലാദ്യം തോന്നിയത്, ‘അതിമനോഹരങ്ങളായ എത്രയെത്ര ദൃശ്യങ്ങളാണ് നാം കാണാതെ പോകുന്നത്! ഇവിടെ വരാതിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ എത്ര നഷ്ടമായേനെ!’ ഏറെക്കുറെ ഇതേപോലെ ഒരനുഭവം, ഉദയപുരിലെ മൻസാക്ഷേത്രം സന്ദർശിച്ചപ്പോഴും തോന്നുകയുണ്ടായി.

ദേവീക്ഷേത്രത്തിലല്ലെ വന്നിട്ടുള്ളത്; ദർശനം നടത്താതെയും അനുഗ്രഹം വാങ്ങാതെയും പോകുന്നതെങ്ങനെ എന്നു കരുതുന്ന ഭക്തർ ഞങ്ങളുടെ സംഘത്തിലും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നതിനാൽ ഞങ്ങൾ ക്ഷേത്രത്തിൽ പ്രവേശിച്ചു. മൻസാദേവീ എന്നാൽ മനസ്സിൽ വിചാരിച്ചു പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചതെന്തായാലും നടത്തിതരുന്ന ദേവി എന്നാണത്രെ സങ്കല്പം. ഇനിയും ഇത്തരം യാത്രകളും ദർശനങ്ങളും സാദ്ധ്യമാക്കിത്തരണേ എന്നായിരുന്നു ഞാൻ മനസ്സിൽ പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചത്. അക്കാലത്ത് ദേവി പ്രസാദിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട് എന്നു തോന്നുന്നു. അതിനുശേഷം ഓരോ



Ropeway



Har-Ki-Pauri

വർഷവും ഒരു യാത്രയെങ്കിലും ദേവീകൃപയാൽ സാധ്യമായിട്ടുണ്ട്. പ്രധാനമുർത്തിയായ മൻസാദേവികു പുറമെ ചില ഉപദേവതമാരുടെ പ്രതിഷ്ഠകളും അവിടെ ഉണ്ട്. ദർശനങ്ങളെല്ലാം കഴിഞ്ഞ് പ്രസാദവും വാങ്ങി പുറത്തു വന്നപ്പോഴും അവിടത്തെ കുളിർക്കാറ്റും കാഴ്ചയിലെ അഭൗമസൗന്ദര്യവും മനം കുളിർപ്പിക്കുന്ന പ്രകൃതിയും ഞങ്ങളെ മോഹാവേശിതരാക്കി, അവിടം വിട്ടു പോരാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്നില്ല. പക്ഷേ നേരം വൈകിത്തുടങ്ങി; ഹരിദാരിൽ വന്നു ഗംഗ ആരതിയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാതിരിക്കുന്നതെങ്ങനെ? താഴേക്കിറങ്ങാൻ ഞങ്ങൾ വീണ്ടും റോപ്പുവേയിൽ കയറി. ഹർകീ പൗഡി താഴെകാത്തിരിപ്പുണ്ടല്ലോ.

ഹരിദാർ

റോപ്പുവേയിലെ ഇറക്കം കയറുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ രസകരമാണ്. സൂര്യൻ പശ്ചിമചക്രവാളത്തിൽ തുങ്ങിക്കിടക്കുകയാണ്. വെയിലിനു ചുട്ട് നിശ്ശേഷം വിട്ടു എന്നു പറയാൻ വയ്യ. ഹരിദാർ ഹിമാലയത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായിട്ടാണ് സാധാരണ കണക്കാക്കപ്പെടാറുള്ളതെങ്കിലും ഉഗ്രശ്രീഷ്മം നിൽക്കുമ്പോൾ ഉഷ്ണം നാല്പതു ഡിഗ്രിവരെ ഉയരാറുണ്ടത്രെ. ശൈത്യം നാലോ അഞ്ചോ ഡിഗ്രിവരെ താഴാറുണ്ട്. സമുദ്രനിരപ്പിൽനിന്ന് 314 മീറ്റർ മാത്രം ഉയരത്തിൽ കിടക്കുന്ന ഹരിദാരിൽ റോഡുമാർഗ്ഗവും റെയിൽ മാർഗ്ഗവും വഴി തലസ്ഥാനമായ ദൽഹിയിൽ നിന്ന് വളരെ എളുപ്പത്തിൽ എത്തിച്ചേരാം. ഉത്തരാഞ്ചൽ അഥവാ ഉത്തരാഖണ്ഡ് സംസ്ഥാനത്തിലെ ഏറ്റവും കീഴറ്റത്തായി തെക്കുഭാഗത്തായി കിടക്കുന്ന ഹരിദാർജില്ലയുടെ തലസ്ഥാനമാണ് ഹരിദാർ നഗരം. ദൽഹി സന്ദർശിക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ വിനോദ-ഉല്ലാസ-പഠന-തീർത്ഥയാത്രക്കാരുടെയെല്ലാം മുഖ്യ ആകർഷണങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നാണ് ഹരിദാർ എന്നതിനാൽ താമസിക്കാൻ നിരവധി ഹോട്ടലുകളുണ്ട് അവിടെ; എല്ലാവിധ സൗകര്യങ്ങളും സുലഭമാണു താനും.

ഈ നഗരത്തെ 'ഹർദാർ' എന്നും 'ഹരിദാർ' എന്നും വിളിക്കാറുണ്ട്. ഹിമാലയം ശിവശക്തിപുരിതമാണ് എന്നാണല്ലോ വിശ്വാസം. ഹരനിലേക്കുള്ള ദാരം അഥവാ കവാടം എന്ന നിലയ്ക്കാണ് 'ഹർദാർ' എന്നു പറയുന്നത്.

