

■ CoverStory

The coir industry in Kerala, despite its all illness is offering five lakh plus job to the people. Government is to open an era of modernisation for rejuvenating the industry.

JOSHY MANJUMMEL

The Golden Fibre



The story of coir begins with coconut palm. Though it is next to impossible to trace back its origin, both historians and scientists are of the view that the coconut palm had existed as far back as 3000 years ago. This cocount palm had played pivotal role in the economy of Kerala from time immemorial till the "Gulf -money" took over it in early 70s. Coconut farming, oil extraction, toddy tapping and coir industry were the backbone the backbone of the state's economy.

Though the fast chainging Kerala scenario has relegated the cocount farming, oil extraction and toddy tapping into the backyard of its development agenda, the coir industry still provides jobs for 5 lakh people in the coastal areas of the State and produces goods worth Rs 600 corore for export and domestic markets every year.

Coir industry is still the largest sources of non-farming employment for the rural poor in Kerala. While processing of fibre and spinning of coir yarn is spread across the entrie coastal belt employing bulk of the workers, mnaufacturing of coir products is localised in and around the Alappuza town and Cherthala. Nearly half the workers in the regions are employed in the industry.

Everybody agree that picture of the coir scenario is not so rosy now for various reasons. While the industry has been enjoying buoyant market conditions and rising profits, domesti prices and wages have been declining giving rise to industrial unrest.

The exports of coir and coir products had been declining since the fitties reaching a rock bottom of 23,214 tonnes in 1986-87. Since then it has been steadily rising to reach 27,926 tonnes in 1991 and then more than double within a decade reaching a peack of 67,493 tonnes in 2000-01. The rise in demand has been fulfilled by changes in market tastes in favour of natural products and demand fro geo-textiels.

The unit value of exports has also rising from Rs 13,545 in 1986-87 to Rs 17,350 in 1991 and then very rapidly to Rs 49,655 in 1999.

The data show that rise in price in

rupee terms have not been a barrier for increasing the exports. As part of on going reforms, the floor prices on coir exprots has been virtually given up. The abolition of Minimum Exprot Price has resulted in a decline of coir price in 2000-01 and it is still continuing.

With fall in export prices, the prices paid by eporters to samll-scale producers (purchase price) also began to decline. With constan reduction in purchase price , producers were froced to cut the waters throughout the industry.

The situation has fruther worsened with the emergence of depot system (middlemen) between exporters and producers. The manipulations of depot owners have created a lot of porblem in the industry. Wages and quality have been at the receing end.

Modernisation

These apart ,the slow pace of modernisation processes is also a bane of the coir industry. Experts are of the view that the phase of modernisation of different sectors of industry needs to be accelerated and pave way for cost effective and productive equipment and machinery to replace the age old tradition and outmoded production and processing equipment. Lack of organised and co-ordinated efforts is felt in certatin sectors of the industry and this had affected the momentum of modernisation of industry despite the fact that the industry is now all set to accept the modern methods of production.

Training forms an integral part of modernisation process. keeping this in view Coir Board lays special emphasis in its plan programmes and organsies training in the use/adoption of new methods of production employing new devices.

Problems faced by producers

Coir products for domestic and export markets are mainly manufactured by the small-scale producers of coir who finds its oftern difficult to get quality raw materials like fibre, yarn, dye and chemiclas at reasonable prices from the privity traders, whom they depend for its procurement. The solumtion to this problem is to establish a Raw Material Bank capable of stocking and supplying quality items like coir fibre, coir yarn, dyes and other chemicals at a resonable prices to the small-scale manufactures number over 5000. ■

Coir the future

The various messures envisaged under the Kerala Government's integrated coir development project is expected to increase the prodcution of untreated fibre in the northern district of Kerala. The long-term strategy of the Coir Board is for production of coir fibre to go up to 5,00,00 tonnes by 2007 from the present level of 2,50,00 tonnes. The fibre availability would, therefore, be substantially improved in the years ahead making substantial exportable surplus of raw material and finished products after catering to the domestic requirements .

A recent development of great significance to the coir industry is the use of coir in the field of soil engineering to solve the problems due to soil erosion . So far various types of geo synthetic have been in use. But coir, jute and other natural products started gaining popularity as an eco-friendly substitute to synthetic products in many areas of bio engineering applications.

A recent study undertaken by the International Trade Centre, Geneva under the auspices of the Inter Governmental group of Hard Fibres of FAO in select countries like the USA, Austeralia, New Zeland, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, the Netherland, Germany and the UK reveals that coir geo-textiles has a very fast growing global market.

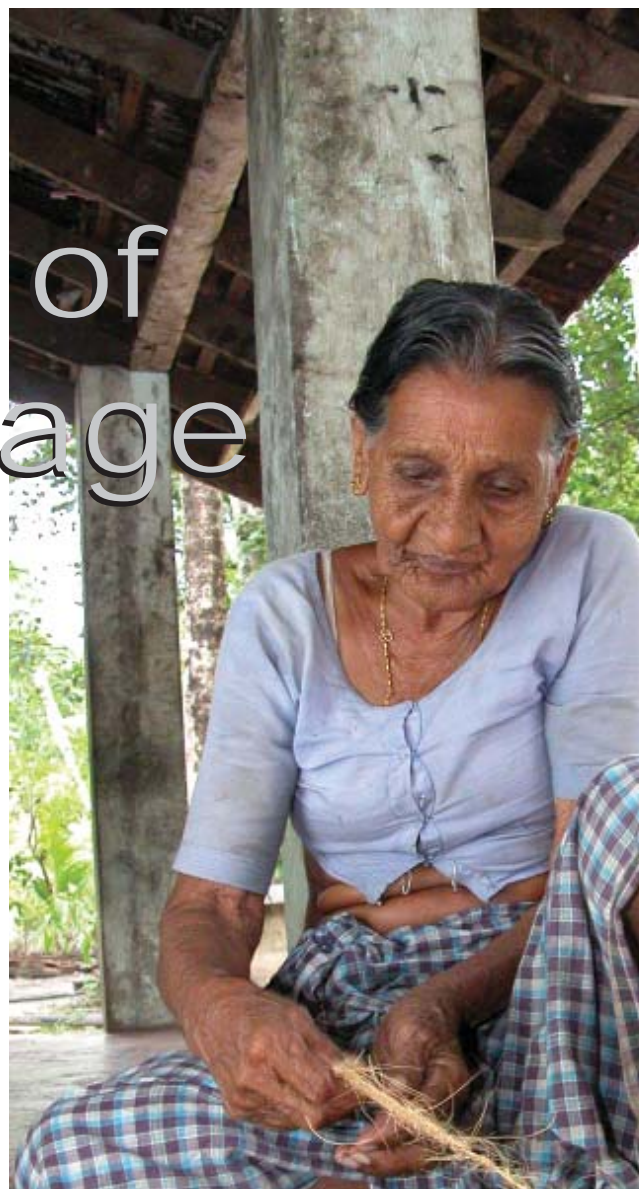
The major bottleneck for large scale applications of coir geo-textiles is not at all the potential users are aware of the existance and performance of this prouducts as also the technical specifications are not available. Promotion of these products should be with a view to persuading the potential users to change their current practice of applying geosynthetics which are not eco-friendly. The eco-friendly propperties of coir as also other relevent body could be used to influence the Government departments, decision makers, developers, bio-enginners. In Indai also there is vast potential for coir nettig or its use as geo-textiles. ■

Chemistry of fibre shortage

Coir industry in Kerala has been in the grip of a shortage of raw material during the past few years. This is not permanent phenomenon as the industry experienced similar occasions in the past also. Coconut husk is a ubiquitous commodity and is available wherever the coconut palms are grown. But its availability to the coir industry is affected by a number of factors.

The problem of husk shortage was prevalent in the industry even during 1970s. The government of Kerala implemented the Husk Control Act, for ensuring the availability of husk for coir industry through the primary coir cooperatives and to the licensed husk dealers. The problem of husk shortage in spite of enactment of the Act and its implementation could not be addressed effectively and therefore a three point levy system was introduced in the coir industry subsequently by the government of Kerala.

There were inter and intra state restriction in the movements of husk as measures to ensure availability of husk for coir production in the State. But all these regulations were subsequently withdrawn. Of late, the growing environmental consciousness among the general public resentment against retting of coconut husk. This development however, contributed reduction in the availability of fibre, employing traditional methods of retting and fibre extraction. The result has been withdrawal



Role of quality

Quality is a powerful competitive weapon to increase the volume of sales and expand the contours of market. The expected quality standards are hard to achieve in coir sector because the products are largely undertaken in tiny self-employed units scattered all over the coastal regions in Kerala with low infrastructural facilities. The different manufacturing processes are handled by thousands of skilled and semi-skilled workers in different units. As such, the production and processing lack any homogeneity. The spinning of coir yarn and manufacturing of basic products are carried out on a cottage industry basis and in view of its wide spread nature, achieving standards in quality through process quality control is not an easy task. This could be

resolved through quality improvement programme like quality camps and extension services.

As the export of coir is managed by comparatively small and medium exporters their access to current market information of their own is rather limited. There is at present no system of collection and dissemination of market information on a systematic and regular manner. As a result, Indian embassies and trade missions abroad are not in a position to meet with requirements on a regular basis. Lack of market intelligence and its necessary feedback has been identified as an impending factor affecting the growth of export.

of organised husk dealers and suppliers who were assisting the industry as feeder units in the matter of raw material.

The reduction in the structure of holding of coconut plantations due to the Land Reform Act in Kerala reduced the availability of husk for the coir industry. The drop in the fibre production in the



RINKURAJMATTANCHERYIL

comparatively cheaper labour in Tamil Nadu.

However, the present shortage of coconut husk in the industry is not a situation developed all on a sudden. Rather it is the cumulative effect of the draught and the mite disease which have been affecting the coconut production in Kerala over the past several years. The story of the neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka are also not different.

Realising the gravity of the problem and the need for a long term solution for improving the availability of husk to the industry Coir Board is taking various measures.

For the immediate improvement of the position, the Board took some short term measures as well. The Board facilitated procurement of coir fibre from production centres in other coir producing states for supply in Kerala. A fibre distribution



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centre was opened at the Central Coir Research Institute in Alappuzha for the manufacturers in the area. The board has been providing all assistance to the trade including price support through Market Development Assistance Scheme for ensuring availability of sufficient quantity of fibre in Kerala. Under the aegis of the board.

The Kanniyakumary Central Coir Co-operative Society mobilised coir fibre from production centres in Kanyakumari and

Pollachi for distributing in Kerala at lowest possible price. The board also explored the possibilities of sourcing fibre from other coir producing states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

The board constituted a Coir Relation Committee consisting of representatives of exporters, small scale manufacturers, trade unions and fibre suppliers with the aim of taking stock of the situation periodically and to take suitable actions after taking into confidence all sectors of the industry. As a result of the efforts, availability of fibre improved in the market and prices started to come down.

As a long term strategy to address the problem of fibre shortage, the chairman of Coir Board has requested all the District Collectors in Kerala for promoting setting up of more defibering units for extraction of coir fibre by utilising the husk available locally and availing of the financial assistance under the board schemes as also

coastal regions in Kerala prompted setting up of a number of defibering and decorticating mills in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Coconut husk in the northern districts of Kerala started getting transported to defibering units in Tamil Nadu for fibre production. An added advantage is the availability of

utilising the margin money scheme under the REGP of KVIC.

At the initiative of district collectors meeting of officials like general managers of DIC, lead bank officers, Kudumbasree projects co-ordinators and prospective entrepreneurs are being convened with a view to encouraging establishment of new defibering units in various districts. Such meetings have already taken place in districts of Alappuzha, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Kannur, Kollam



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and Idukki.

Coconuts are available in Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands where exists untapped potential to step up production of fibre if the industry there could be activated. As a long-term measure Coir Board is making efforts in that direction also with the co-operation

of concerned state governments through specific action plans.

Extension of the scheme of Mahila Coir Yojana for enhancing utilisation of coconut husk is another long term measure envisaged by the board to tide over the shortage of fibre. Mahila coir Yojana is the first women-oriented self-employment programme of the coir board. Under the scheme, the board imparts training to women workers in the spinning of coir yarn on motorised ratt/motorised traditional ratt and provide subsidy of 75 per cent of the ratt.

With a view to help the women workers in sourcing adequate quantities of coir fibre, particularly, at the

time of scarce supply, the Board proposes to incorporate a backward linkage under the Mahila Coir Yojana to ensure raw materials to the women workers to spin coir yarn and earn their livelihood.

Shortage of husk is mainly on account of lack of an organised mechanism for collection of husk and the manifold

increase in the transportation cost during the last one decade which made procurement and distribution of husk uneconomical to the husk dealers. The scheme envisages introduction of systematic collection mechanism by which husk being wasted in the rural and urban areas could be mobilised and made available to the coir industry.

Under the proposed scheme a nominal incentives will be provided for collecting of husk available in the rural and urban areas by engaging rural women workers under Self Help Groups. This would ensure the availability of raw material locally for stepping up production and generate employment to rural women. The scheme will be implemented with active co-operation of NGOs, coir-cooperative societies, Women Self-Help Groups and PSUs.

The board is aiming to mobilise adequate raw material available in the country for coir production and through it to achieve rural employment generation. The objective is to achieve 50 per cent utilisation of husk available in the country from the present level of 35 per cent. An awareness campaign highlighting the importance of making available the coconut husk to the coir industry and through them providing rural employment has been initiated.

-Kavitha Menon



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Modernisation of coir industry



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K.R. Gouri Amma

Minister for Agriculture and Coir

Coir Industry, being one of the oldest traditional industries of Kerala is given top priority by the State Government. About 5 lakh workers depend on the industry for their livelihood. In the last financial year industry earned more than Rs.450 crore as foreign exchange. It creates more employment in the rural area. The industry has its roots in the rural area and since mostly women workers are involved at different stages of production, this industry has an added relevance in State economy. In a state like Kerala where modern industries are lesser in number, the development of this industry mainly based on the natural fibre available within

the state attracts immediate attention.

Upto the ninth five-year plan, the development of coir sector was mainly carried out through the cooperative societies. Cooperative societies producing fibre, coir and coir products and societies manufacturing coir products with an apex society, the Coirfed, for the promotion of sales, function in the coir sector. Apart from this more than 10000 small-scale producers and nearly 200 exporters are functioning in the coir industry. The public sector undertaking, the Kerala State Coir Corporation is engaged in the purchase and sale of coir products from the small scale producers.

Manufacture and sale of rubberised coir is undertaken by the Foam Mattings (India) Ltd, a public sector undertaking.

National Coir Research a

V. Bhavani IAS

Coconut fibre popularly known in the name of one of its products viz. coir has got immense potential with its biogradable and eco-friendly nature. The WTO has thrown open a very big market for the traditional as well as non-traditional products. But the coir industry in the state with its traditional practices of processing, is yet to tap its full potential. Modernisation requires focus on proper research and detailed studies. The government felt it necessary to establish a national coir research and management institute for the purpose. The existing centre for coir technology is going to be elevated to the standard of the National Institute.

The detailed project report of NCRMI is prepared by the Tata Consultancy Services. The foundation stone for the institute has been laid by the Chief Minister Oommen Chandy in December 2004 at Kudappanakkunnu having a campus area of 7 acres. Establishment of the institute is included in the current one year's action plan of the Government is a clear indication of Government's top priority for the project.

Mission of NCRMI

Ensuring an appropriate place for the 'golden fibre' and the stakeholders of the sector in all walks of life, and to constantly pursue innovations and improvements in coir and coir related products through continuous research, education, training and extensive application."

