

Read to lead

Reading is the greatest of all joys. Reading sparks creativity and imagination. The moment one starts reading a book, he enters a different world, which can uplift his spirits. Lin Yutang says: 'the man who has not the habit of reading is imprisoned in his immediate world...The reader is always carried away into a world of thought and reflection'.

Having access to information through the Internet, radio and television is important; however, reading books is still an absolute necessity for all. Books continue to find their way to the right readers. Reading is valuable for many reasons. We read books to a large extent, for differentiated and authenticated information as well as pleasure. Reading makes one a better writer also. It arms the reader against oppression – psychologically, and physically as well.

Developing good reading skills means not only that one can read a novel or a magazine or newspaper; but also being able to read and understand. Reading helps us keep up with what is going on in the world and keeps our minds active and engaged. Reading also sets a good example for future generations. Reading must be taught from childhood. A reader today will certainly be a leader tomorrow. We have to give our children something worth reading; something that will stretch their imaginations; something that will help them make sense of their own lives and encourages them to reach out toward people whose lives are unlike their own.

Younger generation is careful in their reading. Today, the children are reading a lot more than what is necessary for classes. Value added reading is the current phenomenon. It is usually an activity for preparing students to get through the multiple choice competitive examinations.

Access to good and diverse literature encourages a love for reading. Selection of reading material may be a task for serious readers. Sometimes we can agree to Lin's statement as he asserts that reading, like matrimony, is determined by fate. Reading may change form, as with the eBook or some other digital form. But it will still remain influencing our lives.

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. It leads to accrued knowledge. As someone has rightly remarked, books, to the reading person, are so much more than books. They are dreams and knowledge; they are a future and a past. Read! Your future depends on it!

Keep the pages turning as our articles guide you to make reading a part of daily life.



Igniting Inspiration

From out-of-Syllabus

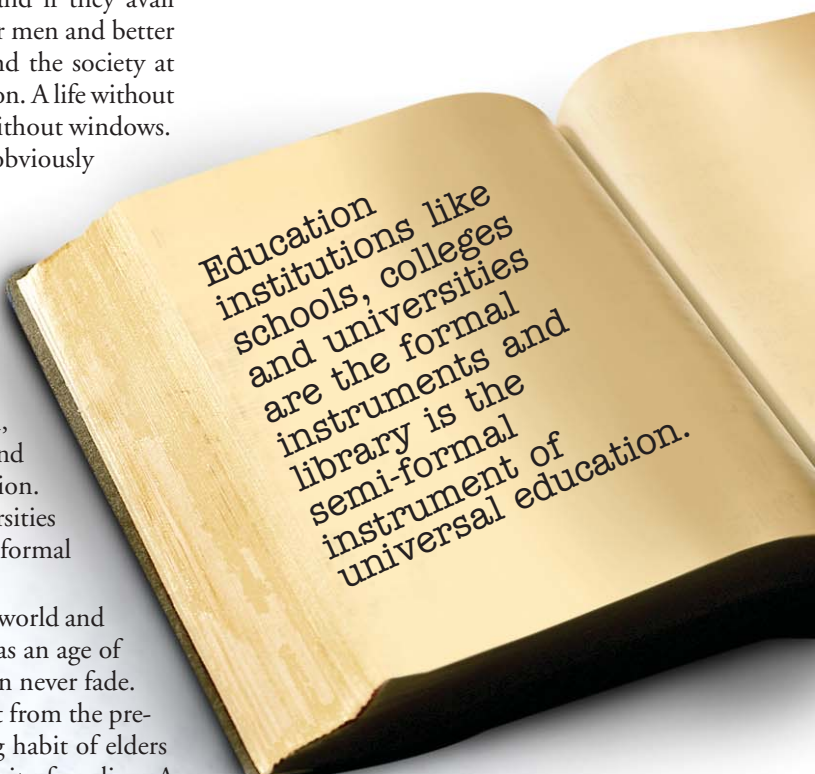
Books and other reading materials nourish our youth, delight our old age, add glory to our happiness and offer a refuge and consolation in our sorrows. At home, books are our joy. They pass the night with us, they travel with us and they are our companions in our holidays. A book was written after much labour and as a result of great deal of time and thought spent on collecting materials and on discussions and finally giving a finish to whole thing. The thoughts contained in a great book live forever. Eminent personalities are the lovers of books and the fruits of reading books are well illustrated in their biographical sketches. If the citizens are afforded the

opportunity of reading a good selection of books and if they avail themselves of it, they will become progressively better men and better citizens. Their sense of responsibility will deepen and the society at large in various direction, say education, health and so on. A life without reading was like that of a person shut up in a house without windows. Nehru said that if people gave up the reading habit, obviously they would become lopsided and cease to grow.

It is doubted that reading habit of people are slowly coming down. Factors like Television, Internet, etc. are influencing the reading habit of people. Measures are to be taken to foster reading habit among the youth as it helps in life-long universal education.

There are three instruments of universal education, the informal, the formal and the semi-formal. Home and community are the informal instruments of education. Education institutions like schools, colleges and universities are the formal instruments and library is the semi-formal instrument of universal education.

At home the child makes his first contact with the world and learns his first lessons in the art of life. Childhood was an age of dreams and the impressions created by the books then never fade. The habit of reading books should be developed right from the pre-school age. Presence of home library and the reading habit of elders and parents greatly influence the child in his/her habit of reading. A child normally gets the urge to read when he is four years. Parents are the first models for children and they imitate what they do. Hence

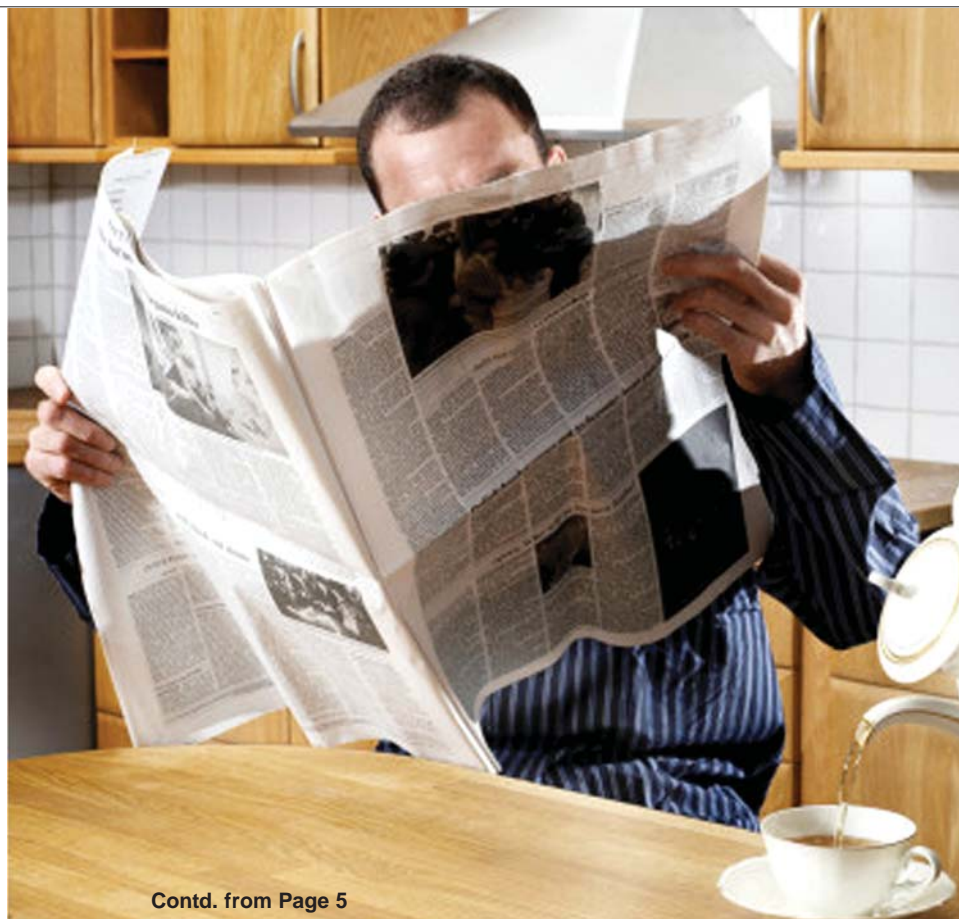


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parents should try to inculcate reading habit in their ward by developing a reading habit themselves.

The community of the neighbourhood and the families of neighbourhoods were very influential to a child in his/her universal education. The community is a compact body capable of knowing and shaping each of its individuals. Public library is a community centre where books and other reading materials are collected, processed, organised, and provided to the public as and when needed. People visit libraries for reading and referring books and other reading materials. A child with reading habit utilises the resources of a public library for education, information, inspiration and enjoyment. Kerala has a strong public library system supported with Public Libraries Act (1989). Leading public libraries in the State maintain a children's section to care them. They organise programmes like reading competitions, book talks, film shows, puppet shows, story telling, exhibition of children's literature, debates, lectures, interaction with eminent personalities etc. for attracting the children to library and develop reading habit in them. The Kerala State Library Council

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organises reading competition to children at state, district and taluk level annually. A qualified librarian is highly necessary in public libraries to chalk out such programmes and make each child in the community a regular reader of library books.

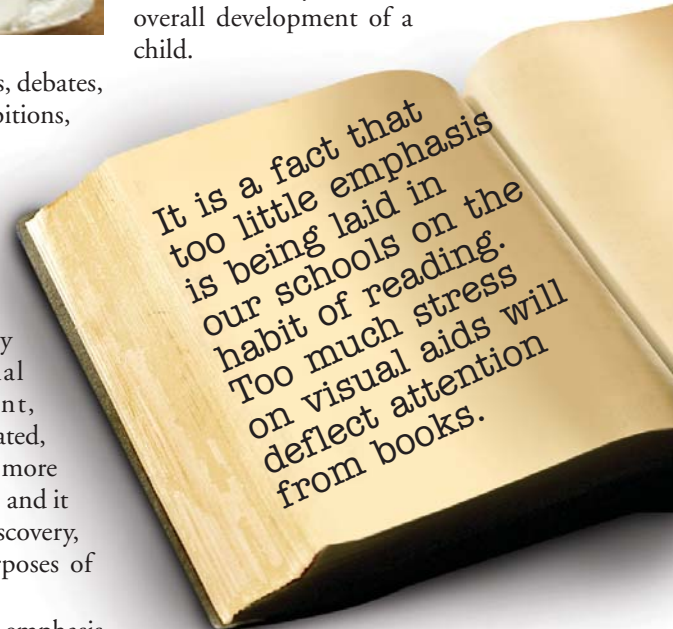
Education institutions are the formal instrument of universal education where the child completes a curriculum, which is incomplete in making a child a good reader of books. Every education institution is attached with a good library. Students make use of the library for learning, information, inspiration and enjoyment. Academic libraries provide open access to the collection and offer important library and information services to students and teachers. Students are forced to use the library for completing the projects, seminars, assignments, etc. assigned to them as part of their curriculum. Leading school and college libraries organise different programmes like orientation, library

hour, story hour, book talks, debates, reading competitions, exhibitions, film shows etc. to maximize the use of library resources. Library hour is commonly gets a place in school hours. Library hour in a school is more important than many hours devoted to formal instruction. A student, properly guided and stimulated, may find the library hour a more rewarding period at school, and it will set him on a path of discovery, which is the essential purposes of education.

It is a fact that too little emphasis is being laid in our schools on the habit of reading. Too much stress on visual aids will deflect attention from books. Libraries are as important as schools in any scheme of education for democracy. Teachers should make reference to the library as essential part of the curriculum. Classroom study should be correlated with library use.

It is preferable than to use the library on a special library hour. For effective use of the library, the students have to be taught how to find their way in the library and get their information from it. A trained librarian is invaluable here to connect the students with right books and information. The Librarian, with teachers should work together to make each student read as many books possible.

When home and the community prove ineffective and the education institutions prove to be inadequate in developing reading habit among children, library, the semi-formal instrument, came to be recognised. The library does not enforce a curriculum, a particular time-table and teacher's help. But the librarian helps each reader in finding what will the best suit his need. The librarian studies the users and understands their requirements and does necessary works to satisfy their needs. Here librarian is very influential in the overall development of a child.



It is found that parents, teachers and librarian are the most influential in the life of a youth and if they work hand in hand we can very well develop reading habit in our children and make them grow as good citizens. ■

The writer is Lecturer, Department of Library & Information Science, Farook College, Calicut



Stop Su

Click on to

Knowledge Bowl

The last decades of last century and the first decade of the current century have seen unprecedented changes in the media world. The biggest change was the advent of the Internet. There is justification in viewing ourselves as lucky to be alive in the age of the Internet.

Technology has improved so much that a person sitting in his home or public library in Wagamon, Kerala can, by a click on a computer, get the latest fact on “Spaceship X” launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida in a couple of minutes, if not seconds!! The Internet Public Library is a public library for the world wide web (www) that gives us access to about 267 million books. One does not need a building to house these books. All one needs is a computer with Internet connection with free or charged download facilities.

For stocking e-Books, you do not need stacking shelves and “shocking

dust.” You can read till the end of time or the end of your life (whichever comes first) in air-conditioned comfort, undisturbed by officious librarians and disturbing intruders. But how many of us are reading books these days – not to mention e-books?

Ever since the audio-visual age was inaugurated in the late 19th century, and the Film, the Radio and then the TV invaded the world of books, more pictures, sound and moving images flitted across the mental horizon of mankind (that includes ‘womankind’ also!) than the printed word. Of course, we are talking of the ‘developed’ world and the ‘developed’ sectors of the ‘developing’ world. More than half the world’s population has not even once used the telephone, yet—not to speak of the Internet. But still, “Image Up, Word Down” seems to be the slogan of the day.

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much suppressed apprehension and expressed criticism that the audiovisual world was making “insalubrious incursions” into the intellectual horizon of the young. When the audiovisual media including television occupied substantial percentage of their waking hours, and when many of them

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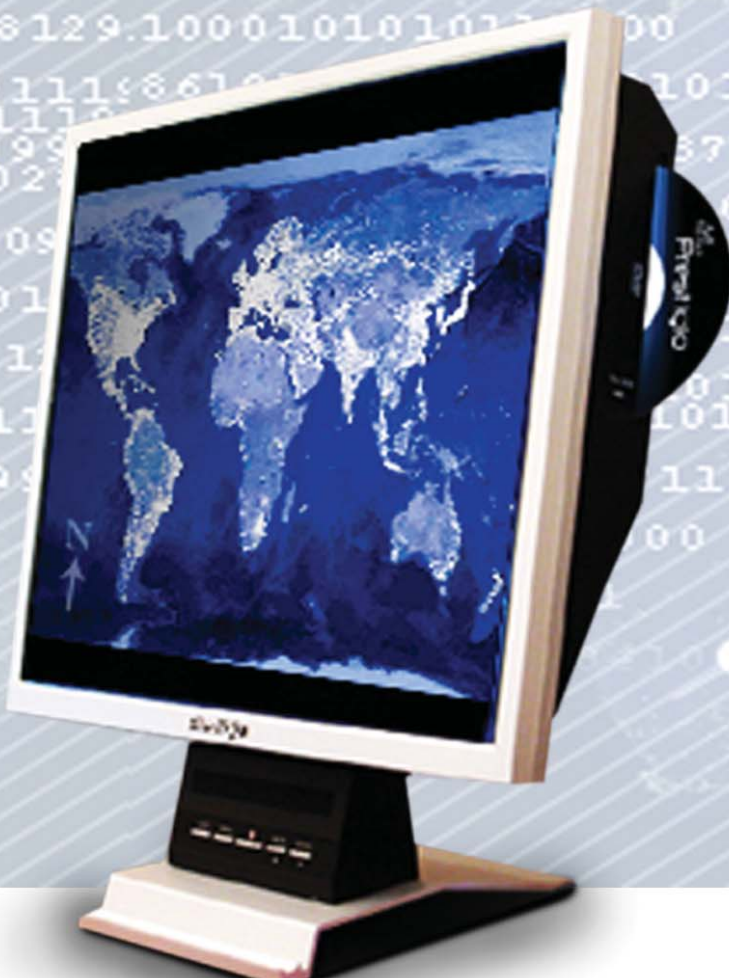
turned into couch potatoes, society raised hell, saying that the young were misled morally and mentally. The most frequently heard criticism was that RTF (Radio, Television, Film) made inroads into the reading time and children and adolescents were getting obese sitting in front of the moving images and lilting lyrics.