വേദകാലം മുതൽതന്നെ വൈഷ്ണവശക്തിയുടെ നിദാനമായി കണക്കാക്കപ്പെട്ടിരുന്ന സ്ഥലമാണ് ബദരീനാഥ്. ബദരിയിലേക്കുള്ള, ഹരിയിലേക്കുള്ള പ്രവേശകവാടമാണ് 'ഹരിദാർ'. 'ഹരി' എന്ന വാക്കിന് ഈശ്വരൻ എന്നും വ്യാഖ്യാനമുള്ളതിനാൽ ഈശ്വരനിലേക്ക്, മോക്ഷത്തിലേക്ക് ഉള്ള കവാടമാണ് ഹരിദാർ എന്നു പറയുന്നവരുമുണ്ട്. ഏതായാലും ഹിമാലയം എന്ന പുണ്യസ്ഥലത്തിന്റെ പടിഞ്ഞാറായാണ് എല്ലാവരും ഹരിദാറിനെ കണക്കാക്കുന്നത്. എന്റെ വ്യക്തിപരമായ അഭിപ്രായത്തിൽ, എല്ലാവരും ദൽഹി കാണാൻ പോകുമ്പോൾ ഒരു ദിവസം ഹരിദാറിനുവേണ്ടിയും കരുതേണ്ടതാണ്; നിങ്ങൾ ഒരു ഹൈന്ദവഭക്തനാണെങ്കിൽ പ്രത്യേകിച്ചും. ഹിമാലയം മുഴുവൻ കാണാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ലെങ്കിലും ഹരിദാറെങ്കിലും കണ്ടു മടങ്ങേണ്ടതാണ്. എന്തെന്നാൽ, പ്രതിഷ്ഠ കണ്ടു തൊഴാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ലെങ്കിൽ ഗോപുരമെങ്കിലും കണ്ടു തൊഴണം എന്നാണല്ലോ.

ഹരിദാറിനു വേറെ ഒരു പ്രത്യേകതയും ഉള്ളതായി പറയപ്പെടുന്നു. അവിടംവരെ ഒഴുകി വരുന്ന ഗംഗ പുണ്യദ്രാ യിനിയായ ഒരു ദിവ്യനദിയായി കണക്കാക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഹരിദാർ പിന്നിടുമ്പോൾ മറ്റേതൊരു നദിയേയുംപോലെ ഗംഗ ജനോപകാരിണിയായ ഒരു ലൌകികനദിയായി തീരുന്നു. എനിയ്ക്കൊന്നു പറയാനുള്ളത്, 'വിശ്വാസം, അതല്ലേ എല്ലാം!' ഒരു കാര്യം സത്യമാണ്. അറുപത്തിമൂന്നു കോടിയോളം ഏക്കർ പരന്നു കിടക്കുന്ന സിന്ധുഗംഗാസമതലം എന്ന വളരെയധികം ഫലഭൂയിഷ്ഠമായ പ്രദേശത്തിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ രണ്ടുഭാഗത്തിന്റെ ജലസ്രോതസ്സാണ് ഗംഗ. എന്നു വെച്ചാൽ ഭാരതീയരുടെ അന്നദാതാവാണ്, അമ്മയായി കണക്കാക്കപ്പെടുന്ന ഗംഗ. ആ അമ്മയെയാണ് ഹരിദാറിനുശേഷം അഴുകുചാലുകളോഴുകിയും പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് വലിച്ചെറിഞ്ഞും ശവങ്ങളോഴുകിയും അതിക്രൂരമായി പീഡിപ്പിച്ച് കൊന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്. അതിനെ വീണ്ടും പൂർവ്വസ്ഥിതിയിലുള്ള ശുദ്ധിയും വിശുദ്ധിയുമുള്ള നദിയാക്കണമെങ്കിൽ, അതിനു മനസ്സും ശ്രമവുമുള്ള ഭരണാധികാരികളും ബോധമുള്ള പൗരന്മാരും പതിറ്റാണ്ടുകളും വേണ്ടിവരും.

നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന രാഷ്ട്രീയ അസ്തിത്വവും ആശയറ്റ ജനസമൂഹവും

ഭാസ്കരൻ കാറാത്ത്

കേരളസംസ്ഥാനതൃപിരണത്തിന് അറുപത് ആണ്ടുകൾ തികഞ്ഞു ഇക്കഴിഞ്ഞ നവമ്പർ ഒന്നിന്. അന്നത്തെ ഏകദേശം ഒന്നേകാൽ കോടി മലയാളികൾ നെഞ്ചിലേറ്റി നടന്ന ഒരു വലിയ സ്വപ്നമായിരുന്നു ഐക്യകേരളം. ആ സ്വപ്നത്തിന്റെ സാക്ഷാത്കാരത്തിന്റെ അറുപതാം വർഷമാണ് കേരളത്തിന്റെ ഒരറ്റം മുതൽ മറ്റേ അറ്റംവരെ ആഹ്ലാദപൂർവ്വം ആഘോഷിച്ചത്. ജനങ്ങളുടെ പരിപൂർണ്ണമോചനത്തിനും ശാശ്വതക്ഷേമത്തിനും പുതിയ സംസ്ഥാനം ഹേതുവാകും എന്നവർ കരുതി. രാജ്യഭരണത്തിനോടനുബന്ധിച്ച നിയമസംബന്ധമായ ഉപായങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ടുള്ള സത്യസന്ധമായ സംഘടിത പ്രവർത്തനം- അതാണ് നമ്മൾ രാഷ്ട്രീയം എന്ന പദം കൊണ്ടു വിവക്ഷിക്കുന്നത്.

പൊതുജീവിതത്തിൽ, രാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിൽ, അങ്ങേയറ്റം നേരും നെറിയുമുള്ള, സത്യസന്ധമായ, ആത്മാർത്ഥതയുള്ള, അർപ്പണമനോഭാവമുള്ള ഒട്ടേറെ നേതാക്കൾ ഈ പ്രക്രിയയിൽ നമ്മെ നയിക്കാനുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ആ വലിയ മഹാത്മാക്കളുടെ കാലം കഴിഞ്ഞുപോയി.

പൊതുജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പരിപാവനതാം, പവിത്രത, വിശുദ്ധത കാത്തു സൂക്ഷിച്ച ആ വലിയ മനുഷ്യർ നമ്മുടെ നാടിന്റെ രാഷ്ട്രീയ, സാമൂഹിക, സാംസ്കാരിക മേഖലകളിൽ എന്തെല്ലാം കാര്യമായ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ രാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിന് അതീതമായി നടത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നതിനെ കുറിച്ചും അവരുടെ കുട്ടായ ചെയ്തികളെ കുറിച്ചും വ്യക്തിപരമായ ജീവിതശൈലിയെ കുറിച്ചും ഇന്നത്തെ തലമുറയ്ക്ക് എത്രകണ്ട് അറിയാമെന്ന കാര്യത്തിൽ സംശയിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

മറ്റുള്ളവർക്ക് വേണ്ടി ജീവിച്ചിരുന്ന, ആദർശത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിരൂപങ്ങളായിരുന്ന നേതാക്കൾ ഇന്നില്ലാതായിരിക്കുന്നു. സ്ഥാനമാനങ്ങൾ നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടാലും സാധാരണക്കാരിൽ സാധാരണക്കാരായി ജനങ്ങളുടെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കി അവരുടെ ഇടയിൽ ജീവിച്ച് അവർക്കുവേണ്ടി ജീവൻ ത്യജിച്ച എത്രയോ നേതാക്കൾ അന്നത്തെ രാഷ്ട്രീയകക്ഷികളിൽ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. അത് കഴിഞ്ഞകാല കഥകൾ! സത്യങ്ങൾ!

ഇനോ? രാഷ്ട്രീയകക്ഷികളെല്ലാം ക്രമേണ അധികാരത്തിന്റെ അപ്പക്കണ്ണങ്ങളിൽ കടിച്ചു തുങ്ങാനുള്ള വ്യഗ്രതയിൽ മതങ്ങളെ, ജാതികളെ ഉയർത്തിപ്പിടിക്കുന്നു. കപടമതേതരതാം പ്രസംഗിച്ച് ജാതികളേയും മതങ്ങളേയും തങ്ങളുടെ വോട്ടുബാങ്കുകളാക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് സ്വന്തം വളർച്ചയ്ക്കും പാർട്ടിയുടെ വളർച്ചയ്ക്കുമുള്ള സേവനമായി മാറ്റിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇതിന്റെ ഫലമായി അഴിമതി, സ്വജനപക്ഷപാതം തുടങ്ങിയ നെറികേടുകൾ എല്ലാ മേഖലകളിലും മാറാവുവായി വളർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു.

തത്പരീക്ഷയില്ലാത്ത ഇന്നത്തെ പൊതുരംഗത്തെ കുറിച്ചോർക്കുമ്പോൾ, രാഷ്ട്രീയനാടകങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചോർക്കുമ്പോൾ ഭാവിയിലെ കുറിച്ചോർക്കാൻ പറ്റാത്ത വിധം നാം വർത്തമാനകാലത്തെ നശിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു, ദുഷിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. മാനുഷികമൂല്യങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു വിലയുമില്ലാതായിരിക്കുന്നു. എല്ലാ പാർട്ടികളും ജാതിനോക്കി, സാമ്പത്തികസ്ഥിതി നോക്കി സ്ഥാനാർത്ഥിയെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നു. രാഷ്ട്രീയവുമായി പുലമ്പസം കൂടിയില്ലാത്തവർ ഒരു സുപ്രഭാതത്തിൽ ഒരു രാഷ്ട്രീയപാർട്ടിയുടെ കൂപ്പായമണിഞ്ഞ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെടുന്നു.

അഹിംസയിലും സത്യധർമ്മങ്ങളിലും വിശ്വസിക്കുന്ന, വിദ്യയും വിനയവും ഒത്തുചേർന്ന ഒരു സംഘടനയെ

വാർത്തെടുക്കേണ്ട സമയം ആസന്നമായിരിക്കുന്നു. ജാതിമത ചിന്തകൾക്കും കക്ഷിരാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിനും അതീതമായി സത്യത്തിനും സമതന്ത്രത്തിനും സാഹോദര്യത്തിനും സ്നേഹത്തിനും പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകിക്കൊണ്ട് മനുഷ്യനാണ് എല്ലാത്തിന്റേയും മാനദണ്ഡമെന്ന ആശയത്തിന് ഊന്നൽ നൽകിക്കൊണ്ട് ഒരു സാംസ്കാരികപ്രസ്ഥാനം ഉടലെടുക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഇന്നത്തെ സാമൂഹ്യജീവിതത്തിൽ പുഴുക്കുത്തുകൾ ധാരാളമായിരിക്കുന്നു. ആത്മാർത്ഥമായ നീതിബോധമാണ് ഇന്നാവശ്യം. തെറ്റുകളെ, നെറികേടുകളെ, കെടുതികളെ കാണാതെ മുന്നോട്ടു പോകാൻ തയ്യാറാകരുത്. തീരുത്തലുകൾ ആവശ്യമായിരിക്കുന്നു. നേർവഴിയിലൂടെ സത്യസന്ധമായി ജനത്തെ ലക്ഷ്യത്തിലെത്തിക്കാനുള്ള ഒരു ശ്രമമാണ് വേണ്ടത്. മതവും സമുദായവുമല്ല; മറിച്ച് മനുഷ്യനും സ്നേഹവുമാണ് ഇന്നത്തെ ലോകത്ത് വേണ്ടതെന്ന് മനസ്സിലാക്കി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുകയാണ് ആവശ്യം.

ഭാഷ, സാഹിത്യം, സംസ്കാരം ദേശീയബോധം, ജനാധിപത്യം, സമാന്ത്ര്യാം, വ്യക്തിത്വം, സഹകരണമനോഭാവം എന്നീ വിഷയങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ച് വ്യക്തമായ ധാരണയും ബോധവും വീക്ഷണവും സങ്കല്പവും ഉണ്ടെങ്കിലേ ഭാരതീയരേയും കേരളീയരേയും പുരോഗതിയുടെ പാതയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കാനും അവരിലെ മനുഷ്യത്വത്തെ ഉണർത്തി അവരെ ഉദ്ബുദ്ധരും കർമ്മനിരതരും ആക്കി ഉയർത്താനും സാധിക്കുകയുള്ളൂ. സാംസ്കാരിക, സാമൂഹിക, രാഷ്ട്രീയ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെ ലക്ഷ്യം മനുഷ്യ സമൂഹത്തെ കുട്ടിയിണക്കുന്ന കണ്ണികളാകേണ്ടതാണ്. സാമൂഹ്യരൂപനകൾക്കും മാദ്ധ്യമങ്ങൾക്കും ഇതിൽ കാര്യമായ പങ്ക് വഹിയ്ക്കാനുണ്ട്. അന്ധതകളേയും അനാചാരങ്ങളേയും അനീതികളേയും ഉന്മൂലനം ചെയ്യാൻ ഇവരുടെ മുൻപുവേറിയ പടവാളുകൾക്കേ കഴിയൂ. നിർഭാഗ്യവശാൽ, ഇന്നത്തെ അവസ്ഥ വെച്ചുനോക്കുമ്പോൾ തങ്ങളുടെ വ്യക്തിതാല്പര്യങ്ങൾ, വ്യവസായതാല്പര്യങ്ങൾ എന്നിവ സംരക്ഷിക്കാനും അവയെ പരിപോഷിപ്പിക്കാനും ഉള്ള വ്യഗ്രതയിൽ അവരത് വേണ്ടരീതിയിൽ വിനിയോഗിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ എന്ന സംശയം ബാക്കി നിൽക്കുന്നു.