Welfare activities and distribution of pension to coir workers are carried out by the Kerala State Coir Workers Welfare Board. Up to the 9th five year plan schemes for the cooperatives alone was implemented and reasonable funds have not been allocated for research and development activities. However, 1994 onwards Centre for Development of Coir Technology (C-DOCT) is conducting some research projects.

In the last decade, the functioning of the cooperatives was not productive. Decrease in the availability of raw material, politicisation of cooperative sector, lack of professional management systems, apathy

Vision of NCRMI

"To act as a nodal agency for coordinating the technological, commercial and academic developments in the entire gamut of activities related to the coir sector in Kerala and emerge as a Center of Excellence, for R&D, Industrial consulting and Knowledge dissemination, Globally"

Objectives of NCRMI

The objectives of NCRMI are

- Ensuring assured level of basic services to the people working in the coir sector
- Building an enabling environment for growth for the sector
- Achieving Fiscal sustainability of the sector enabling continuous development
- Undertake consulting for improvement of the industry in terms of product Value Addition, diversification in coconut fibres in the lines of other natural fibres industries and evolving marketing strategies for export/ domestic (rural) markets etc.
- Undertake transfer of technology for POC and acceptance amongst the

industry about new generation Value Added products.

- Act as a knowledge centre for all information relating to policy directions, sharing of ideas, new product developments, market intelligence, improvements in the industry, technology innovations, product trends, trade practices and all other areas in coir through interaction, co-ordination and networking with other institutions of national and



to mechanisation, hostility to the utilisation of modern technology, lack of sales facilities etc. are the factors that affected the growth of coir industry adversely. Many of the cooperatives in the coir sector are in the brink of liquidation. In the 10th five-year plan, Rs.149.85 lakh has been disbursed for the reconstruction of sick societies. Further, steps have been taken to disburse Rs.1.77 crores for the active societies.

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minimum wages from the cooperatives. As most of the workers are women, more employment opportunities are created and self help groups are being organised in the sector for providing more days of work. Last year 6000 women workers were given training in ¼ HP motorised ratt and ratts

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- Create awareness amongst Coir Industry on new IPRs, Contractual Obligations, and international trade related issues.
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When the institute begins to function, the traditional coir industry will get a new profile with which the State can regain its monopoly in the industry. In a more mechanised and technologically advanced industry the workers will enjoy the atmosphere as in the case of any other modern manufacturing units.

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basic level. Women workers engaged in the defibering processes are now not willing to do such works. Further, husk retting has almost ceased because of the pollution threats and health hazards. In order to tide over the situation, Kudumbashree project is engaged in the procurement of husk available within the State. M/s Foam

Mattings (India) is authorised to import fibre from abroad. The Coirfed has already procured 4341-quintal fibre and distributed among the societies on no profit no loss basis. Apart from this, fibre is distributed from the four defibering units run by the Coirfed.

Government have introduced a new scheme for attracting private entrepreneurs to this field. As per the scheme the government will give a subsidy of 50 per cent of the investment (limiting 10 lakhs) to the defibering units starting in the State. Thirty defibering units have already been registered and three among them have started functioning.

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The Coirfed, the apex body of coir cooperatives, has been given Rs.250 lakhs for installing a raw material bank and sanctioned Rs.50 lakhs to the State Coir Corporation. When these projects are in operation the shortage of fibre will be solved to a certain extent.

In order to avoid pollution due to the accumulation of pith in the defibering mills, a scheme for providing 30 per cent special investment subsidy for starting pith processing unit is being implemented.

A distress purchase scheme is being implemented to solve the difficulties due to dullness and fluctuations in the market by ensuring fare price to the small producers. A revolving fund of Rs.8 crores is constituted. The scheme will help to safeguard the interests of the small producers and the situation of stock swelling of coir products can be avoided.

As 90 per cent of the coir export is contributed by Alappuzha district, for infrastructural development including the development of common facility service centre, the Central Government has accorded sanction in principle for a Rs.56.80 core project in the coir cluster at Alappuzha as central assistance through

Coir Board. From the above, the first instalment of Rs.17.22 has already been received. The Central Government is being pressed for opening a permanent trade centre exclusively for coir in the model of Demotex of Germany. From the year 2000-2001 onwards the rebate scheme is substituted by MDA scheme for which the State Government disbursed Rs.1936.39 lakhs so far.

The welfare of the workers engaged in the coir sector is being looked after by the Kerala Coir Workers Welfare Fund Board. The board implements various schemes for the coir workers using the grant given by the State Government and the share collected from the exporters. The collection of share from the exporters is stopped as per the directions of the Hon. High Court of Kerala. The State Government released an amount of Rs.19.18 crores to the board during the last year for welfare activities.

It is felt necessary to focus on research and development activities for revamping the industry. The C-DOCT which conducts research and other studies in the technology development in the coir sector is proposed to be elevated to the status of

National Coir Research and Management Institute (NCRMI). The foundation stone for the institute has been laid at Kudappanakkunnu. A detailed project report is prepared by M/s Tata Consultancy Services. It is intended to manufacture value added and designed coir products through research and studies. The state can achieve dominance in the domestic and foreign market by the production of diversified products using coir fibre and quality standardised coir yarns. Special fund is allotted to C-DOCT for introducing new ratts and high capacity machineries in the industry.

Coir village is an innovative and novel concept in the coir sector. The project envisages to conduct all activities relating to coir and coir products like defibering, dyeing, bleaching, spinning, manufacturing of coir mats and mattings, geotextiles, pith utilisation etc. under one umbrella. There will be provision for basic services such as sanitation, drinking water and electrification of houses in the coir village. Presently, two coir villages one at Peruman in Kollam and the other at Vayalar in Alappuzha will be started soon. An amount of Rs.28 lakh has been sanctioned for this. It is proposed to select four sites during 2005-06 for which Rs.30 lakh is provided.

The Government have decided to implement several modernisation programmes for the development of the coir industry with immediate effect. A lab will be set up at the National Coir Research and Management institute and coir geotextiles technology will be marketed. As part of modernisation the handlooms at Foam Matting India Ltd and Kerala State Coir corporations will be replaced with power looms at a cost of Rs.75 lakhs each. Billowing machine will be distributed and mat-finishing units will be provided to all SHGs. A flocking machine will be set up in the Coirfed.

The coir and coir production manufactured in the State will be marketed under a brand name of "Kerala brand" coir. ISO certificates will be obtained for the Government agencies like the Kerala State Coir Corporation, Coirfed and Foam Matting (India). Government will declare awards for the designed coir products.

When high quality diversified products are brought to market, coir and coir products from the state can come to the forefront of the industry. Coir workers, small and large manufacturers, industrialists and exporters should work together and render their whole hearted support to the Government for strengthening the industry. ■



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Down the memory lane

Coir Industry in India has a very long history. Even the 11th century Arab writers have mentioned about coir and referred to the use of this material for ships, cables, fenders and rigging.

During the 13th century there was an

evidence of coir yarn being used for ship-building in the Persian Gulf. The ancient traveller Mar co Polo, was impressed by its usage in the Persian Gulf and later on visited the land where from Arabs brought their coir and recorded as to how it was made out of a fibre extracted from the

coconut husk.

India and Sri Lanka became the first coir countries - in that order. Though Philippines and Indonesia are two major coconut producing countries, there is not coir industry worth the name. Unlike in India, especially in Kerala, the defibering of husks and spinning of coir is a mechanised process in Sri Lanka. Major portion of the coir produced in Sri Lanka is consumed by the agriculture sector of the country.

All the coconut communities in the world generally discarded the husk as a waste material, which from the early initiatives in Kerala, became the raw materials for the present day coir industry.

From the level of near monopolistic domination in Kerala, the coconut growing has moved in the other southern States.

In India the coconut tree is a native to the Malabar coast now known as Kerala. It was in 1859 that James Darragh and Henry Smail, two Westerners who had been in Bengal and familiar with the woven products of jute, having heard about the coir yarn came to Alappuzha with two Bengali technicians - Mukherjee and Chatterjee. They were really the pioneers of the various coir products as we know them today. They set up Darragh Smail & Co to produce the innovative products they had developed. Their success brought many other Europeans into Alappuzha and firms like Pierce Lesley & Co, Willom Goodacre & Sons, Madura Co, Coir Yaran Textiles, Bombay Co, Volkart Brothers, Aspinwall & Co came into existence.

And even the royal family of Holland becoming interested in the coir products invested in the formation of the Royal United Carpet Factory at Amoor. The royal family of Travancore also became major shareholders in the Aspinwall & Co.

Native entrepreneurs were not far behind and large Indian firms also took shape. Alleppey CO, C. George Peter and Sons, Pitchu Iyer & Sons, Coir Floor Furnishing Co, Empire Coir Works, Commercial Emporium, Charamkattu Coir Mft Co, Travancore Mats and Matting Co, Devaswomchira Coir Fabrics, Kochupillai & Son, Kolencherry Coir Factories were a few of the large establishments of native origin established then. ■

Geotextiles offer a major solution for ground improvement. They can perform different functions like filtration, separation, drainage, reinforcement and erosion control. Both natural and synthetic fibres can be used for manufacture of geotextiles. With the advent of polymers, geotextiles are mostly manufactured from polymers. They have greater uniformity and strength and are capable of fabrication into products of controlled specifications. On the other hand those from natural fibres vary in properties and cannot be easily made to strict specification.

Coir yarns made of coir fibres are dependent on the twist and friction of slivers (or plies) and consequently rigid (large diameter) fibres do not contribute to efficiency in tensile strength especially for ropes of increasing diameter because of lower drapability, greater number of defects and bridging effect in spite of the greater roughness of coir. Larger diameter ropes and mesh matting made of these yarns thus do not effectively provide an alternative to geosynthetic grids on account of the inadequate confinement of soil in the openings and also the lower pull out resistance while the weight of fabrics is increased.

Coir Fabrics

Coir geotextiles, as they are commonly named by the coir manufacturers are mostly woven coir mattings of various yarns with different mesh size. These have gained wide acceptance for erosion control as a biodegradable material in preference to jute, which degrades very fast. But as stated earlier, geotextiles have many other functions in the engineering field and it is necessary for coir industry, particularly of Kerala to venture into new products serving these purposes and maintain high quality. In the context of such modernization, value addition is a golden opportunity and this potential of coir products must be exploited. It may also be noted that for most of the engineering applications, coir geotextiles can be made from brown fibre and retting is not needed. Traditionally coir mesh mattings are made of coir yarns of various designations depending upon the runnage, scorage and nature of spinning and weaving. Investigations have shown

Diversified types

that the present classification of yarns and mesh mats specified by the Coir Board, though useful for traditional use, does not help to evaluate the engineering behaviour of coir geotextiles. Hence it is necessary to ensure uniformity and minimum strength in the classification of these yarns and mattings, which they have to be adopted in place of geosynthetics.

Coir yarns and mattings

Coir yarns are presently being manufactured using raw fibre of assorted

be used for different purpose.

Non-Woven Coir Products

Another aspect of the manufacture of coir geotextiles is the potential for non-woven products. Unfortunately production in this sector seems to be on the decline in Kerala. Such a product will be able to function more effectively for drainage, separation and reinforcement purposes. This product is flexible and can be strengthened by incorporation of polypropylene nets, chemical bonding and



Laying of coir geotextiles

length and diameter. If better yarn is to be expected, it is necessary to segregate the fibres in terms of their rigidity l/d and use them for making products for different uses. This segregation is possible utilizing a separator mechanism (similar to the one used for grading of root and tail fibres of jute) using a rotating drum and with deflector plates. A loading chute can be used for loading raw fibres during the operation of this device. Larger diameter fibres fall into a tray just below the drum while the smaller diameter fibres are carried further among and fall into another tray. If the trays are provided with screens of different lengths, it may be possible to get fibres of different l/d ratios which can

blendings, ensuring adequate permeability and soil retention characteristics (as for eg. AGL – 101 previously manufactured by Aspinwall Geotech Ltd.) Even in the case of erosion control, non-woven coir felt with such modifications are lighter and competitive to mesh matting. These non-wovens are capable of modification to suit varying demands.

Present Scenerio

Conventionally the primary use of coir geotextiles has long been for erosion control. It is for this use that there is great demand. The slow rate of degradation of coir fibre due to the high lignin content and its bio-degradability after the

f coir geotextiles

vegetation takes control of the erodibility of surface soil has been responsible for this use. Even so the use of coir geotextiles (coir mesh mattings) for erosion control is very low due to the competition with other natural fibre products of lighter weight. Coir geotextiles can also be used for silt fences to prevent erosion of coast. The possibility of using non-woven coir fabrics with reinforcement nets such as stitch-bonded blankets can prove to be more profitable.

New Applications of coir geotextiles

Other potential uses for which coir geotextiles can compete in engineering applications are ground improvement of soft clays, construction of low height bunds and protection for canal banks and beaches, base separators for road construction and railway ballast protection. Some of these are described below. The use of coir geotextiles for

important criterion and therefore the use of coir geotextiles is generally restricted to situations where permanent functioning of the coir fabrics are not needed. In ground improvement, for soft clay deposits, the rate of construction of embankment has necessarily to be slow as there will be base failure on sudden loading. This is avoided by stage loading where a small height of fill is made and after the settlements and lateral movements slow down to negligible levels, the next load stage is applied. This phenomenon is due to the consolidation of clay and dissipation of excess pressure due to the loading. If this dissipation is accelerated by vertical sand drains covered by a drainage blanket, the rate of construction can be faster. The use of coir geotextiles for encasing the metal blanket will enable temporary support or bridging of the fill and allow the stage loading to

fabric should not have large openings to allow the soil particles in the drainage layer to escape. Non-woven coir geotextiles of suitable minimum strength will be most suitable for this purpose and this will be very cost effective. However if only woven products are available, they should be made of very small diameter yarns (not carpet mattings or twill woven which increases sliding substantially) with appropriate soil retention characteristics.

Coir geotextiles have also been found useful to increase the life of pavements in weak subgrades. The separation between fine subgrades and base course is best made by non wovens and the base course made of larger size metal which can be effectively restrained by mesh mattings of larger opening sizes but of sufficient tensile and tearing strength fixed to the ground by clamps at intervals. This will improve the bearing capacity of roads and result in reduced long-term deformation. For more permanent effects these fabrics can be treated with light bituminous coatings to ensure durability without reducing friction.

A special form of coir product coco logs are being used for erosion control and as wave impact absorber. A modification of coco logs with hollow section and open ends can help drainage. The inside space can be filled with metal aggregate to increase permeability while the outer side casing of compressed coir fibre can provide protection against soil movement into the drain. This arrangement can be used as a French drain in roads which is cost effective. Since the water infiltration into the drain effectively builds up a soil filter cake, even degrading of coir fibre will not affect the long-term performance of the coir drains.

To conclude, if coir geotextiles have to find increasing use for both domestic use and export, their engineering properties have to be improved and greater control in their manufacture has to be exercised. Further a new classification system for these products must indicate their grade and use for different purposes. Kerala needs development in this sector which can be made only through research and field trials. There is great potential for the same in terms of the raw material and intelligent manpower in the state.

■ The writer is formerly director of Technical Education Kerala and Chairman Geotextile Advisory Committee



Established crop in slope land using coir geotextiles

foundations and retaining walls for long-term stability however requires field studies of longer duration, even though laboratory trials have shown that with suitable treatments, they are cost effective alternatives in selected situations. For broader engineering use, durability is an

be faster. After the consolidation of the clay, any decay of the coir fabric will not affect the performance of the embankment as the consolidated clay by itself will support the load. The coir geotextiles for this purpose (drainage) have to be highly permeable and further the

Anil Kumar M R

SPARD is the leading Non Governmental Organisation engaged in evolving and disseminating various technologies in connection with coir and its byproducts. The evolution of Society for Promotion of Agriculture Technology and Rural Development (SPARD) narrates a conscious effort by a group of highly



qualified agriculture professionals, agricultural engineers, civil engineers, social scientists and progressive farmers with innovative ideas to chalk out a development culture that is inconsistent with the local as well as international needs and one that would firm up the foundation for sustainable livelihood systems. The basic objectives and mission

statements of SPARD are:

- Socio- Economic development of the weaker section of the rural population through encouraging sustainable agriculture practices
- Development and dissemination of appropriate technologies mainly in the field of agriculture and allied areas with special emphasis on coir with overall coordination of other related discipline.