There was some truth in all these criticisms. Even today in the age of the Internet, substantial number of hours is spent by adolescents and the young adults of well-to-do families surfing the Internet. There are unexpected consequences emanating over a period of time from such unlimited watching of the audiovisual

media including the Internet. Many young people are trapped by unconscionable people in various parts of the world. But, can we blame science and technology for all these wayward happenings? We have to make good use of the new facilities plentifully available in the modern world.

Educators have to revamp the structure of instruction and provide ample scope for young people to demonstrate their enthusiasm for the new technologies and direct it to desirable ends by giving assignments in school and college based on searching the Internet at home and in the institution's library. This requires imaginative planning of curricula and syllabus with significant inputs from the teachers who teach and guide the students to new pastures of knowledge, treating education as an adventure of ideas.

For reading to gain its rightful place in the academy, teachers have to become voracious readers, not vociferous readers. When this happens, they can transfer their new knowledge to their young wards and enthuse them with the motivation to read more through the Internet and all other sources of knowledge. Truly original findings can be arrived at by the younger generation, which does not lack in imagination, and in the



willingness to work hard. Teachers have to become motivators and not moronic masters of fossilised knowledge filed in “dog-eared”, “dust-laden” bins of lifeless books. Information has to be updated every now and then in the light of what is happening around the world.

It is really sad to see the reports of the young Ph.D scholars who made use of the Internet in recent days copying verbatim whatever was written elsewhere by diligent scholars. Such events are not new. Instances of this kind have happened before in non-Internet times. And plagiarism is not the monopoly of the modern age! But plagiarism will pass undetected when the teachers become lazy. It will be encouraged by teachers who are not avid readers. The quality of education depends not only on the syllabus and curricula but also on the integrity of teachers and students. Even the best and most modern systems of reading, making notes and assembling data will come to nought if either the teacher or the student will show no qualms in sacrificing the old world qualities of honesty and integrity.

It is indeed worth mentioning the results of a survey conducted in the

northern parts of our country since they answer our basic question: Has the general reading habit among young people dwindled in the age of the Internet?

Results showed men and women spent only a quarter of their study time on newspapers, news magazines and their own textbooks. The bulk of their leisure was spent on TV serials and other programmes including TV news and discussions. But the surprising finding was that two-thirds of their time was spent for TV watching although their attention on

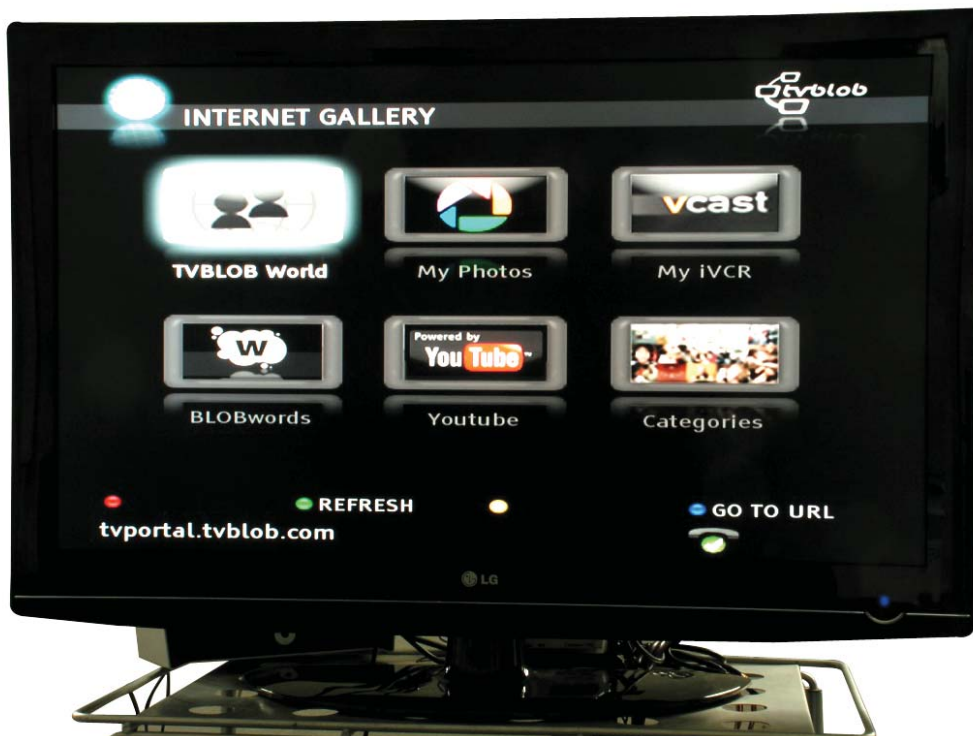
There is truth in the criticism that young people are not making good use of the Internet for enhancing their level of information on very serious matters connected with the global and national economy, politics and sociology.

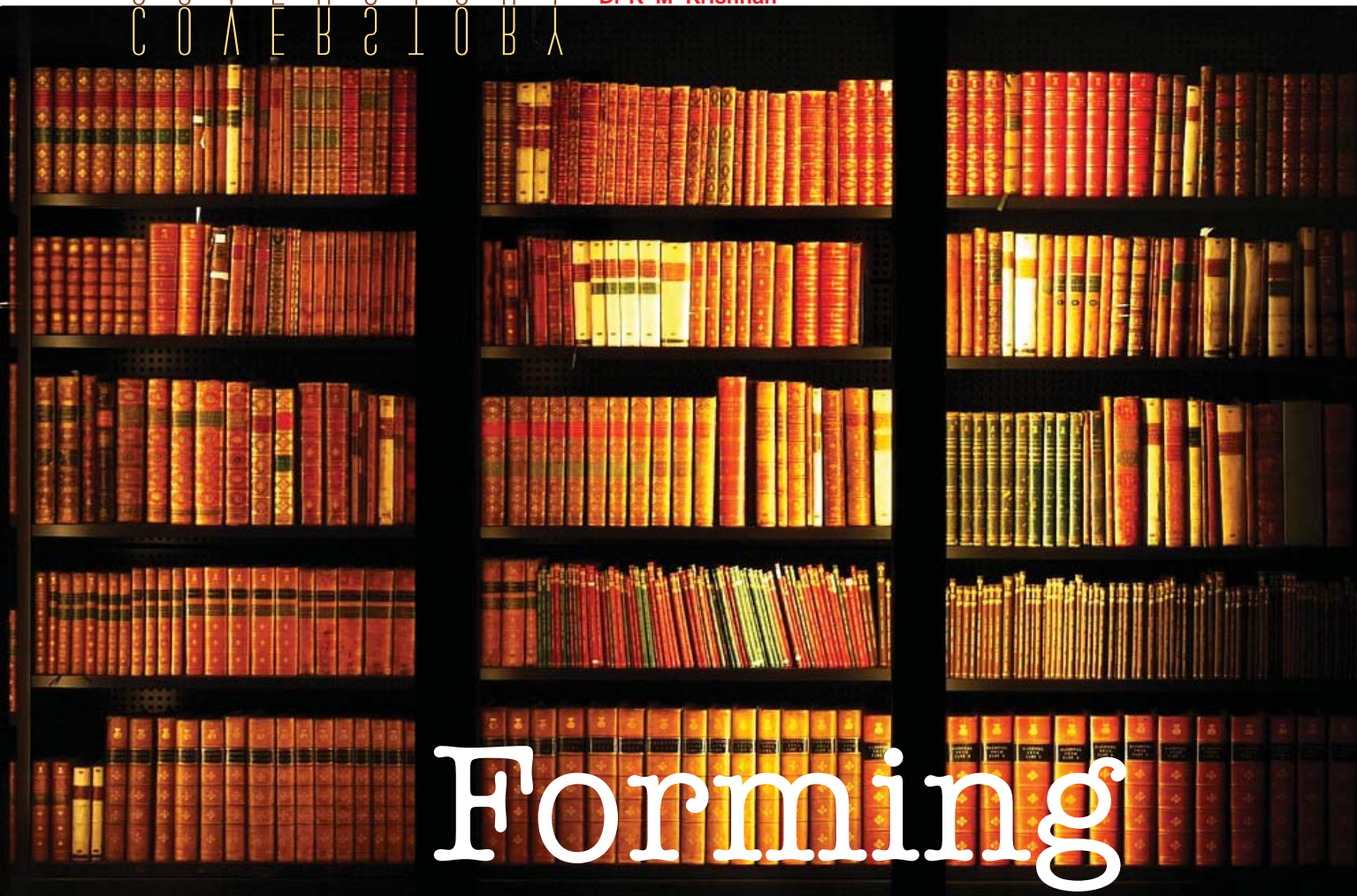
local and national news was not much. Most of their news watching was confined to cables that brought foreign channels to them — mostly 24x7 news channels, particularly bringing foreign sports and entertainment. Those who show interest in other countries should also show some interest in what is happening around them in their own State or nation.

Almost 80 per cent of the University youth of the cities where the survey was conducted turned to the TV for entertainment, particularly films. Those who listened to the radio frequented the FM channels for music. So there is truth in the criticism that young people are not making good use of the Internet for enhancing their level of information on very serious matters connected with the global and national economy, politics and sociology. They are not aware that the number one problem of the world is poverty. The efforts of UNDP and other agencies of the UN for making poverty history are not known to them. But results of soccer or cricket played in some obscure locality of England or Germany, the U.S. or Canada are quite well-known to them!!

A dozen of the respondents found the ads more interesting than regular programmes. And 15 per cent said that they watched cable channels mainly to watch revealing commercials. But the most interesting finding was that all the respondents agreed on one thing: TV watching has given many ideas of modern living, although the majority of them were blissfully ignorant of the actual percentage of Indians earning less than Rs 50 a day!! Internet or no Internet, Indians are not aware of how fellow Indians live but fully aware of who won a county cricket match in Copeka. ■

The writer is a Communication Expert and former Vice Chancellor, University of Kerala





Forming the Society

It is a common concept that the history of reading in Kerala or Malayalam like any other culture and language is inextricably linked to the advent of modernity. Again, our modernity has been identified as colonial modernity by postcolonial scholars. Be that as it may, the attempt in this article is to explore some other dimensions of the issue.

The notion of a reading public, as a community engaged in a specific mode of social activity, is definitely one that can be used to define a society.

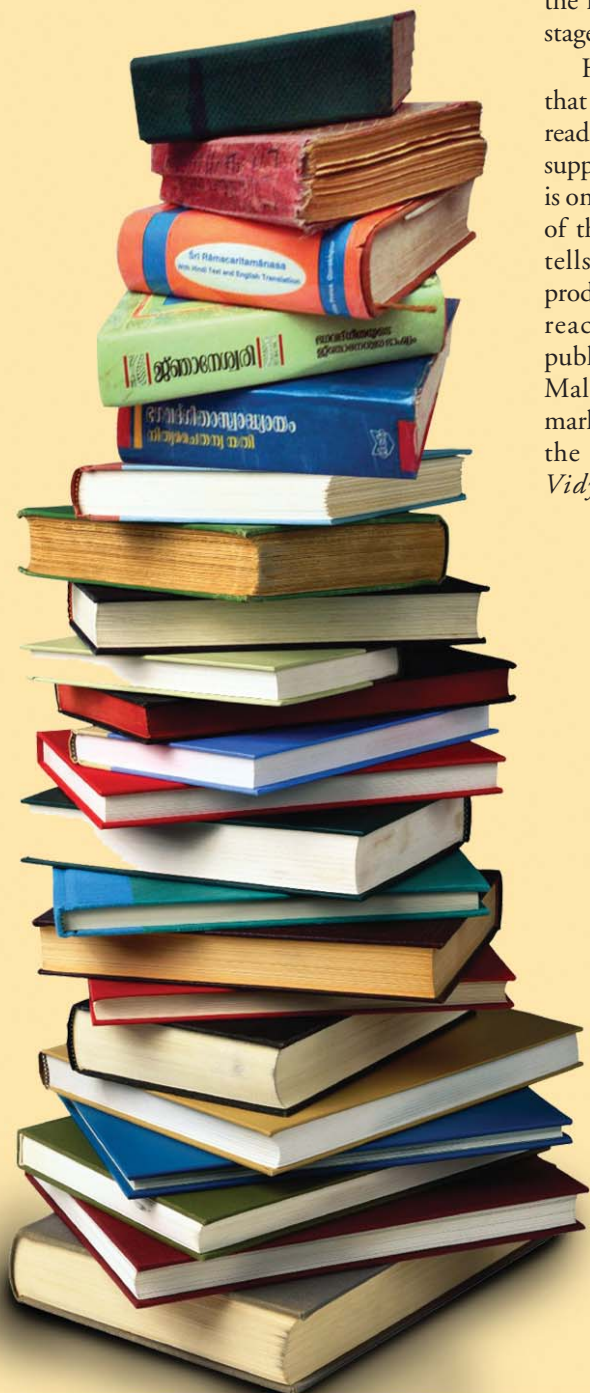
Simultaneously, it evokes notions relating to knowledge and consequently power too. It is possibly in this context and sense that Dr. Johnson referred to England as a nation of readers in the eighteenth century. In Kerala's context however the formation and such a dramatic rise in the size of the reading public happens after Independence. Because, even though attempts primarily initiated by missionaries had prepared the ground for the spread of literacy and consequently of the reading habit, conditions that

facilitated the formation of a large reading public did not become a reality until after Independence. It is noted that literacy in Kerala which stood at 45% at the time of Independence rapidly grew until in the nineteen eighties it reached the stage of what is called total literacy.

However, it is surely important that mere literacy does not create a reading public. The production and supply of materials worthy of reading is one of the important prerequisites of the practice of reading. History tells us of the early attempts at production of works, which however reached a small minority. The publication of the first journals in Malayalam like Jnananikshepam marks a major leap in this area. At the same time, publications like *Vidyasamgraham* represented

another major area of interest the Malayali became addicted to: the academic and semi-academic. But in course of time, it can be seen that reading has come to be primarily associated with reading of creative literature, particularly fiction. Thus what began as a marker of intellectual achievement came to be associated primarily with reading as a cultural requirement. Laments like the reading habit is dying, and the book is dying refer primarily to this phenomenon. They do not, apparently, take into consideration the birth of the book or reading habit, either. Similarly the newspaper, a great influence even now is ignored while discussing reading habit. Indeed, another important dimension of this phenomenon can be understood in

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Forming the Society...

terms of what critics like Tony Bennet would call “fictioning the nation”. The fact that a nation grows through its readers cannot be overemphasised. This is what we see in the Indian context in the form of translation of works between Indian languages, thus facilitating the imagination of nation in novelistic terms, as Benedict Anderson would have put it.

In the Kerala context, however what appears equally important is the specific modes of literary production, to borrow an expression from Terry Eagleton. This is what defined the reading public here. Printing presses, publishing houses and distribution networks which grew dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century here gave new character and status to creative literature. While publication of creative literature in periodical magazines gave a definitive structure and often directionality as far as the narrative is concerned, it made available to prospective reader, literature at an affordable price. The role played by popular magazines in popularising reading among neo-literates has been well acknowledged. This, however, led to a certain hierarchy in literature too, making a distinction between high brow and low brow literature, indeed leaving a space for middle brow writing too. For us what this means is the creations of types of reading public, interested in different modes of writing. One, for whom fiction is a compulsive addiction, and literature as an institution does not interest them. The other community is interested in literature as an institution and looks up at creative writing as an “aesthetic” object. Predictably, it is authors who cater for an “elite” readership who have defined the course of literary history. The title “author” is, apparently reserved for them. More interestingly, writers of “popular” works find it hard to get a publisher to bring out their works; new reprints of celebrated “authors” appear more regularly. In between the two, the middle brow writers have always had a steady following.