അഴിമതി എല്ലാ മേഖലകളിലും വളർന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. അഴിമതി വിരുദ്ധഭരണം വാഗ്ദ്ധാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന, കാലാകാലങ്ങളിൽ ഭരണത്തിൽ വന്നിട്ടുള്ള ഒരു രാഷ്ട്രീയ കക്ഷിയ്ക്കും കൂട്ടുകക്ഷികൾക്കും ഇന്നേവരെ അത് പാലിക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടില്ല എന്നു മാത്രമല്ല, അതിനൊരു നിയന്ത്രണം ഏർപ്പെടുത്താനോ പരിമിതപ്പെടുത്താനോ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടില്ലെന്നതാണ് സത്യം. ഉദ്യോഗ തലത്തിലെ അഴിമതി തഴച്ചുവരാനുള്ള പ്രധാനകാരണങ്ങളിലൊന്നാണ് രാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിലെ അഴിമതി. ഇന്നത്തെ രാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിലെ പ്രധാന അജണ്ടതന്നെ അഴിമതിയും സ്വജനപക്ഷപാതവും കുറുമാറ്റവുമായി മാറിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ചുവപ്പുനാടകങ്ങളുടെ കെട്ടഴിക്കാനും കാര്യങ്ങൾ സമയത്ത് നടന്നു കിട്ടാനും ഗ്രാമങ്ങളിലെ വില്ലേജ് ആപ്പീസുമുതൽ ഉയർന്ന സർക്കാർ ആപ്പീസുകൾവരെ തുറന്നു വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന മേശവലിപ്പുകളിൽ കൈക്കൊണ്ടു വീണില്ലെങ്കിൽ കാര്യം നടക്കില്ലെന്ന സ്ഥിതിയായിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഇന്ന് ഇന്ത്യയിൽ ആകമാനവും കേരളത്തിൽ പ്രത്യേകിച്ചും മാഹിയ സംസ്കാരം വളർന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. വ്യാജമദ്യനിർമ്മാണം, കരിഞ്ചന്ത, മണൽ കടത്തൽ, കള്ളക്കടത്ത്, പെൺവാണിഭം, തുടങ്ങിയവ വ്യാപകമായിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇതിനൊരു കടിഞ്ഞാണിടാൻ ഭരണപക്ഷത്തിനോ, പ്രതിപക്ഷത്തിരിക്കു

SUMITRA IN RED SAREE



Priya Menon

Heaven tumbles down... down.... on the wet red soil,
She sings, swings and walks making the universe coil.
Sri Krishna, Rudra, Vasuki, Kamadev calmly follow her moves
For a fleeting look of Sumitra in a red saree with a million hues.

My words as enclosure, the clouds as worksheet,
She, the *Mriganayani*, cuts off my way, heaves up my pulse beat.
And the scent like the sandal paste splatter all over her *Kaya*,
With a blend of golden turmeric effervescence, like *Maya*.

Her dazzling earrings swing, chime charmingly,
Her necklace caressing her collar endearingly.
Shines like the delightful *Tat-tvam-asi*,
She bears a resemblance to Adi, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Oh Sumitra, my *atmasakhi*, you are *Advaita*,
Universe empower your eyes, they are just like Aravinda.
You and I like a convergence of *Mandakini* and *Alakananda*,
The radiance of your smile is like the flow of *Gayatrimantra*.

The chiming of your bangles and the rustle of your red saree
The divine Lakshmi within you would never vary.
Who is Nala? She won't be his Damayanti
As the pious bonding makes a new Ganga divine
Sumitra in Red Saree, the vermilion red saree...

നവർക്കോ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടില്ലെന്നതാണ് സത്യം. ഇത് ജനങ്ങളുടെ സമാധാനത്തിനും സൈരജീവിതത്തിനും ഭീഷണിയായിരിക്കുന്നു. കുടിവെള്ളം പോലും ഒരു വില്പനച്ചരക്കായി മാറിയിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന അവസ്ഥയിലേക്കാണ് കാര്യങ്ങൾ നീങ്ങിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്. കുടിവെള്ളം പോലെയും വൈദ്യുതി പോലെയും ജനങ്ങൾക്ക് അത്യാവശ്യമാണ് നല്ല നിരത്തുകളും. നല്ല പാതകളും ഗതാഗതസൗകര്യങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ദേശവിദേശസഞ്ചാരികളെ ഏറ്റവും കൂടുതൽ ആകർഷിക്കുന്ന സംസ്ഥാനമായി മാറും കേരളം. അതുവഴി മാതവപുരോഗതി ഉണ്ടാവുകയും ജീവിത പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു പരിധിവരെയെങ്കിലും പരിഹാരം കാണാൻ കഴിയുകയും ചെയ്യും.