- Develop, introduce, demonstrate and train on various location specific as well as improved technologies to farmers as well as Govt/ Private agencies engaged in various stages of coir industry.

- Supporting and supplementing development initiatives of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and Government / Private agencies through providing them with necessary advise and preparation of projects proposals/ reports etc in the field of coir and its various applications.

The activity profile of SPARD encompasses the following areas:

- Promoting appropriate technical interventions in the

field of agriculture as well as soil water management with a special emphasis on coir and its applications.

- Evolving and sustaining location specific/ improved agriculture practices
- Evolving various sanitation as well as water harvesting technologies for rural population
- Initiating and strengthening the capacity building process among the

PRI leaders and farmers.

The organizational structure of SPARD facilitates a non-hierarchical and participatory mode of functioning. At the core is a broad based general body consisting of agriculture experts, engineers, progressive farmers, rural development workers and functionaries of SPARD. An executive committee elected from the General body guides the functions of the organization are managed by a Chairman and an Executive Director elected from the General body.

The frontier areas in which the organization has been able to develop core competencies are:

Technological interventions

Given the backdrop of a unplanned phase of commercialization and urbanization in Kerala, a major focus of SPARD has been to foster appropriate technological interventions with a view to preserve the fragile eco-balance and evolve cost effective technologies. Consentisation, training and technical expertise on popularizing innovative farming techniques with special emphasis on coir are the key initiative in this regard.

Decentralized Project Planning and Implementation

To translate the conceptual spirit of 'bottom up' in the definite plans of action, key functionaries and members of SPARD have undergone extensive training on participatory techniques to make the 'people-centered' interventions more effective. Many of the members and functionaries of SPARD were involved actively in the decentralized planning programme at various stages and some of them even published booklets on various technical programmes.

The responsibility of the SPARD in the role of a facilitator, the new vistas look both promising and daunting. The key challenge in the emerging context is to draw upon its core competencies and community interfaces to help build resilient rural livelihoods.

■ The writer is Asst. Executive Engineer (Agri.) Dept. of Agriculture, Alappuzha.

Soul's alchemist

VIJAYAN'S DEMISE TEACHES US WHAT IT MEANS TO LOSE A GENIUS

Rajendran N. P.

The death of O. V. Vijayan, the noted novelist and cartoonist from Kerala, marks end of an era. Great writers are not, necessarily, great men. But, Vijayan was both. This fragile, bespectacled, bearded man in his loose kurta, supporting himself on his walking stick and with a seer look and a sardonic but benign smile on his face, will always be part of Malayalis' collective remembrance. When he died, we lost a seer from the sphere of aesthetics. His mission was soul's alchemy. This alchemist with a seer's 'inlook' even resorted to artistic wizardry and transmuted our ordinary experiences into something rich and rewarding. There was no human thought or feeling, he did not explore into. The strange alchemy of his genius transformed the raw iron materials of our basic instincts and emotions into golden spiritual experiences. The novelist in him made us look inside while the cartoonist and the political commentator in him made us look rather outside.

He philosophized a lot – a great risk for a true artist. To the core, he was an artist. His artistry was destined to have a philosophy, and, eventually, could have it, fortunately at no aesthetic cost.

He was a great 'wordsmith.' On the anvil of his genius, even ordinary, rusty and bulky words were made into young, sinewy and maximally charged ones. As for rooted words, they were rendered soulful and revelatory. His brief, pointed, withholding, metaphor-rich style with its strange semantics, always matched his themes, and was a wonder in itself.

His very first novel 'Khasakinte Ithihasam' (The Legends of Khasak) with its dark milieu, broody mountains, strange characters and regenerative rains, was a classic. Its hero Ravi with his 'karmic' bondage and existential pangs has attained almost a mythical dimension in Malayalam. It was a born book.

In his "Dharmapuranam" [The Saga of Dharmapuri], he employed his characteristic black humour fully. The naughty smile on his face was reflective of

the black humour with which he peppered his self-reflective and self-critical writings. This humour is employed on a grosser level in his cartoons.

The spiritual transformation in Vijayan is clearly reflected in his 'Guransagaram' [The Infinity of Grace] with its all-embracing 'advaidic' vision. He gave even the sacrificial dreams of disoriented revolutionaries a spiritual quality. He intuitively slipped through the interplay of dualities, to grab the significance of life.



O.V. Vijayan (1930-2005)

His concerns are what concern us. To call him a humanist is belittling him. His concerns were human, but essentially cosmic. But, he was never unconcerned about the gross realities of life.

What matters most in Vijayan is the vision of the organic oneness of cosmic existence—traceable to the Upanishads and the Vedanta. His going beyond the dualism stems from such a view. His writings are, intrinsically, transcendental, in spite of its beautiful portrayal of the dualistic play of the dark and bright and of the good and bad.

Perhaps, a birth in the West would have made Vijayan a more celebrated man. But, it is doubtful whether a largely depaganised West could have endowed him with a holistic vision.

He never went after awards, but accepted even the 'smallest' ones with

humility. Yet, we withheld a 'Jnanapeed' award from him. But, genius is never measurable by awards.

All genuine authorship is autobiographical. Vijayan created characters throbbing with primordial energy. Unlike the typical material heroes of the western fiction, his characters are on the path of self-knowledge. Most of his fiction is today's epics, tomorrow's myths and can even be tomorrow's Scriptures. They will help us through our brightened life paths.

In the days of anticipatory obituaries, unskilled application of unsubtle critical tools, and pervasiveness of journalese' catchphrases, mourning even a genius is risky. Here, what is written needs careful filtering.

We imported crude weapons of western critical theories, hoping to pin down his genius. Some even employed lurking intellectual mercenaries to bring him round to their isms. He disarmed them all with his pert but pertinent smile.

Today, with quantum philosophy at our doorstep, it is easy to speak of a holistic vision of existence. But, in defiance of the mechanistic view, Vijayan had set out on his lone journey of self-enquiry, long ago.

Vijayan, who changed our literary and linguistic sensibilities, for ever, and who, exposed us to new sensations, is right in the lineage of Ezhuthachan, the father figure of Malayalam and its literature. Strangely, out of uncultivated humility, he described himself as a small fish that had strayed into the ocean of existence.

When a writer like Vijayan withdraws into his subtle body, we need to learn what it means to lose a genius. Perhaps, the little children who stood reverentially before his mortal remains knew it better. Neither will hero worship help us. That will be making a cult figure out of him. With the demise of Vijayan, we have lost the master alchemist of our souls, a transmuter of them. His philosopher's stone was his aesthetics, great compassion and audible silence. When the seer is gone, the seeing remains. And the seeing demands meditation, not mere dedication, from us. ■



Encountering a genius

Vijayan's dream of writing an "obituary of our civilization" remains unfulfilled

K.P. Sethunath

The debilitating impact of Parkinson's disease made conversation a difficult task for OV Vijayan when I met him last. But the creative energy that provided an enchanting quality to the Malayalam prose remained intact in him and the celebrated author was optimistic about completing a new novel titled Padmasanam. That was five years ago in Kottayam. My purpose of meeting Vijayan was to feature him for a Gulf-based newspaper for their Onam special. The obvious physical discomfiture of Vijayan has reminded me of that great lament in 'Khasakinte Ithihasam' "More than my illness, another greater sadness is on me when I see the sun go. What am I sad about?" May be, it was a coincidence with the visitor destined to witness the ritual of words taking their revenge on their author with telling effect.

Much water has flown through Tutapuzha since he wrote those lines. But the profound sadness that transcended time and age continued to permeate the works of Vijayan. Well, his sadness was not a life negating nihilism. More than negation, for him it was a reflection on the follies and limitations of human endeavor. And this is what that made Vijayan one of the most brilliant of the contemporary Indian authors. As he became sick perhaps the question 'what am I sad about' might have attained a personal dimension.

But he was careful enough to ignore it and continue to smile. And through this smile he tried to tell me the rough sketches of how he is going to unravel the mystery of Theodore Wagner's wanderings, the protagonist of his new novel Padmasanam. Unfortunately, Vijayan could not complete the work that he described to me as an "obituary of our civilization".

"It is as an obituary of our civilization: science, machines, state and war", he scribbled in a paper. The starting point of the novel was the newly independent India and from there Wagner sets out to a journey of spiritual purification. And through him the reader is taken for a pilgrimage to the timeless zones of love, brotherhood and compassion. Vijayan conceived Padmasanam as a sequel to the previous book Thalamurakal (Generations).

"I should have been more careful in the treatment

of Thalamurakal portraying the stories of three generations", he said about his last novel. "I was in a hurry to finish the work as I feared that I may leave it unfinished and it was completed in two and half months".

The journey of Wagner is similar to the journey of Ravi in Khasak or Kunjunn in Gurusagaram (The Infinity of Grace). "The waters of Timeless Rain touched him. Grass sprouted through the pores of his body. Above him the great rain shrank small as a thumb, the size of the departing body. Ravi lay waiting for the bus". The rudiments of Wagner's journey could be traced back to these lines of Khasak.

Refusing to set a time frame for the completion of the work, he then told me that the outline of the narrative was ready. "The outline is ready and I will have to put it down to the paper". However, he was unable to provide the finishing touches to the outline due to the failure of the health. At that time he was also working on the English translation of Thalamurakal besides compiling his cartoons for a select volume.

On that I again asked him of his tendency of leaving things open by not offering an alternative to war and machines. But the author asked a counter question "Who am I to offer a solution"?

On the criticism that his language is a conscious attempt to pamper the upper caste sensibilities Vijayan said, "That was an issue which will be debated seriously. But I wonder what will remain of Malayalam language if we remove the words and usages connected with the upper castes. For that matter what will remain in the traditional Kerala cuisine if we leave out delicacies like Aviyal and Payasam accusing them of belonging to upper-castes? For me what is to be fought is the casteist attitude".

This brought us to the question of why he is considered as soft towards the forces of majority communalism? Vijayan has an answer ready for this as well. "Earlier, I was accused of being a CIA agent. But history proved that even the most efficient secret police could not protect the empire based on falsehood. The same forces has now accused me of something whose absurdity only time could reveal. I am tired of this kind of low equilibrium polemics."

■ The writer is former Chief of Bureau, The Financial Express, Bangalore

The literary legend

O.V. Vijayan wrote, drew, spoke and lived in his own unique original way

N.A. Karim

In and out of hospital with different ailments and with a long affliction of Parkinsons disease O.V. Vijayan the creator of the Legend of Khassack, thinker and cartoonist passed away in a Hyderabad hospital at the early hours of Wednesday, 30th March 2005. He had been living in Secunderabad for quite some time now. Author of thirty books including the Legend of Khazassack, Dharmapuram, Gurusagaram and Th/amuraka/ and winner of Kerala and Kendra Sahitya Akademi Awards and several other prestigious ones including the Ezhuthachan Puraskaram instituted by the Government of Kerala, O.V Vijayan had grown into something of a cult figure. Therefore the void that is created by his death in the literary and cultural life of Kerala is not easy to fill.

The novel on the imaginary but now immortal village of Khassak which changed the literary sensibility of Malayalam story readers in a radical way is now celebrated as a contemporary classic of Malayalam fiction. But this early success with his first novel which turned out to be his magnum opus made a victim of his own celebrity the weight of which sat heavily on him throughout his literary career. It is indeed a fact that he could not repeat this early creative achievement in any of his later works let alone the question of transcending the imaginative and philosophical heights he climbed in the

Legend of Khassak.

What made O.V. Vijayan different from other modern Malayalam writers was that in all his creations there was an intense but subtle spiritual yearning of man for the satisfaction of which he explores all secular non- traditional means. The writer

The central character of his Legend, Ravi, did not get the mental succour from the ashram of Bodhananda of which he became an inmate after his mother's death and after having sexual relationship with his stepmother. Perhaps his emotional discontent



himself was afflicted with a divine discontent. He sought remedy for this at first in literary and cultural life, and later sought refuge in the most traditional Indian spiritual way. He used to visit and make extended stay in the ashram of Karunakara Guru at Pothencode in Kerala. Did his deeply intellectual mind find any solace there? We are not sure.

was evidently too superficial that he was not driven to make a determined and sustained quest for its real remedy. Sex -as perhaps a deeper urge in Ravi that it gets the better of supposedly existential agony and falls for the pleasure that women like Mymoona provided with the result that he becomes incapable of responding to the love of Padma who loved him sincerely.

Poetry in Cartoon - Fatigued by their own karmas, great many living billions, move around the world



The first cartoon sketched by O.V. Vijayan, published in Mathrubhumi weekly in 1960.

The question that she asks in her last encounter with him is significant. "What is it that you are trying to run away from?" He was not running away from mundane life in any way. The vague and evasive answer is illustrative of his mental make-up.

In a very broad sense Vijayan belonged to the mainstream of modern Malayalam novel the foundations of which was laid by the unrelenting realist O. Chandu Menon and the inveterate visionary C. V. Raman Pillai. We find a combination of both in a modern idiom in Vijayan stories



RAVISHANKAR

including the story on Khassak. But we find a striking departure from the novels of writers of immediate past like Kesava Dev and Thakazhi in the sense. Vijayan's concerns are different from the writers of the Malayalam renaissance era. The shift from the social and historical to the personal and philosophical apart from the common fictional tradition they all share

in a general way, is significant. Vijayan's themes, particularly in his first spectacularly successful work, have been often termed the expression of existential angst.

In Kerala of the sixties of the last century there were no sudden socio-economic or cultural upheavals to give birth to such philosophical concerns or search as in the west though our academics and intellectuals in metropolitan cities were aware of the deepening spiritual crisis in the life of highly industrialized capitalistic societies particularly of the west. The problem of alienation had not set in closely-knit traditional rural and agrarian societies.

In the case of Vijayan's Legend the protagonist of the novel comes from a God-forsaken village in a remote area of predominantly agriculture based Palakkad district. It is true Vijayan has succeeded in giving a magical appeal to the village by suggestively linking it with an undated legendary past. The time of clock and calendar is dynamited

from within. Even the sounds that are produced when east wind plays in the fronds of palms are given a highly evocative mystical quality. It is this touch of timelessness that gives the story of Ravi and Khassak the irresistible appeal. They become archetypal, as it were.

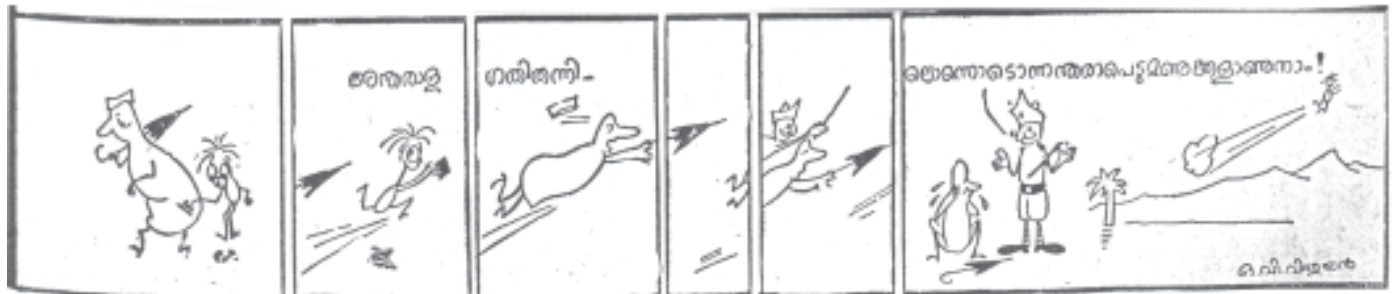
Here is a wayward young man caught in a slightly unusual personal situation and unsure of himself and his future. The life and behaviour of Ravi everywhere he went is depicted in such a vaguely romantic way that it captivated the imagination of a new generation of kindred souls who found in

him a mind yearning for new experiences blasting all traditional social or moral norms. This magic of the atmosphere and characterization is the result of the lyrical quality of Vijayan's narrative prose and the highly suggestive nuances of the words he uses.

