

# KERALA CALLING

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2020 JANUARY 01

*The Wider We Grow*



*The Deeper Go Our Roots*



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## Welcome to the Homeland Once Again!

Any development to the State will not be complete without the active participation of the non-resident Keralites. This realisation gathers pace with the Government welcoming the Malayali diaspora with open arms for them to actively participate in the building of a New Kerala to keep pace with international furtherance.

The history of Kerala of the last sixty years will remain incomprehensive if the contributions of the Malayali Diaspora are not taken into consideration. Migration has become so rampant in the last couple of decades that its effect is felt in every aspect of life in the state.

The role that the Malayali Diaspora continues to play in alleviating poverty and propping up the financial backbone through remittances means it still wields a major influence on Kerala economy, and has thus become an influential body which can play an important part in the development of the State. This realization by the present government was what paved way for the creation of the "Loka Kerala Sabha".

The first ever Loka Kerala Sabha that met in 2018 had 351 members across the continents drawn from various walks of life so as to represent a cross section of our migrant community spread far and wide.

The floods of August 2018, the worst in the history of the State, precipitated one of the biggest testing times. The immediate support and help the State got from around the world, which continues into 2019, is in fact a direct result of Kerala's strengthened global networks, epitomized in the setting up of the Loka Kerala Sabha.

The second session of the Loka Kerala Sabha will assess the interventions made by Non Resident Keralites since its inception, and discuss the steps forward. Besides, it will further the participation and revitalize the leadership of our expatriates in projects related to Kerala's development in various sectors.

This edition of Kerala Calling has rightly chosen to focus on Non Resident Keralites in order to give a glimpse of their pervasive and positive influence on the economic and social life of the State, and also to salute the indefatigable spirit they have shown in times of adversities in countries affected by recession.

Loka Kerala Sabha is sure to emerge stronger in the years to come with such a proactive involvement of the expatriate community, and make Kerala a State where all its migrants too have a say on how they want their state to evolve. All this proves that the present government demonstrates the prerequisites of good governance.

Hope the new era of engagement with Non resident Keralites in the upliftment of the State brings in good tidings in the New Year.

*Wish you all a Happy New Year*

**U.V. JOSE I.A.S.**  
Editor-in-Chief

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My ancestors migrated from Kashmir to Madhya Pradesh about 200 years back, and were in the service of the Nawab of Jaora ( in Western Madhya Pradesh ) for several generations. So I would like to call Madhya Pradesh as the real India.

My grandfather Dr. K.N. Katju shifted to U.P. as a lawyer, first to the District Court, Kanpur in 1908, and then to the Allahabad High Court in 1914. I was born in Lucknow in 1946, and grew up in Allahabad, which I regard as my home town. So I would like to call the people of U.P. as the real Indians.

I have close connections with Bengal, Orissa ( where my grandfather was Governor ) and Tamilnadu ( where I was Chief Justice ). So I would like to call the people there as the real Indians. But these are only my emotional opinions.

Thinking rationally, I believe that the real Indians are the Keralites, because they have in them the quintessential qualities of Indians. As I have explained on my blog ' What is India ? ', India is broadly a country of immigrants, like North America, and that explains the tremendous diversity here—so many religions, castes, languages, ethnic

## IN EVERY MALAYALI I FIND THE QUINTESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF INDIA

Justice(Rtd.) Markandey Katju



and regional groups, etc. The ancestors of perhaps 95% people living in India today came from abroad ( the original inhabitants are the pre Dravidian tribals known as the Scheduled Tribes e.g. Bhils, Gonds, Santhals, Todas, etc ). So to live united and in harmony we must respect every group of people. In my opinion the Keralites do this the best, and therefore they are symbolic and represent the whole of India. So they are the real Indians, and all of us must try to emulate them and imbibe their spirit.

I regard Kerala as the real India because it represents a microcosm of India. As I said, India is broadly a country of immigrants. the essential quality of Kerala is its openness to external influence—Dravidians, Aryans, Romans, Arabs, British, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Marxists, etc.

The Christians of Kerala belong to the oldest Christian group outside Palestine. It is said that one of the disciples of Jesus, St. Thomas, came to Kerala. Jews came here and settled down in Cochin when they were persecuted by the Romans after demolition of their temple in 72 A.D. Islam came here through traders, and not through armies, as in the north. The Scheduled castes never suffered the discrimination that they suffered in the rest of India. One of their sages Sree Narayan Guru, who was an Ezhava,

is venerated by all communities in Kerala.

Adi Shankaracharya ( whose home town Kaladi in Kerala I have visited ) travelled throughout India and established the 4 well known centres of Hinduism, Sringeri in the South, whose first head was Mandan Mishra ( renamed Sureswaracharya ) whom he defeated in a famous debate, Puri in the East, Dwarka in the West, and Jyotirmath in the North.

In the Badrinath temple in the Himalayas the head priest is always a Namboodri Brahmin from Kerala, who is called the Rawal, and his deputy, the Naib Rawal, is also from the same community. The Rawal has a tenure of 5 years, after which the deputy Rawal becomes the Rawal.

The Keralites had trade relations over 2000 years ago with Carthage, Rome ( many Roman coins have been found in Kerala ), Arabs, etc Kerala has produced great artists, mathematicians ( the great mathematician Aryabhata is said to be from Kerala ), martial arts, handicrafts. enlightened Kings, and sages, etc. Keralites are great travellers, and everywhere in the globe one will find Keralites. There is a joke that when the American astronaut Neil Armstrong landed on the moon on 1969 he found a Keralite there offering to sell him tea. There was

never any tradition in Kerala against travelling abroad, nor of ritual defilement for crossing the 'kala pani ' as among many communities in North India.

Keralites abound in the Middle East. I was invited to Qatar last year by some Keralite Muslims, and found that in Qatar there are more Keralites than local Arabs. In Dubai too I found numerous Keralites. In Bahrain there are more Keralites than Bahrainis.

When I was a University student and lawyer in Allahabad I would often go to the Coffee House. I found that most of the waiters there were Keralites, and I became friends with many of them. In many hospitals in India and abroad the nurses are Keralites. I believe there is no illiteracy in Kerala.

Keralites are hard working, modest, and intelligent. They are broad minded, liberal, cosmopolitan and secular in their views ( though no doubt there are a few exceptions ). All Indians must learn from them.

**Long live the Keralites !**

“ In my opinion the Keralites do this the best, and therefore they are symbolic and represent the whole of India. So they are the real Indians, and all of us must try to emulate them and imbibe their spirit.

“ Keralites are hard working, modest, and intelligent. They are broad minded, liberal, cosmopolitan and secular in their views ( though no doubt there are a few exceptions ). All Indians must learn from them.





Malayalis are that rare breed of people who successfully made migration/sojourn a means of eking out a livelihood or even attaining prosperity. Due to this, for Malayalis, migration wasn't the distress of fleeing one's motherland; rather, it was a give and take affair that brought them prosperity and development. Today we have realized our dream of an association, a togetherness representing Malayalis living all over the world. Democracy always makes, remakes and reinvents itself. We expect this organization to be the reinvention of such a process of democracy. The impressive track record after the first Loka Kerala Sabha meeting during

the last two years is a sample testimony to this. The forum facilitated an assemblage for the deployment of the voice and power of Malayalis living in every nook and corner of the world.

Democracy is never a static, technical or immutable thing. On the contrary, democracy always finds better ways to communicate and to respond to the ever changing world and society. Kerala is not confined to a geographical location; rather, it exists everywhere where there is a Malayali. A forum which includes elected MLAs and MPs is a tribute to the non resident Keralites who are the back bone of the economy of Kerala. This forum can address and formulate solutions to a whole lot of

## A PREFACE TO THE SECOND LOKA KERALA SABHA

P. Sreeramakrishnan  
Speaker, Kerala Legislative Assembly



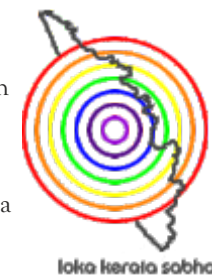
issues faced by non resident Keralites. The Government of Kerala has taken all possible measures on the recommendations put forward by the standing committees of the Loka Kerala Sabha. There was a supplementary regional meet in the Middle East. Many investors meets were organised. Many forums are being formed including the Emerging Entrepreneurs Meet - a forum of emerging Malayalee investors. All these forums get the opportunity of allying with Kerala and its developmental activities. Dividend Pension Scheme for Non Resident Keralites is not just an announcement; legislative measures have been taken to make it a reality. Laws are made to give full support to investors / entrepreneurs. There is a surprising rise in the number of issues resolved through the intervention of NORKA. A situation has emerged which ensures an atmosphere providing full confidence and empowerment to the investors and entrepreneurs.

We realised the concept of federalism in India through the reorganization and formation of linguistic states. India has an abundance of diversity. This diversity didn't result in contradictions, negations, dichotomy and divisions, thanks to our Constitution which, far-sightedly, ensured a wide federal structure of power and aspirations.

We developed Federalism through language- Linguistic- sub-Nationalism. This concept was revolutionary, to say the least. Through this forum, we grew into a linguistic world from being just a linguistic state. We bring about the globalisation and global diffusion of Malayalam language, literature and culture through this forum.

Loka Kerala Sabha has made considerable interventions in the welfare of Malayalees living abroad, utilisation of the experience and expertise of diverse Malayalee expatriate professionals, formulation of the ways and means of effectively utilising the income and wealth of Non Resident Keralites and identifying sectors where Kerala (as a community) needs to respond new global prospects for investment etc.

Through the second Loka Kerala Sabha meet, we expect to attain more clarity and much determination to go forward. We can be proud of the fact that we have creatively and productively responded to the changing times as a society.







## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECOND LOKA KERALA SABHA

**PINARAYI VIJAYAN,**  
CHIEF MINISTER

Within a short span of under two years, the Loka Kerala Sabha has benefited both Keralites and Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs). The support and help we got from around the world during the floods of 2018 and 2019 is in fact a direct result of Kerala's strengthened global networks, with the setting up of the Loka Kerala Sabha.

**K**erala's history over the past sixty years is intertwined with the history of the Malayali diaspora. Keralites around the globe have left an indelible imprint on the social, economic and cultural spheres of Kerala. Therefore, without addressing the role of our pravasi community, no study on modern Kerala would be complete.

Despite playing an important role in strengthening Kerala's economy, till recently, NORKA-Roots was the

only mechanism through which the various issues of our pravasis could be addressed. There was no comprehensive avenue for them to express their opinion or utilise their skills and expertise towards the overall development of the state. It was to address this severe lacunae that this Government formed the first ever Loka Kerala Sabha. It had 351 members drawn from various walks of life, so as to represent a cross section of our migrant community.

Within a short span of under two

years, the Loka Kerala Sabha has benefited both Keralites and Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs). The support and help we got from around the world during the floods of 2018 and 2019 is in fact a direct result of Kerala's strengthened global networks, with the setting up of the Loka Kerala Sabha.

The first session of the Loka Kerala Sabha held in January 2018, provided valuable insights into the issues faced by the pravasis, and the various arenas in which the Government of Kerala can seek the

cooperation and collaboration of our brothers and sisters across the globe. To study them further, seven standing committees were constituted and a secretariat was formed for the LKS to carry forward its activities.

The seven standing committees met on several occasions, both physically and through video conferences. The deliberations focussed on four major points, welfare of the pravasis and returning migrants, utilising the pravasis' investment for financing developmental projects in the state, skill upgradation and maintaining and strengthening of the cultural and literary ties with Kerala. Forty eight suggestions emerged from the discussions. On the basis of priority and practicality, 10 of them were taken up for implementation.

Accordingly, the Government of Kerala has taken concrete steps. A Non-Resident Keralites Investment Company has been formed, in which expatriates have 74 per cent stake. It will ensure the participation of NRKs in Kerala's infrastructural development. It will also serve as a means to utilise the knowledge and experiences of our pravasis in Kerala's development.

Rehabilitation of the returning migrants is a top priority of the Government. NORKA Department Project for Returned Emigrants (NDPREM) has been developed to proactively address this issue. Last year Rs. 15 crores was disbursed among 791 beneficiaries as capital and interest subsidy. To further facilitate this scheme NORKA ROOTS has entered into MOUs with 14 major banks, so that their 4,500 branches can serve as a vast network.

Norka Business Facilitation Center was set up in March this year. It is a single window facility which assists NRKs in initiating and investing in small, medium and large businesses within the State. A Co-Operative Society which can provide employment for returning migrants is on the anvil as well.

Santhwana is a distress relief scheme

intended to provide time bound financial support to returned emigrants. During the last financial year alone 4,156 people benefited from this scheme. In the current financial year a budgetary allocation of Rs. 25 crores has been made for it.

The recently launched interactive portal, which pravasis can reach out to in an emergency, has been a huge success. Calls have been made from as many as 13 countries, which sought assistance of various kinds. This facility has also helped the Government to formulate suitable policies and programmes for effective redressal of their issues.

PRAVASI ID card is a multi-purpose photo identity card which enables all NRKs to connect with the Kerala Government. After the launch of web portal, close to 4 lakh Malayalees have obtained the ID card. It entitles them to avail all services and facilities offered by NORKA Roots. It comes with an add-on Personal Accident Insurance coverage. We have negotiated with Oman Airlines and now PRAVASI ID card holders and their families get 7% discount on their air fare. We are trying to extend the benefit to other airlines too.

Women's Cell and Legal Aid Cell have been set up at NORKA-Roots. Women's Cell offers counseling, guidance as well as emergency services to women migrants. Legal Aid Cell runs awareness campaigns and orientation programmes on legal issues relevant to NRKs. It also provides support, assistance and legal aid to NRKs in need.

In a relief to the struggling families of the pravasis in Gulf countries, we have started a scheme in which the bodies of deceased persons are brought back to Kerala, free of cost. The Government has reached an agreement with Air India in this regard. We have also set up an Emergency Ambulance Service for financially backward NRKs. It can be availed either while returning home for treatment or while transporting a deceased loved one

back home.

We have passed the Non-Resident Keralites Welfare (Amendment) 2019 Act. It aims at providing a lifelong income to returned emigrants. It includes a Pravasi Dividend Scheme that would take deposits from NRKs and give a monthly dividend to the depositor. Under the Pravasi Dividend Scheme, an NRK or their partner will have to make a one-time deposit in the range of Rs 3 lakh to Rs 51 lakh. This amount would be handed over to the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), which is tasked with handling the scheme.

The investors would then get a monthly dividend of 10% from the fourth year of deposit. This is in addition to the existing Pravasi Welfare Pension, which is also disbursed as per the same Act. Through KSFE, a Pravasi Chitti is also administered so that migrant Keralites have an additional savings option. Funds deposited in the Chitti is also utilised for various developmental initiatives.

We are keen to develop industries based on the expertise of the returning migrants. Government is keen to setup NRK enclaves and NRK cities. These will have world-class healthcare facilities, global universities, apartments etc. We are setting up a Kerala Cultural Center in Mavelikkara, so that the ties between NRKs and Kerala can be further strengthened, especially in the cultural arena. An amount of Rs 1. 40 crore has been allocated for the same.

The second session of the Loka Kerala Sabha will be held on 2 and 3 January 2020, at the Kerala Legislative Assembly Complex. It will assess the interventions made for the NRKs till date and discuss on the next required steps. It will also further the participation and leadership of our pravasis in Kerala's development. Thus, Loka Kerala Sabha is emerging as a milestone in the history of Kerala's pravasi community.



RAHUL GANDHI  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
LOK SABHA



**MESSAGE**

I congratulate the members of the Malayalee diaspora for their phenomenal success, and for being worthy ambassadors of the State. The Loka Kerala Sabha is a great platform to connect with the diaspora, and recognize their contribution.

Malayalees have played an instrumental role in the nation building efforts of many countries, and cemented the community's reputation for its dedication and determination. Successive generations have excelled in various fields and paved way for a better future for lakhs of others. While Malayalees are widely celebrated for their cosmopolitan outlook, it is heartening to see them remain firmly rooted in their local communities. The sheer number of initiatives spearheaded by Pravasi Malayalees in Kerala, stand testament to their commitment to give back to their home country.

As the torchbearers of the glorious heritage and culture of this State, I hope that the diaspora continues to excel in all their endeavours.