നമ്മുടെ കാര്യങ്ങൾക്കു മേലെയും ഗ്രാമീണ-ചെറുകിട വ്യവസായങ്ങളും തകർച്ചയിലേക്കാണ് കുപ്പു കുത്തുന്നത്. എത്രയോ കർഷകരും ചെറുകിടവ്യവസായികളും കടക്കണിയിൽ പെട്ട് ആത്മഹത്യ ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു. സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ താഴെത്തട്ടിലുള്ളവരെ പുനരുദ്ധരിക്കാനുതകുന്ന വിധത്തിലുള്ള വികസനമാണ് ഇന്നാവശ്യം. അതുപോലെതന്നെ, കേരളത്തിലെ വികസന പദ്ധതികളുടെ- അതു കാര്യങ്ങൾക്കു മേലെയിലാകട്ടെ, വ്യവസായിക മേഖലയിലാകട്ടെ- ഉന്നമനത്തിനുവേണ്ടി വ്യവസായികളെയും നിക്ഷേപകരേയും കേരളത്തിലേക്കു കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിനായി അവർക്കുകർഷകമായ ഒരു പരിതസ്ഥിതി ഉണ്ടാകേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. പ്രവർത്തന സാമർത്ഥ്യവും ക്രമസമാധാനനിലയും ഇനിയും വളരെ ഉയരേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. അതിനുകുന്ന സുഗമമായ ആന്തരികമായ ഘടന നമ്മൾ ഒരുക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. രാഷ്ട്രീയാഭിമുഖ്യമുള്ള തൊഴിലാളിസംഘടനകൾ കാലത്തിനനുസൃതമായി അവരുടെ ചര്യകളിൽ മാറ്റം വരുത്തണം. അതുപോലെത്തന്നെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസമേഖലയിലും ആരോഗ്യമേഖലയിലും ജനങ്ങൾക്കുതകുന്ന തരത്തിലുള്ള ഒരു മാറ്റം അത്യാവശ്യമായിരിക്കുന്നു. ജനാധിപത്യരീതികൾക്ക് അനുസൃതമായി

ഉഭയചർച്ചകളിൽക്കൂടി കാര്യങ്ങൾ മുൻകൂട്ടി മനസ്സിലാക്കിക്കൊണ്ടുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനപാതമാവ് രൂപപ്പെടുത്തിയേ മതിയാകൂ. ഭരണ-പ്രതിപക്ഷങ്ങൾ തമ്മിൽ അഭിപ്രായവ്യത്യാസങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകാം. എന്നാൽ അത് അന്ധമായ എതിർപ്പായിക്കൂടാ. സർക്കാർ ചെയ്യുന്ന നല്ല കാര്യങ്ങളെ അംഗീകരിച്ച് പ്രതിപക്ഷവും അവരുടെ വിമർശനങ്ങളെ ഉൾക്കൊണ്ടു തെറ്റു തിരുത്തി മുന്നോട്ടു പോകാൻ ഭരണപക്ഷവും തയ്യാറാകണം.

എല്ലാ കക്ഷികളിലും നല്ല നേതാക്കളില്ലാതില്ല. പക്ഷേ ഭാവിയിലേക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ചിന്തകൾ അവരുടെ പ്രതികരണശക്തിയെ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. ഭരണപക്ഷത്തിന്റെ നല്ല ചെയ്തികളെ അഭിനന്ദിക്കാൻ പ്രതിപക്ഷമോ, അവരുടെ നല്ല വിമർശനങ്ങളെ കൈക്കൊള്ളാൻ ഭരണപക്ഷമോ തയ്യാറാകാത്ത ഒരു സ്ഥിതിവിശേഷമാണ് നാം കാണുന്നത്.

പരിഹാരമില്ലാത്ത പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ ഇന്ന് കേരളത്തിലില്ല. അർത്ഥത്തിലുള്ള ആർത്തിമൂലം പ്രകൃതിയെ ചൂഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നത് തടസ്സപ്പെടുത്തിയാൽത്തന്നെ കേരളത്തിന്റെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്ക് പരിഹാരമാകും. നിയമം പാലിക്കാതെ സാർത്ഥതാല്പര്യം മുൻനിർത്തി അഴിമതിയിൽ മുങ്ങുന്നവരെ ജയിലിൽ അടക്കാൻ മുഖം നോക്കാതെ സർക്കാർ തയ്യാറാകണം. അന്യർക്ക് ഉപദ്രവമാകുന്നതൊന്നും ആരും ചെയ്യരുത്. സർക്കാരിന്റെ നേത്രങ്ങളായി ജനം ഉണർന്നിരിക്കണം. അത്രയേ വേണ്ടതുളളൂ.

ജാത്യാചാരങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് അകലം പാലിച്ച്, നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ ഒരു സമൂഹത്തിനായി നിലകൊണ്ട ശ്രീ നാരായണ ഗുരുവിന്റെ ആദർശങ്ങൾ, മതമേതായാലും മനുഷ്യൻ നന്നായാൽ മതി എന്നിങ്ങനെയുള്ള പ്രബോധനങ്ങൾ മുതലായവ കേരളീയർ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളാൻ സമയം വൈകിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ജനങ്ങളുടെ മനോരഥം നന്നായാൽ നേതാക്കൾ നന്നായേ തീരൂ. അതിനവർ തയ്യാറാകുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ അവരെ മാറ്റിയേ തീരൂ. ■



THE CHARMING BINDI



Dr. (Major) Nalini Janardhanan

■ “Bindiya Chamkegi”.....” Teri Bindiya re haihai”.....

Remember those good old Bollywood Songs on Bindi? Why is this much importance given to a small dot on our forehead? Actually bindi is and has been an integral part of our Indian Culture and heritage, may be since time immemorial. Some of the ancient cave paintings and sculptures of our Goddesses are also incomplete without bindi. You can't imagine a woman (married) without a bindi on her forehead. As per our customs, a widow is not supported to put on bindi as part of other signs of suhag (marriage) like mangalsutra, bangles, rings, bichua, shankha (worn by Bengalis) etc. So bindi is an inseparable part of the image of Indian women.

Nowadays bindi has become a fashion accessory. Sari, Salwar Kameez, Lehenga-choli or any Indian traditional dress of ladies is not

complete without a bindi. Even college going young girls try different types of bindis.

Bindi comes in various shapes and forms ranging from powder bindi or liquid bindi to stick-on bindis. In earlier days women used to put sindoor or kumkum on their foreheads. Chandan (Sandalwood), Haldi (Turmeric) or bhasma (Sacred Ash) were also used in dry or paste form as bindis. The most popular shades of bindis used by married woman are red



and maroon and the commonest shape is round. But now the market is flooded with bindis of different shapes, sizes, colors and designs to suit every ensemble or occasion and to cater to everyone's taste. Working women prefer stick-on bindis. 'Designer' bindis are in vogue nowadays. Special bridal bindis are also available for weddings. They are made using pearls, zari, stones,

sequins and American diamonds. In fact bejeweled bindis go well with heavy silk saris and “designer” dresses.

You should select a bindi which suits your face, figure and personality. For example, an oval bindi is more suitable for a round face. A large bindi may not suit a small lady.