O.Y. Vijayan could not repeat this with the same perfection and effect in his later stories though flashes of it were in all his writings that gave a peculiar Vijayan hallmark. He gave a spiritual philosophical and universal orientation even for a contemporary political situation as in Dharmapuram. A major later work, Thalamurakal, written in the philosophical vein did not evoke the same human interest that the story of Ravi did with his bohemian spiritual vagabondage. The peculiar halo around Ravi's head is not there in the case of other later characters even when Vijayan tried to cast them in almost the same philosophical mould.

The success of Vijayan's creations is in his ability to combine a sublime sense of tragedy with a subtle streak of comedy. C. Y. wrote his historical novels imbued with a sense of unmitigated tragedy and wrote light plays to give expression to comedy. Vijayan combined both in a remarkably original manner, as he was a writer with multiple perspectives of life including the tragic and the comic, the sublime and ludicrous, the silly and the serious. According to ancient Greeks a great genius is capable of creating both tragedies and comedies with the same skill and perfection. In that sense O.V. Vijayan was a real literary genius. His death is an irreparable loss to serious literature in Malayalam. ■

We are dust particles out to meet our intervenient destinies one by one.



Forest land for Sabarimala development



Prime Minister's Principal Secretary T.K.A Nair with other officials at Sabarimala .

K.Santhosh Kumar

The Union Ministry of Forests and Environment will hand over non-forest land for implementing the master plan submitted by Kerala Governemnt for the development of Sabarimala. Mr. T.K.A. Nair, Principal Secretary to the Prime Miniser who visited Nilakkal, Pampa and Sannidhanam on 18th and 19th of March disclosed that the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is very particular about the development of Sabarimala and he was particular about the development of Sabarimala and he was deputed to asses the facts in transferring more forest alnd to the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDS) for making amenities to pilgrims. Chief Minister Mr. Oommen Chandy and the TDS authorities submitted a representation regarding this to the Prime Minister during his visit to the State.

Long term and short term project has been suggested for Sabarimala in the masterplan prepared by the Eco Smart India Limited. Around 18 projects are to be completed before the next pilgrim season while requires 12.712 hectares of forest land from the Periyar Tiger

Reservoir.

The State Government has already decided to develop 250 acres of land available at Nilakkal near Pampa held by the State Farming Corporation as the base camp of pilgrims. Mr. Nair suggested to the TDB authorities to invite an expression of interest for a scientific plan for the site's development, so as to ensure ecofriendly construction works, providing for rain water harvesting, drinking water for pilgrims from upstreams in the hills and keeping the Pampa river dam open during the rainy season.

Mr. Nair said that wide publicity should be given for creating awareness among the pilgrims to keep Sabarimala as well as the Pampa clean. Mr. Nair told Forest authorities to consider the prospect of a ropeway linking the Pampa Hilltop with Sannidhanam for transportation of goods as the present style of using donkey for the purpose creates a lot of hardships to pilgrims. This would also reduce the pollution in trekking paths. Mr. Nair held discussions with the Chief Secretary, Mr. Palat Mohandas in Thiruvananthapuram.

Devaswom Board President Mr. G. Raman Nair, member Mr. M.B. Sreekumar and Mr. Punalur Madhu and the Principal Secretary Mr. E.K. Bharat Bhusan were present at the meeting held at Nilakkal. ■

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KERALA CALLING

Direct Speech on Developing Kerala

End of an era



Pope John Paul II (1920-2005)

Pope John Paul II left his mark on the world like few others in the 20th Century, playing a leading role in the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and also working tirelessly to revolutionise relations with other religions.

He passed away in the 27th year of his reign and was the third-longest serving Pope in history. He was elected in 1978 as the first non-Italian Pontiff in 455 years.

A man of towering intellect and intensity of prayer, Karol Wojtyla was one of the few Popes in centuries to have come up from poverty rather than privilege.

Born in a small town near Krakow in southern Poland, the son of an army officer, on May 18, 1920, he was brought up by his father after the death of his mother when he was eight. His elder

brother, a doctor, died in 1932 during an outbreak of scarlet fever. He became a parish priest and rose steadily through the church hierarchy until, as Bishop of Krakow, he became widely known to Western ecclesiastical authorities during the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965.

When Cardinal Wojtyla was elected Pope in October 1978, he was 58, a robust sportsman and a relative outsider amid the vast bureaucracy of the Holy See.

One of the Pope's first foreign visits was to his native Poland. The advent of a Polish Pope provided an immeasurable boost to his countrymen, and the upshot was a reinvigorated anti-Communist working class movement, the birth of the Communist bloc's first independent trade union, Solidarity, and the steady thaw of

the Communist glacier that lay over eastern Europe.

In September 1979, John Paul II became the first reigning Pope to visit Ireland. Before travelling to Drogheda in Co Louth he was flown to Phoenix Park in Dublin where he delivered an open-air sermon to more than 1.25 million people - nearly a third of Ireland's entire population. The rest of his trip included visits to Galway and the Marian Shrine at Knock in Co Mayo.

In 1981, the Pope was nearly killed in an assassination attempt by rightwing Turkish fanatic Mehmet Ali Agca, who shot him at close range in St Peter's Square. The Pontiff survived after extensive surgery, but his health was badly affected thereafter.

At the same time, church reformers,

the young, and Third World congregations in the grip of a devastating AIDS epidemic became dismayed at his refusal to give ground on contraception and the use of condoms.

While nearly all of the world's one billion Catholics cheered his defence of human rights, he drew criticism from within his own flock for his unbending stance against contraception, gay marriages and women priests.

Liberal Catholics have made it clear they want a more democratic church in the future. Conservatives hailed him as a divine messenger who took a church buffeted by the winds of liberalism and put it back on a theologically narrow path after the anything-goes 1960s and 1970s.

Critics, particularly those in developed countries, faulted him for applying to issues of faith and morals the same uncompromising style that served him so well in staring down Communists and keeping his church alive in Poland.

During two and a half decades as Pope, John Paul II has met virtually every significant head of state or government, from US Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton to Kremlin leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, from Emperor Hirohito of Japan to Britain's Queen Elizabeth.

Under his leadership, the Vatican opened diplomatic relations with Israel in 1993 and he was the first Pope to pray in a synagogue in 1986. He also issued 13 encyclicals, including three on socio-

Pope –the voice of righteousness



Oommen Chandy

Chief Minister

Pope John Paul II was the strongest voice of righteousness of the century. Even people who could not agree ideologically with him could not ignore his voice. It was a voice which the world lend the ear for more than a quarter century.

Pope, who condemned the US attack of Iraq, had cautioned that globalisation has been affecting badly on the third world. He had reminded

the capitalist world of their moral responsibility to share the economic crisis faced by the developing countries.

He was a pilgrim who visited countries all over the world many times. There is no place where he had not been. There is no heart that he had not conquered. It is from the midst of the people that he led the Catholic Church. His voice rose for the laymen, which include workers and farmers. He converted social justice into one of the important visions of the church.

It was a great recognition to Kerala when he declared Chavara Achan and Alphonsamma as Saints. He stole the hearts of all Keralites by the time he left Kerala.

economic questions, and wrote several best-selling books.

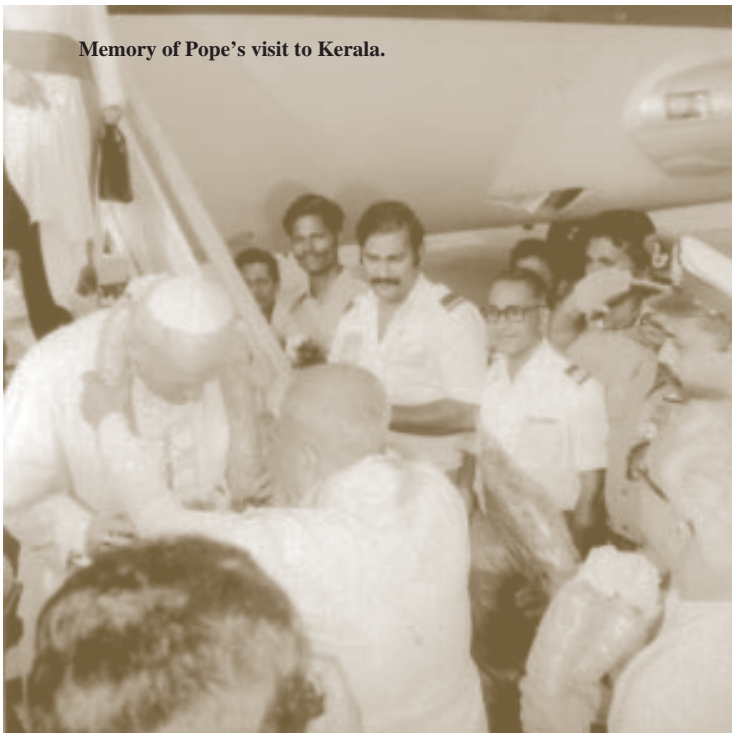
In the mid-1990s, John Paul II became increasingly frail, suffering from Parkinson's Disease, arthritis and other ailments. Despite his infirmities, he continued travelling as widely as possible.

Given his failing health, however, many felt that his trip to Switzerland - his 103rd foreign trip - in June 2004 would

be his last. He visited Lourdes in August 2004.

It is doubtful there has ever been a Pope who has so successfully translated his strength, determination and faith into such widespread respect and goodwill. In a world of shifting trends and leaders of questionable virtue, John Paul II has been a towering figure at the moral centre of modern life.

Memory of Pope's visit to Kerala.



Dr. S.A. Shanavas

Among the four cultivated languages of the Dravidian family, Malayalam comes last in the development of grammar and literature. It is established that inscriptions of Malayalam are traced out only from Ninth century onwards. This does not mean that there were no writings in the language of the land earlier. It is well known that the language of the West Coast called Kodumtamil grew and developed into Malayalam. Different opinions are there on the origin of Malayalam. Great Malayalam language expert Kovunni Nedungadi in Kerala Kaumudi says Malayalam is an offshoot of Sanskrit/ Prakrit. Vadakkumkur Rajaraja Varma is also supporting this statement. Robert Caldwell, P.Govindapilla, A.R. Rajarajavarma and L.V. Ramaswamy Ayyar are of the opinion that Malayalam is the daughter of Tamil. Herman Gundart, Attoor Krishna Pisharody, Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyar, K. Godavarma are favoring for the concept of sister language status to Tamil: i.e., Tamil and Malayalam are two separate languages originated from a Proto form. Ilangulam Kunjan Pilla is not willing to be specified in terms of kinship like daughter/sister.

Malayalam has a history since BC. But the term Malayalam was not in use. The very term was first used to refer the land. There are opinions that upto 800 AD Malayalam was part of Tamil called Malanattu Tamil, and then developed into a separate language with the term. There are references about Kerala in Ramayanam, Bharatam, Harivamsam, etc. There are so many sources like inscriptions, place names, literary style and literary works, folk songs, riddles, proverbs, coins, etc. helped to develop the history of the language.

The discussion, in the book under review, about the evolution of the word



A BRIEF HISTORY OF MALAYALAM LANGUAGE

E.V.N. Namboodiri – 2004

International Centre for Kerala Studies,
University of Kerala, Kariavattom.

Price: Rs.130/-

Malayalam is a novel one. It is argued that Malayalam is derived from the terms mala 'mountain' aal 'possession' and am as neuter gender suffix. It is compared with the term Malayali (mala+aal+i) as equivalent to tozhilali ('one who possesses work) mutalaali ('one' who possesses wealth), etc.,

The book contains six chapters.

The first chapter is titled the Origin of Malayalam. It gives a clear picture of the external history, the people of Kerala, the Dravidian languages, and the structure of the language at that period.

The next three chapters are given title as Old Malayalam for three periods. The Malayalam of the period 800-1100 is the topic of the first part where the language of the Kulasekhara Kingdom, the development of the language and the various changes and process undergone by the language are depicted. The Malayalam of the period 1200-1400 is given in the next chapter. The fifth chapter is about the Emergence of Modern Malayalam. The period of this emergence is noted between 1400 - 1600.

The sixth chapter is titled Modern Malayalam from the period of 1600 onwards. The language of prose, poetry and other literary forms are given. The structure proposed by various schools like Manipravalam, Pachamalalayalam, and of Rajarajavarma, etc. are also provided. All chapters contain sections like phonology, phonetic changes, gemination, sandhi, grammar, word formation, noun and verb with their inflectional forms and clitics.

The presentation and style of the book is very attractive. A lot of inconsistency is there in transcription, phonetic representation, spelling and also in numbering the sections. As the title reflects the book does not present a brief and clear history of Malayalam language. The concept about the origin and development of the language is not clearly depicted. The grammatical structures of the language in the three periods are not pictured clearly. Though one can point out more mistakes in the book, it is worth to mention that the present volume is good for both the students and teachers of Malayalam language. ■

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■ Environment

Mangalavanam

P. M. Alex

Dr. V. Sivanandan Achari

Mangalavanam becomes a symbol, a writing on the wall. Given the mega projects down the line Cochin is poised to be the centre of gravity of Kerala's industrial boom, provided our work culture gets synchronized to the general run of the world. When urbanization picks up momentum it will be a daunting task to insulate the remaining pockets of greenery from the greedy tongues of urban flame. And there Mangalavanam becomes a signal, a grave reminder. Such cool and vivacious sylvan recesses will help the denizens of the city to take a much needed break from the high strung horrors of humdrum urban life. But then why Mangalavanam amongst other green patches of the city? Mangalavanam was a curious accident in the course of urbanization juggernaut. The so called Mangalavanam was, before the 1930's, a timber depot, railway station and a low



DR. V.R. BINDUMOL

developed becoming of this tidal flatland. But it is very doubtful whether these two hectares of marginal marine wetland serves the purposes expected of a forest. The city swirls eddies and inches into this island of greenery. And urban refuse heaps layer upon layer as silt in the tidal marsh and at this rate this tranquil meso haline water body around which the forest flourishes, will cease to be in the none too distant future.

The term mangrove refers to an ecological rather than a taxonomic assemblage of plants. But true mangroves are taxonomically isolated from their nearest terrestrial relatives at least at the generic level. Mangrove forests are inter tidal wetlands in the tropics and sub tropics. They often develop as extensive monospecific streaks of trees parallel to the coast line. This creates distinctive vegetative zone, but the zonation pattern is not fixed. The mangrove landscape is a heterogeneous mosaic of vegetation patterns connected to an estuarine system.

The concerns relating to all coastal environments are as follows:

- Declining marine and coastal water / sediment quality, particularly as a result of inappropriate catchment's land use practices.
- Loss of marine and coastal habitat
- Unsustainable use of marine and coastal resources
- Lack of marine science policy and lack of long-term research and monitoring of the marine environment
- Lack of strategic integrated planning in the marine and coastal environments

The estuary, where the flow of the river meets the flood of the tide, is a unique and important part of the aquatic environment. It forms the transition zone between the inland world of fresh water and the seawater lying off shore. It retains some characteristics of both fresh water and the marine environment but it also has unique properties of its own. As an ecosystem, the estuary performs several vital functions. Many marine organisms spend at least some part their life in an estuary, hence an estuary is often referred to as the cradle of the sea.