Rahul Gandhi

12 December, 2019

12 TUSHYAK LANE, NEW DELHI (110011)



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the Netherlands

The Malayali community in the Netherlands is a group of hard-working, knowledge migrants who actively contribute to the Dutch economy. There are around 1500 Malayalis in Netherlands. When Kerala witnessed the largest ever floods in hundred years in August 2018, the Malayali diaspora was instrumental in raising awareness of the situation in Kerala and hosted a fund-raiser and constructed a house for a family in the flood-stricken area.

Onam and Vishu are celebrated in grandeur in the Netherlands every year and these celebrations are platforms to showcase the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Kerala and the sumptuous Kerala cuisine to the Dutch society. The diaspora also contributes to India's soft power with their significant participation in Indian Embassy events like Yoga Day and Gandhi March with Chenda drums, Thiruvathirakali and Kalaripayattu.

Members of Netherlands Association of Malayalis (Nanma) had organised a grand reception for Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan during his visit to the Netherlands in May 2019. In his

address to the Malayalis community, the CM urged them to work for Kerala and thanked them for their contribution to Kerala. The Malayali community is well integrated into the Dutch society and most of them are Dutch citizens and form a part of the larger immigrant community in the Netherlands.

The fact that their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of the Netherlands visited Kerala in October 2019 reflects their respect and regard for the State of Kerala. During the visit, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Netherlands National Archives and the Kerala State Archives. Kerala and the Netherlands are exploring cooperation in various areas of mutual interest and have signed MoUs for setting up two centres of excellence - one for internet of things (IoT) and another for fruits and vegetables at Regional Agricultural Research Station, Waynad. The Dutch government has also promised support to Kerala government in implementing the Kuttanad action plan to deal with future water issues.

## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN THE NETHERLANDS



VENU RAJAMONY

Indian Ambassador to the Netherlands





## STRENGTHENING THE ROOTS



**K. Harikrishnan Namboothiri**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Norka Roots, Thiruvananthapuram

When forming as a Public sector undertaking under the aegis of Norka Department, Government of Kerala in the year 2002, it was the first of its kind in the country and so much was the challenges in addressing the issues faced by the Keralite diaspora. However now Norka Roots is a model institution in addressing the issues faced by the Non resident keralites as well as in implementing welfare schemes for both the emigrants and returned emigrants. We are concerned with all stages of a pravasi life cycle right from the preparation, up skilling, recruitment, safety and security in the foreign country and on return to the homeland. Different types of targeted schemes are devised and administered for this purpose. The migration life cycle starts as a prospective migrant, develop as a migrant and end as a returnee migrant.

### The Schemes implemented for Prospective Migrants

**1. Certificate Attestation:** - Norka Roots is the single authorised Government of India Agency in the state to undertake attestation of educational certificates following Ministry of Human Resources Development [MHRD] guidelines. Apostille Attestation, MEA Attestation and Embassy Attestation. Currently Norka Attestation Division provides following Embassy attestation services :

- United Arab Emirates
- Bahrain
- Kuwait
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia

In addition to this, Govt has ratified Norka Roots as a nodal agency for the home attestation services of non educational certificates.

### Pre-Departure Orientation Programme:

Intended to make overseas job aspirants aware about general job situations abroad and to impart essential information relating to visa, emigration rules, employment contract, travel formalities etc. This will safeguard them from fraudulent agents and threats like visa cheating etc

### Skill Upgradation:

The Skill upgradation & re-integration training programme aims at upgrading the skill of young Keralite prospective migrants to meet the challenges and to equip them to adapt to the technologies and skill set updation globally in the overseas employment market. Around 2000 candidates fill up

their skill gap annually through this programme. Nurses and house maids are the major beneficiaries under this scheme.

### Recruitment Services Including Job Portal:

NORKA ROOTS holds overseas recruitment licensed from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India since 2011 and has been doing regular overseas recruitment in Medical Health care sector from 2015. Norka recruits Nurses, Doctors, Technicians and Housemaids for various Foreign Employers in GCC countries.

NORKA ROOTS has a dedicated recruitment division to facilitate quality recruitment service to Foreign Employers. Transparency, Quality recruitment service, Minimum recruitment charges and corrupt free recruitment process are the hallmarks of Norka Recruitment wing. We are committed to our clients with our best, fast and quality

service by sourcing qualified and competent candidates in health care sector. We have a strong data pool of around 25000+ qualified, right, experienced job aspirant endeavouring new job in health care sector. We are facilitating hassle free recruitment drive anywhere in India with minimum period of time.

The Job Portal developed by the Norka Roots that enables overseas recruitment is being customized by KPMG that can be used as a database for sourcing the candidates against the demand raised by the foreign employers.

### Schemes Targeted For the Pravasis

- Welfare and Service Schemes and Diaspora Engagement

### Pravasi Insurance Card:

PRAVASI ID card is the single stop for a non-resident Keralite to connect with the Kerala Government. This multi-purpose photo identity card entitles every NRK to avail all services and facilities offered by NORKA Roots, now and in future. PRAVASI ID card comes with an add-on of Personal Accident Insurance coverage of upto a maximum of Rs. 2 Lakhs. The card has a validity of 3 years. New efforts are on for critical illness coverage also with this scheme.

### Affiliation of Pravasi Associations:

NORKA Roots has issued guidelines for recognition of NRK Associations outside the State within India and Abroad. These associations are functioning with the approval of the Government for atleast five years and the accounts submitted to audit. The registration is valid for five years and should be renewed from time to time. For renewal, along with application, registration certificate issued by Local bodies, annual report, copies of income and receipts, each pravasi associations should start a helpdesk at their offices for settling issues

related to NRKs. This relationship or engagement works on a give and take basis, mutually helping to resolve the issues of the diaspora.



### Online Registration and Database:

Creation of online real time data base of NRKs would facilitate identification of the skill sets, help in inter connecting, also provide information during emergency and help Government in formulating country specific and need specific policies. This online registration will be implemented with the support of a campaign across the state and abroad where there is a large malayalee population living. Those migrants and returnees who register

online with Norka Roots will be benefited with an attractive insurance package.

### Global Contact Centre:

This project is the first of its kind, implemented by the Government for the welfare of NRKs and returned emigrants residing in any part of the world. By using this facility they can give a missed call to the Toll Free Helpline number and get a call back. The NRKs can thereby enquire the services (24x7) provided by NORKA Roots or place their grievances for appropriate redressal. Live Chat facility through Norka roots website and public grievances are also provided. Over 1,31,900 Lakh expatriates from 31 countries have made use of this facility so far to avail various services since February 2019.

### Emergency Ambulance Service:

The scheme aims at providing free ambulance service for NRKs from the airports in Kerala and also from Mangalore and Coimbatore Airports for the conveyance of a sick Keralites on repatriation or the mortal remains of a deceased Keralite from foreign countries and from other states in India to a hospital or their residence. The scheme runs in association with the Indian Medical Association. This has been adjudged as one of the most valuable service from Norka Roots by the NRKs.

### Emergency Repatriation including Body Repatriation:

The emergency repatriation fund scheme is used for emergency repatriation of NRKs in very distressed circumstances. It could also include mass evacuation from strife torn countries and during unrest. Repatriation of distressed persons and also transportation of mortal remains are covered under this scheme. Also, evacuation of NRKs during war, natural disasters, from their residence or work place mostly in association with MEA is carried out. Flight charges at lower



cost, accommodation at Kerala House, Emergency expenses, Dead body repatriation of deceased NRKs abroad to their home land etc are met from this plan fund. In the absence of assistance from sponsor or associations abroad, the dead body of deceased NRKs shall be brought back free of cost through the sub scheme of this project 'NORKA Assisted Body Repatriation Scheme'.

### Loka Kerala Sabha:

Loka Kerala Sabha is a flagship scheme implemented through NORKA ROOTS for the welfare of NRKs. The Govt of Kerala have constituted Loka Kerala Sabha to discuss and deliberate matters with the intention to strengthen relations between Keralites working outside the state and those living within and work towards promoting the unique culture and heritage of Kerala amongst the Malayali expatriates. Loka Kerala Sabha comprises of all members of the State Legislature, members of Parliament representing Kerala and elected nominees from amongst Non Resident Keralites living within and outside India with a total of 351 members. Hon'ble Chief Minister is the leader and the opposition leader is the deputy leader of Loka Kerala Sabha.

The non-resident members are selected from abroad and from other States/UTs within India, taking into account gender, age and occupational status. It also includes eminent non-resident Keralites who have contributed immensely in their respective fields of engagement to achieve public acclaim.

The vital suggestions submitted by the 7 subject based standing committees of the 1st LKS are being implemented and an Overseas Keralites' Investment and Holding Limited, an NRI Investment Company and NRK Women Cell have been formed. The second Loka Kerala Sabha is on 1,2 & 3 January, 2020 at Thiruvananthapuram.

### Investment Schemes

**Norka Business Facilitation Centre:** NBFC is an initiative by the Government of Kerala, offering comprehensive support services and advisories to prospective investors among NRKs on investment opportunities available in Kerala. The aim of NBFC is to assist NRKs to start/expand their business in Kerala.

Even though the scheme is in its infantile, it could catch the attention of lot of investors and 27 Business Facilitations has been made so far under this scheme. By this an investment to the tune of Rs. 110 Crores and 750+ employment generation is estimated.

### NRI Holding Company:

The First regional meeting of Loka Kerala Sabha was held at Dubai on 15th and 16th of February 2019 and the above 10 shortlisted recommendations presented were accepted by the LKS members. In tune with these decisions above, the Government of Kerala has now established an NRI Investment Company named Overseas Keralites Investment And Holding Limited to harness participation. This company is expected to play a pivotal role to associate Pravasi Malayalees with their homeland for creating various infrastructures in the state. The company will focus on capitalizing huge investments from overseas Keralites for the development initiatives of the state. Also, the knowledge and experiences of millions of Non-resident Keralites, in their capacity as a Global Citizen, will effect as a catalyst for the development of the state. The company will have a larger role for the investors and the role of the Government will be restricted to that of 26% equity. The company will have an equity base of 100 crores and will be in a position to leverage institutional finance to take up large scale projects. It is an opportunity for the Pravasis to join this endeavour.

### Schemes for the Returned Emigrants.

### Financial Assistance:

**SANTHWANA:** This is a distress relief scheme intended to provide time bound financial support to returnee emigrant who have worked abroad for not less than two years and the period after return does not exceed 10 years, having the Annual family income not exceeding Rs. One Lakh. An amount up to Rs. 1,00,000 is provided as death assistance and up to Rs 50,000 is provided as medical assistance. An amount of Rs. 15,000 is provided as marriage assistance and for wheel chair crutches & artificial limbs, Rs.10, 000 is provided as assistance.

### Assistance to Pravasi Sanghams:

The scheme is devised to support the Pravasi Sangham established for the welfare and betterment of returned emigrants. Assistance will be provided to those societies who will generate atleast 10 employment through their projects or expand the projects to the effect that 10 additional job opportunities are created. Rs. 2 Lakh will be provided as Capital Subsidy and One lakh as share parity.

### Rehabilitation

#### Norka Department Project for Return Emigrants (NDPREM):

Rehabilitation package that aims at promoting entrepreneurship for returnees and also help them continue living a dignified life. NORKA ROOTS have tied up with the 14 financial institutions. Subsidy is given for entrepreneurships having a seed capital of up to Rs 30 lakhs. For prompt repayment, 15% subsidy on capital and 3% rebate on interest of loan are offered for the first 4 years. During the current financial year at least 1000 ventures are planning to be floated through this scheme. This is one of the most promising schemes which enable the hopeless returnees to build up their own livelihood.

## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN UAE



The growing number of Malayalis around the nook and corner of UAE is not a surprising element as it strengthens the ties between UAE and Kerala. Even in the case of trade, tourism or culture vibrant and vivid interconnection of diasporas are clearly seen everywhere.

From multi-billionaires to ordinary workers, Kerala diaspora has a unique representation in the UAE, a land of opportunities for people from across the world. It was recently the UAE, which was looked upon as a dream land for South Asians, has become the most sought-after city for people from nook and corner of the world. Now the country is home to 150+ nationalities that cut across from all socio-economic groups and religions.

There are Britons, Chinese, Polish, Filipinos, Portuguese, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Arabs from across the Middle East, and so on. Yet, no workforce can beat the contribution of Malayalis, who have been the backbone of the country since, and before, its inception in 1971. As per the latest official records, there are around 10 lakh Malayalis in the UAE who has deposited around 1.9 lakh crore at various banks in Kerala, of the total bank deposit of 5 trillion.

## THE INDELIBLE FOOTPRINTS ON SAND



Nazeem Beegum, Senior Journalist, Dubai



Walk around a busy street in Dubai or Sharjah, you experience as if you are in Kerala. Visit a shopping mall, from the counter staff to cleaners and managers, Malayalis are found in various positions. Go to a hospital, majority of the healthcare professionals would be from Kerala. The growing number of Malayalees is not a surprising element taking into account the number of business firms owned and run by people of Kerala.

## From Historic to economic

Kerala shares a special connection with the Gulf countries that dates back to thousands of years and the UAE is one among them. As early as 3000 BC, Kerala had been an important spice trade centre, historians have recorded strong trade links between kingdoms in Kerala and the Arabs, a relationship which manifested in strong cultural and social influence on the region. The monopoly was broken only with the arrival of the Portuguese on the shores of the state in the 15th century, followed by the Dutch and much later, the British.

Take today's situation: Among the five richest Malayalis in the GCC region, four of them are based in the UAE. Retail business tycoon Yusuffali MA, education entrepreneur Sunny Varkey, healthcare conglomerates owner

Azad Mooppen, and physician businessman Shamsheer Vayalil.

Yusuffali M.A, Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Group International, the \$7.8 billion worth retail company with 185 hypermarkets and shopping malls across the GCC, Egypt, India and Far East, said, "Indian diaspora, especially from Kerala, comprises the biggest chunk of UAE population. Since the first emigrant who reached the shores of UAE almost five decades back the historic relation between UAE and Kerala has grown tremendously over the years.

If these businessmen are the embodiments of growing economic development, there are thousands of unsung heroes in the community, the blue-collar workers and professionals, who strive hard for the development of their foster country as well as the for the social uplift of their motherland.

## Emerging ties

Another factor that strengthens the ties between UAE and Kerala is tourism. In a state, where tourism-related income accounts for about 10 per cent of the \$125 billion GDP, 6.5 per cent of the total travellers are from the UAE. While Emiratis visit Kerala for respite from heat and treatments, Malayalis visit UAE primarily as jobseekers. Another big

majority make short term visits to live with their kith and kin. The visits benefit both sides as it results in a thriving tourism sector adding more revenue to the economy. Munnar has become a popular vacation spot among Emiratis who love to visit the hill station and watch rainfall during the monsoon season.

Al Ain Zoo

The recent opening of Kannur International Airport also boosted tourism in the Malabar region. Roadshows organised by both sides turned out to be a huge success, which contributed to the rise in number of visitors.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had made three official visits to the UAE since he assumed office in 2016 which underlines the growing relationship between both parties. One of the breakthrough developments happened during one of his visits was the announcement of a hospital and hostel for Malayali expats in Sharjah. The Ruler of Sharjah, His Highness Dr Sheikh bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, has promised to the Kerala CM that he would give land to build a township for Malayalis which will have schools, crematorium and other community facilities in the Emirate.

During his visit, the Chief Minister had also met His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, who pledged support to strengthen the ties, and accepted a formal invitation from Pinarayi Vijayan to visit Kerala.

## Credit goes to people

Prince B Nair, a senior journalist, who has witnessed the growth of the UAE before his eyes, and its growing cordial ties with India, said: "If the two countries share a mutual bilateral relationship now, the credit goes to the common people who have found this place as their second home. I believe that the strong bond developed between the expat community and the UAE leadership over the years manifested in cordial bilateral relations.

"Though now the Indian diaspora includes a wide spectrum of people from across India, Malayalis still have a deep influence in the UAE. It's a fact that Keralites have started migrating to Europe and other faraway places. But for an average Malayali, Gulf, especially the UAE is the dream place because it is the nearest foreign destination and they

can reach their hometown in 3-4 hours, there is assured safety and security to women, flexible working conditions, majority of the schools follow Indian curriculum and several universities have campuses, availability of Indian medical system, doctors and other healthcare professionals etc."