Stick-on type of bindis can lead to allergy causing allergic contact dermatitis. This is due to the constant contact between the skin on the forehead

and the gum at the backside of the stick-on bindi. Itching, redness followed by small pimples and skin rashes may

develop on the area of contact. If you notice allergy to bindis, consult a dermatologist and start treatment as per the doctor's advice. Also take care to avoid those types of bindis in future.

The charming bindi is not just an accessory. It has a charm of its own and it is definitely an important part of our tradition. ■



Live Life Happily

Dr (Major) Nalini Janardhanan

A happy new year is a dream of everyone. We always like to lead a happy and peaceful life. But the truth is that life is a roller coaster ride of ups and downs, struggles, disappointments, joys and sorrows. Still if we plan our days and change our perspective of life, happiness may brighten your days like sunshine. Let me give you some tips for a happy life (as advised by elders and scholars).

■ Don't take life too seriously. Grab any opportunity you get, to be happy.

■ Write out a short list of the simple things that give you pleasure.

■ Don't compare your life to others. You may not know what problems they have behind the curtain of their rich or famous life.

■ Forgive everyone for everything.

Negative feelings like grudge, hatred and envy are harmful to your mind so learn to control your emotions. Life is too short to waste time hating others.

■ Time heals everything. So don't be sad and depressed.



■ However bad or good a situation is, it will change. So don't be proud about your money.

■ Don't overdo or stress out in your job

and life. Keep your limits and take one step at a time.

■ Think positive thoughts. Don't waste your time thinking about things which you can't change or not under your control.

■ Get ready 5-10 minutes early and reach your workplace in time to avoid stress and negativity. Moreover punctuality is a good habit.

■ Spend more time with people having positive attitudes and avoid interaction with negative thinkers.

■ Try to make atleast three people smile each day. Give them your smile!

■ Be kind to others in small ways (eg: giving up your seat in train or bus for elders or handicapped persons, buying lunch for a poor child etc.)

■ Learn to appreciate others. They will like you.

MDMA

3, 4, methylenedioxy-N-methylamphetamine



Dr Sujatha Nair

■ Ecstasy, Molly, E, Roll, X, XTC

The rave and party drug that has taken the party scene by a storm for several decades.

It is available in Pill form - Ecstasy -

which can however be adulterated by bath salts [cathionines] or any other chemicals. It is called Molly for "molecular" available in capsule form but which can be mixed with bath salts again. It is also available in crystal form which is swallowed or dissolved in water and drunk. Powdered versions are also available which are snorted.

it is a psychedelic drug with stimulant effects.

It affects three chemicals in the brain-

Dopamine- causes euphoria and increased energy.

Norepinephrine- causes increase in heart rate and in blood pressure which can result even in a heart attack or a stroke.

Serotonin- MDMA causes the brain to secrete enormous amounts of serotonin and eventually this depletes the serotonin sources and reduces it considerably. Initially it causes one to feel all loving and caring, alters perceptions, heightens the senses. However, soon it causes a very low dip or even depression and anxiety in the individual.

The effect of MDMA sets in within 30 to 60 minutes. In 3.5 to 4 hours it peaks followed by a plateau and then a depressive phase to stave off which a dose is popped again.

At times to enhance the psychedelic effects it is combined with LSD,

Psilocybin mushrooms or Ketamine called as "flipping". Also with marijuana and alcohol.

Effects: The person under influence becomes physically very active alert and hence it is used in rave parties where people dance non stop for the entire night and day . The music has a synergistic effect in enhancing the psychedelic effects. The mind becomes hyperactive. Thoughts run at a high speed.

After effects- dry mouth, lack of appetite, bruxism [lockjaw] repeated involuntary clenching of teeth, blurred vision, chills, sweating, fatigue, anxiety, paranoia, feelings of excessive love, increased sexual desire, this can result in high risk sexual behaviors too , insomnia, lack of focus .

In people who have myopia, with a high number, MDMA causes expansion of the eyeball which puts pressure on the retina. The small retinal capillaries might leak resulting in floaters in the line of vision. Retinal tears also might happen increasing the risk of loss of vision.

In people who have traits of ADHD, the use of this drug magnifies the effects.

In people with underlying anxiety and dependency issues, these symptoms get highlighted and last longer.

Thus depending on the frequency, duration, quantity of usage and the underlying personality traits, the duration of the effects also vary.

Over the course of the week following moderate use of the drug, a person may experience: irritability, impulsiveness and aggression, depression, sleep problems, anxiety, memory and attention problems, decreased appetite, decreased interest in

and pleasure from sex

Chronic use results in depression anxiety and paranoia.

Other physical adverse effects

MDMA can cause increased body temperatures to abnormal levels so much so that it can lead to multi organ failure, heart failure and can prove fatal.

Withdrawals seen - fatigue, anxiety, depression, lack of appetite, difficulty in focus.

Treatment

Residential care in an alternate life therapy center/drug rehab in an environment that is non judgmental, loving and accepting with counseling, meditation, yoga, writing and other alternate therapies is the path to a resolution.

We provide the same at AHvulsing and aspiring on their own vomit and dying have been seen. In the US there have been at least 19 deaths amongst Americans aged 19-29years due to this. Deaths and bizarre behavior have also been reported from Australia and Britain.

In India the drug has recently entered the market and caches have been caught by the NCB in Bangalore and Mumbai.

Thus this slow growing menace needs to be tackled with increasing awareness in society.

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Film: Ambalapravu
Lyrics: P Bahaskaran
Music: M S Baburaj
Singer: K J Yesudas

ദുഃഖങ്ങൾക്കിന്നു ഞാൻ അവധി കൊടുത്തു!

ദുഃഖങ്ങൾക്കിന്നു ഞാൻ അവധി കൊടുത്തു
സാർഗ്ഗത്തിൽ ഞാനൊരു മുറിയെടുത്തു
വിധിയും ഞാനും ഒരു കൂടു ചിട്ടുമായ്
വിളയാടാനിരിക്കുന്നു. എന്റെ
(ദുഃഖങ്ങൾക്കിന്നു)

Duhkhangalkinnu njan avadhi kotuthu
Swargathil njanoru murhiyetuthu
Vidhiyum njanum oru kootu cheettumai
Vilhayatanirikkunnu. Ente
(Duhkhangal..)