The lament “the book is dying” may have been caused by the attraction towards the electronic media and other forms of popular entertainment like the cinema and television series, which replaced serialized literature as the cultural requirement. What is needed in such contexts is to redefine notions about reading, like the goal of reading, materials for reading and even the very process of reading. Indeed, the “traditional” notion about reading is no longer valid. But we have to redefine reading and rediscover new forms of reading. ■

The Writer is Reader in English, School of Letters, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam

Give me books, fruits... To Define Pleasure

Reading has been a passion for me, all through my life and Gustav Flaubert put it, “reading is in order to live”. Any time I travel, I carry a bundle of books. I am absorbed in reading and familiar co-passengers have asked me, whether I am preparing for any examination. An erstwhile colleague once wrote of a bibliophile and when I asked him about it, he answered that it was about me - the avid reader; he mentioned of a lean and lanky unromantic young colleague, who instead of flirting, was buried all the time amidst books! The school headmaster, who taught us the story of Aladdin and the magic lamp, asked students in the class, what we would do, if gifted a magic lamp. Boys wanted mansions and money and girls wanted dresses and golden jewellery. My turn came, I answered I wanted all the books that I can read! The whole class was in uproarious laughter. But my beloved teacher thumped the table for silence and sternly appreciated my answer as the best and continued to provoke which language books would I wish for. I answered, Malayalam, and he asked about English and to my answer that I could not read them properly that I should read them as well as we were going to write the ESLC examination, soon, in 8th standard! His blessings came true and I was never short of books in my life so far.



Hailing from a very remote village, other than textbooks, the only material was newspaper that used to come to the local grocery shop. As soon as the daily used to reach the shop, I used to mark my attendance there and gobble up whatever I could understand. A little later we used to get weeklies, Mathrubhumi and Navayugam, and in my elementary school days, I did not understand much. The Higher Elementary, now Upper Primary School, was about two kilometres away and there was reading room and library nearby. Library movement was gaining momentum in the late 50s in Kannur district and each village had a reading room and library. Apart from newspapers and weeklies like Jayakeralam, I also became a member of the library; the membership fee was a whopping monthly amount of 50 ps those days for a poor boy and with a deposit of Rs. two! I managed to pay the deposit and whether I paid the fee or not, my passion for books was recognised and appreciated by those in charge and were very liberal in lending me books. Every week I used to borrow when the library was open on week ends. I still remember reading Munshi Prem Chand's "Godaan" translation in one night with kerosene lamp and when my mother got up early morning, and not finding me by her side, she was



I answered I wanted all the books that I can read! The whole class was in uproarious laughter. But my beloved teacher thumped the table for silence and sternly appreciated my answer as the best and continued to provoke which language books would I wish for. I answered, Malayalam.

mortally afraid of the smell of kerosene from where I was reading. My eyesight was blurred and had to be taken to the local Vaidyar! I had finished reading every book in that village library at Kozhummal, near Peralam in Kannur.

I had great liking for detective writers whose stories of horror and crime were scary. During my High School days, the Panchayat's Jawahar library and Reading Room was where my lunch was the newspapers and periodicals. The librarian was strict and would not lend books without the payment of fee. Once in a while somebody would help me. The Malayala Manorama weekly used to

be the most sought after periodical, in which stories of Kaanam EJ and Muttathu Varkey used to be serialised.

The St. Joseph's College, Devagiri, Kozhikode, was a heaven for me for reading. I could borrow four books at a time from the library, where I found, as the great poet Milton put it, "a good book is like lifeblood". I was staying with a great writer-relative of mine, the late Dr. K G Adiyodi, who used to buy good books and make me read them. He used to help me in discriminating between good books and bad books and encouraged

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To Define Pleasure...

in assessing the quality of the book that we read, which later helped in reviewing in the right perspective, and make reading as “a good way to define pleasure”, to quote Richard Ford.

The galaxy of renowned college teachers like the late Thayattu Sankaran, Sukumar Azhikode, Prof P K G Vijyaram and several others helped in nurturing my infatuation for books. When I started teaching in Payyanur College, my passion for reading was further honed by the great critic Prof. M R Chandrasekharan. I am yet to find another scholar who can absorb the best or bad part of a book. During my postgraduate studies in Calicut University, I had a close friend Dr. S Gopinathan Nair,

Anaesthesiology Professor, whose collection of books was amazing. It was he who suggested my translating the Japanese novelist Tanizaki's “The Key” into Malayalam. He introduced me to the remarkable world of Japanese and Australian literatures, quoting Francis Bacon that they were to be “tasted” like ice cream. Then there was M T who is a



beacon light of my life who has given me any number of great books from all parts of the world.

Ever since I got employed, I spent a good part of my salary in buying books, which I thought were worth possessing for life. Once in a while I used to make serious decisions systematically, before buying so as to increase the chances of finding good books. My younger son Viswanath, who has inherited my passion for good books also advise me suggesting great books and we exchange them.

I have built a library of a few thousands of good books. I also built fairly good libraries wherever I worked, and was highly commented upon. Space for storing books has become a serious problem, despite giving away more than half of my acquired books to libraries and friends, on transfers.

The prospects of the E-books are now looming large, and prophets of doom predict the bleak future for the printed books. But as book lovers all over the world shout in one voice, like Umberto Eco, nothing can replace the printed book. In conclusion, I am quoting John Keats, “Give me books, fruits, French Wine and fine weather”. ■

The The writer is former Deputy Director General, Doordarshan.



Mix in fold

News paper- the word evokes varied reactions in people. For some, it is just a few folds of paper which brings news and has to be recycled after reading it, but for many feel of newspaper kick start their day and opens the window to the world. Many are attached to their brand of newspaper and cannot even start their day without reading it... But whatever individual tastes and interest one has, newspaper is the lifeline of the modern society.

Newspaper provides a reader with a wealth, from current affairs to updates on changes in the timing of your favourite soap operas. A day

without a newspaper cuts one off from the entire world.

Even after the advent of radio and television, one needs to read a newspaper to initiate a conversation with his fellow human being. It keeps him abreast of the happenings in the community, among his peer group, in the state and in the country.

While TV news gives you a brief about an airline strike or a train strike, you get the behind the scene information at your own pace only in a newspaper. And it is a mine of information that brings you prosperity.

Various sections in a newspaper have varied news aimed at various sections of readers. While many of us read the front page first, the sport enthusiast reads the sport section first or maybe only the sport section.

A child may read only the comics in the newspaper. A businessman or a merchant will survey the advertisements in the newspaper before he even reads the newspaper. For a school student, a newspaper keeps him informed of the developments in the world of science and social studies. It also helps him develop the habit of reading, which

would increase his vocabulary and general knowledge. It will help him to stay in touch with developments in the student community across the world. It holds the key to his future. For someone in his college years, newspaper keeps him informed about developing job opportunities and how to gain adequate skills to equip him for a particular career. The education supplements that various newspapers bring out are specifically aimed at the students' community.

Newspaper stories are written in a very well-controlled style, so they might be examples of good writing, or at least clear and consistent writing.

Most of the newspapers have a section on career opportunities that brings jobseekers a plethora of information on employment opportunities. It often includes tips on how to land that dream job and how to present oneself at interviews and what an employer expects of an employee. Thus the newspaper helps you chart a career right from your school days to adulthood.

commodities based on news he gathers it from the newspapers. An investor gathers information about companies in which he would like to invest from the economic section or business section of a newspaper. A traveller scans the newspapers to know about the city he plans to travel to. A

While TV news gives you a brief about an airline strike or a train strike, you get the behind the scene information at your own pace only in a newspaper. And it is a mine of information that brings you prosperity.

proprietors bring the newspapers to you at such low prices. And those ads are news for someone.

Do you know that those small little ads that may mar the look of the newspaper in some cases are the lifeline of some readers? They make a career and life out of those ads. They offer services that you as a householder are in need of. If you need to repair your refrigerator that suddenly broke down, you just need to look up the classifieds section of the newspaper to avail that service. For a small businessman who wants to sell his product or service, the newspaper becomes his lifeline.

The newspaper is also a forum for speaking out on issues that you have strongly felt about. The letter to the editor column in all newspapers provides a window to comment on issues that affect your city, your community and your life.

It also entertains the reader with many feel good stories on fellow human beings or animals. It also provides a distraction when you are stressed out. Even the Internet fails to fulfill your appetite for various things at one go.

While helping you voice your opinion about various issues, it would also take up that issue and start a campaign if it affects a large number of individuals.

A newspaper is a product that has gone through lot of research and design. The designer wants the reader to read in a particular fashion that makes reading enjoyable as well. He has analysed the reading pattern and eye movement and designed the product accordingly.

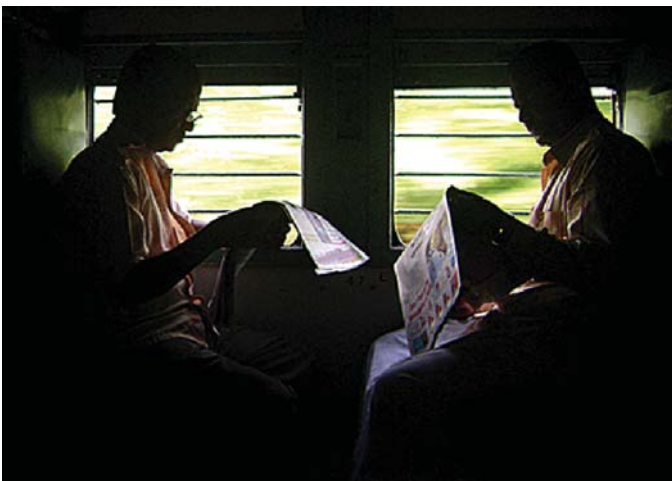
In days gone by, newspapers gave you a longer version of the story. While TV news expends only 30 seconds on an issue, a newspaper deals extensively on an issue bringing you all the pros and cons and even an analysis on it. Television tends to sensationalise issues, often forgetting the humane aspect. Newspapers cater to your varied interests and whet all your reading appetite by bringing in the right mix to keep you engaged. ■

business man's day does not start without him reading the news of the day on his company, of his rivals or companies manufacturing similar products in other countries.

For a writer, back issues of newspapers help him trace the background to a developing story or inform him about the era he is writing about. He may develop a story based on a news item he read in

a newspaper, as it is a reflection of the society that he lives in. For a researcher in history, it provides him valuable information about an era gone by. He need only look up the scanned back copies of newspapers to garner news about the particular area of his research.

While many people think of advertisements as wastage of space, it is these very ads that help the



A layman reads a newspaper to know about upcoming events in sports, community activities (concerts, parades, etc.) and politics. A farmer gets to know the weather forecast and the price that his produce would fetch in the markets near and far. Even tips and advices on agricultural practices are given on a weekly supplements aimed at the farmers. A merchant buys and sells his

Laments are Lying

Interestingly, we do not hear of too many publishers shutting shop for want of business.

Let us admit it- many of us think it fashionable to mourn about change as degeneration. History has seen many an instance of innovation being first looked upon with suspicion, then as convenience and finally as something to mourn about. Nobel Laureate Luigi Pirandello once snubbed the automobile, 'the triumph of folly', but that never deterred the growth of the automobile industry. Centuries ago, when printing was introduced, there were many who felt that it 'bred heresy and dissent' and 'gave common folk dangerous ideas'. American historian Daniel Boorstin called Television 'the next great crisis in human consciousness'. Such crises attend the birth of every new form of mass communication. Even written word had not emerged unchallenged. Plato had warned: 'Disciples of writing would generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the shadow of wisdom without reality'. Video, computer and internet have faced such initial, pointless hostility, but when they outgrew such resistance, the critics began to sigh – degeneration! To add effect and reason to their lament about the media other

than print, they point to what they call the 'death of the habit of reading'.

This is a lament heard all over the world, during the last three or four decades. It seems to be based on the notion that traditional reading is the only way to being informed and that there is nothing to beat the printed word in creating an informed world. For instance, the spread of Television was feared to dampen the prospects of the printed word. Some studies have also revealed that in countries like the US and UK, the newspapers had fallen to the second place as early as 1970's and that people in the developed world are 'spending less time reading books and more time interacting with the visual media than ever before'.

The situation in Kerala is no different. Just like in the case of the diffusion rate of newspapers, the reach of the channels is also quite high in Kerala. While the rate of cable penetration is around 30 per cent in India, the rate in Kerala is well above 60%. Out of the 70 lakh households, almost 45 to 50 lakh households have access to TV sets.

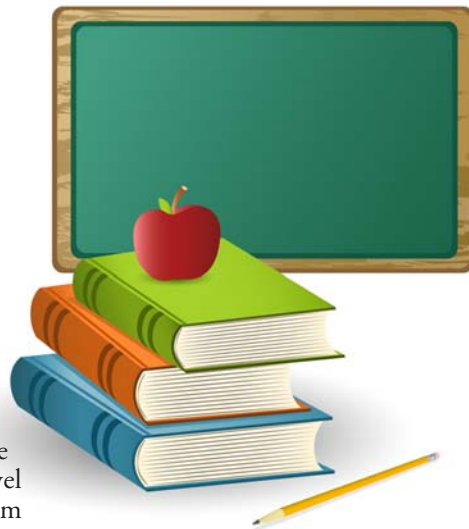
Though there is capital enough to support hardly three channels, we have over a dozen channels operating somewhat successfully in Kerala. In spite of all this, most of the dailies are gaining in circulation and have even diversified their areas of operation.

Seeing this, one tends to agree with John Naisbitt, author of *Mindset* and *Megatrends*, who asked: 'How can we be sure that we are in a shift from the written word and our own imagination to instant picture consumption – a visual world?' If we limit the scope of this article to the situation in Kerala, one cannot ignore the growth and development of publishing houses. Most of the major cities of the State now have large showrooms of leading publishers, some of whom have expanded their business by bringing out English books. Even the publishing units owned by the Government and Universities are performing well in terms of sale of books. In the recent past, there has been a considerable increase in the number of small and middle level private publishers, some of whom bring out nearly a hundred titles a year. Interestingly, we do not hear of too many publishers shutting shop for want of business.

In spite of such a boom, we hear the lamentation about the death of the habit of reading. To a certain extent, it is the definition of reading that makes people lament so. There was a time when the term 'reading' brought to mind mainly books of fiction, literature, political science, economics etc., But, times have changed and so has the nature of reading. It may be true that not many publishers bring out plays and epic poems, because there is hardly any market for such books. The number of copies sold by weeklies that serialised pulp literature, has nosedived to almost one fourth of the mammoth figures of a decade ago. This, the marketing executives say, is because TV gives the same pleasure, visually. Such weeklies now claim, that they compete not with each other, but with television serials! No one publishes drama, mostly because people have the option of watching many a drama on the small screen. But, one must recall that even in these

much televised days, Sethu's recent novel *Adayalungal* has had seven prints in a year. Novels of O.V. Vijayan and Perumpadavom have crossed the one lakh mark. The collection of ONV's poems and even Prof. Panmana's books on the right use of language have crossed such thresholds. Is this because no one reads?

As mentioned earlier, the number



of books published in a year has been increasing, but the size of the book, in general, has decreased. Given that a publication with 60 pages and above would qualify to be called a book (less than that would make it only a pamphlet), most of our books be of around 100-120 pages. Thin in appearance, but easily read and enjoyed with the ease of sitting through an episode of a tele-serial. This may also point towards the readers' affinity towards books that can be read in the shortest time. There has also been an interesting shift in the readers' choice of books. For instance, books on personality development, career information, soft skills, human resources development, management and books that provide instructional wisdom have become very popular among readers, as is evinced by the rise in sale of such

publications.

Another fact to be considered is the availability of alternate facilities to supplement the reading experience. For instance, one can depend on an audio disc to enjoy poetry, well narrated. Heard poetry registers more effectively in the reader's mind than verses that are read and punctuated in the mind. If the motive behind reading is pleasure, one gets this pleasure through listening also. Since the ultimate aim of any message is to reach people, why should we insist that it should be only through reading?

Besides, those who lament the neglect of the habit of reading books are often partisan, as they fail to see the quantum of material that is read on the internet and other new media, including the mobile phones. Interestingly, many of those who decry the effect of such media, do not realise their contribution to reading – first by being topics to be written about and then by supplementing the reading experience.

Seeing the growth of the electronic media, Marshall McLuhan, said: 'The future of the book is the blurb'. He intended to say that the Book would die in the 80s, and if at all its fossils continue to live, those would live only in the corners of some libraries. But it was the prophet of doom, McLuhan who died in the '80s. The books continue to live...

So, Let's face it – it is better to face the challenges we can't overcome, than mourning about them. ■

The writer is Public Relations Officer, University of Kerala

Does Reading Liberate?