## Social scene

Despite being an Islamic country, the UAE allows its residents to follow and practice their religious faiths. There are no restrictions compared to other countries. There are churches, temples, gurudwaras and even cemetery for non-Muslims.

When it comes to availability of Kerala food, there is no lack of availability for vegetables, pulses, fruits and nuts, fish or meat, and they have even found a big fanfare among different nationalities thanks to chain of supermarkets under the Lulu Group. Medicines are available at the doorsteps of every resident, be it citizens or expats, thanks to Aster DM Healthcare. Quality education has become a reality much to the relief of Indian parents in the UAE thanks to GEMS Education. VPS Healthcare has proved how healthcare can become a platform for philanthropy.

All these shows how effectively the common people as well as Kerala businessmen have become key players in the economic and social development process in the UAE as well as in their homeland.

## Cultural contribution

Malayalis value their traditions and culture wherever they are: This is

the popular sentiments among other nationalities in the UAE. And yes, they are truly, madly patriotic and traditional when it comes to cultural and religious occasions. There are several associations that give a platform for the expat community to get connected with the people from their locality, friends and relatives, and irrespective of religious and ideological differences they find time to get together for celebrations. It is a known fact that Onam, Christmas and Eid are year-long celebrations for the UAE Malayalis, and it sends out a message of religious harmony and values of tolerance and coexistence to the more than 150 nationalities living in the UAE.

The reading habit of Malayalis is also popular in the UAE. The number of books released by the community members at the Sharjah International Book Fair undoubtedly underlines the love of books and thirst for knowledge of Malayalis. It's not wrong to say Malayalis popularised the Sharjah Book Fair, which is reciprocated by the Sharjah Ruler in allowing more grants to aspiring Malayali writers and publishers. Amid all these positive

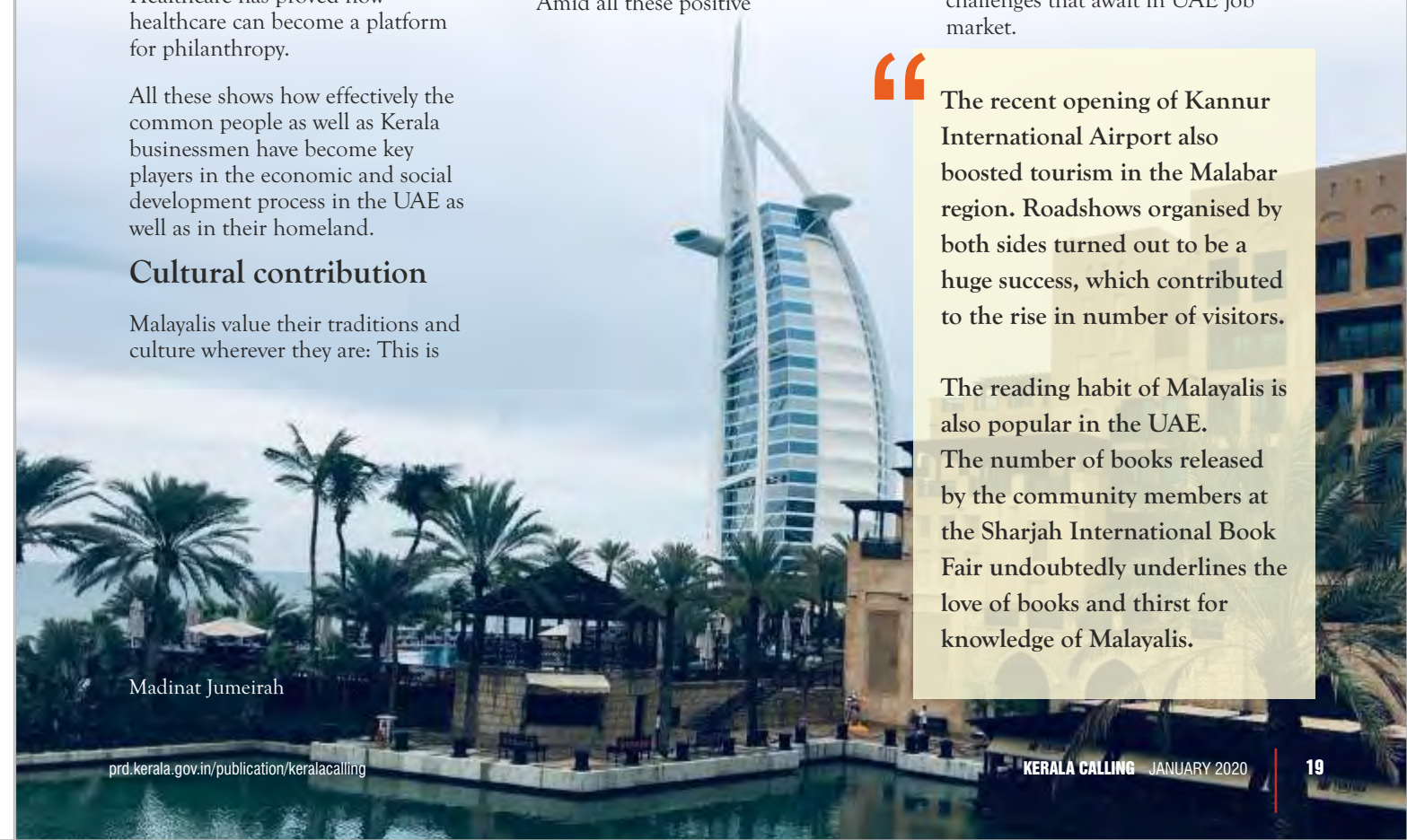
developments, a migration study by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) in Thiruvananthapuram in September last year attests that emigration is falling and return migration is on the rise now. However, that does not deter new generation from seeking job opportunities, and businessmen to look for viable investment opportunities in the UAE, which is gearing up to transform into a knowledge economy by 2021 under the UAE National Agenda programme.

The programme developed by over 300 officials from 90 federal and local government entities, includes a set of national indicators in the sectors of education, healthcare, economy, police and security, justice, society, housing, infrastructure and government services.

The UAE has launched its visionary strategy to welcome futuristic trends of 4.0 Industrial Revolution and strengthen its position as a hub for innovation and technology leaving the Kerala diaspora in UAE with a huge responsibility. Acquire futuristic skills to meet the challenges that await in UAE job market.

**“The recent opening of Kannur International Airport also boosted tourism in the Malabar region. Roadshows organised by both sides turned out to be a huge success, which contributed to the rise in number of visitors.**

**The reading habit of Malayalis is also popular in the UAE. The number of books released by the community members at the Sharjah International Book Fair undoubtedly underlines the love of books and thirst for knowledge of Malayalis.**



Madinat Jumeirah





### Yusuff Ali M.A

Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Group International

“I don't think there is any family which does not have direct or indirect connection with the UAE countries be it in the form of a family member working or having some business / cultural relations. Talking about economy the 'Gulf money' has a big stake as it is the backbone of Kerala economy in the form of bank remittances, or investment in real estate, hospitality, health sector, or even simple trade. As a retailer we just have only one shopping mall in Kochi, almost every Malayali has a bit of Lulu in them. Either they would have visited our shopping all, or had received a gift from friends or relatives. Our second shopping mall in Thiruvananthapuram is slated to open by mid-2020. Apart from retail, we also have sizeable investment in hospitality sector having two Marriot hotels in Kochi, and the biggest conventional centre Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty. As someone who advocates investments in Kerala, we are continuously looking at new opportunities across different cities.”



### Dr Shamsheer Vayalil

Chairman and Managing Director, VPS Healthcare

“The contributions of the Malayali diaspora in developing Kerala economically and socially have been immense and indispensable. The foreign remittance, particularly from the Gulf, continues to be a major source of the state's revenue. Kerala tops at the national level in many sectors particularly healthcare, social security, education and so on. The standard of living of our people is better off compared to the physical and social conditions of people in other parts of the country.

“VPS Healthcare has always strived to contribute our best to the development of Kerala. We have always supported the governments of the state and has extended unconditional support to the state machinery in implementing any policies or attracting investments. We have extended our sole support to the Kerala government's 'Rebuild Kerala' initiative. When Nipah was reported in Kerala, VPS Healthcare had helped the state government by supplying medical safety equipment and emergency medicines.”



### Dr Azad Moopen

Founder Chairman and managing Director, Aster DM HealthCare

“The Kerala diaspora in the UAE has always supported and offered a helping hand to the homeland and has contributed immensely towards social and economic development of Kerala. Over the years, there has been a significant enhancement in the engagement levels between Government of Kerala and the diaspora of non-resident Keralites to the advantage of everyone.

“The UAE businessmen of Kerala origin have also been working for the upliftment of Kerala. We are proud that we could play a major role in improving the healthcare scenario of the state and providing employment for large number of people in the state. We have now 4 hospitals and a medical college with 2,759 beds with an investment of INR 1,930 crores.

“There has been excellent support from the political leadership, the bureaucracy and the people of Kerala for establishing and running these institutions in the last 20 years. This highlights the fact that Kerala is a very business friendly state and with the availability of large number of professionals, it is one among the best destinations in India for investment.”

## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN OMAN



## HISTORICAL TIES WITH OMAN

Faraway, amid a plantain farm in Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman, lies the oldest evidence of Kerala's ties with the Middle East. It is the 'khabar' (crept) of Cheraman Perumal. Even though there is little historical proof to support this, it is a must-see destination for all Malayalis visiting Salalah, perhaps the greenest region in the whole of the Middle East.

The Sultanate of Oman has a long-standing relationship with the Kerala coast, dating back to 5,000 years or more. The remnants of the history were found in many parts of the Sultanate as a living example of the strong socio-economic relations established between the two regions. The ancient ports in the Dhofar region speak volumes of the trade routes. Oman is also known as the land of frankincense to the world depending on the Malabar coast for their strong building activities. Till date for many Omanis, a Malayali or Keralite is a Malabari than an Indian.

The Sultanate of Oman is an Arab Muslim country located in the far southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula. This second-largest country in the Gulf region has an area over 310,000 km with a current population of 4.6 million, 44 per cent of whom are expatriates. World Bank classifies Oman as a high average income country, and it falls under the category of countries with a considerably high human development index as per the United Nations.

Today, Indians are still the largest expatriate community in the Sultanate of Oman and Keralites



**KAVITHA MARTIN**  
Senior Journalist, Oman

have contributed immensely to the growth of the country's economy. Be it in the infrastructure of the country or the commercial sector or in the medical field the presence and contributions of the community is widely appreciated. There is no single sector in the Sultanate, whether its infrastructure development, health, education, industrial, oil & gas, legal, finance, hospitality and tourism to name a few where there no contributions made by Indians, especially





Bidiya

Bidiya Sands

### The Kerala Connection

Malayalis in the growth of the Sultanate under the able leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's visionary plans.

Kerala was connected as maritime neighbours linked by geography, history and culture and enjoy close and friendly relations as Malayalis are the highest number among Indian expatriates living and working in Oman. In the larger interests of both the countries, India and Oman have expanded their bilateral cooperation and exchanges since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955, forging a mutually beneficial Strategic Partnership, that has also enhanced and boosted the role played by Malayalis in the Sultanate in the various socio-economic development activities of Oman.

Keralites also have closer ties with Omanis, beyond that of a sponsor in many a business. PNC Menon and Muhammed Ali are perhaps the most known of these expatriate Malayalis or Non-Resident Keralites lived or living in Oman. The various cultural fora active in the capital city of Muscat and Salalah have contributed to building up a close relationship with the natives of the country. Indian Social Club's Malayali wing and other social welfare associations organized by Malayali communities living in different parts of Oman support those in need.

For many Omanis, Malayalam is not a strange language, with some of them fluently speaking Malayalam and others speaking a smattering of Malayalam. Many Omanis visit Kerala for medical treatments be it

allopathy or Ayurveda and as tourists. Most cities and towns have restaurants serving Kerala food and Omanis do relish Kerala food, be it sadya or a simple meal.

#### HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The year 2020 marks the historic commemoration of the fifty years of His Majesty's ascend to power and also an occasion for the nationals and expatriates to celebrate. Recalling the experience of being an Oman resident for more than two decades a few of the Malayali in Muscat shared their experience and thoughts.

“For us Oman is our first home. After living in this country for more than two or three decades and leading a peaceful and secured life in Oman, we cannot give this priority to any place, though the nationality is connected to Kerala. After each visit to Kerala our families long to come back to Muscat”, says Hema Malini, who is a resident of Oman for the past two decades or so.



Grand Mosque

Sheeba Vimoj, an English Trainer with the Royal Oman Police and an Oman resident for more than two decades and whose family had lived in Oman even before the ascension of His Majesty to power had known transformation of Oman in terms of growth and development. “In fact, seeing the growth of the Sultanate, today Oman can be considered as growth and development model for many developing nations in terms of infrastructure, socio-economic growth, health and education.”

An active member of the Malayalam wing of Indian Social Club in Muscat, she expressed her gratitude to His Majesty for his benevolence on all expatriates in Oman and the secured life they all lead in the Sultanate.



Hema Malini

“I am very enthusiastic about the Kerala Government initiatives through NORKA and Kerala Pravasi Welfare Board. Indeed, the Government initiative is an encouraging step to help the Malayali community”.

Abraham Mathew, heading the Malayali wing of Indian Social Club for the ninth year consecutively has spent 37 years in the Sultanate. Expressing his happiness and the security he enjoyed in the Sultanate, Abraham Mathew said, “This country is my home away from home.”



Abraham Mathew

“I am very appreciative of the efforts by the Government in Kerala for taking various steps to improve the situations of NRIs”



Sheeba Vimoj

“The Pravasi welfare policies were encouraging but much more needed to cover a wider population. The initiatives by KSFE also will encourage savings of NRIs and secure their future financial needs”.

All the three non-resident Keralites expressed their concern over the delay in getting voting rights for expatriate Indians. They expressed hope that this long pending requirement by non resident Indians would be met soon.



## OMAN'S LOVE FOR MALAYALI



**Sulieman Al Yazidi** : Entrepreneur

Sulieman Al Yazidi, a young entrepreneur based in Muscat was eloquent about his thoughts on Kerala and Malayalis and asked in Malayalam, Sukhamano beginning his conversation. He had visited India twice and one of his visits was to Kerala. He recalls, "I went to Munnar with my family and also Kochi, and it was a very memorable visit for us. The place is clean and calm, unlike the other Indian cities. Kerala is indeed beautiful." On his love for Malayalis he says, "I have a few Malayalees working for me and they are intelligent and dedicated to their work. I have learnt Malayalam from them and a few of my Malayali friends. Kurachu kurachu ariyaam and samsarikkam. But he confirmed, he can count very well in Malayalam.



**Idris Al Alawi** : Electrical Engineer

Idris Al Alawi, a globe trotter and an electrical engineer who is working with an engineering consultancy in Muscat, is waiting for an opportunity to visit Kerala. He said he would love to visit Kerala as he has many colleagues and friends inviting him to Kerala. He said Keralites are simple but very intelligent. He said he had heard a lot about the historical relationship between Oman and Malabar and would like to see that connection growing. He also said that he would like to visit Kerala next year if everything goes well.

## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA



## MALAYALAM LITERARY MAGAZINES FROM AUSTRALIA

Journeys are exciting events. A migrant's life is a journey of many sorts, not always smooth and happy. It is one of constant flux - physical, emotional and cultural transitions across the spatial and temporal. It does not end even when we say, "we are settled down in Australia, Canada, US" or anywhere else for that matter. Can we ever settle down in a place outside the physical bounds of our culture? As a migrant living in Australia for 25 years, observing the life of first-generation migrants young and old, I can say that we never grow out of our culture and we constantly live in two worlds. The first few years we are haunted by the dilemma - have we made the right decision to move? Will our children grow up with our values in this society of differing morals? Should we go back after a few years? Until we eventually realise, we are here to stay and going back is more improbable than our coming here in the first place.

Integration to the chosen country's culture is typically not a desire in the Malayalee's cultural agenda even when we know we will never return and our children will call a different country home. We strive often laboriously to make our culture and

language dominate the family environment.