Conditions in the estuary are more variable than those in either fresh water or marine environment. The variation is

DR. V.R. BINDUMOL

anam; different pulls

key harbour. When Sir Robert Bristow engineered out an all weather harbour on Wellington Island this commercial nerve centre relapsed into oblivion. The best way

to manage a forest is not to manage it at all. When man lost interest in this erstwhile harbour nature took over and by and by a typical mangrove forest ecosystem



A pair of petunias drenched in the morning dew.

primarily in the salinity of the water, which varies with the degree of mixing and the river discharge. Hence estuarine characteristics suffer seasonal and lateral variation. If mixing is not effective stratification occurs and a vertical salinity gradient develops. Estuaries and similar marginal marine environments are the principal places where the two major types of earth – surface water meet: fresh land derived water and the saline ocean water. Suspended matter, which is chemically equilibrated with fresh water, is carried by rivers and, upon subjection to a series of changing salinities and pH changes within the estuary, undergoes chemical reactions. This often causes precipitation of the suspended matter by flocculation and / or aggregation. Additionally there are chemical changes between the suspended sediment and the estuarine water that change the chemistry of both. Besides the mixing of fresh and saline water in the estuaries, there are internal processes within the estuary itself that can change the chemical composition of the water. Exchange of both dissolved and particulate matter occurs between the sediments of

the bottom of the estuary and overlying water. In addition, considerable biological activity occurs in the estuarine water in the surrounding tidal marshes and in the bottom sediments. Nutrients are cycled biologically within the estuary (C, N, P, Si) and as a result dissolved and particulate organic matter is both produced and consumed. Man causes changes in estuaries both in the amount and type of suspended sediment and of dissolved material reaching the estuaries through the rivers and land run off from surrounding urban and rural areas. Nutrients are particularly affected by pollution, and estuaries, because they retain water for appreciably long periods, can become eutrophic. There is also concern about trapping of anthropogenic trace metals in estuaries. So the survival of Mangalavanam is directly dependent upon the quality of the lake it draws sustenance from.

Mangalavanam is too small a forestland to be the oxygen booth of the city. Nor is it truly woodland in word and spirit. Anthropogenic intervention in the form of clandestine solid waste dumping and economic activities gravely obliterate

its wild character. The city is straining at the leash all around the four walls of the woodland. The gracing cattle complete the picture.

August national institutions like NIO, CMFRI and the Hon'ble Kerala High Court are on its western and southern extremities in effect buffering it from brazen urban intervention. Fortunately Bharath Petroleum, feeding the water body with a stifling scum of oily film and heavy metals, has packed tent and started business at Irumpanam. The tiny tidal lake has silted up to a slushy quagmire severely impeding the original natural biochemical processes characteristic of an estuarine ecosystem. The silt is made up of heavy metals, organic matter, persistent organic pollutants and even phytotoxic substances among other things left behind by various activities in the city. If the lake is desilted and left to the regular ministrations of tidal action the mangrove will remain healthy and kicking. Greater Cochin has still wider areas of woodland and even mangroves. But Mangalavanam alone has the curious distinction of being the eye of a brain storm. Mangalavanam qualifies for so



DR. V.P. BINDUMOL

A botanist's paradise: Air breathing roots of a mangrove tree.

Species of birds listed at Mangalavanam

Common name of the bird

Phalacrocoracidae
 Large cormorant
 Little cormorant
 Anhingidae
 Indian darter
 Ardeidae
 Purple heron
 Indian pond heron
 Cattle egret
 Great egret
 Intermediate egret
 Little egret
 Black-crowned night heron
 Accipitridae
 Black kite
 Rallidae
 White breasted water hen
 Charadriidae
 Yellow wattled lapwing
 Columbidae
 Plum-headed parakeet

Cuculidae
 Asian koel
 Centropodidae
 Greater coucal
 Apodidae
 House swift
 Alcedinidae
Common kingfisher
 Cerylidae
 Lesser pied king fisher
 Dacelonidae
 Stork billed kingfisher
 White throated king fisher
 Meropidae
 Green bee eater
 Megalaimidae
 White checked barbet
 Picidae
 Black rumped flame backed wood pecker
 Corvidae
 Eurasian golden onole
 Black drongo

Rutous treepie
 House crow
 Muscicapidae
 Oriental magpie robin
 Sylviidae
 Pale capped babbler
Common tailor bird
 Stummidae
Common myna
 Irenidae
 Jerodon's leafbird
 Pycnonotidae
 Red whiskered bulbul
 Mottacillidae
 White wagtail
 House sparrow
 Nectarinidae
 Purple sunbird
 Jungle myna
 Jungle crow
 Large pied wagtail

much of environmental attention because it is in the thick of the city. When it came to the fore, the Honorable High Court has decided to develop a parking area in Mangalavanam. When Environmentalists protested, the High Court preferred a rethinking.

The old railway station still stands the go down too, like a ghost of the fabled colonial past. The buildings will have to be protected, frozen in time, owing to the architectural historic and archeological significance. Then the disputed chunk of land originally meant for Pandit Karuppan Memorial forms part of the grove.

Given the size and location the relevance of Mangalavanam is rather instructional than environmental. The adaptations of the endemic plants like gymnorrhiza avicennia, rhizophora and acanthus, illustrate the survival mechanism of xerophytes in oxygen starved salt marshes where tidal pendulum and salinity concentration govern the ecological features of the habitat. Shining leathery leaf to minimize evapotranspiration, mats of jutting breathing roots to survive in anoxic soil, skirts of stilt roots to stay balanced in the slush, sieves of root system

to trap nutrients etc. are curious cases of adaptation. In ideal conditions, the root systems offer the safe breeding grounds for amphibians, crustaceans and a large variety of fishes. The trophic levels in the ecological pyramid and the symbiotic co-existence of various fauna and flora adapted to this hyper sensitive and highly productive environment call for academic interest. In fact, mangrove systems have one of the high ecological productivity levels in the world.

Mangalavanam, *inter alia*, is a regular haunt of migratory birds. During the rainy months the grove reverberates with the din and rabble of a wide spectrum of avifauna busy in their nuptials and home making. Jose Erumely, an employee at the High Court, says that certain trees get virtually smothered with suspended bird nests during the breeding season. And at least one tree, according to him, was killed by the hooks of tens of thousands of bats. The skeleton of the tree still stands. It is curious that birds mostly settle for true mangrove trees for perching their nests and steer clear of the large canopy offered by the

imposing rain trees.

In the world of today where sustainable development and back to nature are the catch words a small grove caught between development and sustainability poses a potent question. It is to be borne in mind that every extinct species inevitably leaves behind an empty space in the ecological niche, and no species is for nothing. Every species performs a specific environmental function, which is part of the eternal rhythm of nature. As the chief of Seattle put it everything is linked, life ends and survival begins when man detaches himself from nature. This is perhaps the banner Mangalavanam puts before us..

In 1991 Kerala government declared this area as a game reserve. There are plans on the anvil to introduce facilities like bird watching tower salt water crocodile pond sport fishing estuarine animal sanctuary and facilities for relaxation in the cool of the woods.

■ Dr. V. Sivanandan Achari is a lecturer in School of Environmental Studies, CUSAT, Kochi. M. Alex is his a researcher under him.

Jumps for women Kerala dominates



Anju Bobby George

When Bob Beamon jumped that 8.90 metres in Mexico Olympics in 1968, the entire world was stunned. The amazing performance could not be digested for a span of time. For India and even for Asia, it was a repeat of Mexico in Teheran Asiad in 1974 that our T. C. Yohannan leaped to a distance of 8.07 metres. Of course a Japan athlete had crossed the 8 metre mark before. But for Yohsuman it was a Gold with Asian Games Record and Asian Record as well. A stunning performance indeed.

And, look in to the record books now, the name T.C.



V.S. Surekha

Yohannan is missing even from the list of national record holders. It was not a matter of omission deliberately or even accidentally. In fact, the record was shattered even at national level. Amritpai Singh of Punjab eclipsed Yohannan's national record in 2004.

Other eminent Kerala jumpers like Suresh Babu, Reghunathan, Subhash George, to name a few, were out of even many meet record books earlier. Of course, records are meant to be broken today or tomorrow.

And come to the distaff side, all the four jumps records stand with Kerala. It cannot be counted as a stunning metamorphosis. It was a hegemony for many an year. Anju Bobby George who holds the national record in long jump and triple jump is the true Bimonesque figure or a Heike Dresler figure as far as Indian athletics is concerned. But she rewrote the records of Lekha Thomas the senior trainee of Anju's former coach TP Ouseph. Now Anju's record stands at 6.83m in long jump and 13.67 metre in triple jump. With the new athletic season about to start there won't be much threat for both.

Bobby Alosius keeps the high jump record for quite a long time. She lifted the bar to 1.91m just before leaving for Athens Olympics. Sahana Kmnari is slowly but steadily approaching her but at least for the time being Bobby stands a cut above others. The Asiad silver medallist with her foreign exposure and coaching can utilise the experience and technical know how of Fosbery Flop for the future generation.

And the younger of the lot, 22 year old Kerala born, Tamil Nadu brought up girl V. S Surekha has improved her own national record in pole vault with her 3.55 effort in Mumbai last year. Surekha has a long way to go for a try at international level. But, indeed she doesn't find a true opponent at national level. This should not affect her chances to improve.



Bobby Alosius

Anyhow it was for the first time that a group of Kerala women dominates the national scene in a particular event in athletics. Usha alone had dominated the sprint, 1008 sprint and hurdles. Shiney had her domination in middle distance. Both have their names intact in national records at least in one event for a few more seasons, as it seems.

But we do not find a second string coming up even with the inspiration Anju, Bobby and Surekba have created. There must be a boom. We must find a junior group with an ambition or the least an intention to win something precious.

Sanil P. Thomas

Sports quota appointment: A few norms

Sanil P Thomas

As a sports enthusiast and historian of Kerala sports, I was delighted to hear that Government of Kerala is all set to restart the recruitment of sports stars in Government services.

But it was found that the recruitments in the past were not done with the intention of building up sports stars, who can win laurels for the state. Instead they were all mere recognition to the spent forces.

Hence a few points are suggested.

It was the late. T.V. Thomas who initiated the move to bring back talented Malayalee sports stars working outside Kerala. Thereafter every government has contributed to developing sports in Kerala. It is almost impossible to bring back all the talented Malayalee stars working outside. But we can absorb promising talents from in and outside. Right now, there are no scientific criteria regarding sports quota appointments in government service.

At present, Government of Kerala offers 20 jobs a year for sports stars. But the recruitment is pending for the past over five years. Before filling the vacancies we should fix certain norms.

- First of all we should have the disciplines where we can excel. The recruitment should be for these disciplines only.
- The appointment should not be for spent forces. We should bear in mind this aspect while calling back our stars who are working outside too. Otherwise it will be a mere bonus for their achievement so far. They can be rewarded in some other way.
- The age limit should be 18-25
- The performance of the stars in the preceding three years as well as their current form should be assessed
- The chances of the stars in the near future as well as in a particular span of time should be assessed. For this an expert panel is needed.

- Trial must be conducted for selection.
- The head of the department for which the candidate is being chosen must head the selection committee. For example the. DGP in selection to the police force. Professionals who are no way connected with the Government must have a place in the committee.
- The performance of the sports stars should be assessed every year. A weeding out can be done. The confirmation of job must be only after a particular span of time. Otherwise they will become complacent and that



ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK

- will affect their performance in sports.
- Promotions should not be connected with sports achievements. They must be rewarded with prize money and increments.
- Like what the foreign countries do, a second string of stars aged 16-20 or even 14-18 can be absorbed on contract basis. They must be given a monthly allowance.

A detailed study about the achievements of sports stars who got appointment in the Government services in the past 10 years is needed.

The criterion to selection adopted by Railways, Petroleum(PSPB), Services etc is given below.

Sports person who has represented in any of the listed games. (1) The country

as a member of junior/senior team in prestigious international meets, such sports persons must have also medal winning performance in National Championships. OR (ii) Zonal teams within the country and the team should have obtained at least 3rd position in inter zonal championship at all India level. OR (iii) A state or equivalent unit in National Championships whether in senior or junior section and obtained at least 3rd position in individual events or at least 4th position in team games, OR (iv) A university in all India Inter University Championship and should have obtained the first position both in individual or team games. OR (v) A state school team in National School Games for schools and should have obtained the first position both in individual or team games. OR (vi) Sports person who was a member of a team securing first or second position at the Federation Cup. Note: (a) Performance in Indian style wrestling will not be taken into account for recruitment purpose. (b) in Cricket (Men) players who have participated in Ranji Trophy -knock-out-stage will also be eligible (c) in table tennis, tennis, badminton etc. the norm will be current annual ranking i.e., up to 10th rank.

For lower grade jobs, sports persons concerned should have represented a district in junior/senior State Championship and obtained at least 3rd position either in individual or team events. OR Sports persons concerned should have represented State school/ University/State junior or senior team in national School Games/Inter University Championship/junior or senior National Championship except Marathon and Cross Country. In such cases obtaining of a position need not be insisted upon. For recruitment the above achievements should be in the immediate preceding three years and the sports person should be an active player. The age limit will be 18-25 years. ■

Dr. Rema Devi C.

Trauma is a major health problem. Trauma now attracts more attention than ever before as a major cause of death in developing and developed countries. In all countries the biggest single contribution for trauma is made by road traffic accidents.

With just one per cent of total number of vehicles in the world, India accounted for six percent of road accidents. The accident rate in Kerala is double that of national average and Kerala position is third among states in the number of road accidents.

Implementation of organized system of trauma care reduces crash mortality. Trauma accounts for 12% of hospital bed occupancy and almost 7% of national total health expenditure. Serious injuries require long periods of expensive care, nursing and treatment. Extended hospital stay causes not only increased distress for patient and his family but also substantial cost to hospital.

Materials and methods

The present study has tried to find the epidemiology and duration of hospital stay of patients admitted with polytrauma (more than one organ system injury) in Medical College Hospital, Trivandrum. Descriptive approach was adopted for the study and sample size selected was 500. The sample was divided in to 2 groups. Group I, <9 days duration of hospital stay and Group II with ³ 9 days duration of hospital stay.