Answer Questionable

Reading by definition is an enlightenment activity. If one were asked to mention a single item in the repertoire of modern civilization that would act as a convenient symbol for modernity and its culture of mental and spiritual enrichment, one would for sure go for the printed book. The printed book is an emblem of civilized behaviour. As an instrument of freedom and a great liberating force in the modern world, it represents the spirit of what can be called 'untaming' that is at the heart of the enlightenment project.

But the printed book also partakes of the culture of ambivalence that characterises modernity. Modernity, an extension of liberalism and the spirit of reform, can easily turn into its opposite, and transform itself into a conservative and illiberal ideology. Perhaps this is what we see around us today, the culture of pluralism, once fostered by our reading habits, now smoothly yielding place to a culture of intolerance. It is often said that one gets to know about the life and thoughts of others through books. Books allow one to travel mentally across cultures and geographical areas, while physically remaining in one's own place. They act as a great cementing force, bringing people of diverse regions, countries, cultures and even languages together. This indeed is the most important positive

contribution that reading has made to the modern world.

Though reading appears to be the most natural leisure time exercise of the denizens of the literate world, it is useful to remember that reading is not a politically innocent activity. A society has great stakes in the reading habits of its people. That is why all modern states insist on monitoring the reading of the people, which they do through their departments of culture, information, education and the like. The state may not say in so many words that it is desirable for people to read this or that work written by this or that writer, but the desire of the state will be made known through diverse means, through stated cultural policies and declared educational objectives. As several radical social scientists of contemporary times have pointed out, it is not through the exercise of physical force that modern societies make sure that the citizens remained disciplined, physically, mentally, and culturally. The educational system in place in modern societies manages the disciplining of the people in a somewhat direct way. The institutions of civil society, organised as they are on the principle of self-discipline,

indirectly achieves similar results, as do the society's surveillance practices. These are broad ways in which the state controls the reading culture of a community. Library and publication grants extended to individuals and institutions as well as awards and honours bestowed on writers are among the State's more specific ways of managing the society's reading habits. In fact the popular tendency to characterise literature as a humanistic discourse can in a certain sense be related to this kind of a control. Reading makes a good man, which is a euphemism for describing a tax-paying, law-abiding citizen in whom society can repose its faith. Francis Bacon, the British humanist, had, at the dawn of modernity, in the beginning of the seventeenth century itself, anticipated the shaping of such a man through literature when he said, famously, that 'reading maketh a full man'.

The problem however is that the society, or the dominant segment of it composed not of 'full', but 'little', men, would not like its members to cross the limits that it has set for reading. In extreme cases the state will resort to censorship in order to control reading. Such open measures however are used by modern states only sparingly, primarily because they do want to carry on with the belief that the modernity project is firmly in place in their society. There of course are more subtle ways of taming wild readers. One can be allured by books, become a slave to them and lose all his senses. The emergence of the printed book marks a decline in the ability to hear, and a weakening of the social bond that tied the members of a community together in the past, as some scholars have pointed out. This arguably has led to erosion in the quality of human experience. The tyranny of the spectacle that has followed the introduction of reading has also made sure that the coming of the book does not lead to an



explosion in the creative power of the human individual. Printing itself is one way of ensuring this, as what printing introduces in a society is a kind of discipline at the level of orthography and language. It is often said that today's globalization leads to the effacement of cultural heterogeneity existing in a country. If this is true, printing is to be treated as the first step toward the institution of a global culture, as what printing effectively did in the modern period has been to efface linguistic diversity in the name of standardising writing practices.

It is true that modern societies, unlike their medieval counterparts, have never taken an extremely hostile view of books and the effects of reading. We occasionally hear of ritual burning of books carried out by activists of certain political or social organisations. Such activists perhaps belong to the medieval world rather than the modern world. But there is an irony associated with reading that might render this distinction invalid. Reading, as already mentioned, is an activity that would cement people together and help them become part of a collectivity, but ironically, people also get de-linked from the collectivity and roam about in the world of fantasy as a result of reading. What then is one to make of reading? Is it an enchaining activity, or a liberating force? A taming exercise or an untaming move? Perhaps there might be some unread book on the abandoned shelf of a library somewhere, the kind of which one might come across in the fiction of Borges, which would provide an answer. ■

The writer is Professor, School of Letters, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam



Reading The Retake of History

Man is a reading animal. Without reading process, human society could not survive. Even illiterates could read through others. Reading is a universal means of communication evolved over ages. It is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the purpose of deriving and constructing meaning. Perhaps we as human beings, distinct as we are from the rest of the living species have had build up this habit of reading over a million of years of joined research. After spoken language became natural, over six million years, "reading" emerged as a big invention (like fire and wheel) about 6000 years ago. That is why Aristotle said in On Interpretation

that, spoken words are the symbol of mental experience, and written words are the symbol of spoken word.

The first decipherable writing - Sumerian logographs from 4000 BC - was simply pictures of objects and activities. Over history, humans have found methods to represent their spoken words with written symbols. They engraved written symbols on cave walls, rocks, potteries, woods and trees, in Mesopotamia, Indus Valley, China and America. Even though many of these primitive forms are not decipherable to us, its modified forms and meanings are embedded in all modern languages.

In 2000 BC, the Phoenicians

developed the first methods to represent spoken language - an alphabet consisting entirely of consonants. In 1000 BC, the first major upgrade occurred in the technology of representing language - the Greeks added vowels to the alphabet. This is essentially the same vowels we use today- and it is considered one of humanity's big inventions.

About 1000 years later, in 200 BC, the next major upgrade in writing, punctuation marks, appeared. Punctuation was first observed in Alexandrian manuscripts of plays written by Aristophanes. About 1000 years ago, in 900 AD,

the last major upgrade in text took place: the insertion of spaces between words. This invention made possible for the readers to be able to read silently. Prior to this, most readers had to read out loud in order to be able to read.

For the past 1000 years, there has been essentially no change in the formatting of text, the technology of spatially symbolising natural spoken language, whether one considers the handwritten scripts of 900 AD, the Gutenberg Bible of 1500 AD, or the E-Book of 2000.

During the digital revolution and electronic image transmissions, there rose a big skepticism about the survival of reading habits. But the fact is that, letters combined with images became part of the reading habit of the mass. Like the food habits change from generation to generation, reading habit too had changed over time. Present day reading habit of children increased many fold than their predecessors.

It is meaningless to insist children to read the same types of classics that their parents had read. Children all over the world now read much better ways and means than their parents did. Research has shown that a love of reading is more important for children's educational success than

their families' socio-economic status or wealth. Research also shows that young people's enjoyment of reading may be declining in conventional styles. E-Books and audio-visual materials are new substituent to printed books.

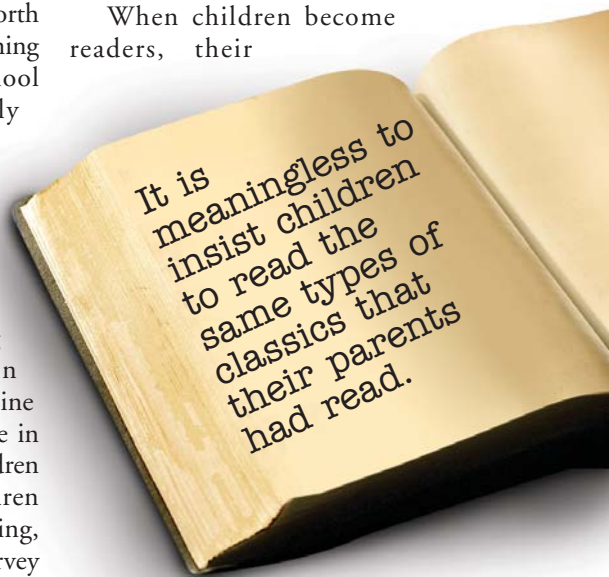
Many studies suggest that pupils' reading is rich and diverse, but that the particulars vary according to gender or age. Schools and the home therefore need to ensure that they tap into this richness in order to hook boys and girls into reading. It is worth to note that, reversing of the declining trend in reading habit of school children is also being widely reported.

The Independent (6 March 2008) has reported on a survey of children in England by the National Foundation for Educational Research which found watching television has decreased in popularity as a pastime among nine to 11-year-olds for the first time in years. The survey of 4,500 children showed that only 55 of children preferred watching TV to reading, compared with 62 in a similar survey four years ago. It also found that the decline in popularity of reading has been halted, with nearly 70 of nine-year-olds and 60 of 11-year-olds

saying they enjoy reading stories.

According to another study that asked 2,600 parents about their children's reading habits, the perception that children spend their lives glued to a computer screen is either a myth or a huge exaggeration. About 40 of parents think their children read more than they did at the same age, which has given rise to the phenomenon of "crossovers" - books that children recommend to parents.

When children become readers, their



world is forever wider and richer. Studies have shown that children who read on a consistent basis begin to develop both communication and thinking skills at a much younger age than children who do not read on a consistent basis. In addition, those skills continue to progress and develop much more rapidly in children who read consistently.

Maintaining the consistency in reading should be an essential and integral part of a vibrant society. Kerala has been maintaining a big tradition of reading habit consistently over a long period and considers it as one of the reasons of Kerala Model of Development. Many current initiatives of government and society to enrich this reading tradition is widely acclaimed world over.

UNICEF has been trying to replicate it as a best practice to other parts of the world. ■





Top New Paths

Recent findings reveal that as economic recession advances globally, trends in career sector is gradually changing. Some of the potential areas in educational and career sector that have shown spectacular growth during the pre-recession era have been replaced by new emerging sectors. Export and tourism have been badly affected during recession. Healthcare, education, research, energy, utilities, international business, public safety, accounting, pharmaceuticals, sales, Government, marketing, debt management, banking, consultancy, law, food, beauty care, debt collection and ultra luxury sectors are proven to be some of the recession resistant areas.

Ten career-oriented educational sectors, which are not affected during recession period, are listed below. Parents and students can prioritise the courses having more career potential during the coming years.

Engineering India ranks fourth

in telecommunication sector after Japan, China and South Korea. By 2012, this sector will exhibit spectacular growth and create immense job opportunities in India. This will be reflected in the information technology sector also. Taking into account the emerging opportunities in the telecom sector, electronics, electronics and

Ten career-oriented educational sectors, which are not affected during recession period, are listed here. Parents and students can prioritise the courses having more career potential during the coming years.

communication, electrical and electronics and IT will have more potential during the coming years. Nano technology, Mechatronics and Bioinformatics are emerging as the promising technological areas. Global economic recession has started affecting some of the potential employment sectors in the country. It has not even spared the IT industry. Biomedical science; Bioinformatics, electronics and communication, Mechanical engineering, Dairy technology, Environmental engineering, Maritime engineering and Fashion technology are emerging as the major placement oriented courses. Civil, Architecture and Chemical engineering graduates can pursue post graduation abroad for better placements. By 2012 ecofriendly technologies will acquire momentum in the country. As part of popularizing green technologies, chemical engineering may emerge as one of the potential sectors, which can assist in developing ecofriendly pollution control measures. Biomedical, Bioinformatics, nanotechnology and biotechnology graduates will get better opportunities within the country and abroad.

Nursing has globally emerged as one of the key areas generating more employment. Almost all countries are facing scarcity for nurses. Developed countries face difficulty in meeting the ever-growing demand for nurses. Since the demand gap is very high, Indian nursing schools can exploit this situation. International Council for Nurses (ICN) and Florence Nightingale International Foundation have revealed that developing countries can play a key role in reducing this global problem. Potential for nurses are more in USA, England, Canada, Newzeland, Ireland, Switzerland, Scotland, Australia, Wales and in certain African countries.

Fashion technology is emerging as one of the lucrative employment ventures in the country. There are better opportunities for diploma and degree holders in this sector.

Quantum jump in Apparel industry, designing and modeling have paved way for fashion technology experts to perform well in this sector.

Maritime courses especially maritime engineering is having better opportunities nowadays. Attractive pay and allowances make this sector more lucrative.

Recent survey reveals that by 2012 three lakh vacancies for teachers will be created in United States. These

thrust areas identified in this category.

Management experts with MBA will get better options within the country and abroad. Students while joining for MBA programme in selected business schools should identify some of the emerging sectors like retail management, insurance, telecom, banking, IT, agribusiness and supply chain management. More professionals are interested to take MBA from abroad. Recent findings

after completing MBA programmes from abroad they tend to diverge their activities in to business related areas. Globally information technology, engineering, consultancy, financial services, banking, industry, consumer products, telecommunications, accounting and retail marketing are the major employment sectors for MBA respondents. Moreover 18 per cent of the respondents in the employed category are interested to study MBA. 14.1 per cent MBA holders are working in the IT and ITeS areas. Business schools from abroad offer specialised MBA programme catering the need for professionals like MBA programmes for lawyers, engineers, doctors, etc. Moreover, dual MBAs are available in different disciplines. 34 per cent of the MBA aspirants reveal that career change is their major motivation to pursue MBA from abroad.

Chartered Accountants have enough opportunities within the country and abroad. They can associate with public sector undertakings, banks, insurance companies and private companies.

BBC predicts that among Asian countries, India has immense potentials in animation sector. This will facilitate recruitment of animation experts in the coming years. Animation design, web designing, computer graphics, multi media and digital media production are some of the promising areas in animation sector. There is enough potential for animation diploma and degree holders in India and Middle East.

There is better scope for professionals in Bioinformatics and Biotechnology sector in India, Canada and United States. They can work in R&D units of Pharmaceutical and biotech companies. Plant biotechnology, vaccine production, veterinary biotechnology and pharmaceuticals are some of the promising areas coming under bioinformatics and biotechnology. ■

The writer is a career journalist



vacancies will be available in pre-schools, KGs, elementary schools, secondary schools and universities. English proficiency will help teachers to acquire better posts within developed countries and Middle East.

Government of India is making all efforts to promote scientific research. As part of the same, pay scales of scientists have been revised. Nano science, mechatronics, biomedical science, biotechnology, public health, medicine, agriculture, veterinary science, environmental science, conservation, etc. are some of the

reveal that 69.4 per cent of the candidates are interested to take MBA to improve their career prospects. 53.3 per cent's objective is to learn new skills. 41.1 per cent are interested to study MBA to build professional network. 26.9 per cent candidate's aim is to get better salary after completing MBA. 22 per cent candidates are interested to take MBA as part of their education, whereas 23.89 per cent candidate's aim is to start their own business.

As a result of booming interest in MBAs among non-business people,

The door or opening of the Ganges in the mountainous gorge at the foot of the Himalayas in Haridwar, is known also as Gangadvara. Gangotri, the place where the Ganges descended from the Heavens is her legendary source. Uttari means descending. One of the longest glaciers of India, Gangotri glacier's snout descends steep down from the height of 7138 m from the northwest slopes of Chaukhamba peaks. Bhagirathi, one of the tributaries of the Ganga, originates from the snout of Gangotri glacier, whereas the Alakananda, the other and main tributary emerged from the Bhagirathi Khark and Satopanth glaciers, east of Chaukhamba peaks. After flowing on towards opposite directions from their snouts they meet at Deoprayag and is known as Ganga.

Gaumukh means cow's snout/mouth. The origin of the mighty Ganges is from the Gaumukh. It is the snout of the Gangotri glacier and the present source of the Bhagirathi River. A temple dedicated to Ganga exists in this birthplace of river Ganga. The legend is that Goddess Ganga descended here from heaven



Sivling Peak, Tapovan

after the prolonged penance of King Bhagiratha. His Herculean task is a synonym for very strenuous endeavour. A difficult task pursued till it is crowned with success is Bhagiratha prayatnam. It is Bhagiratha who through years of penance in Satya Yuga, worked hard to bring the river Ganga down from heaven to the earth. His endeavour earned the status of a phrase, Bhagiratha Prayatna, in the Indian

languages. Various scientific facts and records that support this great feat of ancients reinforce how this indeed qualifies to be called Bhagiratha Prayatnam. Yatnam means effort. The sacred stone slab/ rock, known as Bhagiratha Shila is believed to be the place where the great King Bhagirath performed his penance to get Mother Ganga on Mother Earth. No wonder Ganga came to be called Bhagirathi. Bhagirath himself is the source of the

Ganga

The Sign of Great Endeavour

A difficult task pursued till it is crowned with success is Bhagiratha prayatnam. It is Bhagiratha who through years of penance in Satya Yuga, worked hard to bring the river Ganga down from heaven to the earth. His endeavour earned the status of a phrase, Bhagiratha Prayatna, in the Indian languages.

name of the river Ganga that flows through the Himalayan ranges.