We make sure to have family friends who help the next generation live within our culture. Our language and the geographical space that defines it stays and shapes us. It is a connection that goes beyond simple terminology such as birthplace or a clichéd complexity such as nostalgia. The pull is far too strong and comforting for an uprooted migrant to find solace elsewhere. In the Kerala diaspora of Australia, as in every other country, language unites us strongly despite pockets of sectarianism. Amidst resettlement, our mother tongue is a great soother that instantly pacifies existential anxieties. And the way we can connect to everyone speaking that language creates this truly global family where class and religion become relatively irrelevant and faded markers. Malayalam that binds us to a whole world of cultural experiences and memories remains our aspiration, our inner core, even as we adopt manners and behaviours that we wear like a costume to play our part well. Malayalee associations and cultural clubs organise regular cultural events with visiting artists from Kerala and with local Malayalee artists. Through these we seek to

## VOICES IN PRINT



**Dr. Lalitha Gouri** freelance writer and academic researcher based in Melbourne, Australia. She is an executive committee member of Thoolika Sahithyavedi.

continually nurture our cultural connections, relive our personal and social histories, and most of all endeavour to touch our roots. It is into this vibrant space of arts and culture that new avenues of creative expression are emerging in the form of Malayalam literary magazines. Literary publications in Malayalam, often made bilingual to accommodate the writing talent of children, are not just the voice of local Malayalee association



members. They serve as a secondary space to negotiate our migrant identities, a space that is crucial to the first-generation who still speak the language and socialise almost exclusively in the community. Upcoming writers generally have a congenial environment when they live and work in the same culture and language. It is a different story for aspiring Malayalam writers in places like Australia where we are at best a very small minority group who have come here to become Australians. In this duality of existence where we live our lives as a Malayalee at home and as an Australian at work, the time we keep for creative talent is very defined and limited. The flare for pursuing creativity dries up within this narrow window, unless there is a concerted effort to nurture it.

The handful of Malayalam literary magazines coming out annually or biennially in Australia share this effort through sheer hard work and dedication. These magazines have a niche space in the community's culture and identity and showcase the creative writing talents of both first-generation migrants and their children. The major Malayalam magazines published in Australia include Kerala Naadam from Sydney, Thoolika from Melbourne, Jaalakam from Queensland, Chethana from Perth, and Pravasi from Adelaide.

## Kerala Naadam

Kerala Naadam, an annual bilingual literary publication, was established in Sydney in 2002 by a group of literary enthusiasts. It has been a prominent platform for the expression of creativity and literary talents of the Malayalee community in Australia for almost two decades. Literary creations in Malayalam language are given prominence in all editions of Kerala Naadam. Writers from the Australian mainstream have also contributed in most editions of this publication showing its growing acceptance among its English-speaking friends.

Kerala Naadam is a pioneer Malayalam literary publication in Australia in more ways than one. The magazine has been a role model in content, format and aspiration for many others to follow in other parts of Australia. With almost two decades of uninterrupted publication Kerala Naadam seeks to be a national magazine, providing a writing avenue for all Australian Malayalees and their children.



## Thoolika

In Melbourne, Thoolika Sahityavedi is an organisation exclusively dedicated to the promotion of Malayalam literature and creative writing. The organisation was established in 2016 and inaugurated by Balachandran Chullikkad. Their literary magazine Thoolika, an annual

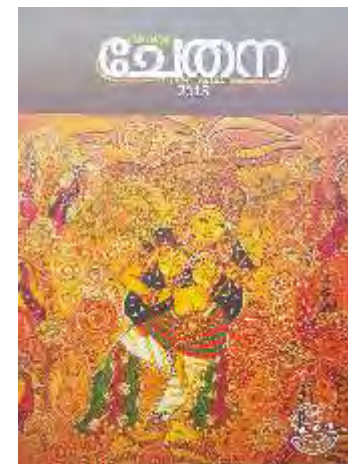
bilingual publication, was launched in 2018 by Prof M.N Karassery. The magazine offers writers and lovers of literature opportunities to network in a peer group supportive of their literary creativity. The first edition of Thoolika carried articles by eminent Malayalam writers Zacharia, Prof M.N. Karassery and Benyamin.

The publication seeks to address the lack of creative writing opportunities and is a needs-based response to the desire of Malayalees to actively engage with the language and literature they had left behind. From its second edition Thoolika is on a path to be a national voice in its authorship with contributions from Malayalee writers from all regions of Australia.

## Jaalakam



The Queensland Malayalee Association's literary magazine Jaalakam is the newcomer in this space. Starting publication in 2019, Jaalakam showcases the creative talent of Queensland Malayalees and offers a diverse feast of creative writing. Many genres of writing find a presence here - poems, short stories, articles, memoirs, book reviews, interviews and cartoons. They provide a platform for emerging writers to present their work to Malayalam and English readers in Australia and abroad and fulfill the Malayalee community's desire to find a voice for creative expression.



## Chethana

Chethana is a long-established magazine from the western side of Australia, published from Perth since the late 1990s. It is the magazine of the Kairali Cultural Club with a membership of around 70 families, and started as a souvenir of the club and its activities. This later transformed to become a voice of the Malayalee writers with articles exclusively from Kairali members and families. The magazine also carries works by eminent Malayalam writers. Though exclusive to the club the magazine finds circulation in other parts of Australia.

## Pravasi

The magazine of Adelaide Malayalee Metropolitan Association, Pravasi is a biennial publication from 2003 that carries writings in both Malayalam and English from the Malayalee community of Adelaide. It is an avenue for sharing information and discussing common interest topics for the community. Recently, Pravasi has also moved the focus to creative writing and enrichment of literary interests.

## Closer to home

All the literary magazines coming out in print in Australia serve the creative writing aspirations of the community in many ways. The most important outcome of these activities has been the emergence of strong links and networks with writers from Kerala. It is encouraging for the Malayalee community to see the publications getting noticed by eminent Malayalam writers who support this initiative through visits and direct interaction, sharing of expertise, and by contributing articles to the magazines. Emerging writers in the community are often elated that their work shares a space with some of the greatest names in Malayalam literature.

Benyamin, Prof Madhusoodanan Nair, Balachandran Chullikkad, Zacharia, Prof M.N. Karassery and Dr K.V. Thomas are some of the writers who have visited Australia recently and toured the different states addressing and interacting with literature enthusiasts. These visits offer a real, tangible experience of language and literature to further creative writing pursuits. The two-day writing workshop conducted by Zacharia under the auspices of the Australian Malayalee Literary Association needs special mention as the first of its kind exclusive to Malayalam writers here in Australia. These visits create wider interest in the community and are the source of ongoing momentum that drive a small group of passionate individuals at the helm of these efforts.

The whole process of Malayalam magazine publication in Australia is not without its struggles and challenges. From setting up a readership, to funding and publishing opportunities it requires a dedicated team and continual effort. This may seem a small feat for someone familiar with the

profusion of literary magazines in print and online in Malayalam coming out of Kerala. But in a society when a minority linguistic group aspires, every conception and birth is a challenge.

The contributions, original art by local artists, and all aspects of pre-production work are entirely volunteered by members of the community. These organisations and publications also have the encouragement and support of the local government as they are seen as initiatives consolidating the inclusive and vibrant multicultural society that Australia strives to be. The support of a limited number of Malayalee owned businesses towards this venture is commendable. Most of the magazines are distributed free of cost although they incur high production expenses. Naturally we may ask, why in print and not in social media and online platforms? A multi-coloured coffee table magazine in our hands that we can refer back to still retains a certain charm. Unlikely to be submerged in the cacophony of voices and juggernaut of social media posts your work in print is likely to reach those who know you personally. It is acceptance, recognition, and a little fame of sorts that we all crave for at times, more so in our socially isolated migrant lives.

The small ripples that these publications have started can become something substantial over the years as the global spread of Malayalam reaches far and wide outside the borders of our linguistically defined geographic boundaries. One step at a time, the Malayalee communities in Australia are getting closer to a world where Malayalam language and literature is not a distant, nostalgic dream. Beyond the borders of Kerala, communities are creating a voice, apolitical and secular, to unite us through imagination and thinking. A voice that is a reminder that we too belong.



The Malayali psyche is immensely entwined with art, literature and vibrant culture of Kerala. Malayalis across the globe always loves reading and writing about a distant setting and culture.

Renowned poet K.Satchidanandan highlights the Malayali diaspora literature, literature about the diaspora, and their contributions in enriching Malayali's cultural life.



## ART FROM BEYOND THE BORDERS

K. Satchidanandan  
Poet

### Art and Literature of the Kerala Diaspora

Malayalam literature, as well as the art of Kerala, has always been enriched by the unique contributions of Malayalis across the globe. In a sense every Malayali is born into an international atmosphere: Malayalam itself has words and expressions from Arabic, Chinese, Latin, French, Portuguese, Dutch, English and other foreign languages though the major part of its vocabulary has Dravidian and Sanskrit (Indo-Germanic) sources. Kerala has had trade-relations with countries as far as Greece and Rome, not to speak of Arabia, China and other Asian countries.

This also led to cultural, artistic and linguistic exchanges. Our literary movements like Progressive Literature, Modernist, post-Modernist, Feminist and Subaltern (Dalit, for example) have been impacted profoundly by similar movements in other continents like Europe, Africa and the Americas so much so that when asked to name the most popular Malayalam novelist, the well-known Malayalam fiction writer N S Madhavan answered, "Gabriel Garcia Marquez." One of the most popular novels of recent times is on a tragic period in the life of the great Russian writer Dostoevsky. We now have a film festival, an art biennale and a theatre festival, all international in scope and repute besides many literary festivals and

book fairs with international participation.

Malayali is also international in another sense: there is hardly any part of the globe where there is no visible Malayali presence. When I recall my own trips across six continents, I cannot remember any country where I did not find at least a few Malayalis working in various fields and capacities. While most of them may have left Kerala for the purposes of education or to seek better job opportunities, they have seldom been careerists concerned only with their promotions and salaries; on the other hand, they have formed little Malayali communities wherever they live, who meet and discuss everything from Malayalam literature to Kerala politics in their gatherings at regular intervals and celebrate all the major Kerala festivals, religious or otherwise, though according to Homi Bhabha, they occupy a 'third space' as they are neither fully in their native places nor in the places they reside in. But this situation has changed a lot, thanks to the technological revolution in modes of communication. Along with that, the status of Malayalis working abroad has also undergone changes. If the first generation immigrants were mostly unskilled labourers, later doctors, engineers, teachers and IT professionals began to seek opportunities abroad. Now there are several rich entrepreneurs, high officials and well-paid professionals among them. All of them have a deep concern for Kerala and take keen interest in the developments in the state; they have also made great contributions to our economy as well as culture.



M. Mukundan

O.V. Vijayan

Paul Zacharia

T. Padmanabhan

Malayalam literature is a case in point. I have not seen any other literature in India where fiction or poetry is set in so many diverse backgrounds of either cosmopolitan cities like Delhi, Bombay and Kolkata in India or even London, Paris, Rome, New York, Singapore or Dubai. This is besides our rich and varied travel literature that demonstrates the range of our travels across continents. There is a whole genre of fiction in Malayalam that I have not come across in any other language, often called pattaalkatha (barrack stories) written by Malayalis (like Kovilan, Nandanar and Ekalavyan) who have had the experience of life in the armed forces outside Kerala or even India as in the old Burma.

Writers who occupy the 'third space' respond to their diasporic experience in different ways. Some experience intense nostalgia and recreate their lands in their imagination that often turn them into semi-mythical spaces like O V Vijayan's Khasak in Khasakkinte Itihasam (The Legends of Khasak), internalised places of historical conflict like the Mahe in M Mukundan's Mayyazhippuzhayude Teerangalil (On the banks of River Mayyazhi) or N S Madhavan's Lunden Batheriyile Lutheenyakal (The Litanies of the Dutch Battery) or purely imagined places like Sethu's Pandavapuram in the novel of that name and the unnamed places that form the setting of Paul Zacharia's early stories or of some of Anand's stories and novels like Marubhoomikal Undakunnathu (How Deserts are Made) or Govardhante Yaatrakal (Govardhan's Journeys). At times

they write about the new places they have come to occupy: look for example at M. Mukundan's novels like Delhi, Haridwaril Mani Muzhangunnu (Bells Toll in Haridwar) or Delhi Gathakal (The Ballads of Delhi), Anand's Alkkootam (The Crowd) or dark satires like O V Vijayan's Dharmapuram or VKN's Arohanam (The Ascent) or N S Madhavan's story, Vanmarangal Veezhumpol (When Big Trees Fall) or Thiruttu (translated as 'Blue Pencil') or Benyamin's Aadujeevitam (Goat-Life). (The opposite happens in novels like K R Meera's Arachar - Hangwoman-set in Kolkata or T D Ramakrishnan's Sugandhi Enna Andal Devanayaki - Sugandhi alias Andal Devanayaki-set in the riot-torn Sri Lanka where writers living in Kerala choose to write in a distant setting). Sometimes the writers of the diaspora initiate a conversation between the two cultures they have known and even their language reflects this mixture as is found in the poems of Sarju, Kamaruddeen Amayam, Ram Mohan Paliyath, Saheera Thangal, Sofi Shajahan, Dona Mayoora and other similar poets or fiction writers like T V Kochubava. Many of Kamala Das's poems are set in Bombay, Delhi and Sri Lanka where she has lived. (Many Malayali writers also turn to English as they have better mastery over that language - for example, Shashi Tharoor, Arundhati Roy, Jeet Thayil, Vijay Nambisan, C P Surendran, Anita Nair, Jaishree Mishra, Anees Salim, Meena Alexander...) while some turn bilingual like Kamala Das (Madhavikkutty). Some become critics of urban life like the poets Cheriyan K Cheriyan (who lived in Delhi and is now in the US), Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan or Attoor Ravivarma (who spent their formative years in Chennai.). In fact, Modernism in Malayalam fiction emerged with the appearance of writers like O V Vijayan, Anand, V K N, M P Narayana Pillai, Paul Zacharia, M Mukundan, Kamala Das and others who lived in cities outside Kerala.





**M**uch has been written about how the Malabar Coast connected Kerala with the rest of the world. The commercial activity in this region brought in not just material exchanges from across the globe, but also forms of belief, culture, tradition, and religion. K.R. Sunil's photo series, Manchukkar: The Seafarers of Malabar, tells the stories of arguably the last links in this chain.

Self-narratives are special. They often throw light on what historians don't. It is through the fabric of the everyday that such narratives are woven, revealing astonishing tales about people, their lives and their times. K.R. Sunil's photography exhibition on the seafarers of 20th century Malabar—Manchukkar—retold some such narratives. A manchu or dhow (also called pathemari or vanchi) is a wooden boat that the seafarers of Malabar used for travel and trade. Before motors became common in the second half of the 20th century, dhows sailed on winds, their masts often standing as tall as fifty feet. In a collection of black-and-white portraits, Sunil absorbed the lives of the sailors—their hopes, dreams, and memories of a time at sea. All of Sunil's subjects are men, now over sixty years of age, who joined the boats in their teens as cooks. Those who stayed on became deckhands and captains. Some went on to serve for as long as half a century.

About those long years at sea, some recollect heartwarming tales of friendship and camaraderie. Sixty-four-year-old Hussain has fond memories of making friends and exchanging gifts with Arabs on his travels to Ajman and Muscat. The boats often carried clothes and other accessories that labourers in Arab countries sent back home to Kerala. For many in the villages of Malabar, these manchus were their ticket to big cities like Kozhikode and Bombay or to the Arab lands. Abdullakutty, sixty-six, recollects a fascinating "ceremony" for new sailors before they saw the skyline of Bombay for the first time: "You must wash your eyes with turmeric water before you look at the big city!"

But for the most part, life at sea was far from easy. "Death was a constant companion," recollects seventy-year-old Kunjama about a boat-wreck that almost killed him. Kunjama (67) remembers being crammed on a small life-boat with his crew after a storm swallowed their dhow. Everyone tied themselves to each other so that at least their bodies would be found when they all died.