അപ്സരമണികൾ സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾ ചുറ്റും
അത്ഭുതപാനപാത്രം നിറയ്ക്കുന്നു
മുത്തണികൈവള കിലുക്കി എൻ കല്പന
കസ്തുരിചാമരം വീശുന്നു. എന്റെ
(ദുഃഖങ്ങൾക്കിന്നു)

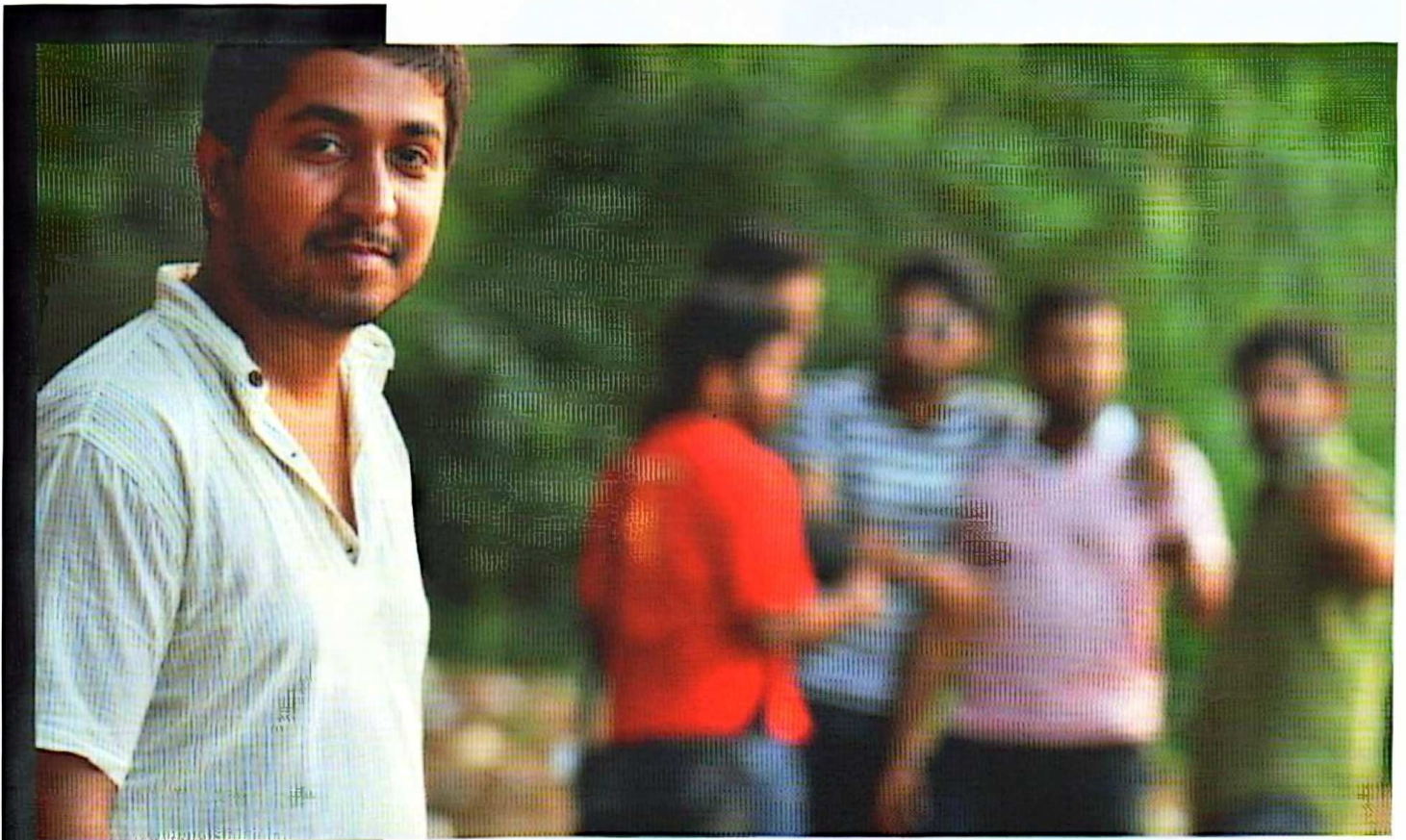
Apsaramanikal swapnangal chuttum
Atbhutapaanapathram nirhakkunnu
Muthanikaivalha kilukki en kalpana
Kasthoori chamaram Veeshunnu. Ente
(Duhkhangal..)

മനുജ ജീവിതമലർപ്പൊതി ഇതുവരെ
അനുഭവിക്കാനെനിക്കൊത്തില്ലാ
പതിരും മലരും ശരിയും തെറ്റും
പെറുക്കി പെറുക്കി ഞാൻ വലഞ്ഞല്ലോ. എന്റെ
(ദുഃഖങ്ങൾക്കിന്നു)

Manuja jeevitamarppoti ithuvare
Anubhavikkanenikkothilla
Patirum malarum shariyum thettum
Perhukki perhukki njan valnjallo. Ente
(Duhkhangal..)

Ambalapravu is a 1970 Indian Malayalam film, directed by P. Bhaskaran and produced by TC Barjathya for Sargam Pictures. The film's main cast were Prem Nazir, Sheela, Madhu and Sharada in lead roles. The film had musical score by MS Baburaj. Other actors were Adoor Bhasi, P. J. Antony, Sankaradi, T. R. Omana, C A Balan, K P Ummer et al. The song was picturised on P J Antony, a drunkard. He had another similar song in 'Randitangazhi', his first

film and that too as hero. The song was 'Naalheyana kalyanam..' sung by Kamukara Purushothaman and composed by Brother Laxman. There are five songs written by P Bhaskaran and composed by M S Baburaj and all of them were well received. The singers were K J Yesudas, P Jayachandran, S Janaki and P Leela. Other songs were Kuppaayakkeeshamel, Maavupoothu Maathalam Poothu, Pramadavanathil and Thaane Thirinjum.



ABY

■ After the hit film 'Kunhiramayana' Vineet is busy with his next venture 'Aby' that is nearing completion. Directed by debutant Shrikant Murali, it has Merina Michael as Vineet's heroine. Other actors are Aju Varghese, Suraj Venjaramoodu, Sudhir Karamana, Harish Peradi, Manish Chowdhary, Vineeta Koshy et al. After Kunhiramayana, its producer Suvin K Varkey of Little Big films undertook the production of this film. It is written by Santhosh Echikkanam. The lyricists are Rafiq Ahmed and Santhosh Varma and the music composers are Bijibal, Anil Johnson and Jaison J Nair.