Ganga: a man-made engineering marvel

The observation that an individual alone could not accomplish a river engineering project of this massive magnitude reaffirms the legend of the descent of the Ganga to earth. It is the cumulative effort of five generations, starting from Raja Sagara, to his 60,000 strong Sagaraputra, their successors Anshuman, Dilipa and finally on to Bhagiratha that succeeded in the

completion of the Gangavataran.

Kapila means “golden-coloured”, reddish-brown, hot, molten, copper colour and the like. Kapila or Kapilasthan, is named after the saint Kapila Muni who had an ashram here, and sat in meditation. In meditation, one perceives this copper colour. The legend says that the sage made a mountain of ashes of King Sagara’s sixty thousand sons by his very glance, which is like the personifications of the human mental and emotional attributes. Kapilaks(h)a (Sanskrit) is Kapila’s eye, often referred to as an

allegorical name for certain spiritual and intellectual powers evoking vibratory forces which neutralise and bend to their will all the lower human mentations and emotions.

The forest tract of Jharkhand, an ancient landmass, is a part of Gondwana land. It portrays areas formed of rock formations ranging from the earliest Archean Era to the latest post-tertiary period. Jurassic Period hills, formed by the volcanic activity in the Jurassic Era spread to the east in the state of Jharkhand, are oriented in a north-south axis with

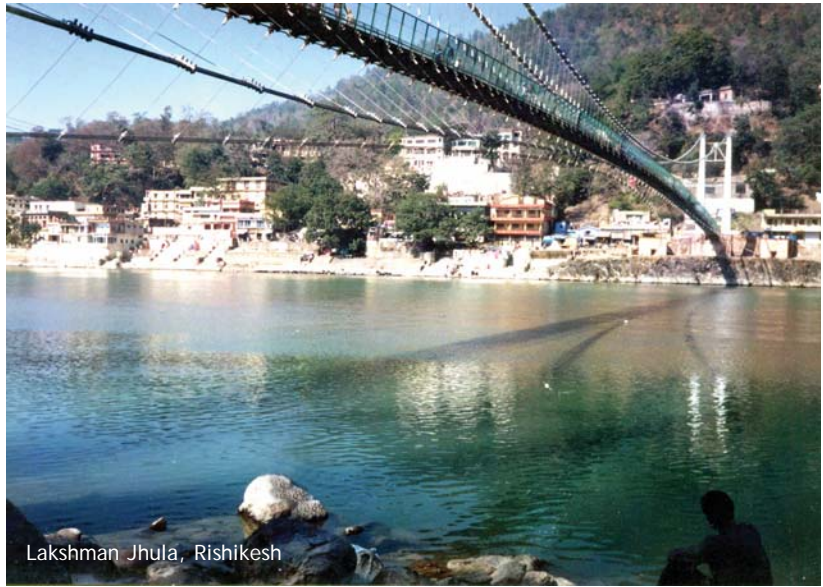
PHOTOS : HARI PEYAD



an average elevation of 200-300 m (600-1,000 ft). The topography of Raj Mahal hills bears witness to the remnants of volcanic activity. The rivers flowing in the hills in Jharkhand are older than the Himalayas and the Ganga. The River Ganges, which meanders around these hills, changes direction and flows from eastwards to southwards.

The Sagaraputra assumed to have engaged in digging a path for Ganga to flow, encountered environmental debacle at Raj Mahal in the shape of volcanoes.

Anshuman who inherited the unfinished task from the Sagaraputra surveyed the upper reaches of the Himalayas as well as the Raj Mahal hills. His successor Dilipa spent a major part of his life in the Sivalik Ranges, to create the pathway for Ganga to reach the planes. Clearing of the course for the river from the Bindu Sarovar to the seas at Raj Mahal, signalled Bhagiratha to break open the gorge. The release of Ganga into the channel that the Sagaraputra dug, led her all the way through the



Lakshman Jhula, Rishikesh

Sivalik range, down the canal finally reaching the seas. Ganga is said nowhere to be a gift of God or a divine miracle (deivadanam) of Siva.

The quest for finding the source of the river Ganges

Ganga in the myth is a river descending from the heavens and falling upon the gracious head of Siva,

who caught its destructive force and allowed it to flow harmlessly through his matted hair and bless India with the unmatched powers of purification. Emerging out of Gangotri glacier, the river Ganga remained as a centre of attraction to the Hindus since times immemorial. The Portuguese Jesuit father Antonio de Andrade was the first European to climb those stupendous mountain walls to discover one of the principal sources of the sacred Ganges. During 1624, in the garb of a Hindu pilgrim, he tried to locate the source of Ganga but mistook Mansarovar as the source.

At the end of the 16th century, King Akbar had sent an expedition

The British surveyors surveyed the sources of the Himalayan Rivers extensively, more than 100 years ago. In 1808, the East India Company deputed army surveyor Lt. W.S. Webb to explore the source of Ganga. The team failed to reach Gaumukh and declared that Ganga emerges from a spot beyond human reach.



Haridwar, view from Mansa Devi Temple

team to locate the source of the sacred river Ganges. They returned with tales of a world beyond the Himalayas where humans lived on a great plateau. On the basis of these data, Monserrate, a courtier during Akbar's regime, accurately described the Himalaya and Lake Mansarovar.

The deeds of the great kings and stories around them were so far considered to be legends. The Indians treated the Puranic stories as historical legends till about 200 years ago. This purely mysterious arcane knowledge of India of an earlier age is now reduced to scientific information when the quest for finding the source

was indeed civil engineering, gained momentum with the quest for the origin of the Ganga River, in modern times.

The British colonial surveyors in India who carried out extensive survey of the Himalayan region from the late 1700's, emphatically and unambiguously declared that the Ganga is not natural, but a man-made river, started as a canal along with many other canals dug in ancient times. The findings of illustrious surveyors like Captain Herbert, Rennel and Sir William Willcocks, recorded in journals and books of their times, speak volumes.

Major James Rennel, a Surveyor with the East India Company, in his Memoir of a Map of Hindustan (1783) stated that the emergence of Ganga from a cow's head is a figment of imagination of Hindus. The Hindus believed that the mouth of the cave from which the Ganga emerges from the Gangotri area resembled the shape of a cow's mouth, and "is near 300 miles above the place where the Ganges enters Hindustan..."

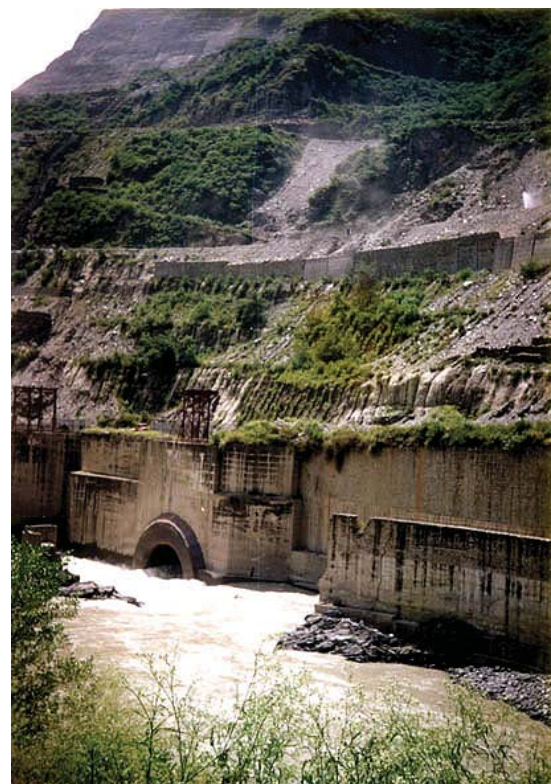
The British surveyors surveyed the sources of the Himalayan Rivers extensively, more than 100 years ago. In 1808, the East India Company deputed army surveyor Lt. W.S. Webb to explore the source of Ganga. The team failed to reach Gaumukh and declared that Ganga emerges from a spot beyond human reach. But these missions continued in 1808, under Capton Raper. James Baillie Fraser (1815) was the first British to reach Gangotri on 20 July 1815, but failed to locate 'Gaumukh' the source of Ganga. Captain Hodgson, who managed to locate the cave, on 31 May 1817, gave a vivid description of the snout of Gangotri saying that the source of the River Ganga appeared like a cow's forehead. But



Gomukh (1999)

of the river Ganges began with the advent of colonialism. Literary, local topographical, geographical, geological and historical records give us various perspectives of Ganga. The advent of colonial historians of India marked changes in this thought process, which started from James Mill and Charles Grant in 1808.

When scientific facts begin to be used to validate the legends they stand vindicated. Studies on the course of the river in three stages, from the angle of the Ganga legend, has suggested that the Ganga was a man-made engineering marvel that involved river engineering work of a massive magnitude. Channelising the river Ganga showcases the biggest and most valuable civil engineering marvel of the world for times to come. An alternative focus on verifying if there



Ganga diverted for Tehri Dam Construction

the British could achieve the mission only after 1857. Griesbach, a geologist with the Geological Survey of India (GSI), reached Gangotri and made the first sketch of the snout in 1891.

In 1935, J. B. Auden of GSI prepared a map of Gaumukh and its surrounding areas and also produced data on glacial retreat. B S Jangpangi of GSI, in 1956, mapped the snout and the glacier, which was refined in 1967 by A P Tewari, from GSI.

In addition to the onsite findings of the British Surveyors' report, the Geological knowledge about these areas and other historical records clearly corroborates the details in the Indian legend that India owes the Ganga to Bhagiratha and to the river engineering efforts of his ancestors. The ground reality and scientific data thus uphold the legend of Ganga as the feat of civil engineering of the ancients, perhaps the greatest in the human endeavour history. Such a great project planned and executed by the five generations of Sagara to Bhagiratha survived for thousands of years. ■

PHOTOS: HARI PEVAD

E-waste is one of the most rapidly growing waste problems in the world. Now, it is cheaper and more convenient to buy new equipment to suit the newer generation technology than it is to upgrade the old. This practice of repair by replacement, rapid technology change, low initial cost and high obsolescence rate has resulted in a rapid generation of e-waste. The consumers do not know what to do with the unwanted equipments. Disposal of e-waste is a problem faced all over the world.

We must reuse the old products instead of disposing them off. Donating electronics for reuse extends the lives of valuable products and keeps them out of the waste management system for a longer time. We must get our old equipments repaired and reused at least till they work up to our satisfaction.



E-WASTE Threat Enl

Electronic waste or e-waste is any broken or unwanted electrical or electronic appliance. E-waste includes computers, TV, stereos, fax machines, mobile phones and other items that have been discarded by their original users.

Growing Environmental Problem

IT and telecom are the two fastest growing industries in our country. Electrical and electronic equipments, the main tools these industries rely on are made up of a large number of components. They contain toxic substances like mercury, cadmium and lead which can have an adverse impact on human health and the environment if not handled properly. There are also carcinogenic substances such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which are mainly found in capacitors, wires, and transformers. Often, these hazards arise due to the improper recycling and disposal processes used.

Cathode Ray Tubes (CRTs), which form an integral part of old TVs and computer monitors, have high content of toxic chemicals.



Long-term exposure to chemicals and metals like lead, cadmium, chromium, mercury and polyvinyl chlorides can severely damage the nervous systems, kidneys, bones, the reproductive and endocrine systems. Some of them are carcinogenic and neurotoxic too. When disposed carefully in a controlled environment, they do not pose any serious health or environmental risk. However, breaking, recycling or disposing in an uncontrolled environment without the necessary safety precautions can result in harmful side effects for the workers and release toxins into the soil, air and groundwater causing serious environmental challenges.

The overwhelming majority of the world's hazardous waste is generated by industrialised market economies. Computer and cell phone junk is growing and they do not know where to unload this stuff. Countries like

India are facing an impending danger. Developed countries, such as the US, dispose their wastes to India and other Asian countries. Major reasons for exports are cheap labour and lack of environmental and occupational standards in Asia. In this way the toxic junk of the developed nations would flood towards the world's poorest nations. The developing countries and India in particular should set up appropriate management measures to prevent the hazards and mishaps due to mismanagement of e-wastes. Due to lack of rules to handle generation and disposal of this complex waste, the e-waste disposal has become a subject of concern to the world.

Managing for Future

To help address the problem, corporations worldwide have implemented take-back and low-cost to no cost recycling programmes for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and other home and auto electronic products. Panasonic, HCL, Sharp Corporation, and Toshiba founded the Manufacturers Recycling Management Co. to help manage their electronic waste. Many corporations planned to dispose off the e-waste in an environmentally safe manner.

Making producers responsible for taking back their products can go a long way in reducing the e-waste. This will encourage producers to prevent pollution and reduce resource and energy use in each stage of the product life cycle through changes in product design and technology, from the use and disposal of products. The model example of this concept is product take-back where a producer takes back a product at the end of its useful life either directly or through a third party.

Many companies have started to design cleaner or green electronic products. Today, every electronics product contains fewer chemicals, is more energy efficient, and is easier to recycle, repair and upgrade. Efforts are on to eliminate toxic substances and develop more environmentally benign materials such as lead-free solder, non-



halogenated lead wires and non-halogenated plastics.

What We Can Do?

Waste prevention is more preferred to any other waste management option including recycling. We must reuse the old products instead of disposing them off. Donating electronics for reuse extends the lives of valuable products and keeps them out of the waste management system for a longer time. We must get our old equipments repaired and reused at least till they work up to our satisfaction. But if the old equipments are damaged beyond repair or too worn out then it is suggested to get them recycled in an environmentally safe manner. As consumers, many of these products can be reused, refurbished, or recycled in an environmentally sound manner so that they are less harmful to the ecosystem. E-wastes should never be disposed with garbage and other household wastes. This should be segregated at the site and sold or donated to various organisations.

Through responsible use, reuse and recycling of electronics, we can protect and preserve our environment. ■

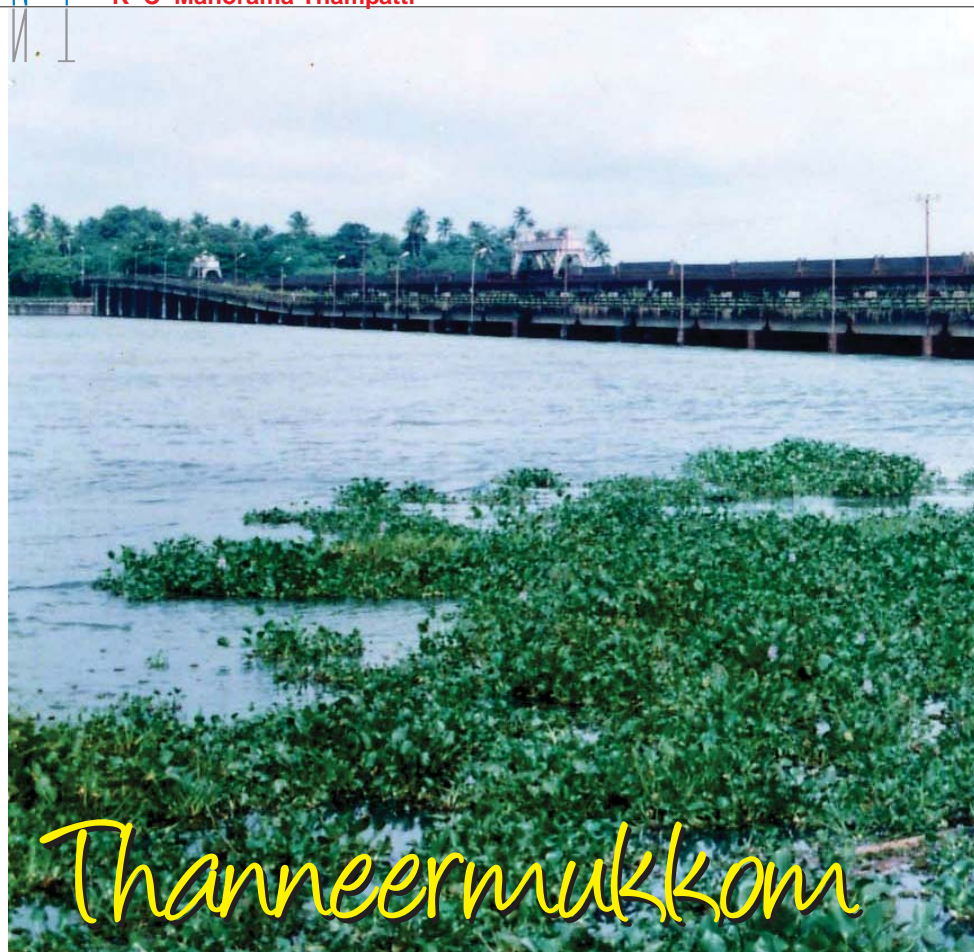
The Writer is consultant in electronics and communication

arguing



This is the apt time to think about “regulating the operation of Thanneermukkom salt water barrier” since the Swaminathan Commission appointed by the Centre to study the problems of various districts facing agricultural distress has recommended a Rs.1,839.75 crore package for improving the conditions of farmers of Kuttanad. The Central government has approved the same and the project is to be implemented soon. Commission chairman M.S. Swaminathan said, out of this amount, Rs.1,208 crore would be earmarked for agricultural revival, Rs.323 crore for ecological rehabilitation of the area and the remaining amount for schemes to enhance the livelihood of farmers. These recommendations are to be implemented soon, through the special package for Kuttanad and a sizeable amount has been allotted for the Thanneermukkom salt water barrier/Regulator also. So it is imperative to develop a plan for operation of the Regulator, without much environmental havoc and at the same time supportive to the farming and the fishing communities.