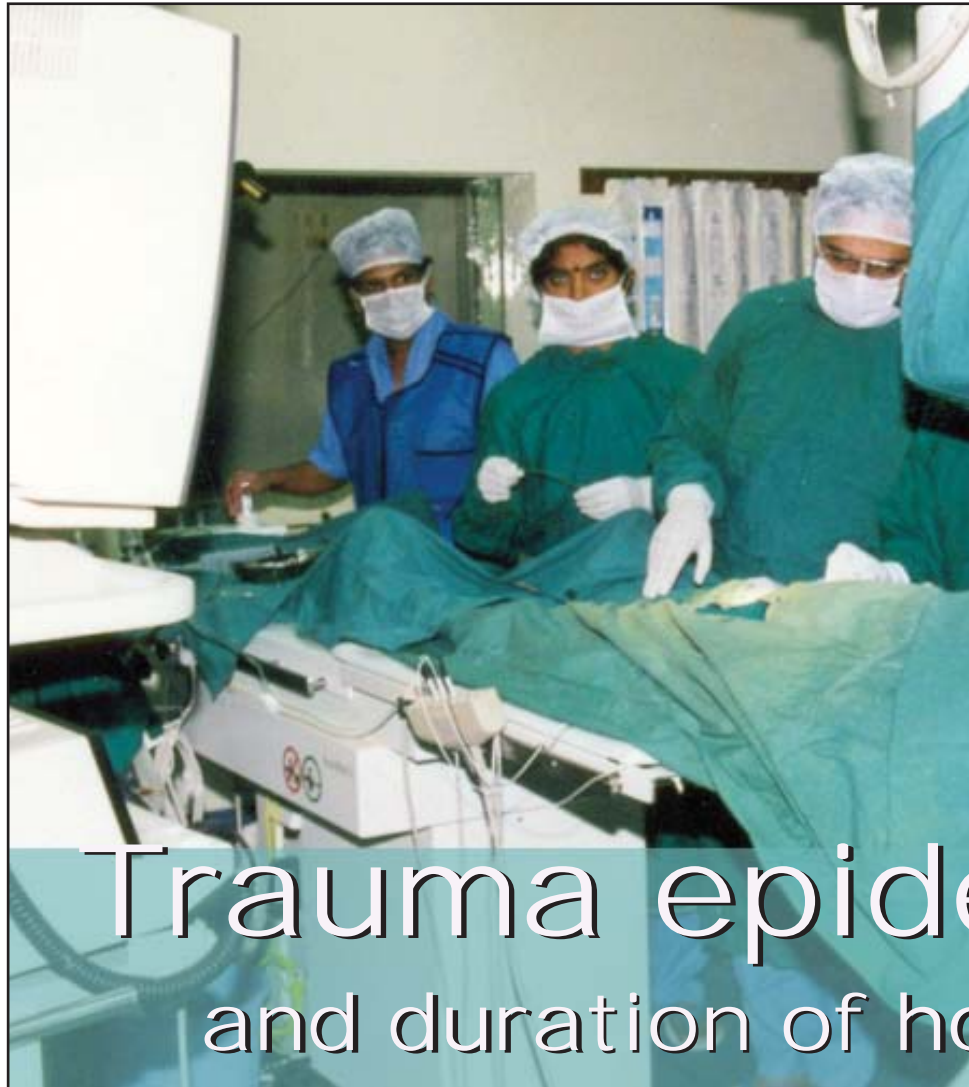
Chisquare test was applied to identify association of variable with duration hospital stay.

Results and discussion

Patients with age group 20-29 had higher incidence of polytrauma (23.8%) whereas patients in the age group 70-79 had lowest incidence (5.6%). Patients coming under age 39 years comprised 46.8% .

The test revealed no association between age of patient and duration of hospital stay

Religion wise distribution of patients showed that majority (76.4%) were Hindus followed by Muslims and Christians (9.6%) When the position of the patient in family was considered,



Trauma epidemic and duration of hospital stay

Trauma is a major health problem. Trauma now attracts more attention than ever before as a major cause of death in developing and developed countries. In all countries the biggest single contribution for trauma is made by road traffic accidents.

47.6% of the patients are having parents.

Majority of patients (59.6%) developed polytrauma following road traffic accident. Fall was the cause in 25.6% and assault in 11.4%. Fits, industrial injury and blast injury constituted as the cause in equal percent (0.6) of patients followed by water boat accident (0.2%), sports injury (1%) and self inflicted injury (0.4%) as shown in

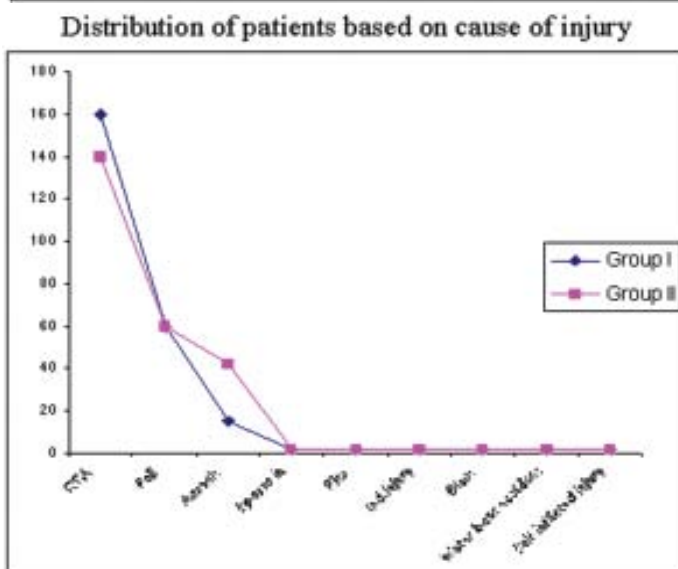
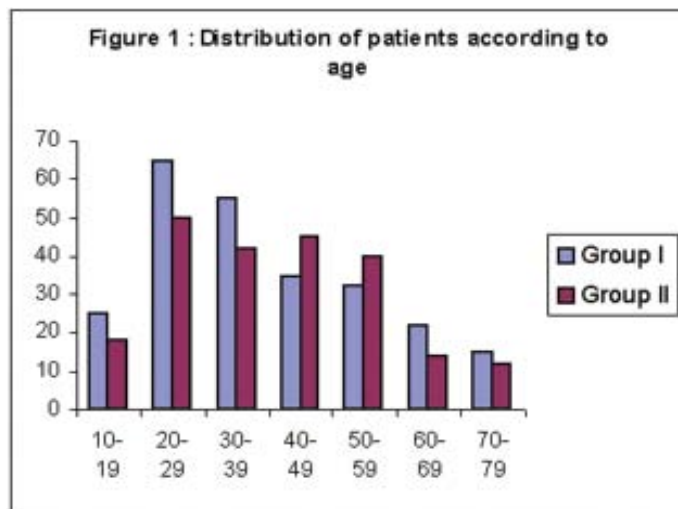
Figure (2) Distribution of patients based on cause of injury

In many countries, motor vehicle accidents ranked first among all fatal accidents.

When patients were categorized based on type of injury sustained laceration constituted the major type (46.7 percent)



Epidemiology Hospital stay



followed by blunt injury (18.6%) and penetrating wound (7.9%)

The analysis of the diagnosis showed that majority of the polytraumatised patients had head injury (34.4%) and long bone fracture (31.0%) as major involvement. Gardner (1986) states that head trauma accounts for 1/4th of all trauma deaths and is most precipitated by motor vehicle accidents.

Longer duration of stay was seen for patients undergone operations as patellectomy, splenectomy, nephrectomy, colostomy, bladder repair and laminectomy. Statistical test revealed significant relationship (P<0.5) between type of surgery and duration of hospital stay. Majority of patients who had undergone multiple surgical interventions had long duration of hospital stay.

Among types of surgery, open

reduction and internal fixation (22.2%) and craniotomy (18.2%) were most common.

When patients were distributed based on involvement of one organ system, central nervous system ranked first (15.7%) and next stood skeletal system (12.8%). When the involvement of two-organ system among polytrauma patients were analysed, nervous and skeletal system comprised majority. Strong association was seen among patients with involvement of more than one organ system and duration of hospital stay and hence inferred that polytraumatised patients have long duration of hospital stay, which is statically significant at .001 levels.

Out of the total patients considered for study the mean duration of hospital stay was found to be 11.6 days with standard deviation of 9.57.

Conclusion

Trauma occurs in epidemic proportion in our society. An organized system of trauma care probably affects the outcome of complex non-life threatening injuries. Many of the multiple trauma victims need longer duration of hospital stay and are discharged with mild to moderate deficits. Hospital cost can be reduced by providing secondary care facility in the community. It avoids admission and reduces length stay in hospital. Some hospital services can be provided safely and more cheaply in the community. Cornock and Bernard (1997) opined that the trend in hospital-based care is towards the moving of patients to least expensive locations in which desired therapeutic outcomes could be achieved.

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The Digital Library

P.K. Sudhi

Once again the libraries are facing a change in respect of their organization and services.

The arrival of digital documents is the force behind the new change.

Libraries always accommodated all the developments especially the change in the physical nature of documents. The new facilities improved the library services. The evolution of present day virtual libraries from the old day manuscript libraries is significant. With the arrival of speedy printing, books become a common thing and the chained libraries are vanished. Libraries began open to public. Now libraries become an indispensable part of all institutions and the society.

The introductions of computers in libraries have changed the face of libraries a lot. It helped the librarians in the better organization of book and other reading materials. In the library, computers are used for preparing electronic catalogues and for the control of the issue and return of reading materials. Computerisation enhanced the quality and variety of library services.

Developments in the computer science and electronics have created the techniques of digitalization. Conversion of text, sound and images into the digital form produced a variety of electronic documents. They include CD-ROMs, publications and other computer readable forms. Discovery of hypertext documents is another revolution in the publication field. This makes the world of world wide web (WWW) more fruitful. The processes of publication of documents have also undergone vast change. Digital documents are accessible from everywhere in the world through the Internet. This eliminates the two important barriers of information access such as time and distance. The WWW publishing again forms a challenge to the librarians.

Digital library is a new device brings such digital materials under one umbrella, here a computer. Accumulation of millions of such documents is not

visible to the eye and not felt by our sense organs. So these libraries are called virtual libraries. E-library, library without walls are synonymous terms.

Our traditional libraries collect books and other reading materials, which includes non-book materials like charts, maps, microform publications (microfiche and microfilms). These documents are well organized through technical

Bush formulated the idea behind this concept in 1945. He discussed about a device called "Memex". Which will be able to store large amount of books, pictures, periodicals, newspapers and so on, with material being indexed for easy retrieval. The developments in communication and computer science together with the information science created the world of virtual libraries a reality.



processing (Classification, cataloguing, providing subject headings etc). When the clientele approaches for a document the librarian issue the book to the user. Libraries also offer some other services like reference service, current awareness services, document delivery services, other bibliographic services etc depending upon the type of the library and the nature of users.

While tracing the history of digital libraries it can be seen that Dr. Vannevar

ICT and the libraries

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has brought remarkable changes in the areas of information storage and its dissemination. All the developments in the computer area changed the library services..

Computers are used for preparing machine-readable electronic databases of reading materials. Electronic databases of nascent information are an unavoidable

thing in research area. Such databases are established in all subjects. A researcher from every corner of the world becomes accessible to such information sources through the telecommunication lines and computers. This technology of information search converted the libraries into a center of “on line search “of databases. This was the modern service rendered by libraries during 90s.



Production of publications in electronic format (e-book) is another change that happened in this area. Electronically published books and periodicals are available in both CD form and in on line computer readable form. Expansio of the computer networks into the Internet and the development of WWW again have become a challenge to the librarians. Emergence of all these electronic reading materials and the treasury of knowledge in the internet

medium is the basic reason behind this development.

What does an Electronic Library do?

In this digital world an electronic library collects and organises all electronically published documents and make them available to the users of the library either electronically or in hard copy form.

A digital library basically includes two main components, the collection of documents and the library services. These two components are linked with work involved in the library (Collection building, technical organization, creation of documents data bases, dissemination of reading materials and the management of the library).

Like the process of automation of the traditional library procedures, the establishment of a digital library needs both hardware and software. Greenstone is a important digital library software. It is developed by New Zealand Digital Library Project, and distributed by The UNESCO and Human Info NGO. Greenstone is an open source multilingual digital library soft ware.

E-library software helps to conduct all the library operations. It also provides the connection with the net without which the accessibility will not work properly.

The e-library module of digital library software handles the operations of electronic library. This module bears certain parts such as e-library, e-journals, video library, CD library etc. This division is based on the physical form of the electronic material on which the library concentrates. E-library section is concerned with e-books. The e- journal section of the e-library handles the subscription, documentation and the related works of electronic journals. The organization of CD-ROM materials by the CD library and video library is concerned with the graphic materials.

Users of the e-library can search, find and down load the reading materials from their own computers even without going

to the library. They are provided with the access to an electronic library by means of membership. All libraries can form its digital section.

Thousands of users from different parts of the world can use a particular document at a time. This is another advantage of the digital library.

This mechanism provides the opportunity of publishing materials. In future libraries having the digital library facilities will become a center of publication. In the case of academic libraries it can digitize the theses and dissertations of the academic community and can put into the library. Digital recordings of video clippings of seminars, conferences are some important items, which may be made available to the users community through this facility.

Digital library facility provides many opportunities to render the information services such as the CAS services new arrivals list preparation, content page service of periodicals, conference alert, news clipping service, bibliographic services etc. All these materials can be mailed easily to the terminals of its users.

More than that the numerous worth full documents are now available in the net. Digital library attached to an organization can collect and make use of such materials properly. With the help of the digital library software the librarian can down load reading material and can include such documents into the collection of the library. Thus a digital library is always an updated one in respect of its collection.

Thus introduction of electronic library facility reduces the burden of keeping thousands of bound volumes. Users can expect more services in limited time irrespective of the location of the information sources. The whole library service of an institution can be lodged in a single room. Many electronic libraries are available in the Internet also . Any user can access the information collected by such libraries through the Internet.

Project

Udyabhanu A.K.

Gender-the socially constructed difference of power relation between men and women-has got very important place in any development programmes of the current world. Gender is a social construction defining men and women, masculinity and femininity and reflecting the roles and socio-political relation that informs and shapes their interaction at all levels of society. Gender has got utmost importance in development sector to avoid the asymmetric dispensation of welfare and participation of women in decision-making.

'Jalanidhi' is a water and sanitation project launched by government of Kerala under Kerala Rural Water supply and Sanitation Agency (KRWSA) to facilitate and support local initiatives in ensuring adequate supply of potable water and better sanitation facilities to the rural Kerala. Even if the state's social indices are kept high, the coverage of drinking water to rural areas of Kerala is less than 50%. Apart from water supply, the project has got other components like Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion programmes, Women Development Initiatives, Grama Panchayath Strengthening programmes, Environmental Sanitation Programme, Ground Water Recharge and Capacity

mainly sprung from the following channels.

- Women exclusion from decision-making or policy level plan imperative.
- Women face multiple work loads such as, productive, reproductive and community development work.
- In many occasions' women's work

programmes, conflict management, behaviour change and prevention of relapses in behaviour change. Above all, the focal point to gender will bring economic benefits. Better access to potable water gives women more time for income generation programmes. Look after the well-being of family and their own well-being where by attain reduced expense on



Jalanidhi Success of a gender sensitive project

Development through different trainings and exposures. The project is purely based on demand driven and participatory approach to ascertain sustainability.

Gender and Water Supply Project

Women are primarily the collectors and managers of domestic water and involve in sanitation and hygiene aspects of the home and community. If anything those reduce the drudgery of women have multiplier effects. When taking account of gender in water supply, we have to peep in to other aspects of development planning. In the development state of affairs, the issues related with gender are

contribution are unaccounted and demoted.

- Under valued and under paid women labour.
- Women are excluded from the access to skill development and capacity building programmes.
- Domination of male oriented technology in developmental fields.

Focus on gender in water supply project has multifarious effects. A good gender planning leads to better procurement, operation and maintenance, cost recovery, hygiene awareness, visible impacts to capacity development

health care. That in turn brings betterment to the community where she lives.

Studies show that women from rural areas spend 3-8 hours for the collection and management of water. In between this she has to rear her children and take care of elderly and also to be involved in the other community affairs.

Better availability of water in home premises definitely will reduce the extra yoke for the collection of water. So she will get adequate time to look after her children and schooling of especially girl children.

In rural areas, reports show that, more time involvement of girl children in domestic works and water collection, increasing the chances of dropouts and inaccessibility to higher studies. So the availability of water at home will produce impacts that are intergenerational. So a better gender sensitive water resource management plan will seek to provide equity in the distribution of welfare to society devoid of gender discrimination.

Strategic Gender Needs

Strategic gender needs are those needs, which stem from the analysis of women's subordination to men. The outcome of such planning definitely will be an alternative, more equal and satisfactory organisation of society than that now exists in terms of the power relations and relationship between men and women.

The important strategic gender needs are

- The abolition of sexual division of labour
- The alleviation of the drudgery associated with home making and childcare
- The removal of institutionalised forms of discrimination such as right own land or property or access to credit and thrift
- Involvement in decision-making
- Inclusion of women in skill and capacity development programmes
- Enrolling community assigned positions and
- Adopting other measures to check male domination.