## A WORLD IN MOTION: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE "MANCHUKKAR"

S. Harikrishnan  
Doctoral Research student, Dublin City University.

Some, like Manchukkoran of Kasaragode, hung their boots early because of near-death experiences at sea. The cyclone from 1967 seems etched in the memories of many of these sailors. Two boats from Ponnani—Duldul and Vijayamala—were destroyed by this cyclone, and many lives were lost. Ummer Srank, now in his seventies, was among the lucky ones who survived. His wife remembers being terrified because news of the deaths of her neighbours at sea reached home before Ummer could return. During the Indo-Pakistan War (in 1965), some of the sailors at sea spent their days in constant fear of being bombed. P. Ummer and his crew had to live on the boat at sea in total darkness for a week because they were given strict instructions to have their lights turned off after dark. Some also recount disturbing tales of sexual abuse by the captains.

This exhibition on the sailors adds to Sunil's excellent documentation of everyday life in Malabar and its "histories from below"—histories of the less powerful that often remain undocumented. When asked why he chooses to do portraits, he quips: "It is people's stories that brought me to it...it's not just about taking pictures. These people have a history that needs to be told". He plans to extend this work into a book, complete with more pictures, artefacts and stories. Through Sunil's evocative photographs, we get a glimpse of a powerful and moving world of hardship, pain, sacrifices, friendships and love. On land, it was often poverty and hunger that forced these young boys to take up these dangerous voyages. At sea, cyclones and storms were constant companions, often wreaking havoc and loss of life. Between these, on boats to far-off lands, the seafarers sailed towards hope.

A version of this article was published on [www.ala.keralascholars.org](http://www.ala.keralascholars.org).



Muhammedkutty



Abdullakutty



K.K. kadher



Aboobakkar



Manjukkoran



Ummer Srank



Moytheenkutty



Abdul Rahiman.





## WHO IS A MALAYALI?

ANITA NAIR  
INDIAN WRITER IN ENGLISH



Anita Nair is the author of several novels. Her books have been translated into over 32 languages around the world. Follow her on twitter/instagram: @anitanairauthor

of Kerala but an entire nation.. All of this is Kerala and not just the caparisoned elephants at Thrissur pooram, houseboats of Alleppey, the capsule Kathakali performances, ayurvedic massages, and appam and stew that has non-Malyalais thronging to Kerala to discover it for themselves.

If only they could see what Kerala is really all about! If only Malayalis living in Kerala and outside would realize that there is more to Kerala than nostalgia for its cultural tropes and make an attempt to understand the true meaning of who is a Malayali. That to be a Malayalam isn't about parochial organizations or a shared language. That it is a state of mind and is all about respecting humanity.

Trust me, when you learn to do that, you would love Kerala as I and many others do.

In Bangalore, at any given point, be it a mall or a vet's clinic, a multiplex or a political protest, you will hear a babel of languages spoken. Kannada, Tamil, English, Hindi, Telugu, Dakhani Urdu... And amidst all that an epithet of Malayalam will unfurl itself with that peculiar snarkiness that's the Malayali's birth right and settle in my ear. It is usually an astute observation laced with sarcasm. Sometimes it can be downright funny and sometimes it would make me want to roll my eyes. Nevertheless it would always cause a magical warm glow somewhere around the region where my heart is located.

Over the years I have always been asked why am I so smitten by Kerala. The truth is I see myself as an Indian in every way. I know if I had to, I would live in Gujarat or Tripura, Kashmir or Jharkand with an equal sense of belonging. I love each one of our 720 dialects and find poetry in the spoken word no matter who speaks it. I am fascinated by the landscape of every square cm of India and savour each one of its cuisines. I read the literature written in each of the 13 scripts [even if only in translation] and listen to the music from all parts of the country even if I don't understand the words. Every day in a thousand ways, my sense of identity as an Indian is nurtured. But what I feel about Kerala is something else.

It isn't that I am oblivious to how cussed Malayalis can be. Or how for a state entrenched in egalitarian ideology, dignity of labour still scarcely

exists. Or how the Malayali who was once simple in dress and custom has fallen into the trap of ostentatious consumption even as some parts of Kerala is crippled by starvation. Or of how the Malayali who was once nature's child treats the environment with disdain and contempt. Of how misogyny, moral policing and a tendency to take offence over trivial matters is an affliction in every rung of the Kerala society. I see all of these amidst mutterings by non-resident Malayalis: 'God's Own Country; Devil's own people.' 'Great place to visit; Horrible to live in'. But the Kerala I love is more than a piece of land or people; it is a layered concept. It exists but you have to seek it. The place where a million shades of green survive despite the rampant deforestation. The place that makes satire into a political tool. The place where feudalism was chopped at the knees and education for everyone became a reality. A place where little children from underprivileged backgrounds seek the village libraries to feed their hunger for knowledge and stories. The place that saw the rare coming together of a people when the great flood of 2018 destroyed property and lives. The place where artistic expression touches new heights and sometimes is the forerunner of artistic movements. The place where its political and religious leaders came together as one to protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act because it affects not just the people



Anasudhin Azeez is the editor of Asian Lite International, published from London & Dubai. He started his career with Deshabhimani and later worked with Free Press Journal, Indian Express, The Gulf Today, Khaleej Times and Yorkshire Post. He launched Asian Lite in 2007 to provide a platform for the Indian professionals working abroad to share their news and views. Asian Lite won 2012 How Do Newspaper of the year award.

A major story in the London local press last year was the survival of India Club at Strand. The budget restaurant at a prime location at Holborn at central London was recused from the wrecking ball by a group of Londoners who fought to preserve one of the landmark buildings of Indian freedom struggle in London. They requested the Westminster town planners to spare the building which carries the heritage of Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon aka VK Krishna Menon- the first global citizen from Kerala.

More than 26,000 people signed the petition to save the restaurant started by Mr Menon to help the Indian student community in London. Thousands of students and visitors enjoyed the south Indian dishes in the backdrop of London's West End. The India Club was founded by Mr Menon in 1946 and moved to the Strand location in 1964. Its co-founders were Lady Edwina Mountbatten and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The Club has links to the India League, which campaigned for India's independence from Britain. Every year on October 2, hundreds will arrive at the Gandhi statue at Tavistock Square to celebrate Gandhi Jayanthi. They will also pay tribute to Menon because he was the man led the campaign to install the first statue of Gandhi in London despite protests from some right-wing organisations.

Menon is synonymous with Indian independence struggle in London. The success of Menon is his ability to turn the majority British community to turn against their own government to end the occupation of India. Menon's soap box performances were chronicled in the British media with all its acidic comments. But still they fondly remember the lanky Indian who fought for the freedom for his motherland. They are showing their fondness to his fellow citizens from the southern state of Kerala. As the first high commissioner of Independence India to UK, Menon asserted the rights of a fledgling nation at the heart of the Empire.

## CARRYING A SPLENDID LEGACY

Anasudhin Azeez

The Malayalee community in Britain carries Menon's legacy to every segment of the British society. Their presence is visible across the spectrum. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's recent visit to London to float the masala bonds of Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) rekindled the memories of Menon. It was reflected in the response to the first masala bonds from a state entity. The launch saw strong participation from a wide spectrum of investors which included asset managers,



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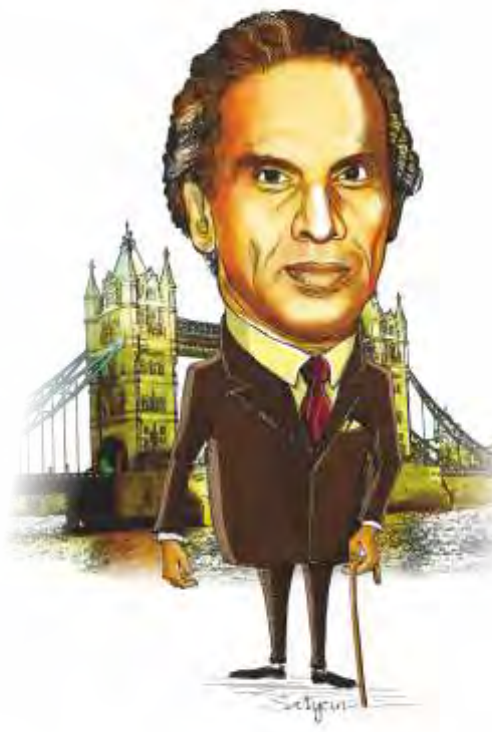
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from a wide spectrum of investors which included asset managers, insurance companies, pension funds, banks as well as private wealth managers. Keralites are one of the most vibrant communities in Britain. Unlike their counterparts from other parts of India, Malayalees are comparatively small and young. Hardly 100,000. Some of them arrived here during the 50s and 70s from East Asia. But the major influx happened during the Blair era in the late 90s when Prime Minister Tony Blair opened the doors of crippled

NHS to the medical professionals from Asia. Keralites were the first one to grab the opportunity. Hundreds of medical professionals from various parts of the world migrated to National Health Service hospitals and other medical centres across the UK.

Instead of becoming a rolling stones in an alien nations, they settled anywhere near the hospital to avoid commuting. Today, they constitutes a significant number in every 650 constituencies of the British parliament. Targetting Kerala voters was on agenda for every party during the recent election to the Parliament. When the fate of some of the marginal constituencies were decided by a margin of less than 500 votes, every Keralite voter counts. Unlike their relatives back in Kerala, Malayalees in the UK are still not loyal to any of the political parties in Britain. They swing and make them the favourites of the politicians. So they will give priority to the invitations from Kerala organisations.

### Grip With Nostalgia

When the Pilgrim Fathers tamed their nostalgia in America by naming their settlements with English city names, Keralites in the UK overcome their feelings through community forums. There is hardly anybody from Kerala without an affiliation to an organisation. There are religious, cultural, community and political forums and Malayalees thrive in it. Weekends are busy with various meetings and community activities. Various Christian denominations have their own churches in England. The arrival of Kerala Christians gave new life to the empty Churches in England.

Most of the Malayalee organisations are working unitedly. UUKMA (Union of UK Malayalee Associations) is one of the umbrella organisations for the Kerala forums. Their annual calendar is dotted with various mega cultural events like Youth Fests and Snake Boat Race. The kerala forums are active in sports besides community

## PERSONAGE



Thembalath Ramachandran is the only Indian featured in the British government adverts to promote British manufacturing sector

## STORY OF A MALAYALI WHO FUELLED BRITISH BUSINESS GROWTH

Thembalath Ramachandran is now one of the most prominent British-Asian businessmen. His position is now among the British Asian success stories like Lord Swaraj Paul, Lakshmi Mittal etc. Even the British government showcased Kerala-born Ramachandran and his Bristol Laboratory as a success story to promote British manufacturing sector. Mr Ramachandran, TR to his friends and colleagues, is a symbol for Malayalee resilience to tide over crisis and face challenges at alien lands. In an industry dominated by multi-nationals, Ramachandran's Bristol is stealing the show.

Mr Ramachandran turned a debt-laden sick unit at Luton near London to a multi-million pound modern drug manufacturing giant Bristol Laboratories. His story is an inspiration to entrepreneurs across the world, especially from Kerala. Educated at Ottappalam NSS College, TR went to Mumbai during the 60s seeking a job. He joined Ipca Laboratories and served them over 35 years.

When people are thinking about retirement, Ramachandran was planning to explore his luck as a manufacturer. As an Executive Director of Ipca Laboratories

Limited, Bombay, India, he was responsible for dealing with clients across 110 countries. Ipca is associated with several healthcare organisations across the world and dealing with markets as diverse as Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the US. Its international clients include AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Roche and Sanofi Aventis.

He launched Bristol Laboratories from a modest office in Harrow, London in 1997. He bought a sick manufacturing unit of Wallis Laboratories in Luton to embark on his vision. He started his company with one staff and a small capital saved through his 35 years employment at Ipca. His wife Sreedevi helped him because she was saving money for their three daughters.

The gamble paid rich dividends. Today Bristol Laboratory is one of the fastest growing manufacturing units in Britain and one of the Top 100 most profitable companies in the Sunday Times List. He is also featured in the Asian Rich List with assets over £100 million. A success story of a simple village boy from Ottappalam, Kerala. His role model is VK Krishna Menon, the man who fought for India's freedom through his fiery soap box speeches at London's historic Hyde Park.

In an industry so dominated by the multi-nationals, creating the level of reputation, loyalty, and infrastructure that Ramachandran has achieved is an extraordinary accomplishment. Despite his lack of MNC connections and demeanours, Ramachandran created a niche market for his products. You won't see him in the party circuit of London. He prefer to be at home with his wife and three daughters. He proudly displays his India card at every event. But that strategy clicked in the British market. After succeeding the British market, Ramachandran is now planning to expand his company in to the rest of the world including Africa, Middle East and finally the USA.

"My intention of starting a business was just taking on another challenge," said Mr Ramachandran. "It is always a challenge to establish a new company in a new country



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"My intention of starting a business was just taking on another challenge," said Mr Ramachandran. "It is always a challenge to establish a new company in a new country and I thrive on challenges. I was working almost 18 hours a day and was fully supported by my wife Sreedevi and children."

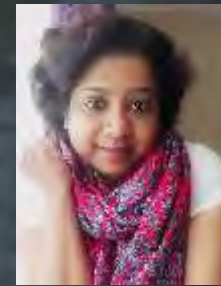
"At the start it was a very small company, with one director, Mr.P.M.Raju, who has been associated with me for all these years. We started in a small office in Harrow. From there, we initiated the registration process for our products with the Medicine and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA). By 2001, we were able to launch some of our own products. From a humble beginning and a turnover of over two million pounds in 2001, we grew at a steady pace over the next few years."

The biggest challenge during the launch year was manpower management. The staff was hesitant to change and the new boss was not willing to succumb to any union pressure. Mr Ramachandran was a hands on boss and he always on the floor to support the process. The workers were shocked when they saw their moustached Indian boss working along with them with rolled up sleeves. The determination of a Malayalee won the hearts of English workforce.

Today Bristol Laboratories is one of the top drug manufacturing units in Britain. Bristol Laboratories market more than 150 molecules and over 300 presentations in the United Kingdom. Their products are available throughout the country, in most pharmacies, as well as NHS hospitals and in the Department of Health.

"Our focus is on development of newer generics. We have built a state of the art analytical laboratory and employ a number of professionals with sound technical expertise. Our research and development department is geared to develop over 20 generic products in a year," added Ramachandran. It took Ramachandran almost three years to make a profit at Bristol Laboratories, but as a result of his dogged determination, vision and passion, he has built a renowned and award-winning company that never compromises on quality. Bristol Laboratories is engaged in the innovative development, manufacture, marketing and distribution of medicines treating a

## INTROSPECTION



## WHEN I FOUND MALAYALAM IN IRELAND

A nurse by profession and an avid reader by instinct, Dyvia John Jose says how she became a writer and found time for reading Malayalam books in the busy life of Ireland

**I** found reading was really relaxing as I was going through one of the anxious periods of my life my temper was a big problem which was obviously started making turbulences in the family life too.

Since I started concentrating on reading it helped me to relax like a relaxant. I found a few good shops to buy second hand English books in the city. Most of them had an amazing collection of books both new and old ones. I started using a local library and it was a good place for my child to attend storytime and Tuesday afternoon as well, in later years.

You can buy books online and Kindle like devices help to access books easily, I would like to go for book shopping once in the month, myself. Its start from searching for the book online, find more about the author and watch their articles, videos and all available articles.

All these years I was totally away from Malayalam literature, and it was hard to get the Malayalam books in Ireland. The only option was to buy books in bulk when I go on holidays. Order online and get delivered to Europe was not cost-effective those days. There is a small library used to work in Ireland for the books lovers, and I started using that library apart from the books I bought from India for Malayalam books.

Meantime I came to know some of the Malayalam writers who publish their books already, and it was a great opportunity to talk about Malayalam books.

In Ireland, there are lots of cultural organisations which promote lots of cultural activities, but I found it hard to find a group to discuss books and literature on a regular basis.

Then, I realise that social media is a

Dyvia John Jose  
writer, Ireland

good platform to get more audience with similar interests. I started writing on different topics on social media and used to get more notification as the day progresses.

I was happy to find some groups, people, pages who really take literature and related discussions very seriously.