Thanneermukkom, a small village in Alapuzha district is well known to scientists, environmentalists and policy makers only because of the regulator/barrier erected across Vemband Lake between Thanneermukkom and Vechoor to prevent the impact of tidal action and intrusion of salt water. This largest mud regulator in India has partitioned the Vembanad wetland in to a fresh water lake on south and a brackish lagoon on north. Since its commissioning in 1975, numerous issues on environmental, agricultural, fisheries, ecological and socio-economic aspects have been propped up one after another and still continues. The debate on



Thanneermukkom

Regulator nee

The regulator was relatively successful in preventing saline water intrusion to Kuttanad and there by enhanced or even doubled the cropping intensity and grain/straw yield during the initial years. This was a great help to the farmers of Kuttanad, since they could get dispensed with the construction of temporary tidal bunds for prevention of saline water entry.

Thanneermukkom regulator is as old as the regulator itself.

Thanneermukkom regulator was only a part of the Kuttanad Development Project submitted by P.H. Vaidyanathan, in response to the visit of the Agricultural Minister E. John Philipose to Kuttanad during December, 1949. At that time Kuttanad was facing a severe crop loss due to both flood havoc and tidal

action and Vaidyanathan submitted a detailed project to tackle the above problems. But when the project was implemented, many omissions were made and its impact was noted only in later years. However, the regulator was partially commissioned in 1975 as a project to enhance rice production in Kuttanad, by preventing saline water intrusion from the Arabian sea to Kuttanad through



regulator remains closed during this period till the completion of punja harvest. Consequently the southern part of Vembanad lake remains as a fresh water zone during major part of the year. Thus rather than the construction of regulator, its improper operation had created several ecological problems in Kuttanad. If you are going to critically analyse the merits and demerits due the regulator, it is difficult to judge on it, since merits and demerits are of different dimensions.

During 1960's Kuttanad with its natural resource potential, was one of the two regions selected in Kerala for Green Revolution Strategy (Kurien, 1982) for enhancing rice production. Massive use of fertilizers and pesticides, supported by heavy subsidies promoted wide spread use of high yielding varieties of rice. The permanent but submersible bunds constructed had fragmented the wetland ecosystem in to tiny units, disrupting the natural hydrological

ds Regulation

the Vembanad lake. The regulator was built at the narrowest portion of the lake at Thanneermukkom, 24 km north of Alapuzha. As per the original plan, the 1250 m long regulator was envisaged to have 93 shutters, of which only 62 shutters have been built, with 31 shutters on east and west ends with an earthen embankment located at the middle portion, rising 1 m above the highest tidal level. To prevent saline water entry, the shutters of the regulator have to be closed before the highest tide i.e., "Vrischika veliyettam" usually occurs around the mid of December. The shutters of the regulator remains closed till the mid of March, allowing the completion of the harvest of the punja crop. During

these three months the tidal flushing in the Kuttanad region will be prevented and water get stagnated which will be used for cultivation and domestic purposes.

The regulator was relatively successful in preventing saline water intrusion to Kuttanad and there by enhanced or even doubled the cropping intensity and grain/straw yield during the initial years. This was a great help to the farmers of Kuttanad, since they could get dispensed with the construction of temporary tidal bunds for prevention of saline water entry. When the farmers were not afraid of the saline water entry, the discipline in cultivation season was lost and the season extended up to April-May. The

Merits

- Reduction in salinity in Kuttanad wetland ecosystem
- Increased the cropping intensity
- Increase in overall rice production
- Increased labour availability

Demerits

- Decrease in fish production and extinction of several native species
- Deterioration of soil health and severe ecodegradation due to
 - Accumulation of residues of pesticides and fertilizers
 - Increase in soil acidity and release of acid drainage water - resulted fish mortality
 - Accumulation of toxic quantities of iron and aluminum in soil/water
 - Loss of natural flora
- Epidemics of several diseases like wheels disease, diarrhea, typhoid, cholera and different kinds of fevers etc.



balance. Effective drainage became impossible due to the closure of the regulator, resulting stagnation of water with heavy load of fertilizer and pesticide residues, aggravating the eco-degradation of Kuttanad.

In the present scenario, the price of rice could only difficultly match with the cost of production, making rice cultivation uneconomical, more so in the rice bowl. The proportion of labour input for unit quantity of rice is the highest in Kerala. The rice production can be made cost effective only by increasing input efficiency. In these circumstances, all the early economic interventions to boost rice production were becoming not only ineffective but also counter productive. The most appalling ecological outcome of the physical interventions has been the disruption of physical and biological continuity of the lake with coastal waters resulting a rapid decline in fish yield and diversity.

Hence to revamp and rejuvenate the farm sector in Kuttanad, due importance should be given to Thanneermukkom regulator. Since punja cultivation is not possible without the closure of the regulator, it can not be dispensed with. What

The improper functioning of regulator had not only affected the fisheries sector, but the agricultural sector also.

the government/policy makers should impart are the following

- Enforce strict adherence to the minimum closure period i.e., only from December 15th to March 15th so that the regulator is closed for the minimum period only..
- Apart from regulating the operation of Thanneermukkom regulator, it needs proper maintenance and repair/ replacement of existing shutters so that salinity protection can be ensured.
- The earthen embankment should be replaced with steel shutters allowing the free flow of water from the sea to Kuttanad.
- A local committee should be formed so that the operation of

the regulator can be monitored well.

Along with the above, the farmers should also take care to use minimum chemical inputs with proper scientific management practices or even they can go for organic cultivation if farming situation is suitable for it. For a remunerative rice crop adopt mechanization in each step of cultivation and attempt value addition to the final product.

Adoption of sequential farming with one rice and one fish could offer a positive influence to this declining agrosystem.

Taking the importance of Kuttanad in the tourist map of Kerala, the pollution hazard due to enormous tourist activity has also to be considered since the prime tourist season coincides with the closure period of the regulator.

In this context it is highly imperative to chock out and implement a methodology that could protect the fragile ecosystem without disrupting its natural balance and ensure sustainable rice/fish production in the “Rice Bowl of Kerala”. ■

The writer is professor College of Agriculture, Vellayani, Thiruvananthapuram

Mango Magic



Mango Pachadi

Ripe mango - 5 Nos | Salt to taste | Turmeric powder- half teaspoon | Curd - one cup | Coconut grated - one cup | Green chilli- 2 Nos | Mustard seeds - half teaspoon | Dried red chilli (cut into two) - one No. | Curry leaves- two sprigs | Oil - one teaspoon | Fenugreek seeds- ¼ teaspoon

Wash the mangoes and cut each into six pieces. Add salt, turmeric and enough water and cook. Add the curd. Add grind coconut, green chilli and ¼ teaspoon mustard seeds into fine paste and add to the cooked mango. Fry ¼ teaspoon mustard seeds, ¼ teaspoon fenugreek seeds, curry leaves and dried red chilli. When mustard seeds splutter, pour curry to this and off the gas.

Mango Quencher (Mango Sherbet)

Mango(ripen)- two Nos
Milk- two cups
Sugar- two tablespoon
Transfer these items to a mixi bowl and blend well. Serve cold



Mango Pulisseri

Big ripe mango- Four Nos.or Small ripe mango – Eight Nos. | Salt - to taste | Turmeric powder- half teaspoon | Curd - one cup | Crated coconut - one and a half cup
Red chilli powder- one teaspoon | Cumin seeds, mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds- ¼ teaspoon each | Dried red chilli – one No. | Oil - one teaspoon

Cut big mango into six pieces. If you are using small mangoes, cut each into two. You can add its seeds also. Add salt, turmeric and enough water to this and cook.



Mango Pickle

Big mango (ripe)- two Nos.

Redchilli powder- one teaspoon

Salt- to taste

Fenugreek powder- two pinches

Asafetida powder- a pinch

Mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds- ¼ teaspoon each

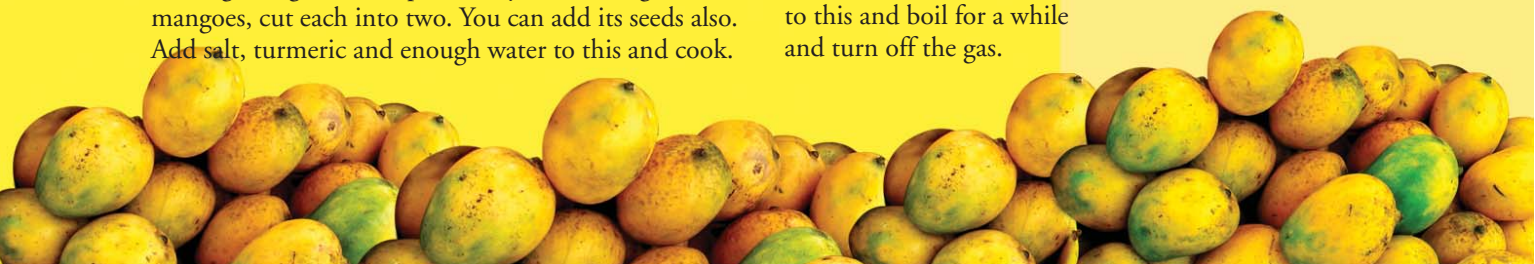
Oil - one teaspoon

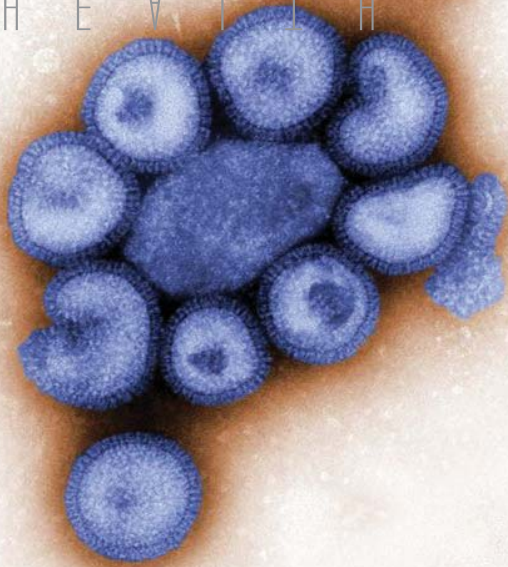
Dried red chilli (cut into two) - one No.

Cut mango into small pieces after removing its skin.

Add salt. Keep it aside for a day, adding enough water. The next day pour oil into a pan. Add mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds and dried red chilli and fry. When it starts to splutter, add the pickle and turn off the gas before it boils.

Remove the gas. Add curd when it is removed from the gas. Grind coconut, red chilli powder, and cumin seeds into a fine paste and add to the curry. Fry mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds, dried red chilli and curry leaves. When the mustard seeds splutters, pour the curry to this and boil for a while and turn off the gas.





Swine Flu Threat Reexamined

Government of Kerala is making all efforts to create awareness about the Global Human influenza. Department of Health Services, Animal Husbandry and Tourism are closely assessing the situation.

Globally, like Bovine spongiform encephalitis, SARS and Avian influenza, Swine flu is emerging as a dreadful threat to public health. Since the source of infection was not from pigs World Health Organization (WHO) renamed the disease as A (H1N1) Flu. This pandemic influenza has six phases ranging from predominantly animal infection to global level human-to-human transmission. The disease has already moved in to the fifth phase of pandemic outbreak, which represents that human-to-human transmission in at least two countries in one WHO

region is present. Moreover chances of strong signal pandemic are imminent. Even though it is named as Swine flu, OIE has categorically opined that its source of infection from pigs has not been reported now. Swine flu is a type of influenza caused by H1N1 type of an RNA virus, which belongs to Orthomyxo viridae family. Influenza affected people can transmit the disease to others a day before or seven days after he or she shows the clinical signs. This disease has already affected about 1700 people in Mexico and caused death of 163 human lives. One death has

been reported from United States. Moreover disease has been reported from 17 states of United States. Confirmed cases of Swine influenza have been reported from 15 countries, which include Mexico, United States, Spain, Canada, Germany, France, Ireland, Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong and New Zealand. European Union is making all efforts to control this disease. Many countries including South Korea temporarily stopped the flight operations to Mexico.

Swine flu is different from classical swine fever, which is prevalent in India. Classical swine fever is caused by pesti virus, which belongs to Flavi viridae family. Moreover it is not a zoonotic disease. But the new flu strain is a combination of pig, bird and human viruses to which humans may have no natural immunity.

World Health Organization's recent reports reveal that this disease is spreading at a faster pace. Globally there is a growing apprehension existing among researchers whether this virus will be like that of Spanish flu virus, which caused death of lakhs of people during 1918. Even though the disease was reported from Asian countries, India is still free from H1N1 virus. Government of India is regularly tracking the passengers coming from disease-affected countries for any symptoms of swine flu. Government has put on alert all international airports and ports for screening passengers with suspected cases of Swine influenza coming from



disease affected countries. Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) is the antiviral drug, which is effective against swine flu. As per WHO protocols all countries must stock drugs to cover at least 10 percent of the population. India is planning to stock one Crore doses of Oseltamivir. Moreover health ministry has asked people to approach public health facilities for diagnosis and treatment as the antiviral medicine would be made free of cost at Government hospitals. Moreover those travelling to affected countries have been advised to postpone their journeys till the epidemic ends. National institute of communicable diseases, New Delhi is co-ordinating

Health Organization's protocols for controlling infection from affected persons.

Government of Kerala is making all efforts to create awareness about the Global Human influenza. Department of health services, Animal Husbandry and Tourism are closely assessing the situation. Principal Secretary (Tourism), Govt of Kerala Dr.V.Venu suggested that swine flu reports in 15 countries have not affected the tourism industry in the state and we are closely monitoring the international tourism situation.

The best way to control the disease is by taking precautions like frequent

as swine flu. World, which is already reeling under economic recession and food security issues, swine flu is affecting the production, consumption and export of meat. Pork production ranks first in the world followed by beef and chicken. Meat and Tourism industry will be badly affected if steps are not taken to create awareness about the disease. People should know that swine flu could not spread through pork products. According to OIE there is no evidence of the spread of the disease through food. But, recently, scientists have identified swine flue H1N1 virus from Alberta, Canada. They revealed that the disease had transmitted from human beings.