In order to overcome the social exclusion of women in developmental milieu, *Jalanidhi* propagated gender sensitive components in its thrust programmes. Taking into the consideration the unpleasant reality that women are the worst affected section of the society due to the shortage of water, deliberate efforts have been made to iron out the problems and issues faced by them from the community.

For the better gender sensitivity and empowerment of women, *Jalanidhi* project envisaged the following strategies and actions.

- Dual membership: During the formation of Beneficiary Groups, the membership is given to one female and

male from each house holds. This is mandatory. Since there is an equitable distribution of membership over male and female, women will get ample opportunity in decision-making.

- More than 33.33 per cent reservation of women membership in executive committee: Through this provision, women have come out of their shell and successfully shoulder the responsibilities from the very planning to the operation and maintenance of period. So key decisions like time and duration of water supplied to the beneficiaries will be engendered by the involvement of women in executive committee.

- Obligatory provision to reserve President, Secretary or Treasurer positions to woman hands. Traditionally women are considered as silent spectators of any activities. In any power triangles, men handled the upper positions by telling that women have no leadership qualities.

- Banged hands to operate pump and take up maintenance works like repairing pumps and pipe lines: In the division of labour hitherto existed concepts were turned upside down by the handling of operator ship by women. By getting water at reachable hands, women will be getting more leisure time to involve in other activities.

- Women led micro-enterprises: For the promotion of economic status and to enlist greater involvement and participation of women, Women Development Initiatives were included as a major component of the project. In this area micro enterprises are promoted through financial assistance to the women groups and developing capacities by trainings

- Formation of Women's Self Help Group (SHG): For the collective involvement of women and providing greater participation in decision making, and better control over the community assets and facilities created under the project, efforts were made to form at least one women's Self Help Group in a Beneficiary Group. Thrift and credit and mobilisation of other resources are undertaken by the SHG.

- Environment Management Plan: Conditions of domestic and community sanitation are highly correlated to the life

of women. Unhealthy and unhygienic environment always affects women negatively. Coverage of latrine facilities in rural areas compared to urban area is very low. Lack of sanitary latrines in the home will badly affect the women in different ways.

- Training programmes incorporated under the capacity development plan are more focused to women. Under this head, skill development trainings are imparted to women beneficiary members.

- Ground water recharge is an important component of the project. Here project adopts both structural and agronomic measures to enrich the ground water level. This has direct relation with inter generational impacts of water supply. The ground water level in our nearby premises is depleting day by day.

- Above all, the involvements of women in water supply create a sense of ownership among women community. Procurement, maintenance of books of accounts gives her right place along men through out from the planning to implementation of the project.

What gained so far?

While examining the participation of women during the planning and implementation of the project, it is concrete evident that, women members have devotedly participated in planning, implementation and operation and maintenance period. In many Beneficiary Groups all over Kerala, women have taken lead roles to complete the entire works within the given time frame by saving an average 5-10 per cent of the total project cost.

To sum up, for the past two decades, efforts have been emerging from different governmental and voluntary organisation to promote a better gender sensitive water resource management plan to enhance the capacities and future needs of women community, keeping in the mind that woman are the worst affected sections of the society due to the perturbed water resources. Through this approach, the project could not only enhance the women empowerment initiatives but also prevent intergenerational impacts of exclusion of women from plan imperatives-related with water resource management.

- The writer is Team Leader, *Jalanidhi* Project, Omassery Grama Panchayth, Kozhikode



Classical aspects of folk art

Dr. M.V. Vishnu Namboodiri

An important symbol of human civilisation is art. Art is as old as human history. Scholars often divide art as aboriginal art, folk art, and classical arts. Yet we shall say that folk arts depend on aboriginal art and classical arts. Yet we shall say that folk arts depend on aboriginal art and classical arts depend on folk art very much. The dances of the aborigines are the crude form of the rhythmic movements made for martial purposes or expression of their emotion. As culture developed from these crude movements derived folk arts. They are preserved most often hereditarily. They seldom require deliberate training and practice. Technical intricacies also doesn't hinder their practice. There were no deliberate attempts to modify and make them classical that even now folk arts keep their originality and pristine nature in spite of the lapse of centuries.

Classical and scientific art forms are influenced by folk arts. Folk art is the storehouse of modern art forms. Although modern classical art forms are advanced in techniques and other things, folk arts

are the quintessence of the pure, natural and undistorted representation of their lives. The position of folk art is in between ancient and crude aboriginal art form and modern classical art. Its function is the linking of the two and the assemblage of the two forms. Hence we can not term folk art and old uncouth one.

The oldest classic of the dance forms of India is 'Natyasastra' of Bharathamuni. He has divided art into 'Desi' and 'Margi'. It is proof of his knowledge of the scientific and the differences in the regional forms of art. Slight differences are possible in acting and speech of art forms. This is the feature of 'desi'. The Rishi might have thought of folk art when he designated 'desi'. 'Margi' is derivative of 'desi'. The Rishi has identified the various art forms prevalent during his time and codified the rules for them. (Natyasastra).

A language attains the quality of 'standard' when it sheds of its narrowness and parochialism and raises itself of a higher level. Sanskrit had a lot of dialects and variants. 'Sanskrit' is a refined form which is higher than the others. Art is also

like this.

The geographical area and the socio-economic factors affect a lot in the development of the concepts of art, beauty, creativity etc. The concept of 'Thina' exemplifies it. Differences can be found in all walks of lives of people like the dress, modes of worship, art, food habits etc. In the performance of art and other festivals too the regional differences are there. At times, art and other may shed away the regional limitation and then it becomes classic.

When we think of civilisation, it has two streams: Little tradition and higher tradition. Regional and racial cultural item is little tradition. The amalgamation of such smaller cultural varieties forming a higher culture. A lake is formed by the flow of a lot of small rivulets. We may not notice such small flow of water. Folk art forms are also just like these unnoticed water flows. When we forget folk arts or leave unnoticed, we forget the fact that the classical art forms originated from those crude art forms. In the book 'Dances of India', it is said: The folk art of a region



olk arts

is the mirror of that place. The nature, culture, social interactions, beliefs, religion and other those can be seen in this mirror.

Almost all folk forms might have been crude forms in their early stage. As human beings developed socially, culturally and economically, attempts were made to refine those crude art forms. The changes that happened need not be as a whole. In certain areas the aboriginal forms might have survived. A few others might have changed at right. Most probably, the present day classic forms got the present form and status on account of the so-called changes that occurred to them at different levels and times.

The main classic forms of art of Kerala are Kathakali, Krishnanattam and Mohiniyattam. In Koodiyattam too we can identify features of classic art. The history of Koodiyattam clearly shows that originally it was a folk form. Classic performing arts got a lot from folk arts in the dress, facial make-up, methods of dances, the performance and the variety of characters. The survival of a few features of porattu can also be seen in the classic forms. The mahout in Kamsavadham, the

servant girl in Kuchelavrittham, the carpenter (Asari) in Bakavada, the washermen and women (Mannan and Mannathi) in Lavanasuravadham, the thangal in Ambarishacharita, the priest in Dakshayaga - all these are the remnants of folk art forms.

It is said that Thullal developed from some crude dance forms prevalent among communities like Paraya, Pulaya and Ganaka. The names Ottan, seethangan and Parayan testify it. The costumes of thullal are also very near in form to the old, uncouth folk dances.

The practice of making Kovil and Balipeeta with banana stem is crude sorcerers and others who practice Kuruthitarpanam follow it. It is also seen in 'pana'. In Kathakali this practice survives. In Dakshayagam Kathakali we see the making of a 'Yagasala' with this. As in the crude folk art forms, in Kathakali too, characters having blood on their bodies appears. It is also a remnant of the old form.

Most of the folk art forms are ritualistic ones meant for the worship of deities. It is performed for the propitiation of the deity for the fulfillment of desires, acquisition of wealth, safety or escape from danger etc. As in folk art, in classic forms too some divine associations can be identified. Krishnanattam is a devotional item in Guruvayoor. In all art forms of Kerala we can see the influence of Kalari - the Martial art. It is there irrespective of the art being folk or classic. The two types now available in Kathakali - Thekkan (southern) and Vadakkan (northern) - developed so because of the influence of the two types of martial arts in these areas.

The relationship between folk and classic art and the mutual influence is here dealt with. Most people believe that folk art forms have no scientific basis. That is not true. The crowns of classic art and 'Mutis' of folk forms are the same. The variety of Mutis used in Theyyam and Thira are not found in refined forms of art. In costumes too, same is the case. In Kathakali we have different types of characters like Pacha, Kathi, Minukku, Pazhukka, Kari, Thati etc. In theyyams too such divisions are possible. Theyyam with Valiyamuti, Vattamudi, Peelimuti, Chattamuti, Pookettimuti, Koombumuti, Kondalmuti, Omkaramuti, Palamuti can

be the divisions of Theyyams. In dress materials too, such variety is noticeable. For Pookkettimuti theyyams a special dress called Chirakuduppu (dress with wings). Different types of costumes called velumban, Kanimundu, Vattota, paranna Ota, Vitanathara, Oliyuduppu etc. are a few others. Can anyone refute the fact they doesn't follow a systematic and scientific method.

In the facial make-up too we can see the scientific methods followed. In Kathakali, we can see only one way of using paste or colour. Varieties are there only in a few characters like Karkotakan in Nalacharitha, Sudarsanam in Ambareeshacharitham, Hanuman etc. The faceback of Bhadrakali in Dakshayaga is very similar to the Kali of Mutiyett and Bhadrakali Theyyattu. In Theyyams and Thiras the decorations of the face of Theyyams. The artists of this field call the different ways of decoration by names like Kattisankhum Prakkum, Vairidalam, Mankaneezhuthu, Man kannum Villukuriyum, Narikuriche zhuthu, Irattachurulittezhuthu, Hanuman-kannittezhuthu, Kodumpurikam-vacheshuthu, Vattakannu, Vattakkannum Pulliyum, Kattaram and Pully, Sanchitteshuthu etc. Besides the facial decorations, the bodies of theyyams are also decorated. It also differs from theyyam to theyyam. The differences of one from the other comprise muti, costumes, facial and body decorations (painting). It is quite justifiable in believing that the ancient beliefs and the myths of gods are mingled inextricably with the aforesaid items.

An observer can never say that in the presentation of Theyyams and the dances involved in the performance doesn't have science / system behind them. Different types of masculine and feminine dances and the hand and muscular movements of the face are found in these folk forms. Four types of acting can be identified. The movements of Theyyams are representative of special ideas associated with the myth. They are the spectacular representation of the old beliefs.

Folk arts are the representation of the aboriginal sense of rhythm and its linear development over centuries. They have scientific basis. Through a systematic study of classical and folk arts, we can identify and understand the evolution of the 'Thala; and 'raga' of Kerala. ■

Refreshingly romantic

Sudha Warriier

Rose Mary, who firmly believes that her talent is 'A Spring From The Misty Mountains' is the recipient of the Muthukulam Parvathy Amma Literary Award this year. Reading her poems and now her reminiscences in prose 'Vrischika Kattu Veezhumbol' which has brought her this recognition one could not help but share her belief. Her language has the fresh cool fervour of the spring waters and the spontaneous flow of the mountain brook. The poetic imagery is romantically misty too. In spite of the prolonged spring that was Malayalam Poetry in the twentieth century when three generations of poets and innumerable trends coexisted, womens poetry remained just a part of it only. Not strong enough or big enough to be acknowledged as a major influence or trend. May be one of the reasons why it was not duly projected is that many of the women poets moved in orbits of their own discovered through repeated attempts at self-expression and found safe. But Rose Mary is different as shown by her bold entrance into prose and the immediate attention and recognition she got.

Through prose Rose Mary's reminiscences remind one of Sry. Parvathy Amma's longing for a lost world where poets like Ashan and other great men and women devoted to great causes existed. Rose Mary on the other hand is trying to bring back a world she was born to and which is fast vanishing in front of her. She is reliving it rather than feeling sorry. Since the world and she herself is changing all the time which is the law of nature her words and ideas come out refreshingly

new. In both their writings the nostalgia is highly communicative and delicately confessional. The female psyche definitely making its presence felt as different from the male approach.

Rose Mary encroaches on the men's world-perhaps as a woman sees it. She says, 'In the breezy twilight hours-I could as well wear a checked Lunki-And sitting in one of the small bars-Tasting the frothing toddy with-The too hot and spicy side dish- Listening to the lengthening

vowels-And unsteady laughter-Responding to the vulgar jokes-I take the head cloth off and -Resetting it at an angle once more-I could reach you on the - Broad wings of a dream.' In her native village as she deftly depicts in her new book Vrischika Kattu Veezhumbol life was a carnival and living a



luxury. In that spontaneous out flow of the urge to enjoy, people joined in irrespective of rank and race. One day she was enraptured by a scene which filled her with hope and happiness as a child. She describes it at length. Her Uncle George, a typical young man of those times carrying an aura of the wilderness of tea estates around him, was sitting under a Chaampa tree in full bloom singing aloud with a sense of abandon. He was so much in love with life-a zeal unknown to the youth of today. All who happened to be there joined in adding their own beats to the grand orchestra that was life then.

It is only natural that Rose Mary when she grew up into a poet wrote, 'I don't believe in a love that is protected-kept safe so to speak. For her love is like the sun burning for all and the western wind that blows for all. A concept she shared with Sry. Parvathy Amma. Rose Mary has succeeded in making a nest for her different from the world around which she rightly calls 'Wakkukal Chekkarunidam.' ■

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Vaikom Madhu

Please make no mistake, we decided to eat out! Yeah. Out and out for a stylish mode. A thrilling break from the past, no? One has to be daring, at times, I tried to buoy up Radha. Not just for a change, as youngsters often excuse themselves from home-food nowadays. Nor to fall in line with the globalization mantra. "OK" - she agreed, though demurred at first. May be out of compulsion, I gather.

For the rest of the story I take you back to the studio.

Arriving by *Anavandi*, we were dead fagged out after a long tiring journey from Thiruvananthapuram. Attending a wedding, which is a must for Malayali, is something of a social sine qua non performed on a punishing schedule. With imaging technology churning out whirling gadgets, marriage ceremony stretches for hours together to make full use of it, or shall we say integrate with it. Either way it is taxing. All the relatives from near and far, friends, neighbors, local politicians of every hue and a sprinkle of mediawallahs (if could be roped in), of the newly wed have to be videoed with the couples in nuptial mode. Presence of a couple of foreigners (mind you, of white variety), who are easier to come by given the gung ho for tourism, lends a touch of globalism, we are mad after.

Lensmen who ruled the roost in every wedding ceremony for nearly a century is being phased out pitifully as passé now. Days were when their presence was looked upon with awe and only the well heeled could engage them. But no more. Just like our municipal kerosene lamps, they are being out-focused to the dim lane of history. The myth that muscle power is the sole prerogative of the politicians is torn to shreds by us, 90 plus percentage literate and tech savvy Malayali. I challenge anyone to disprove this theory by attending a Kerala wedding plus the feast that follows. Of course you may come out in single piece after the marriage, but not necessarily after the Party. But take part in the Party, *Sadya* in local lingo, is a must and for that a special wording, sanctified by tradition, is incorporated invariably in the wedding invitation. There comes the

crunch and you are put to test.

The door of Heaven is opened with lesser traumatic wait than the holy portals of the *Sadya* hall, which is besieged by the guests who the long wait made irritable. As time ticks on patience is visibly running out their face and are on edge. They try in vain to engage themselves in trivia to get rid of the boredom. To get through the portals, I bet, the Bihari muscleman will be no match for us, Malayalis. Once the doors blissfully creaked opened, wherefrom I don't know, we muster unbelievable oomph to charge into it in all the tsunamic fury, with contenders elbowed out, to make to the *Ila* (the plantain leaf). Poof! End of a long wait. Only Malayalis can accomplish it with bravado. I am dead sure. Weaklings of course keel over or get pushed aside in the melee. Or fail to make to the *Ila*, before

way in maddening fury. The same sordid replay. what a lovely battle. Battle for the bowl!