As I had a big pause in reading, it was very difficult to get to know about new writers. I started subscribing to a few literary magazines and a few friends helped me to know about new writers.

I started reading them slowly.



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There are very good writers who are trying to do lots of experiments with language, Styles and frames for the last couple of years. I started doing a column in one of the newspapers which includes a short interview of new generation writers and a brief review on their books which I found myself very interesting and good source to keep in touch with Malayalam literature.

People usually ask two different questions.

First one- How do you find the time to do all these things, Reading and Writing.?

First of all, I am not a big reader as many as my friends here in Ireland. But I find time to read everyday as reading is one of the high priorities in my schedule rather than watching serials, and movies.

I wake up early in the morning and that will give me straight two hours, uninterrupted for reading.

I do good research on books, like the internet, global portals and their articles, Interviews of authors, Long and shortlisted books of prestigious awards etc and select books according to my interests.



## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN IRELAND



The Founder president of Kranthi, currently functions as a member of central committee of Kranthi. Graduated B Sc Nursing from Government Nursing College Kozhikode, M Sc Nursing from Trinity College Dublin and Post Graduate Diploma in Healthcare Management from Irish Management Institute. Currently working as Assistant Director of Nursing in one public hospital in Dublin.

Kranthi is a progressive cultural organisation in the Indian Diaspora in Ireland, formed in 2017. The primary objective of Kranthi is to work towards the welfare of people of Indian origin in Ireland. It also aims to promote socialistic ethos among Indian people in Ireland while retaining a cultural and socio-political connection to their motherland. Kranthi's formation event was inaugurated by M A Baby, former education minister of Kerala in presence of Ms Ruth Coppinger (member of Irish parliament) and Ms Eilis Ryan, councilor and leader of Workers Party of Ireland. On the following day, Ms Coppinger mentioned Kranthi in her speech in the Irish parliament as an example of immigrants engaging in Irish politics. Since its formation, Kranthi has been relentlessly participating and supporting various struggles in the Irish society.



Ms K K Shailaja Teacher, Minister for Health, receives Kranthi's award

## KRANTHI: ADDRESSING STARK REALITIES OF MALAYALI DIASPORA IN IRELAND

Varghese Joy

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Housing is a burning issue in Ireland where thousands of people are unable to afford buying or renting accommodation and hundreds of people are homeless. Kranthi's members had participated in various housing protests and campaigns. Kranthi fought at the forefront in the abortion referendum and marriage equality referendum. Kranthi provided unwavering support to other organizations with similar ideology like Workers Party of Ireland. Kranthi also fought for immigrants rights on its own and in conjunction with Anti Racism Network Ireland. Kranthi's demonstration against inefficiency of the Department of Justice on delivering visa service was widely recognized in the Irish media which subsequently lead to

improved service.

When nurses held nationwide strike in Ireland for better pay and working conditions, Kranthi offered the nurses union (INMO) unfettered support and organized demonstration in solidarity with nurses at various locations in Ireland. Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation General Secretary Phil Ni Sheaghdha expressed her gratitude for this at another Kranthi event with Minister Smt. K K Shailaja. Phil said that Kranthi's support was one among the first of those kinds INMO received from the Irish society during the strike.

Kranthi has always been eager to support all good causes in India. When Kerala was ravaged by disastrous flood in 2018, Kranthi organized various measures to raise fund to the Chief Ministers Distress



## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN THE USA



**I**t is true that the first and second generations of Indian immigrants in America faced a cultural shock as the culture, food, and the life style of this country were quite different from what we had back in our country.

Americans too were amused seeing us in our strange dresses, our eating habit of really spicy food and our funny accent in English. However, Indians specifically keralites were too fast to adopt the new culture to which they jumped in with their punctilious nature and sure to learn american style of speaking English. Sure enough in their modern suit dresses, malayalees appeared affluent (even though Americans gave up their dress code even in corporate offices).

Malayalees are smart and fast in starting associations and places of worship and it grows up with the inflow of immigrants gradually. Though it happened to be initially for socializing, with the increase in immigration, there came an explosion of malayalee association too. Even malayalee associations by

different groups by the name of specific towns and places (like Kottayam Achayans, Ranni Associations ) have divulged from the initial unity to diversified groups and cut throat competitions started taking place in mallu life in America in due course.

However the first generations of immigrants struggled and focused on to make money even working double shifts in their jobs. Their children were strictly educated to fulfill their dreams of having doctors and engineers in their houses.

Most of the malayalee immigrants lived in USA for more than 15 or 20 years have renounced their Indian passport and have obtained American citizenship. However in their hearts, they are still living on nostalgic memories and even holding ancestral properties back in their home town in Kerala. In their Bi-polar cultural mind, they participate in almost all American festivals and decorate their houses for halloween and Christmas. They celebrate Onam and Thanks giving. They hoist Indian and American

## THE RISE OF A BI-CULTURAL NEW GENERATION



JAMES KUREEKKATTIL



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festivals and decorate their houses for halloween and Christmas. They celebrate Onam and Thanks giving. They hoist Indian and American national flag on events and and applause after both the national anthems being sung (Although 99% of the mallus do not know even 2 lines of American national anthem).

Of course the third generation of Indian immigrants are vividly different from their earlier counterparts. If the first and second generations constituted mainly nurses, few doctors and some engineers, the third generation of mallus are highly educated and they are ready to mobile themselves to any parts of USA or or to any other country that provides better income. These bi cultural mallus are not that nostalgic or interested to visit kerala frequently rather they invest for better education, and providing all resources to their children. They enjoy the American freedom and swim with the tides.

Americans are asking " How could these recently immigrated Indians achieve incredible success in life?". At the helm of esteemed corporate



MOVIE

“

“The dreams of a distant land with goldmines had always attracted us. Once it was Ceylon. Then we turned to Malaya. In the last decade, stories spread on the western coast about a country that can make anyone who reaches there immensely rich. Thousands of youngsters then had a dream to cherish – Dubai..”

-M T Vasudevan Nair  
(Prelude to the film, Vilkanund Swapnangal)

Lying on a dirty couch inside a shabby labour camp in Dubai, Rajan starts writing his diary - “The prince who crossed the ocean to amass pots of treasure began his official life today - the day he realized that the scorching summer heat in his homeland is moonlight and that no sight on earth is more delightful than the temple pond in his village...”

Rajan (K Rajagopala Menon) is the protagonist of Vilkanund Swapnangal (Dreams for Sale), a 1980 movie penned by M T Vasudevan Nair and directed by M Azad. He is one among those thousands of Keralites who migrated to Gulf countries in the 1970s in search of a better future and great fortunes. The first movie to deal with the travails of Keralites toiling in the Gulf region, Vilkanund Swapnangal analyses its central theme of expatriate life both from subjective and objective points of view. M T, in his unique style, carves out dramatic moments at every crucial juncture of the script and skillfully blends the personal and socio-political layers that determine the film's narrative structure.

Rajan (dexterously played by Sukumaran), who belongs to a

penury-torn feudal family, painstakingly manages to cross the sea on an illegally operated vessel along with some other young men after a hazardous voyage full of sour experiences – worst among them is the death of Chandran, a fellow traveller who succumbed to a severe bout of vomiting caused by seasickness. Leaving Chandran's dead body on the seashore, Rajan crosses the desert and reaches the highway where he finds a friendly Arab driving a pick-up van. With his help Rajan reaches the city, but cannot find out the whereabouts of Mammukka, a kind-hearted small-scale merchant in Dubai, who was to help him find a job. (Mammukka's son Abu is Rajan's bosom friend and they hail from adjacent villages). Rajan takes up hard manual labour in different construction sites till he accidentally meets Mammukka. Mammukka who spends much of his time helping fellow beings landing in Dubai almost like hapless refugees, introduces Rajan to a multinational construction company. Right from the first meeting with the company heads, Rajan shows extraordinary confidence. His body language is marked by a spirit of optimism. Though he has no job experience in accountancy, Rajan tells them boldly - “I will learn, I will learn fast.”

## DREAMS FOR SALE



K B Venu  
Film Critic

Once employed in the company Rajan escalates the echelons of power like a deft politician, with carefully uttered words and meticulous deeds.

As life begins to take a positive turn, Rajan receives the tragic news that his sister had committed suicide by drowning herself in the temple pond. His mother had died when he was in Bombay trying to board the vessel to Dubai. Rajan accepts his fate and looks forward to building a future for himself.

Soon, he is appointed as the top executive of the company and moves from Mammookka's dormitory accommodation to a luxurious villa





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Soon, he is appointed as the top executive of the company and moves from Mammookka's dormitory accommodation to a luxurious villa in the city provided by the company. Slowly, Rajan becomes more authoritative and aggressive. Rajan has deliberately shed his rustic innocence to become practical in life. Immediately after occupying the new villa Rajan tells Mammookka that he has no plans to accommodate anyone there. "I am not as kind-hearted as Mammookka. I don't want to make this a refugee camp." Selfishness and self-imposed solitude are the basic traits of Rajan's character.

Later, though reluctantly, he makes love to Alice, his Anglo Indian stenographer who willingly offers a night of pleasure in exchange for helping her brother get a job NOC. "I can't promise you anything for what has happened between us last night," Rajan tells Alice. "I hate myself for that." But Rajan helps her brother. While thanking Rajan for his kindness, Alice reveals how for the past couple of years she had been sexually exploited by their

former Managing Director who had the image of a nice, old gentleman. "Gentlemen prefer perversions," Alice tells Rajan with tearful eyes. "He was tantalizing me with the offer of this NOC like a diamond necklace." In this poignant scene, MT unveils the ruthless and treacherous attitude of influential Malayali employers towards helpless expatriate women.

Like any other Gulf Malayali, Rajan too cherishes the dream of possessing a big house at his native place. Rajan's friend Abu constructs a bungalow for him at the same place where his old home stood with the money he sent at regular intervals. Rajan establishes a close friendship with Malathi, a Malayalai nurse. Soon they fall in love and have sex. Rajan and Malathi decide to get married when both of them reach Kerala on leave. Malathi gets a positive reply from her father when she informs him about the relationship. She soon leaves Dubai expecting Rajan to visit her once he lands in Kerala.

Rajan reaches his native place and is received with awe by the villagers. Even some of his former detractors show respect due to his newly attained position as a filthy rich Gulf returnee. Being a person who is unwilling to forget and forgive the past, Rajan behaves rudely to those who had tormented him while he was wandering in the village as an unemployed youth.

The person he confronts first is Kurup, the erstwhile steward of Puthenkalathil Veedu, an aristocratic household which is now facing financial deterioration. This is owing to the mismanagement of properties by its mentally derailed patriarch and his son Gopi who squanders money on illogical and useless land disputes. Kurup had once physically tormented Rajan on a false allegation that he stole a gold chain belonging to a beautiful girl in the family. Rajan, defiant and revengeful, offers Kurup two glasses of undiluted strong liquor and makes him confess the heinous deed. Rajan visits Puthenkalathil household and meets Sreedevi,

## RECRUITMENT



Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants Ltd (ODEPC) is established by Government of Kerala in 1977. There were very few recruiting agencies in operation during those days, and all of them were in the private sector. Public were not aware of the real opportunities abroad and relied mainly on word of mouth information and opportunities advertised by private agencies. Taking all these factors into consideration and with a view to identify more employers, Government of Kerala decided to establish a recruitment company in the public sector, which led to the formation of ODEPC. It is registered under Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, with license number B-0882/KER/COM/1000+/5/2224/87.

ODEPC is the first Recruitment agency in Public Sector in India. ODEPC carries out its recruitment as per procedures of the overseas employer and fully subject to the

laws of the host country and in accordance with the laws in India. Being a professional agency with very dedicated and experienced team, we maintain a high degree of professionalism and absolute transparency in our recruitments. Seeing the success of this organization, many State Governments approached us for guidelines and some States started Overseas Recruitment agencies.

A fully computerized Travel Division, approved by Air India and International Air Transport Association (IATA), is also functioning under ODEPC.

### Recruitment Division

ODEPC has been supplying the best candidates throughout the globe for about four decades and are committed to providing unrivalled quality of service. The popularity and trustworthiness of ODEPC are growing year by year. It provides candidates in various functional areas including Health care, Academic/Educational, Construction, Marketing and Sales, Finance & Accounts, Information

## THE AUTHENTIC CONSULTANT

Technology, etc. During last four decades ODEPC has facilitated many candidates in different fields to various countries including Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, State of Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Sultanate of Oman, etc. As Healthcare professionals from Kerala are with dedication and Service, our major clients are from Health care sector. On an average of 300 candidates are recruited to various countries through this organization every year.

We mainly focus on recruitment of manpower to Government organizations in overseas countries. ODEPC are recruiting Doctors, Nurses, and other Para-Medical professionals to Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since



1985. More than 200 nurses are recruited to Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia each year.

Ministry of Health, Maldives is one of our major client in Government sector, to which we conducted interviews for recruiting Nurses and Drivers in October 2019, and about 50 candidates are under the visa process.

We also signed agreement with Health Education England for recruiting nurses to NHS Trust Hospitals in the UK through Global Learners Program, which is a 3-year work based learning program for Nurses which will enhance and add to their existing skills and provide an opportunity to work in the NHS whilst gaining new knowledge and experience. Nurses working in both Government and Private sector will be benefited through this programme. Government of Kerala has issued special orders permitting Government nurses for participating in this programme.

Besides this, we have relationships with many private hospitals in Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries like UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, etc.

### Training Division

Since January 2019, we have started a training section under the recruitment division in order to

help the poor nurses in Kerala to achieve additional country-specific qualifications. ODEPC provides extensive and result oriented training in IELTS/OET with minimal fees. Presently three IELTS/OET training centers are



functioning at Trivandrum, Ernakulam and New Delhi. More than hundred candidates have benefited through these centres. We have also started HAAD/DHA/Prometric training at our Trivandrum centre.

### Travel Division

ODEPC started its travel division as a stepping-stone to achieve the complete travel solution to persons planning to travel in India and abroad. This IATA approved travel division is committed to offer travel services of the highest quality, combining our energy and enthusiasm, with our years of experience. Our greatest satisfaction comes in serving large numbers of satisfied clients who have

experienced the joy and inspiration of travel. Arrangements have made with leading domestic and international air travel companies. ODEPC also provides reliable information and services on ticket reservation and domestic tour

destinations. This travel division is of great help to the newly recruited candidates in arranging their job papers and tickets in time. It also provides suitable guidance in VISA formalities and Travel regulations to the best satisfaction of the customers. This travel division is working hand-in-hand with all the major flight companies to choke-out speedy ticketing needs for the crossover employee.

### Tours Division

In 2018, ODEPC has started its Tour division as part of its Travel division with an aim to support the government employees to avail their LTC and other common man to fulfill their travel dreams. Tour packages for domestic & International trips are arranged from this division. It organizes and prepares holiday tour packages with a focus on customer service and offer a fantastic range of trips to meet the client's budget, ambition and expectation.

Register online through our Job Portal [www.odepc.kerala.gov.in](http://www.odepc.kerala.gov.in)

## MALAYALI DIASPORA IN EUROPE



**Balagopal** is based in Kent in the UK. He is the editor of [www.ukmalayalee.com](http://www.ukmalayalee.com), an English website for Malayalees in the UK and Europe. He works for the government service in the UK for the last twenty years and covers NRI articles for various publications. He can be contacted on [balagopalkent@gmail.com](mailto:balagopalkent@gmail.com) or Whatsapp 004407855769395.

### MALAYALI DIASPORA IN EUROPE UNRUFFLED BY RECESSION

The Malayali diaspora in Europe remains unruffled by the economic recession that has hit Europe in the last decade. The recession which began in February 2009 continues to cause upheaval in almost all European countries with politicians and bureaucrats searching in the dark for strategic solutions to address the day to day living of their citizens. Governments are still looking for directions to escape from the clutches of recession. However, the myriad of issues means untangling the shackles seems further afar.

Cutting immigration resulted in a shortage of nurses, doctors, IT professionals, cooks, academics which were highlighted by the elite think tank which were ignored.

In recent years Europe has seen a shift towards the extreme, with far-right and anti-immigration parties breaking into the political mainstream in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and beyond.