Properly cooked pork is safe for consumption. Cooking pork to 160 degree Fahrenheit kills Swine influenza virus symptoms. The food and agriculture organization is investigating about A (H1N1) flu virus that has not any direct link with pigs. According to FAO there is no evidence of a threat to food chain at this stage it is a human crisis. FAO OIE (World organization for Animal Health) Crisis management committee is assessing the epidemiological situation in the pig industry. FAO is working in close coordination with WHO and OIE at the international and national levels for disease surveillance. Many research institutions in United States and UK are trying to formulate vaccine against A (H1N1) flu epidemic. Southampton University based at UK developed a DNA test for easy diagnosis of this disease. Swine flu outbreak will directly affect the tourism sector. Tourists will not be attracted to visit countries that are affected badly due to swine flu. Many schools in Mexico and United states are indefinitely closed due to Swine flu outbreak. In the long run if more numbers of cases are reported from different countries, its repercussions cannot be solved easily. ■

The writer is Asst Director, Department of Animal Husbandry, Govt of Kerala, and Visiting Scientist, Smithsonian Instn, Washington DC, US)

the surveillance of Swine influenza in the country. Round the clock call centres have been set up for coordinating the surveillance programme. Instructions were issued for screening the persons coming from other countries.

Students who are planning to travel abroad for overseas education or tourism related programmes can postpone their trip to disease affected countries for a couple of months till the epidemic subsides. Those who are pursuing education and career abroad are requested to strictly adhere World

hand washing with soap and water. Alcohol based hand cleaners are effective. Covering the mouth with tissue papers during coughs and sneezes and staying away from work or school if you are not feeling well is suggested. Ensure soft disposal of used tissues. Avoid close contact with affected people. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Keep the surroundings clean.

Since the source of infection is not from pigs, a serious debate exists among European countries regarding the earlier nomenclature of the disease



Globally, alcohol problems exert an enormous toll on the lives and communities of many nations, especially those in the developing world. The patterns of alcohol intake around the world are constantly evolving, and alcohol is common today.

People today celebrate every festival. They need no excuse of celebrations to drink. Liquor, brandy, whisky, rum or beer, whatever be the brand, these are the main ingredients of peoples celebrations. Festivals may be different but drinks are common.

For anything and everything they are going in search of alcoholic drinks, birth or death, success or failure, happiness or grief, alcohol lead the way. But in festive celebrations they forget themselves and take more and more than regular menu. Unemployment or

poverty never affects drunkard's life. By all means they make sure to get their favourite brands.

Young people, especially teenagers, are more sensitive to alcohol use because their bodies and brains are still developing.

Kerala has the highest per capita alcohol consumption in the country with 8.5 liters alcohol per person. There is also a limited awareness among most of the people regarding the physical and psychological consequences of alcohol use.

Early identification and education may be effective with "at risk" drinkers in reducing serious health problems and dependence.

A series of studies conducted by ADIC-India from 1986 to 2006 reveals alarming increase and shocking patterns of alcohol use among the young generation. This also leads to increase in criminality and other vices. The significant trends observed in Kerala are lowering in the age of initiation, alarming increase in the young drinking population and more girls and young women turning to alcohol in spite of strong religious and cultural taboos. "The main factors for the trend are the impact of globalisation

Alcoholism A Social



and liberalisation policies, easy availability, starting of more beer parlours, and the influence of cinema and television serials and the influence of Alco-pub culture. The high-paying jobs that youth land up in nowadays leave them with a disposable income that becomes a contributing factor”.

Even one or two drinks can result in changes in behaviour and a decrease in one's ability to think clearly - both concentration and judgment become impaired. If alcohol consumption is excessive, the drinker will become intoxicated.

Effects of alcoholism

Alcohol consumption is associated with liver and pancreatic disorders. Recurrent stomach disorder, hypertension, stroke damage to brain, liver and heart, domestic, occupational and road traffic accidents and injury can result from quite light or moderate drinking.

Gastrointestinal problems

Inflammation of lining of stomach (gastritis) interference with absorption of vitamin B particularly folic acid and thiamine and other nutrients are associated with alcohol intake. Chronic

alcoholism can produce cirrhosis of liver and fatty infiltration of the liver. In cirrhosis of liver there will be the fibrous scar tissue formation in the liver manifested by jaundice, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight loss, anaemia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, acites and other disturbances which lead to liver dysfunction.

Increased risk of cancer

Chronic alcohol abuse has been linked to higher risk of numerous cancers including cancer of mouth, pharynx, oesophagus, larynx, liver colon and rectum. Excessive drinking can affect nervous system causing numbness of hands and feet, hangover, disordered thinking, slurred speech, loss of muscle control, dementia.

Alcohol may interfere with the production of new bone. This can lead to thinning bones and an increased risk of fractures.

Pregnancy Risks - Alcohol can cause numerous birth defects, the most serious being foetal alcohol syndrome. Babies born with foetal alcohol syndrome will have physical abnormalities, mental impairment and problems with behaviour.

Conclusion

Alcohol consumption is associated with physical, psychological and social consequences. While it carries connotations of pleasure and sociability in the minds of many, harmful consequences of its use are diverse and widespread. To reduce the harmful social and health consequences of alcohol use much preparation and planning is required. It is our responsibility to encourage health awareness and formulate effective public health-oriented countermeasures in order to minimize the use of alcohol. ■

The writers are Associate Professor, Govt College of Nursing, Thiruvananthapuram and Lecturer, Nightingale College of Nursing, Nedumangad

Mendace

Fazil has proved himself to be a director of different taste and craft. There is always something new in his films. He brings in new heroines in Malayalam Cinema. Melodious songs characterise his films. From Manjil Virinja Pookkal onwards he kept his distinctiveness in Malayalam cinema with experiments in novel storyline, treatment and narrative techniques. But, unfortunately, Moss N Cat, the latest film by Fazil, produced by Johnny Sagarika under the banner Johnny Sagarika Cinema Square disappoints us a lot.

The film opens by introducing the protagonist Moss D. Samuel in a marriage feast along with Kunnummel Sankaran. They meet for the first time even though they are birds of the same feather. They make a living by making fool of others. Tessy is a smart girl of about six years who is a helping hand in Moss' 'business'. They create fake motor accidents and extract money from the motorists. In such two consecutive incidents Moss and Tessy happens to meet Nandana Vasudev, the rich girl of the city. Nandana develops an unusual liking towards the duo and request them to stay with her in spite of the severe objection from her drunkard brother Sumesh Vasudev.

Moss reveals Nandana that Tessy is not his daughter but an orphaned girl who is his ever-loving companion. There is an inner story of property dispute and revenge between Sumesh and Das, who appears as the villain of the film. Moss happens to be a prey at the hands of Das to get Sumesh for a final settlement at the stake of Tessy and Nandana.

On the contrary Nandana seeks the help of Moss to get back his spoiled brother from the clutches of Das and take him to Bangalore. With his inherent intelligent tricks Moss devices plans to hook Das and settle everything amidst the mounting

tension. Eventually Das succumbs to his inevitable fate and the film ends happily with a group photo.

The greatest flop of the story is its lacking of simple logic in each and every frame. It has all the shortcomings of a cooked up story. And so the script, also written by the director, lacks smooth flow. It looks simulated at many points. The scenes and dialogues meant to create humour have reverse impact.

Fazil always tried to introduce new faces in Malayalam through his films. Most of them proved to be successful artistes too, Poornima Jayaram (Manjil Virinja Pookkal), Salini (Mamattikuttiyamma and Aniyathipravu) and Nadiya Moithu (Nokkethadoorathu Kannum Nattu) to mention a few. And the latest in the row is Aswathy, who does the role of Nandana in Moss N Cat. Her graceful presence adds to the charm

MOSS Trapped



of the film. Of course, the greatest discovery of Fazil is Baby Nivedita, who is superb as Tessy. Dileep is in his pinnacle form in Moss N Cat. In fact the performances of the trio – Dileep, Baby Nivedita and Aswathy are the highlights of the film. Jagathy Sreekumar, Janardanan, Harisree Asokan, Rahman, Manoj.K.Jayan, Sudhish and Priyanka have very little to do as artistes.

Malayali viewers always look forward to beautiful songs in Fazil's film. He does not dishearten them in Mos N Cat too. The veteran Ouseppachan pleasantly tuned Kaithapram's lyrics. The visual explorations of Fazil coupled with Anandakkuttan's technical perfection give the frames an unusual allure. The editor Gourisankar also deserves special mention. And hats off to Fazil for selecting such a fantastic title for the film.

Johny Sagarika is to be appreciated for supporting Fazil with this risky project. Undoubtedly Fazil is making a decline in his career from Vismayathumbathu onwards. If one does not have something to pronounce innovative, better avoid the extravaganza of making a film. It is high time that our established directors comprehend this vital aspect. Even without Moss N Cat Fazil is part of Malayalam film history.





Balsam The Showy

Garden Balsam is an annual native from China to India and is known for its quick growth from seed to bloom. The plant is freely branching and will reach upto 75 cm. tall with an equal spread. It has a thick but soft stem. The leaves are long narrow with deeply serrated edges. Garden balsam has been used in the landscape since Victorian times and comes in a wide variety of flower colours and forms, ranging from bright single flowers to double flowers. The flower colour ranges from white, pink, rose, red, orange, purple, violet, bicour etc. There are several novel hybrids in balsam, which are very floriferous, and flower almost throughout the year.

Balsams are of easy culture, which need full sun to partial shade, with a rich, moist soil mix. The soil mix consisting of two parts soil and one part each of organic matter (either leaf-mould or cow dung manure) and sand. Small quantities of wood ash, bone meal etc. can also be added to the soil mixture.

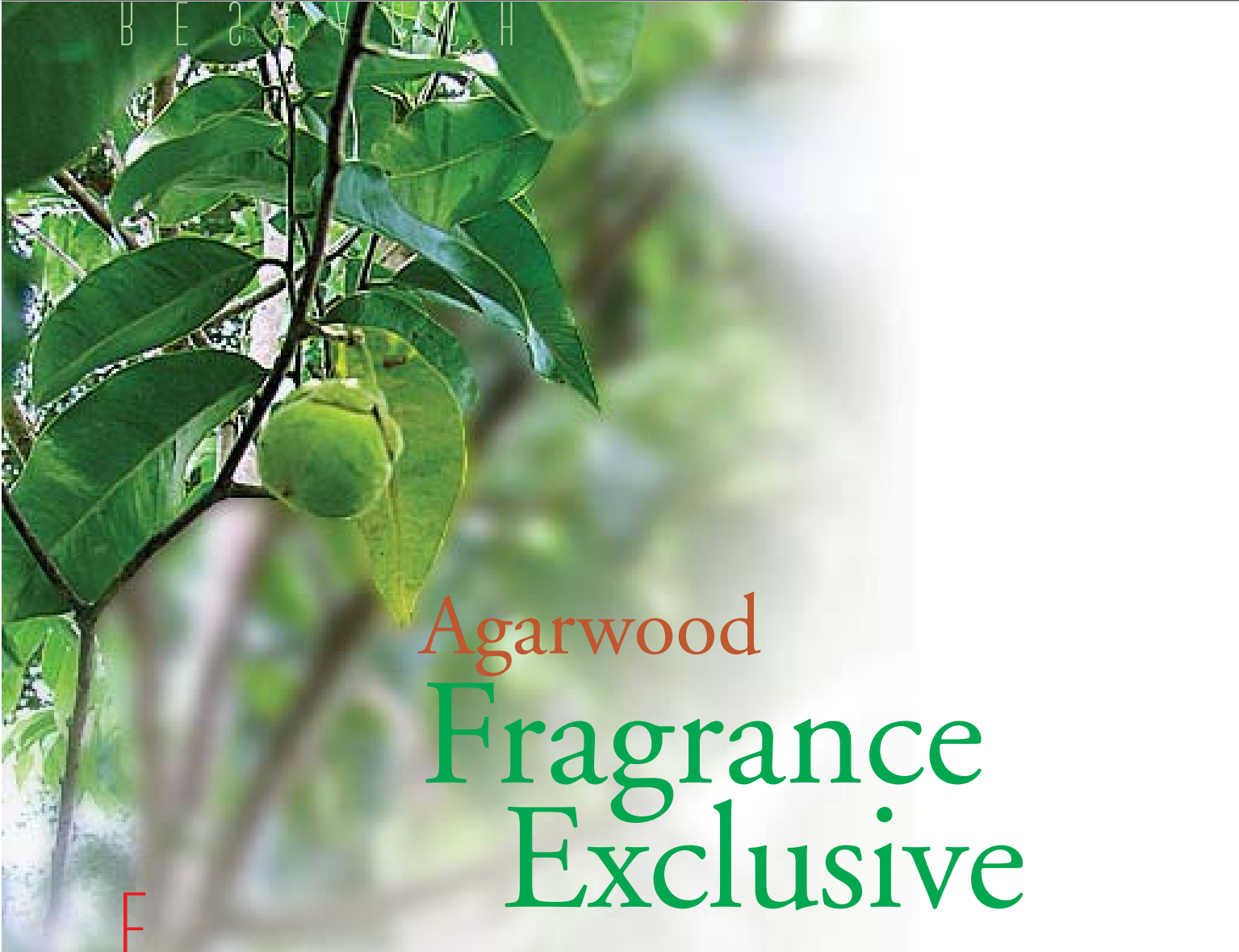
The plant is best propagated from seed. Seedlings growing at the base of the mother plant can be transplanted and grown as separate plants. The plants are sometimes called 'touch-me-not' as the seeds explode from ripe pods when touched.

Though balsam has very short-stemmed blooms that cannot be used as traditional cut flowers, they can be cut and floated in glass bowls or dishes for a pretty summer accent. The blooms are similar to small open roses.

The attractive showy flowers are used for mass planting in borders, in containers or in above-ground planters. It is also useful for shady beds, edging along walks or paths.

Different parts of the plant are used to treat skin diseases. The leaves, seeds and stems are also edible if cooked. Juice from balsam leaves is useful for treats warts and also snakebite, while the flower can be applied to burns to cool the skin.

Known in Malayalam as 'Karithumba', balsam makes a great annual in the landscape.



Agarwood Fragrance Exclusive

Fragrance of agarwood is known to the world from time immemorial. Agarwood and its fragrance are mentioned in many ancient literatures like Abhijnana Shakuntalam, Bible and ancient Persian and Sanskrit religious texts. It is described as incense in paradise in the famous Ahadith-Sahi-Al-Bukhari. Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang had also mentioned agarwood in his travelogues. Thus the use of agar is prehistoric. Agarwood is also known in many names like Oud /Aloeswood/ Lighum Aloes/Aloes/Gaharu/Wood of gods/Eagle Wood/Jinko etc.

Aroma of agarwood is so soothing and wonderful which makes it unique. But it is extremely rare and it is the nature that adds value on it,

which still remains a mystery. God has very mysteriously created agarwood. The matchless fragrance and interesting story behind it makes a doubt that whether God has created it for his own personal interest, i.e. for worshipping him. That may be the reason why agarwood is also called as the 'Wood of Gods'.

Agar oil is very precious and unique. It is universally called as "Otto of Roses. It is a highly sought out commodity in international markets. The specialty about its wood is that it sinks in water.

Botany of Agarwood

Agarwood tree is botanically *Aquilaria malaccensis*. Lamk. or *A. agalloca*. It is an evergreen tree.

Agarwood is believed to have originated in the Assam region of India, and from there it spread throughout southeast Asia. Oud now comes from India, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines. This tree grows up to 40m high and 60 cm in diameter. Flowers are off white in colour and sweetly scented. Though it is the most precious wood known for its rich fragrance, it is extremely rare and often very difficult to obtain. Agarwood is the resinous, fragrant heartwood of *Aquilaria* tree.

Processing by Nature

A parasitic fungus *Phialophora parasitica* infects the agar tree. Its attack turns the wood into dark

resinous substance, which gives it the inimitable and sacred aroma when it is burnt. After fungal attack the wood becomes deep brownish black in color. As the degree of darkness increases, the value of agar also increases. It takes many years for developing into such a precious thing. Credit of such a sweet aroma goes to the fungus, as agarwood is of no use without the attack by fungus. So it is the nature itself that adds value to the wood. It is extremely difficult (or even impossible) to judge from the outside of the tree whether it is infected or not. Cutting the tree is the only way to find out whether the tree contains resin. Thus the resin developed through the natural fungal attack is graded as the first quality. Fungal attack can be artificially made by deliberately wounding agar tree. But a relatively inferior quality resin is obtained.