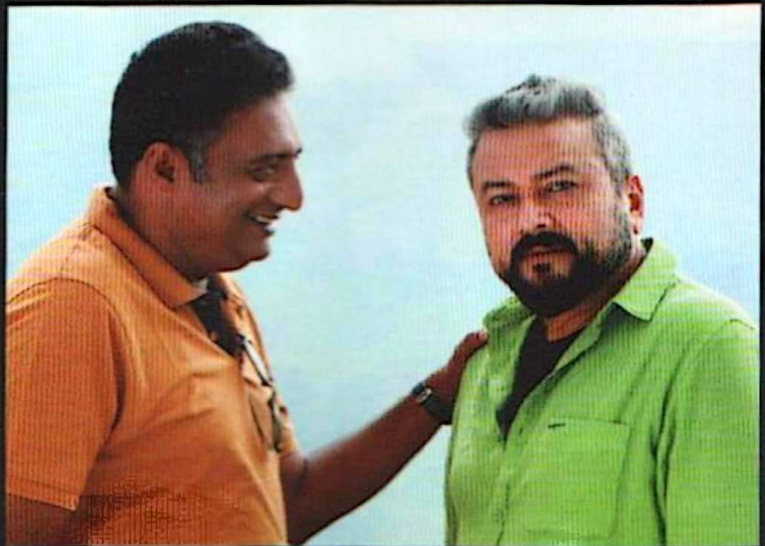
SARVOPARI PALAKKARAN

■ 'Sarvopari Palakkaran' (Above all, man from Pala) is produced by Adv Ajo Jose for Rubigs Movies and it is being directed by Venugopal. Anoop Menon and Aparna Balamurali present the lead characters. Anu Sitara is also coming in an important role. Other actors are Alansier, Balu Varghese, Vijaykumar, Manuraj, Chali Pala, Gayathri Arun, Nandu, Manju Sathish et al. Screenplay is written by S Suresh Babu. Madhu Vasudevan and B Sandhya wrote the lyrics and Biju Bal scored the music.



ACHAYANS

■ Tamil actor Prakash Raj has an important role in Achayans directed by Kannan Thamarakkulam who earlier did 'Adupuliyattam.' Prakash Raj is coming as a Tamil Brahmin Karthik Viswanathan. Jayaram and Amala Paul are in the lead. Unni Mukundan, Sanju Shivaram, Adil Ibrahim, Anu Sitara, Janarddhanan, Maniyan Pilla Raju, Pashanam Shaji, Sohan Sinu Lal, Narayanankutty, Ramesh Pisharody, Sajan Palluruthi, Kaviyoor Ponnamma, Ponnamma Babu, Tezni Khan, Usha Sunny et al are also in the film. Sethu writes the screenplay. Lyrics are penned by Kaithapram, Hari Narayanan and Anil Panachuran while music is composed by Rathish Vega.



CONFLICT OF FILM EXHIBITION

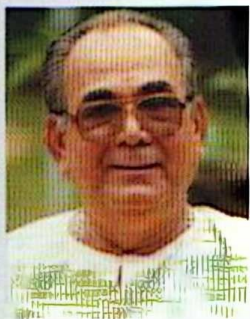
■ For some time a conflict was up-and-coming in the Malayalam movie world among theatre owners, distributors and producers regarding the sharing of income from theatre collections. Till now after taxes, the theatres were getting 40% of the remaining collections and the distributor-producers the balance. Of late, the first class theatres were demanding 50% which was opposed by the other group. There was a joint meeting of the concerned parties in presence of the concerned state minister but nothing came out of the meeting. Now all parties have hardened their stand and it is assumed that no new releases would be made available for Christmas. Further two movies that continue to draw audience since their release two months ago, Puli Murugan and Kattappanayile Rithik Roshan would also be withdrawn

by the distributors from the 300 odd theatres under the Exhibitors Federation. However, multiplexes and government owned theatres would continue to get films from the distributors. The latter has also taken a decision to ban theatres of Cinepolis group as their Pune theatre was found responsible to leak a copy of Puli Murugan for illegal copy making. It would mean that the A class theatres will depend on other language movies such as Tamil and Hindi for Christmas. The Amir Khan film Dangal will make its appearance during the Christmas season. The Malayalam movies that would miss their releasing date during this Christmas season include Mohanlal starrer 'Munthirivallikal Thalirkkumbol', Jayasurya starrer 'Fukri' and Dulkhar Salman's 'Joemonte Suvisheshangal.'



THE GREAT FATHER

■ Mammooty presents the title character in this film directed by Hanif Adeni based on his own screenplay. It is produced by August Cinema and Snehi. I M Vijayan, Arya are also in the cast. It is mainly shot in Thrissur.



ACTOR JAGANNATHA VARMA NO MORE

■ Character actor and Kathakali artist K N Jagannatha Varma (77) passed away on Dec 20. He was ailing for sometime due

to respiratory problems. His body was kept at the office of the Film Development Corporation for public view. Noted personalities from the political, social and cultural field paid obeisance and the body was finally consigned to flames on Dec 21.

Jagannatha Varma was born as the third son of Chertala Thekkedath Kōvilakam Kerala Varma Thamburan and Varanad Kootunkal Kovilakm Ambalika Thamburatti. He joined the Kerala police in 1963 and retired as Deputy Commandant of Kerala Armed Police. His entry into film world was through 'Mattoli' (Echo) directed by Bhim Singh in 1978. He acted in more than 500 films in his three and a half decade stay in the film world. He also acted in several teleserials also for various channels. His well known films include Nakhakshatungal, New Delhi, Oru CBI Dairy Kurippu, Parinayam, Lelam, Vietnam Colony, Pathram, Aaram

Thamburan, Praja etc. Swami Ayyappan, Kadamattathu Kathanar, Mangalyapattu etc were among his teleserials. He started training as a Kathakali artist from the age of 14. He along with his brother Surendra Varma appeared on the Kathakali scene donning the characters of Kunti and Karna respectively on many venues. His last performance was ten years ago. Varma also debuted in Chenda when he was 74. His last film was Doll released in 2012. He is survived by wife Santha Varma, children Manu Varma, Priya Varma, son in law Viji Thampi, and daughter law Sindhu Varma.



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