With the recession taking centre stage, the governments began increasing the tax and this resulted in an exodus of Malayalee migrants seeking pasture new to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The Malayali diaspora in Europe

generally remained a silent witness to the whole drama unfolding in front of them. Their stone-like silence was like the adage, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going".

A look at some countries in Europe where the Malayalee diaspora has made their mark and where immigration continues sheds light to how successive governments are indecisive and finally leading to opening up immigration for the upliftment of their societies.

- United Kingdom • Germany
- Ireland • Italy • Sweden
- Denmark • Finland

**Germany all set to increase migration for nurses and skilled workers**

Malayalee migration to Germany began in the late 1960s with the arrival of Catholic women to work as nurses in German hospitals. Their association with the local population in Germany opened gates to more nurses, mostly friends and relatives of those who were already in Germany, to arrive in Germany. Along with other European countries Germany too opened up immigration in 2001 which saw the arrival of further 20,000 Indian IT professionals. Between the years 2001 and 2007, the government tried and tested different formats to get the best out of their immigration to source

## WHEN GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GET GOING

### BALAGOPAL KENT

skilled workers. However, their approach was more indecisive than affirmative.

Germany, who were once very conservative to recruitment, has now decided to open up their country for more foreign workers. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that in the year 2020 there will be a "paradigm shift" in the way Germany has approached recruiting workers from abroad. This comes as a result of a research which reveals that Germany is most in need of electrical engineers, metal workers and mechatronics engineers, cooks, nurses, aged care workers, computer scientists and software developers.

Jose Kumpiluvellil, editor of [www.pravasionline.com](http://www.pravasionline.com), the first NRI Portal in Malayalam from Europe since 2007, based in Germany says: "In the last few years



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Jose Kumpiluvellil, editor of www.pravasionline.com, the first NRI Portal in Malayalam from Europe since 2007, based in Germany says: "In the last few years Malayalees are very much in the forefront in migrating to Germany. Student migration increased with the education sector being opened up with students allowed to be in the country for eighteen months following the completion of their course. This resulted in more students migrating, finding jobs and settling here. Latest figures show that there are around 20,000 Indian students and out of it there are 8,000 Malayalee students. In regards to nurses to the migration has seen an increase in the years 2017 and 2018 with the arrival of around 10,000 nurses in these years", Jose said. Jose also supports

newly arriving immigrants to Germany and can be contacted on Whatsapp 00491774600227.

## Nurses migration set to boom in the UK

The nurses' migration to the UK is set to boom in the next five years with the NHS having to fill at least around 50,000 vacancies. With Boris Johnson securing a landslide victory and cementing his position as a leader for the next decade and the inevitable scenario of UK leaving the European Union its thumbs up for nurses migration from India to the UK. UK too was tentative when it came to making decisions about immigration. The Conservative government were pulled back by ultranationalist parties who supported Brexit and thus immigration came to a standstill which resulted in huge voids in various sectors which were already reeling under recession.

UK has now opened up their immigration to Indian students with the offer of post-study work, to nurses and doctors.

FebinCyriac, CEO at Envertiz Consultancy UK & India, says: "NHS requires 50,000 more nurses and this can be achieved only gradually in batches and in the next five years we are forecasting an arrival of 5,000 nurses each year. With the government restoring the student nurse bursaries it is expected to get more people into a job locally which is aimed to address the huge shortage.

"NHS opened up migration for nurses in the year 2000 and this slowly tapered down and closed to an almost standstill in the year 2006. And then it opened up gradually from 2016 and 2017 when only less than 1,000 Indian nurses arrived each year and out of this 70 per cent were Malayalees. The year 2018 saw a jump when the figures began to improve with around 1,500 Indian nurses arriving out of which 800 were Malayalees. And now at the end of 2019, the figures stand at around 3,000 Indian nurses arriving

in the UK. Out of this 2,000 are Malayalees and this is set to increase".

"Migration to other European states such as Germany, Netherlands, France and other states remains a hurdle as the requirement to learn that language is an essential requirement. However, all nurses from India are familiar with the English language which makes the UK more accessible to them", Febin said.

## Denmark opens up for IT migrants

According to reports India is placed fifth out of the top ten nationalities immigrating to Denmark in 2018. Although they were guarded with the immigration, news reports say that Denmark will be opening more for migration of IT workers. The prospects look positive as Denmark offers a robust social security to the migrants. However, migrants must learn their language to work and live in Denmark.

## Sweden opens up for IT migrants

Sweden had stopped immigration altogether since 2012 due to political pressures. However, now they have opened up their immigration to Indians where at present there are around 2,000 Indians which are mostly IT professionals and Indian students. Again learning the language is a must to work here.

## Finland opens up for leading technology firms

Numerous polls in 2010 indicated that the majority of the Finnish people want to limit immigration to the country to preserve regional and native cultural diversity. However, the latest reports say that Finland is offering an ecosystem of leading technology firms and 6G connectivity, which has attracted companies such as

# MALAYALI DIASPORA IN EUROPE BENEFITTING FROM LOKA KERALA SABHA

By Balagopal Kent

Since the inception of the Loka Kerala Sabha (LKS) in 2018, the chapters in various countries of Europe has been striving to find their place among the myriad of organisations working towards helping their community in respective countries.

The Loka Kerala Sabha Europe Chapter members have realised that they do not have to address the same issues faced by their peers in the Middle East. Due to the strong social security offered by the respective countries in Europe the Malayalee diaspora has a different set of issues compared to those in the Gulf.

LKS team members mainly coordinates between the Malayalee diaspora in Europe and Kerala government through NORKA Roots to ease the hurdles of Non-Resident Keralites to untangle the red tapes time to time.

Speaking to the representatives in these European countries it obvious that they have all have a totally new set of problems to deal with. However, they are all of the opinion that the support they have been receiving from NORKA and various government departments in Kerala have been overwhelming.



**Rajesh Krishna, from Loka Kerala Sabha UK says:** "UK and Europe are states where the governments provide the support through its mechanisms and therefore the help and assistance required for the Kerala community in Europe is restricted to only certain areas of their lives.



"UK is a welfare state with strong social security network and therefore it takes care of its citizens' rights. Our team in the UK was able to facilitate assistance in the form of coordinating between Kerala government and the Indian High Commission in the UK on occasions where there are hurdles such as lack or delay of communication between various departments. We coordinate with our other European chapters too and we are in constant touch with each other at all times in situations where there is a need to help the community", he said



**Anita Pullayil from Loka Kerala Sabha Italy says:** "Our issues are mainly relating to the illegal immigration which has become a constant problem with several fraudulent agents and advisers misleading our community to arrive in Italy on different kind of visas. I have been helping out several individuals who were cheated by agents from India. I was able to coordiante with NORKA, the DGP office and CM's office and they have all be helpful for me to offer help and assistance to those individuals here".



**Sirosh George from Loka Kerala Sabha Austria says:** "We rarely have any issues which affects the Malayalee diaspora in Austria because of the strong social security provided to the citizens by the government here. However, Loka Kerala Sabha offers a platform to keep close links with the government departments in Kerala, the Indian High Commission here and the Indian government which may come handy at times of need".



**Jos Puthussery from Loka Kerala Sabha Germany says:** "We are able to provide support to anyone who approaches us in times of need. The Loka Kerala Sabha offers the strength for people like us to serve the community. The various departments are very helpful in supporting the Malayalee diaspora."





The plane touched down. I looked out of the porthole. It was morning but nothing was visible. Something, that was mist-like, seemed to cover the whole area. It looked like a sand-coloured curtain stretching into infinity.

This was my maiden trip to Kuwait, and my mind was full of anxiety and uncertainty. I was like any other ordinary Malayali who had set out from home, weaving dreams of making it big in the Gulf.

I turned to my fellow-passenger, a man who had been working in Kuwait for several years, and asked him about the grey landscape outside, "Why is it like this?"

He smiled and replied, "That's the way it is here, friend!" Thus, on a harsh winter morning, I landed in Kuwait, a land enveloped in dust. My heart was laden with a young man's worries. I planned to stay here, work for a couple of years, make a decent nest-egg, and eventually return. Beckoning me back to my homeland were many dreams I had abandoned half-way. My desire to continue the rest of my creative life there was simply irrepressible.

Today as I write this note, sitting in an apartment in Abbasiya in Kuwait, a place thronging with Malayalis, I remember with a mild sense of sorrow that twenty-five years have gone by since I first landed on the dust-swept plains of Kuwait.

My plans of returning home for good after working for a couple of years went awry very early. But that is not my exclusive predicament. This has been the fate of a good majority of Malayalis who have flown to Kuwait, lured by the lustre of black gold in its endless oil fields. Some succeeded. Others failed and returned home. A few remain, continuing to bear all the burdens of middle-class life. And the years continue to roll by . . .

The Gulf - the land of dreams swept up by dust storms - has been the staple of an average Malayali's daily news for the past fifty years. It is estimated that at present Kerala earns roughly Rs 50,000 crores every year from remittances by its expatriates. The major chunk of it comes from Malayalis employed in the Gulf. Following the end of the Second World War, from the 1950s onwards, petroleum mining and export began in the Middle Eastern countries in a big way. Consequently, from the beginning of the 1970s, hordes of Malayalis - forming a huge workforce - started

## DREAMS RAISED ON DUST STORMS



Lazar D' Silva  
Kuwait

migrating to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, more popularly known as "Persia" in Kerala.

The terms "emigration" and "exile" are very commonly used in connection with the life of Malayalis in the Gulf. But they are too inadequate to encompass the complexities of the Malayalis' life overseas. Nearly all our

international migrations at all times have been undertaken in search of a financial refuge. Much earlier, Malayalis used to go to other parts of India, and also board ships to Colombo [Sri Lanka], Burma [Myanmar] and Malaya [Malaysia] in search of a better standard of living. They were not exiled due to political circumstances prevailing in the land of their birth. Rather, they were indirectly impelled by social pressure to seek employment elsewhere.

Theoretically speaking, the immigrant life of Malayalis in the Gulf can be evaluated from different perspectives. Whatever they may be, the fact remains that the first generation of Malayali youth had arrived in the Gulf towards the middle of the 1970s, and it made a huge impact on the social landscape of Kerala.

Kerala's contact with the Arab countries has a long history. It began when Arabs boarded their ships and first came to the shores of Malabar. But the state's Arab connection in the contemporary times began in the mid-1970s with a phenomenon that has been termed the "Gulf Boom". A massive wave of Malayali migration lashed Kuwait soon. It is perhaps as unprofitable as it is irrelevant to look for the identity of the first Malayali who reached Kuwait. What is relevant however is that a humongous Malayali community established itself in Kuwait, and its presence has continued unabated ever since. The first and second generations of Malayalis in Kuwait may have come and gone. But if we look at the Malayali community as a whole, it has only grown larger over the decades. Today, there are about eight-and-a-half lakh Indians in Kuwait, and a majority of them are Malayalis. It is worth recalling that the number of Kuwaitis comes only to thirteen lakhs!

The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) holds the reins of the oil mining business, which was originally in the hands of the British. Although the KOC came into being in 1934, mining and oil export reached its peak at a time when the tenure of the British Raj in India was drawing to an end. As a result, many engineers and other officers, both Indian and foreign, working in India under the colonial masters, were relocated to

Kuwait. In other words, Indians were present in Kuwait right from the time the mining began. Those were the days when Kuwait was under the British Protectorate. It became independent in 1961, and what is amazing is that until then the rupee was its standard currency.

The Indian community in Kuwait following our attainment of independence was not numerically strong. As a result of oil mining, Kuwait quickly became a very wealthy region. (The Kuwaiti dinar continues to have the highest exchange rate in the world today.) The massive flow of human resources from Kerala went into powering all the departments that evolved out of that growth. A wide range of personnel, from highly educated professionals to unskilled labourers, went to Kuwait in droves. The number of those who went to work as domestic helps in Kuwaiti homes was not inconsiderable either.



The phrase "Gulf Boom" is usually used to refer to a decade, from the beginning of the 1970s to the beginning of the '80s. But that does not mean that Malayali life in the Gulf ended in the 1980s. Rather, it suggests that the uncontrolled influx lessened considerably. By then the

Malayali diaspora had crystallized to form a strong community in the Gulf region. Thereafter, the growth of Malayali presence in the area came to be registered more in terms of quality than quantity. Malayalis worked towards improving their employment chances and business potential there. There was no longer any field in the whole area where Malayalis had not established themselves.

Things had been going swimmingly well when tragedy struck very unexpectedly. On 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, an event that sent ripples not only in the lives of Malayalis in Kuwait, but in the social life of the whole state of Kerala. Road No. 80 is an arterial highway in Kuwait, that runs from the capital city of Kuwait to the Iraq border. It has earned notoriety as the "Highway of Death". This was because of the blood-chilling incident that happened there on the last day of the First Gulf War. "Operation Desert Storm," as the First Gulf War was also known, came to an end on 28 February 1991. When defeat became imminent, the Iraqi troops started withdrawing from Kuwait on 26 February. The only land route back to their homeland was Road No. 80. Nearly 2000 vehicles were trying to escape, and according to certain accounts, among them were the vehicles of Iraqi civilians who had entered Kuwait earlier, along with the military trucks.

Perhaps the worst war crime of Operation Desert Storm was committed on that night. Military planes of the Coalition forces flew from the opposite direction, launched a missile attack, and completely decimated the withdrawing Iraqis. A distance of nearly 100 kilometres, that stretched up to the Iraqi border, came under heavy aerial bombardment. It was a road that ran through the middle of a desert, a road that lay vulnerable and completely exposed to the skies.

Within the span of a single night, hundreds of Iraqis who had no other alternative except to retreat on a convoy basis were killed. Vast military supplies were also destroyed



They moved along the same road that would be a death trap for Iraqis some time later. To Indians, Road No. 80 was perhaps the “Highway of Hope”.

On the request of the central government, the colonial government had permitted Indians to take the road via Iraq to Amman, the capital of Jordan. Indians had to travel from Kuwait to Iraq's border city of Basra, and pass through Bagdad in order to reach Amman. This was the first phase of a 15,000 km-long route of migration. To Malayalis, who are strangers to wars, the migration and the subsequent life as refugees in camps at Amman was intolerable in the extreme. I have had occasions to hear about their plight from the very people who underwent the experience.

During the time of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent migration of Indians, Mathunni Mathews, aka Toyota Sunny, featured hugely in Malayalam newspapers, and became a household name in Kerala. As the General Manager of Toyota, in charge of sales, he was a prominent person among the Indian community in Kuwait during the pre-invasion days. The role he played in rescuing Indians from the war-torn region was incredible. There are many stories of the heroic exploits of many unsung Malayali heroes too, whose courage was crucial in rescuing fellow-Malayalis from Iraqi guns and sending them to their native lands.



But this was not the only war that Kuwait had to suffer. After the First Gulf War came to an end, Malayalis returned to this land with renewed vigour. And I was one among them . . .

The Second Gulf War began on 20 March 2003. The US, alleging that Iraq had nuclear weapons in its possession, created a context for it. This set off full-scale debates all over the globe about its justifiability. But those who were caught in the crossfire had no time to get involved in such a verbal exercise. They had to stock food supplies and water to ride through the ordeal. To make matters worse, rumours were rife that Saddam Hussein, caught in a life-or-death situation, was planning to resort to chemical warfare in Kuwait. We had heard that nearly every Kuwaiti home had underground bunkers to safeguard the family, and outlive such war strategies. What shelter did foreigners like us have, who lived in cramped apartments? Isolated Malayali families and individuals scurried to make their living quarters as secure as possible by sticking aluminium tapes to cover every hole! There was no guarantee that such weak precautions were good enough to resist attacks from chemical weapons. Maybe everyone was mindlessly copying what others were doing. And anyway, how would all this help if missiles landed on our heads?

As such war preparations were going on, most Indians, especially Malayalis who lived in Kuwait with their families, sent their wives and

children back home. What if the war situation worsened, they got caught in it, and evacuation was the only way out? In such circumstances, safety of the families came first. Such thoughts were only natural. Most of those who took such precautions had had their personal experiences of riding out the grave challenges of the First Gulf War, one-and-a-half decades back. During those days, long queues in front of the Air India office were a common sight. One day, a young Lebanese friend of mine, asked me the reason for the presence of crowds there. I told him that they were trying to purchase tickets to escape the imminent war and fly back home.