We did n't go one better this time too. No way, we lost out miserably. Now what? Failed to make it, what is there to hope for? Radha, turned at me quizzically. We mulled over the thorny issue before sneaking out furtively making sure not to be noticed by, and sped past hailing an auto. But no luck, it was just a touch and go and missed out the train to Kottayam. Now? Driven to the wall, no way but fall back on *Anavandi*. And so did we, hurriedly sipping a tea.

"A cursed day" – I moaned. "Don't say that", she protested, "we have come to bless the couples, and that done we are satisfied. The rest is not of our making, we have to bear with

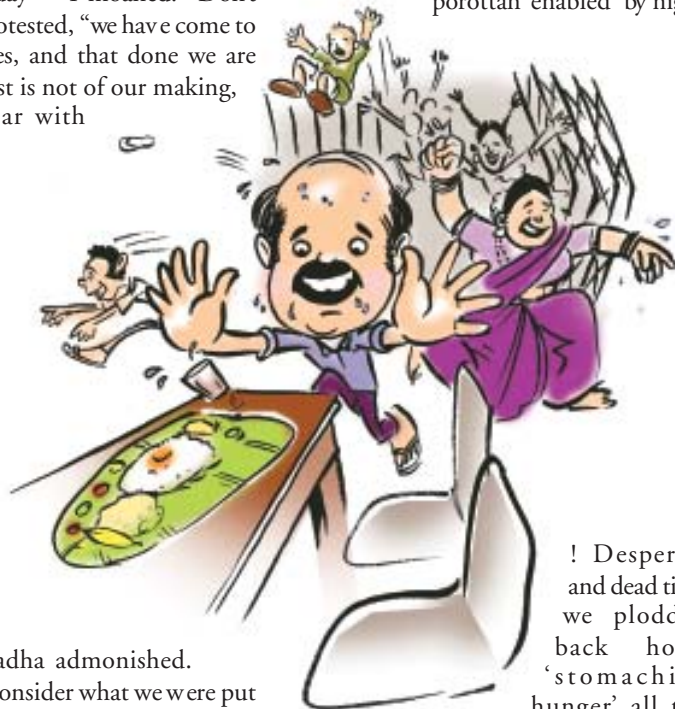
high decibel fusillade, blunting my eardrums instantaneously... Porrottah, chappathi, poori...!

Iddli, Dosa? My hunger prodded me to enquire.

At this time of night? No sir. That you get only in the morning. Now it is 9.30, closing time... Shall I bring porrottah sir, hot and soft? Or poori, smooth and sizzling...?

Slammed! Hoped for Thair Vada and Iddli were turned out to be pie in the sky. Radha can't stand the exotic porrottah et al a wee bit. We made enquiry at two more hotels. No way. All eateries are only porrottah 'enabled' by night

Eating out in the time of Dandi...



being grabbed by the pushy in the free for all. On that fateful day we too were driven to share their fate. Forced out of the hall, being house-full, we were left to wait around to try our luck in the second attempt. Waiting for the second *Panthi* may also end up as a retake and risking valuable another half an hour. Without loosing hope we decided to give a second try, strictly out of societal obligation. And mind you, not to relish the *Atapradhamanned Sadya*.

We moved around to kill time. Presto! Look, the divine doors creaked opened before us the second time. Commotion. Fidgeting movements all around. Rustle of Silk Sarees. Expectation flush the face of the hopefuls. Elbowing. Shirts torn, sarees creased, spectacles blown off, chappals paired down... The crowd pushing their

patiently" – Radha admonished. True, true, but consider what we were put through. No food, no water and face up the ordeal on our own... in this hot, humid summer.

Four hours of sweltering later, back in Kottayam wilted and washed out. I was dead hungry, had the appetite to devour a whole restaurant. Thair Vada a plate or two would be ideal for the summer scorch. Plus an Onion Uthappam or Iddli Sambar would make the dinner excellent. Masala Dosa will be another option. A filter coffee to wash down will work up to an excellent finale. I formatted the mouth watering dinner schedule. Aha! Couple of veg hotels are there. We hit a well lit restaurant frequented by avowed vegans known to me. The bearer, on being asked of the menu, blared out what he rote-learned in

! Desperate and dead tired we plodded back home 'stomaching hunger' all the way. Radha, quiet and composed, prepared a nice black tea, as milk had run out yesterday, and cozily we hit the sac. Our revolutionary eating out has thus been made memorable on day one itself by Upavasam. Is it anyway coincidental with the whiff of Dandi March very much in the air.

The bottom line: Taking the cue from Ayurveda tourism, cultural tourism, pilgrim Tourism, pollution tourism etc., is it not worthwhile reflecting on *Sadya Tourism*. An ingenious idea, 100% culture specific to Kerala! It could be promoted courtesy our envious literacy. Foreigners will, sure, zip in shiploads and our coffers will jingle. ■

Life & Career

They also serve



RENJITH CHANDY



RENJITH CHANDY

Kannan, his wife Geetha and their child (top above)
Gopi, his wife Sandhya (above)

Leenus L. K.

Kannan and Gopi. That is how their friends and relatives call these two young men in their early thirties. Kannan (K.Sivanjanam) is the elder brother and Gopi (K.Elangoven) is younger.

Born into an agricultural family in Polpully near Palakkad they both had regular schooling and college education like any other youth of their time. And then instead of looking for any “jobs” that give related security and a regular monthly income either in government or private sector they both took up their family calling; Agriculture. And through hard work, dedication and a keen sense of business enterprise diversified and expanded family assets into a host of agriculture related business enterprises.

Till 1990, the thirty-acre of land their family owned consisted only of paddy cultivation. It was in 1991 that their father took the first tentative steps to construct three fishponds in about 30 cents of this land. In the very next year the fish farm was expanded with an addition of seven more fishponds. Sensing the spread of fish culture and further need for hatchlings nurseries were also set up to rear a variety of fishes like Cutla, Rohu, Mrigal, Cyprinas, Silver Carp, Grass Carp etc. The erstwhile FFDA at Meenkara under the state government gave the necessary support and guidance for their endeavor. Land Mortgage Bank gave Rs 2,50,000.00 for development of fisheries of which Rs 50, 000.00 was state subsidy.

Within two years the fish culture programme had expanded so well that the brothers could supply fingerlings for the Janakeeya Matsyakrishi Programme of the state government in 1996,1997 and 1998. They also supply fingerlings for the various dam sites like Malampuzha, Chulliyar etc.

“Today our fish farm has expanded to six acres. Our plan is to expand it to ten acres.” The brothers share a dream for their Champath Fisheries.

Two years back they started a Pigery on a small scale. Breeding extremely productive varieties like Large Yorkshire, Duroc, Hamshare, Land Raiser etc. the piggery has expanded from 100 pigs in a 4000-sq.foot sty to 300 pigs and 10,000 sq. feet Pigsty.

They have also started growing cows, bulls and buffaloes. 6 H F brand cows, and 17 buffaloes are already being reared in the farm. The Gobur gas plant attached to the cattle shed provides gas for home consumption. They also have teak wood plantation (one acre) mango cultivation (one acre) and other small plantations in



Kannan and Gopi, the brothers in Polpully near Palakkad, took up their family calling-agriculture.

Their success is amazing.

In addition to ten acres of coconuts. And further diversification programmes are still on. "Now we are planning to plant Chikoo, Ghooseberry and Pathimugham in two acres."

In about less than 15 years their farm has diversified and expanded into one of the most successful ventures in that area. They are happy and take pride their achievements. In spite of this diversification into yields that give cash returns, they have not forsaken paddy. They still cultivate varieties like CR1009 (Ponmani-white rice), red items like Jyothi Matta and Uma Matta in their paddy fields.

Their love for agriculture and related activities is still strong. It is very rare to find such highly educated youth of their age seriously engaged in agriculture.



RENJITH CHANDY

Education has not made them dislike hard work and toil. Young men like Kannan and Gopi and their families prove that there is more to life and career than just Medicine, Engineering or IT.

■ The writer is a communication professional and a film maker.

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Jiji Thomson presenting *Sutharya Keralam*

Pacifying performance

HIS voice is soft, grabbing and pacifying. So far the voice has been reverberating the echelons of power and administration. Yes, speaking of Jiji Thomson, the Editor-in-Chief of *Kemla Calling*. Thanks to his inner-touching voice he was made to adorn the attire of the commentator of *Sutharya Keralam*. After its four weekly episodes, *Sutharya Keralam*, telecast by Doordarshan, registered a record viewership.

The TV programme is an extension of Mass Contact Programme initiated by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. Focused on developmental issues, public grievances and other topics of governance, the

show attracts viewers before 22 lakh plus television sets in Kerala tuned to DD Kerala. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy intervenes in at least 17 complaints from people. He talks to the complainants over video or telephone. Around 300 complaints are received in *Sutharya Keralam* every week. People can register their complaints dialling 04843011111. Chief Minister's urge to always remain among people's issues continues to be fulfilled.

Thus the voice of Jiji Thomson flows like a balm amidst the poor, the distressed and the unattended.

Family matters

DR. K. VENUGOPAL, the chest physician and District TB Officer of Alappuzha, is known for his professional acumen. Awards and accolades never refused to knock his door.

He has received best District TB Officer award from State Government in 2002 and Best Anti-tobacco Campaign Award for four years consecutively from regional Cancer Association, Thiruvananthapuram. He has so far presented nine operational research papers at national and international level conferences.

If Dr.

Venugopal is so high-flying can his wife Dr. P.R. Sreelatha be far behind? Never. Along with her husband she flew to Canada and presented Operational Research papers at 9th annual conference of International UNION Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease – North American Region from 23rd to 27th February 2005. The papers 'Effect of Ayurvedic Immuno modulation on Sputum Conversion under RNTCP Regimen – A case control study', 'Effect of

Antibiotic on Sputum Status of Pulmonary Tuberculosis Cases Registered Under RNTCP' (both by Dr. K. Venugopal) and 'Neonatal BCG Vaccination in Preterm Infants – A case control study' (by Dr. P.R. Sreelatha) are very relevant in TB Control Programme especially developing countries like India. These papers have got an award of \$ 4400 US considering its merit and presentation.



Dr. K. Venugopal and Dr. P.R. Sreelatha

Dr. Venugopal is a native of Mandrothuruthu, Kollam.

Dr. Sreelatha is now working as assistant professor in Paediatrics at Medical College Hospital, Kottayam. She has got a Best Paper Award at National TB Conference in 2005 at Delhi. She is a native of Maruthadi, Kollam.

They have two children, Gopikrishan and Gopika Venugopal.

Students' might

FUTURE waits for those who choose the road less taken. When Vijithkumar, Aneesh B.S. and Rachana R.S. dared to take the bull by the horns by making a seven-minute long animation named *Kolla* (Plunder) on the exploitation of



our ground water by a multinational company, they did the same thing. These final year BFA (Applied Art) students of Fine Arts have become role models, after their three-months' effort has been screened at their college. The debut 3D clay animation can compete with the professionally made big budget ones. They have been invited to screen the film at VJT Hall as part of the Earth Day

programmes organised by *Greens*, an environmental organisation in Government Secretariat.

It is believed that the first response to a social issue comes from the campus. Better late than never.



(from top)
Vijithkumar
Aneesh B.S.
Rachana R.S.

Panchavadyam glory



KUZHOOOR NARAYANA MARAR feels pretty. His ripened talent in Panchavadyam has finally received the greatest recognition from the State Government. Culture Minister A.P. Anilkumar declared him the recipient of this year's Pallavoor Appu Marar Puraskaram. The award carries one lakh rupees and a citation.

Chiefly the proponent of *Thimila* in Panchavadyam, Narayana Marar also stood for *Annamanada* style in Panchavadyam. He also proved a maestro both in Thayambaka and Chenda.



VELICHAPPADU: giving lease of life

Embracing the great recognition, his four decades long excellence in Panchavadyam will enliven more and more enthusiasts in the days to come.

Long live Komarams

VELICHAPPADS and Komarams of North Malabar have been tellers of a distant past. Their lives have been remnants of our cultural tradition. In real life they are an unlucky lot. A.P. Anilkumar, the Minister for Cultural Affairs knew this well. Felt by their life-woes the minister opened his heart towards them. The result: Government has decided to give salary to Velichappads and Komarams attached to the temples under HR & CE.

Added by a new vigour, the cultural front in the State is buoyant and vibrant. Dr. D. Babu Paul's letter to A.P. Anilkumar, when he offered his resignation recently, is an indicator to the new born times.

Not a child's play

TO P.S. JAYAN, Sub Editor, *Mathrubhumi*, the *Chevening Scholarship* came as a reward to the experiments he carried out in *Kuttycom*, a never-before-seen children's page in the Indian print world.



P.S. Jayan

The scholarship having around 11-lakh cash support, is sponsored by the British Council for the young Indian journalists in print media. This is for the study at the University of Westminster, London and training in *The Times* daily.

The brainchild of Jayan, *Kuttycom* has been started in the point of view to provide sufficient materials for assignments related to DPEP curriculum and to build up an

interactive relationship between children and the newspaper. In response to one issue which dealt with making newspapers at school levels, he received a record

number of more than 5000 letters from the children. He also receives handfuls of letters from parents in response to '*Amma Ariyan*', a psychiatric approach to parenting. He is proud to acknowledge that hundreds of clubs are formed in the name of *Kutty.com* at different schools in the state.

After having both master's degree and master's diploma in journalism, Jayan joined *Mathrubhumi* in 1999. Sheena is his wife and Krishnaveni is their daughter.



From the reel to the real

"**DO YOU** know how a pregnant woman should live, what kind of food should she eat and in which entertainments should she involve?" asked Rajiv Menon to the puzzled Annie in the movie '*Dasharatham*.' The poignant moments from the life of the characters presented by Mohanlal and Rekha, has now spilled over to a real life story in Kerala.

The celluloid story has been adopted to the barren

parenthood of Paulson and Prabha belonging to Ernakulam and engaged in a small-scale business.

A 31 year old from Kollam became the surrogate woman. On the day of contract delivery the woman refused to see the face of the 'alien' infant before she left the hospital in Thiruvananthapuram. Otherwise, the climax of the '*Dasaratham*' also would have crept into, and thus spoiled the whole episode!

End of earning, beginning of learning

At last it happens. Practice of collecting donation in school admission is about to end. Parents may no longer have to spend sleepless nights worrying about interviews and organising “donation” to get their little ones admitted to nursery, or any other class.

The public school system in India is set for a radical change. The government is considering as part of the enabling legislation for free and compulsory education, a proposal to do away with screening of children and

parents by schools for admissions. The proposal would also outlaw accepting donations or capitation fee by

schools in lieu of admission. Not a novel idea, it was first outlined by the Kothari

Commission. Later it found mention in the National Education Policy of 1986. It will also mean that neighbourhood schooling will become the norm. Since schools won't be able to pick and choose, they will be obliged to admit children from the neighbourhood first before they can accept children from other areas.

If accepted, admissions to schools will become a simpler task for both parents and children. Further, the tendency to choose a distant school will also end. ■



Line & Memory M.R. Ravindran





Bhairavi Kolam



Pula Nrutham



Kaalan Kolam

Celebrating toil and soil

Deep-rooted in myths and tradition, Padayanis are famous for colour and splendour. **SUGATHAN VATTAKKAD** captures some spectacles from Padayani conducted at Othara in Pathanamthitta district.

Maruta Kolam





Valiya Bhairavi Kolam



Naga Kolams