“Oh!” he muttered softly in astonishment, and remained silent. A little later, he said as if to himself, “My father had left his native land in fear of a war. Many, many years back. We don't have anything there anymore . . .” Such occasions serve to remind us that, no matter where we are in the world, having a safe motherland to return to is a great relief. In a way, it symbolizes freedom too. The Second Gulf War did not affect the Kuwaiti residents in a big way. The Coalition forces advanced very quickly from the Kuwaiti border into the interior regions of Iraq. Saddam Hussein's army could manage to drop only a single missile in a Kuwaiti residential area. Beyond destroying a pier, it did no other damage.

On 1 May, one-and-a-half months after it broke out, the Second Gulf War was officially declared over. Another six months went by before Saddam Hussein was smoked out of a burrow in the Iraqi town of Tikrit. On 30 December 2006, he was hanged to death. We heard news that Kerala observed hartal on that day. Lakhs of Kuwaiti Malayalis, who had endured the ordeals of the First and the Second Gulf Wars, dismissed it with total indifference. It was a poignant moment when we realized that the anxieties of expatriates were of no relevance in the process of idea-formation among fellow-countrymen.

Today all is calm and quiet on Road

No. 80. It is a six-lane highway that stretches 125 kms, cutting through the vast desert, from Kuwait city to the Iraqi border. We can drive lazily from one end to the other, and view gardens cultivated on either side, spreading over acres right in the middle of the sandy plains. It is even possible to spend an idle holiday in that cool, verdant patch of land.

But this is not all. As we travel along the Al Abdali highway, and turn west from the Abdali junction to take a small road cutting through the uninhabited desert, at some distance we will spot the newly constructed oil fields of Kuwait. The oil power of Kuwait in the Gulf region is very formidable. But this state does not have off-shore oil fields. All the mining is done on-shore, and the oil fields of Abdali stand testimony to this fact. The vast landscape, stretching across several square kilometres, and dotted with yellow and green donkey pumps that suck oil from deep inside the earth, makes a strange picture. The donkey pumps are larger, mechanized versions of the hand-operated piston pumps that used to be a familiar sight in our village junctions. The sight of these seemingly endless oil fields gives us a true feel of the strange geography of the region.

However, the saga of Abdali and similar deserts does not end here, especially as far as Malayalis are concerned. The residential quarters of the contract labourers who work on these oil fields are located there itself, deep in the desert. Their porto cabins are laid out in long, neat rows. Inside each tiny room are bunker beds, every bed constituting a veritable house for those small lives, and every mattress



Abbasiya has become a very convenient refuge for the ordinary Malayali for a variety of reasons. For nurses, who form a large section of the working class, Abbasiya is a hub from where they can get buses to hospitals anywhere in Kuwait. Besides, there are numerous Indian schools in Abbasiya and its neighbourhood. “Baqalas” that sell Kerala provisions are accommodated in the ground floor of nearly all apartment blocks in this locality. They take orders over phone, and offer home delivery service to every flat. And all this is done on credit. Payment needs to be made only by the end of the month. There are small eateries that offer regular meals to people living alone. It is also relatively easy for families to get Malayali workers to help with their domestic chores. A generation which used to depend exclusively on government hospitals is fast disappearing in Abbasiya too. That may be the reason why private hospitals, with Malayali doctors on the payroll, have been inviting Mammooty to inaugurate their services.

The other day, as I was at a restaurant, I heard someone making a speech in an adjoining hall. The voice sounded familiar. When I took a peek, I saw that the person was a Minister from Kerala. (I had heard his voice on television several times. Make no mistake, I was not personally acquainted with him.) It is very normal to see an MLA, an MP or a Minister any time of the year in this area. In all likelihood, even the smallest political party in Kerala may have a small unit functioning in Kuwait. Besides, there are many religious, community, literary and charitable organizations too. It is even possible

that you see organizations like “Kandachira Expatriates' Association” or “Vadakkereparambil Great Family Get-together”! And read reports of their activities too!

During weekends, Abbasiya wears a festive look. Malayalis from all over Kuwait converge here for various reasons. Most of them are people living alone in faraway camps who come to pay a visit to their relatives or friends. During such times, temples, churches and mosques in the basements of apartment blocks echo with prayers. People holding the Bible and hastening to churches, or wearing mundus and returning from temples with sandal paste marks on their foreheads are a common “Malayali spectacle”. The life and culture of Abbasiya make it a slice of Kerala, although geographically there may be no resemblance between the two. Is the fifty-year-old Malayali presence in the Gulf coming to an end? Rumours to this effect are rife, especially in the context of recession that a rich emirate like Dubai went through, and also the increasing scale of nativization implemented by a large kingdom like Saudi Arabia. But amidst all these developments, Kuwait glides forward slowly and noiselessly. That has been made possible because although the country is exclusively dependent on its petroleum resources, it has built a strong economy. The Kuwaiti government also is taking steps to bring down the increasing ratio of foreign immigrants. Those measures are sure to have repercussions on the Malayali population in due course of time. But by then, Malayalis would have identified another continent, and boarded a ship in pursuit of their boundless dreams . . .





Kerala's success story in migration is not built upon over any perishable luck; but it is an outcome of the high levels of human development in the State. The investment that the state has made on its human resources will continue to bring home the glory.

In Bengaluru, there is a joke about Malayali food joints; an authentic Malayali restaurant is a place where you get Arabian, Persian, Continental, Chinese, North Indian, South Indian and at times Malayali delicacies. Beyond the fact, the joke holds a larger truth about Malayali life; much like our taste palette, the Malayali identity is a composite one. It is a product of the travels Malayalis have carried out over the years. Migration has shaped who we are. This is true even for those who haven't ventured outside the borders of the State. These travels have even informed our political attitudes. In our times, rootedness is a major political questions. From Brexit in the West, to Citizenship Amendment Act in

the east, political battles are now largely fought over the question of who belongs and who does not. Malayalis seems to have largely transcended this question. While not insulated from nostalgia, we as a people do not feel much alienated at the sight of the other. Malayalis belong to everywhere and somewhere at the same time. This somewhere being a tiny strip of land on the coast of Arabian Sea.

Across the world, the politics of globalization has fallen out of favour. The ideologies of free trade and free movement of people are finding fewer takers these days. Right wing politics is in ascendancy in many parts of the world; this is especially noticeable in places that were formerly strong advocates of free trade. It is ironic that China is

## NEW CROSSROADS

ADWAITH PRABHAKAR

now one of the major voices in favour of trade. These events will have an impact on global migration. Migration, one of the major social phenomena of the 20th century, is likely to face new pressures. This does not necessarily mean an end to migration. In fact, the most important lesson one can draw from the 20th century is that one must not predict the end of anything, especially history.

Migration is essential for the global growth to thrive. Nations as well as businesses understand the importance of migration. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes for the first time the contribution of migration to sustainable

development. However, rising inequalities and stagnant real wages have fermented an increasingly vocal opposition to migration.

To fully understand the scope and scale, the migration story of Kerala is best told in numbers. The Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) 2018, which has one of the most comprehensive data on migration from the State, estimates that there are 2.1 million emigrants from Kerala across the world. The KMS 2018 is the eighth in a series of studies on migration carried out by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS). These surveys reveal a consistent decline in migration from Kerala. Compared to 2013, there has been a decline of about 3 lakh emigrants in 2018. The district that has seen the most reduction is Ernakulam; which is the State's bellwether district when it comes to industrialization. For some years, India has been the top recipient of remittances worldwide. In 2018, it received 79 billion USD, which is about 3% of the country's GDP. And among the Indian states, Kerala topped the list with a whopping 19% share (or 13.11 billion USD) of total remittances. While there has been a decline in the number of emigrants,, remittances to Kerala have continued to grow. The contribution of Malayali diaspora to India's economy is perhaps the most overlooked fact in the India growth story. It has never gotten the attention that it deserves. On the contrary, the mainstream press has helped to prop up some myths about the migration story.

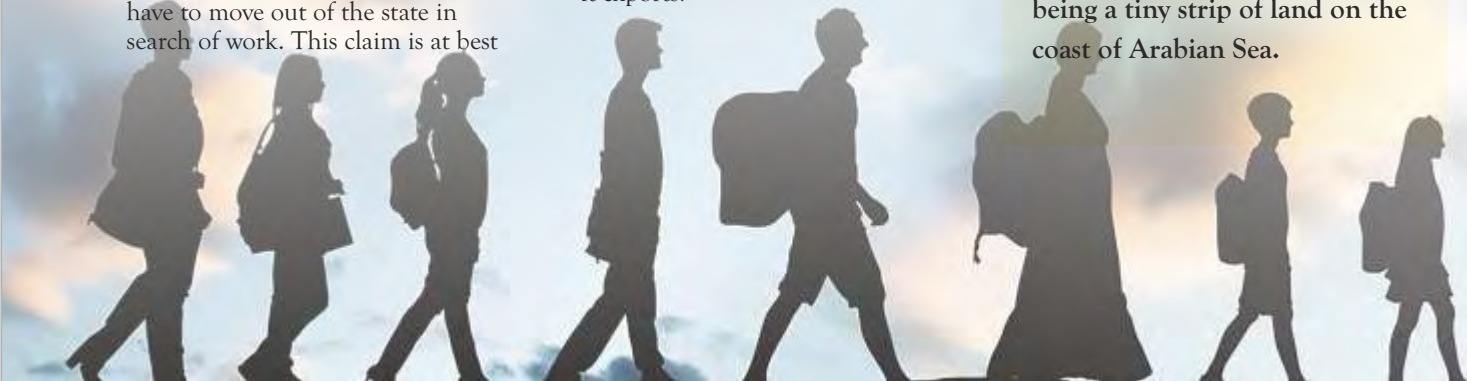
A common myth is that there are not any jobs in Kerala and people have to move out of the state in search of work. This claim is at best

a half-truth. Government of India Economic Survey of India for 2017-18 took a detailed view on migration in Indian States. In chapter 12 of the survey, titled India on the Move and Churning: New Evidence, it refers to a new Cohort based Migration Metric (CMM) to analyze trends in labour mobility. What's interesting is that, the net internal migration rates have dipped in Maharashtra and surged in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Southern states of the country attract more labour, while the the out-migration rates have been increasing in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Tamil Nadu has the highest Net Migrants in the 20-29 cohorts for the years 2001-2011, with an estimate of 1,013,000 (or 8.3%). Kerala comes a close second with 9,00,000 (or 7%). It is fascinating that even though Gujarat has a net migrant rate of 3.2% (with a total of 3,43,000 in the 20-29 cohort), the flows from Gujarat to Tamil Nadu are about 7 lakhs annually. The dip in net internal migration in Maharashtra, which was once the epicentre of nativist politics, further confirms this pull of the southern states. In the aftermath of Kerala floods 2018, Mahesh Vyas, of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, has explained the importance of Kerala. In his article titled "The nation's interest in Kerala", he noted that the 4 million migrants in Kerala account for nearly 1 % of India's labour force. And that these workers are mostly from relatively less developed states of eastern India and they account for 2 % of the labour force of eastern states. In short, Kerala imports more human resources than it exports.

The labour sector is now undergoing an unprecedented churning. Technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence are expected to radically change the job market. The technological advancements in the electric mobility sector have added to the woes of petroleum exporting countries. The Gulf region has a disproportionate influence on the economy and life of the State. Almost one third of the State's GDP is linked to remittances; more importantly a majority share of this comes from the Gulf region. There is enough doomsday talk around about an impending peril for the State. While we should expect the transition to be difficult, pessimism is unwarranted. Kerala's success story in migration is not built upon over any perishable luck; but it is an outcome of the high levels of human development in the State. The investment that the state has made on its human resources will continue to bring home the glory. We learned it during the time of floods; it is not about borders, it is always about people.

Coda: Even though Kerala does not even send even half as many migrants overseas as Uttar Pradesh, the state bags of 19% of the remittances, compared to UP's 3.1%.

“While not insulated from nostalgia, we as a people do not feel much alienated at the sight of the other. Malayalis belong to everywhere and somewhere at the same time. This somewhere being a tiny strip of land on the coast of Arabian Sea.”





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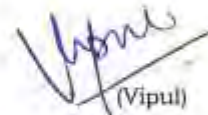
القنصلية العامة الهندية  
دبي

No. Duba/CG/2019

December 11, 2019

**MESSAGE**

I am happy that Kerala Calling is bringing out a special issue on the occasion of the meeting *Loka Kerala Sabha* in January 2020. The Malayali community in Dubai, Sharjah and other Emirates in UAE have participated with great enthusiasm in such meetings held earlier in Dubai. UAE has presence of a very large Indian community of almost 3.3 million, which consists of a significant number of people from Kerala. The Malayalis have played an integral and important role in the development of UAE and the strengthening of historical and friendly relations between India and UAE. Their contribution is well recognised by the leadership of both the countries. I feel proud to see the achievements of the Malayali community in UAE in all fields be it business, medicine, engineering, education, culture or community work. I am sure that the community will also make a mark and showcase its achievements in *Loka Kerala Sabha*. I wish the event and Malayali community all the best.

  
(Vipul)

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**MESSAGE**

I congratulate the Government of Kerala for organizing the *Loka Kerala Sabha* – a conclave of Malayali diaspora across the world. Malayalis form the largest non-Arab linguistic community in the Gulf region, with 40 lakhs of them in the Gulf region, out of which over 3 lakhs reside in Qatar alone.

Kerala has been connected with the Gulf region through maritime links since antiquity. Relations between the two regions encompass culture, trade and people-to-people contacts. Since the medieval period, the Malabar coast has been a key gateway for trade with the Gulf region. The deep influence of the two regions on each another are evident in the similarities in cuisine, clothing, music, crafts and architecture.

The Malayali diaspora can legitimately claim a large share of the Indian community's contribution to the growth and development of Qatar. This has been readily acknowledged by the Qatari leadership on a number of occasions. Our people have established an enviable reputation for sincerity, professionalism, hard work and law-abiding nature, making us a preferred expatriate community in GCC countries, including Qatar. A number of Malayali organizations/associations have been actively working in the areas of culture, labour and community welfare, business networking and sports, to achieve greater synergies within the Indian community. The Indian diaspora in Qatar accounts for remittances of over US\$ 4 billion per annum to India, thus contributing significantly to the national economy.

The Embassy will continue to work closely with the Indian community, including the Malayalis in Qatar, for their well-being and progress. I wish the Malayali community all the best in their quest for greater prosperity as well as personal and professional achievements in the coming years.

  
(P. Kumaran)



भारत का प्रधान कौंसल  
न्यू यॉर्क



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NEW YORK



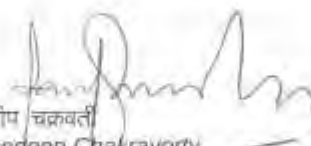
December 20, 2019

**MESSAGE**

I am pleased to know that the Government of Kerala is conducting Loka Kerala Sabha, a conclave of Malayali diaspora across the world, in January 2020 and that the official English monthly of the State, "Kerala Calling" is bringing out a special issue on the event.

"Kerala Calling" magazine is not only a widely circulated publication but its dedication in sharing knowledge, information and news about Kerala enriches people of Kerala and Indian origin throughout the world. It has become a well regarded platform for free expression of views and exchange of ideas through its pages. Informative articles and features published in this "Kerala Calling" best depict the beauty and intellect of God's own country and its people.

On behalf of the Consulate General of India, I convey my heartiest greetings to "Kerala Calling" magazine and hope it will continue to connect Indian diaspora community with India through its pages.

  
संदीप चक्रवर्ती  
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**MESSAGE**

I am happy to know about the "Loka Kerala Sabha" being organised in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) from 1-3 January 2020.

The Malayali diaspora is one of the most vibrant and hard working communities with a prominent presence in Australia and contribute significantly to the national efforts. The community is also proactively engaged in promoting and preserving its rich cultural identity, traditions, and values. This fast growing and dynamic community serves as an important link between their adopted new home and the land of their ancestors.

I wish the diaspora community and the organisers all the very best in their endeavour.

Regards

**P.S. Karthigeyan**

Acting High Commissioner of India to Australia



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