Uses of Agarwood

Today the range of agarwood products and their uses is seemingly endless. Solid pieces of agarwood are highly appreciated as 'natural art' in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Craftsmen carve raw pieces of agarwood into beautiful wooden sculptures. Agarwood is also turned into beads and bracelets. Most of the wood, however, is processed and either

turned into oil which is used in perfumes and other cosmetic products, or the agarwood chips are ground into powder which is used as the raw material for incense making (and sometimes also for special cigarettes). The oil is also used in the production of traditional Chinese and Korean medicine, in the preparation of (medicinal) wine and various other products. Some of the important uses are

Perfumery:- Agar oil is used as the



base in the world's most exclusive perfumes.

Culinary:- It is used to give aroma in local wines.

Medicinal:- It is having a number of medicinal uses. It is used as a carminative, antiasthmatic, diuretic, aphrodisiac, antimicrobial, digestive, against bronchial complaints, rheumatism, small pox, fevers, spasms in digestive and respiratory systems,

abdominal pains, cancer, nausea, diarrhoea, cirrhosis of liver, insomnia etc.

Aromatherapy:- Fragrance of agar oil is so soothing that it relaxes the mind. Also help to reduce depression and anxiety. So it is very effectively used in aromatherapy.

Processing of Agarwood

The aromatic heartwood is cut into small pieces, which is used as such or burnt into a kind of room incense.

Oil extraction

Hydro-Distillation process is used to extract agarwood essential oils. However, sun drying of oil is to be done to remove traces of moisture as the oil mixes with water in the process of hydro-distillation.

Another recent development to obtain quality Oud oil is the use of CO2 extraction instead of distillation. CO2 extraction is so powerful that it requires less wood than steam distillation to obtain the same amount of Oud. As it does not use any heat, oil produced by CO2 extract has a much more vibrant fragrance.

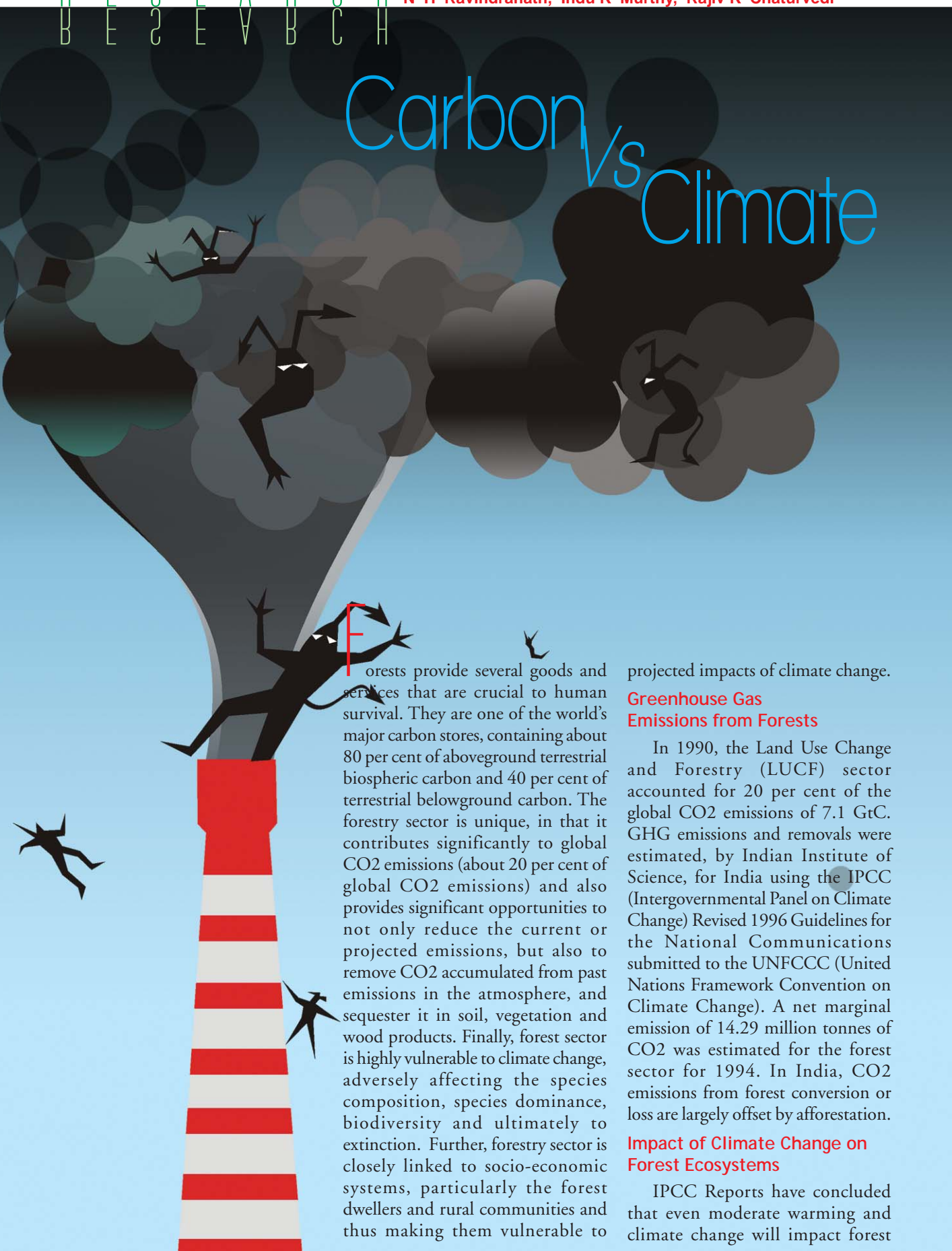
This is the interesting story behind agarwood & agar oil. But it still remains as a mystery. The question is whether we can artificially inoculate the tree with the fungus. Scientists are doing research on it. Whether they will be rewarded with the world's richest fragrance? Let us wait and see!

The need for research is very essential for the survival of this precious tree. There is no agar tree left in India except in Nagaland. Traditional sources are disappearing fast. Great care and attention is needed for the existence of this gift of god to nature, which otherwise will become extinct. Let us hope that this precious wood will not be abandoned and its unique fragrance sooth millions of minds till the end of the world. ■

The writers are with the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, Thiruvananthapuram



Carbon vs Climate



Forests provide several goods and services that are crucial to human survival. They are one of the world's major carbon stores, containing about 80 per cent of aboveground terrestrial biospheric carbon and 40 per cent of terrestrial belowground carbon. The forestry sector is unique, in that it contributes significantly to global CO₂ emissions (about 20 per cent of global CO₂ emissions) and also provides significant opportunities to not only reduce the current or projected emissions, but also to remove CO₂ accumulated from past emissions in the atmosphere, and sequester it in soil, vegetation and wood products. Finally, forest sector is highly vulnerable to climate change, adversely affecting the species composition, species dominance, biodiversity and ultimately to extinction. Further, forestry sector is closely linked to socio-economic systems, particularly the forest dwellers and rural communities and thus making them vulnerable to

projected impacts of climate change.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Forests

In 1990, the Land Use Change and Forestry (LUCF) sector accounted for 20 per cent of the global CO₂ emissions of 7.1 GtC. GHG emissions and removals were estimated, by Indian Institute of Science, for India using the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Revised 1996 Guidelines for the National Communications submitted to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). A net marginal emission of 14.29 million tonnes of CO₂ was estimated for the forest sector for 1994. In India, CO₂ emissions from forest conversion or loss are largely offset by afforestation.

Impact of Climate Change on Forest Ecosystems

IPCC Reports have concluded that even moderate warming and climate change will impact forest

Impact Inspected

ecosystems and biodiversity adversely. A detailed assessment of impacts of climate change on forests at national level for India by Ravindranath et al, 2006 made using BIOME4 model, SRES scenarios A2 and B2 and Regional Climate Model of the Hadley Centre (HadRM3) outputs shows that in India 68 to 77 per cent of the currently forested grids are likely to undergo change in forest type, adversely affecting biodiversity in the transient phase. The model outputs further show that the projected climate is likely to be not optimal for existing vegetation. The study also shows that Net Primary Productivity is likely to increase by 70-100 per cent due to CO₂ fertilisation, assuming no nutrient limitation. Recent dynamic Global Vegetation Modelling Studies have also confirmed that majority of the currently forested grids are highly vulnerable to climate change even by 2050s.

Mitigation potential

A comprehensive assessment of the CO₂ sequestration or mitigation potential of forest sector in India has been made and published in several papers. Contrary to the belief that forest sector in India has limited carbon mitigation potential, due to high human and livestock population density, mitigation studies carried out by the Indian Institute of Science at national, regional, district and project level shows the following. At the national level, economic mitigation

assessment is carried out for the first time using AEZ (Agro-ecological Zone) classification of land. Economic mitigation potential assessment is carried out under baseline and mitigation scenarios, including the carbon price incentive using GCOMAP model. The incremental mitigation potential, over the baseline scenario afforestation, is estimated to be in the range of 129 to 435 million tonnes of Carbon during the period 2005 to 2035 (Ravindranath et al, 2007). The regional mitigation study focused on developing regional baseline and comparing with the project baseline, for the first time. The study adopted three-step approach namely; identification of likely baseline options for land-use, estimation of baseline rates of land-use change, and quantification of baseline carbon profile over time. The analysis showed that carbon stock estimates made for wastelands and fallow lands for project-specific as well as regional baseline are comparable. The study for the first time showed that conducting field studies for estimating carbon stock changes in biomass and soil, using regional baseline approach is about a quarter of developing a project baseline. The study demonstrated the reliability, feasibility and cost-effectiveness of adopting regional baseline for forest sector mitigation projects. A study at district level demonstrated the approach and methods to be adopted for estimating carbon mitigation potential of forestry

projects.

A recent study by Indian Institute of Science, made an assessment of the implications of past and current forest conservation and regeneration policies and programmes on forest carbon sink in India. The study concluded that if the current rate of afforestation continues the carbon stock in Indian forest is projected to increase from 8.79 GtC in 2006 to 9.75 GtC by 2030.

Mitigation and adaptation synergy

Mitigation and adaptation are the two strategies to address climate change. Currently the two strategies are separately addressed. A preliminary attempt was made to conceptualise and explore the opportunity for synergy between mitigation and adaptation. Firstly, there is a need to ensure that mitigation projects and programmes do not increase the vulnerability of forest ecosystems and plantations. Secondly, several adaptation practices could be incorporated into mitigation projects to reduce vulnerability. The study has listed several adaptation activities, which contribute to mitigation. The paper concluded that there is limited information about the synergy between mitigation and adaptation and highlighted the need for research and demonstration of synergy through field projects. ■

The writers are with the Centre for Sustainable Technologies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore



Mangroves protect coastal villages during cyclones?

Mangrove forests, common along tropical coasts, can provide a protective shield against destructive cyclones and reduce deaths, a study has found. The finding follows a report published in January this year which said that mangroves were not effective against tsunamis. It adds to a growing debate on using mangroves as bioshields in coastal areas.

The new study, conducted

by scientists at the University of Delhi, India, and Duke University in the United States, analysed the 1999 'super cyclone' that ravaged Orissa state in eastern India, killing an estimated 10,000 people. The scientists found that coastal villages in Orissa with the widest mangrove belts suffered fewer deaths, compared to those with narrower or no mangroves.

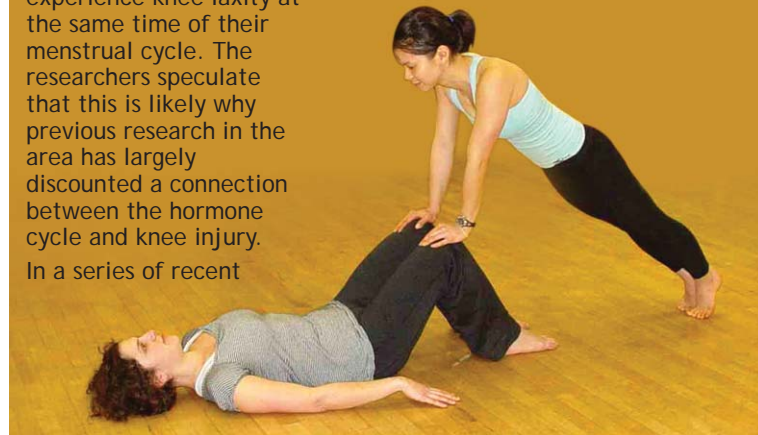
Female hormone cycle affects knee joints

NEW RESEARCH from the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of Calgary has found a connection between the laxity of a woman's knee joint and her monthly hormone cycle.

The research project -- a collaboration between kinesiology, engineering and health sciences researchers -- has found that not all women experience knee laxity at the same time of their menstrual cycle. The researchers speculate that this is likely why previous research in the area has largely discounted a connection between the hormone cycle and knee injury.

In a series of recent

papers published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine and The American Journal of Sports Medicine the researchers noted that while 14 of 26 subjects exhibited the greatest amount of knee laxity during the ovulation phase, while 10 others had the greatest laxity during the follicular phase and two subjects during the luteal phase.



A world away, two planets somewhat like Earth

THE MOST Earth-sized planet and the most temperate planet known beyond our solar system both circle a dim red star 21 light-years away. These discoveries, announced at a meeting in

England, moved astronomers a step closer to their dreams of finding other planets capable of supporting life as we understand it.

Since 1995, scientists have found more than 350 planets orbiting other stars, but most suffer from the same problems that make our

neighbours in the solar system so inhospitable.

Many of the so-called extrasolar planets orbit so close that their stars would

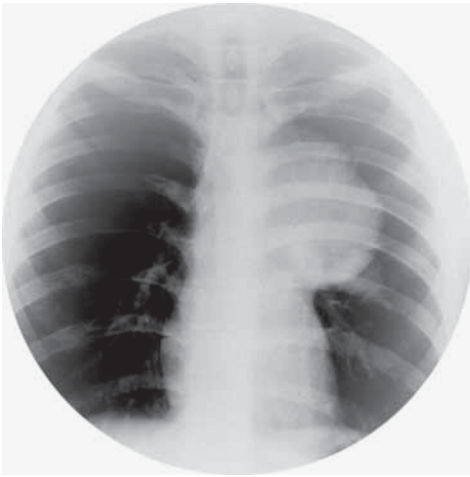
sterilize their surfaces. Others are jumbo "gas giants," like Jupiter, and therefore unlikely to have solid surfaces.

Astronomers suspect that Earthlike planets are out there but that they are nearly impossible to detect with current technology.

This latest finding came from a Swiss and French team working at the European Southern Observatory in Chile. They announced this latest finding at an international conference at the University of

Hertfordshire, in conjunction with the European Week of Astronomy and Space Science.





A urine test predict lung cancer risk

A urine test that catches high levels of two tobacco-related compounds might reveal which cigarette smokers are most likely to develop lung cancer, researchers reported at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research. The study is the first to use biomarkers in urine to delineate lung cancer risk between large groups of smokers.

The urine samples obtained from smokers who later developed lung cancer were more than eight times as likely to have high levels of two tobacco-related

compounds when compared with samples collected from the smokers who did not get lung cancer. The samples were gathered an average of five years before cancer was found, says study coauthor Jian-Min Yuan, an epidemiologist at the University of Minnesota.

The researchers measured a breakdown product of nitrosamine called NNAL, a known tobacco-related carcinogen, and cotinine, a marker of nicotine in the body.

Unlikely life thriving at Antarctica's Blood Falls

An unmapped reservoir of briny liquid chemically similar to sea water, but hidden under an inland Antarctic glacier, appears to support microbial life in a cold, dark, oxygen-poor environment -- a most unexpected setting to be teeming with life.

The McMurdo Dry Valleys of Antarctica are devoid of animals and complex plants and scientists consider them to be one of the Earth's most extreme deserts. The Valleys receive, on average, only 10 cm (3.93 inches) of snow each year. Despite the lack of precipitation, during the Antarctic summer, temperatures rise just enough for glaciers protruding into the valleys to begin melting. The meltwater forms streams

that enter lakes covered by ice that is two-to-three-stories thick.

Even less forgiving are the conditions found below the Taylor Glacier, an outlet glacier of the East Antarctic Ice Sheet in the otherwise ice-free Dry Valleys. The lack of light beneath the glacier makes the process of photosynthesis improbable, causing researchers to wonder how organisms found below the glacier could survive.

The research, which appears in the April 17 issue of *Science*, suggests that over the past 1.5 million years the microbes adapted to manipulate sulfur and iron compounds to survive. In place of photosynthesis, the microbes converted Fe(III) to Fe(II) to create food and energy.



Wildfires add to speed of global warming

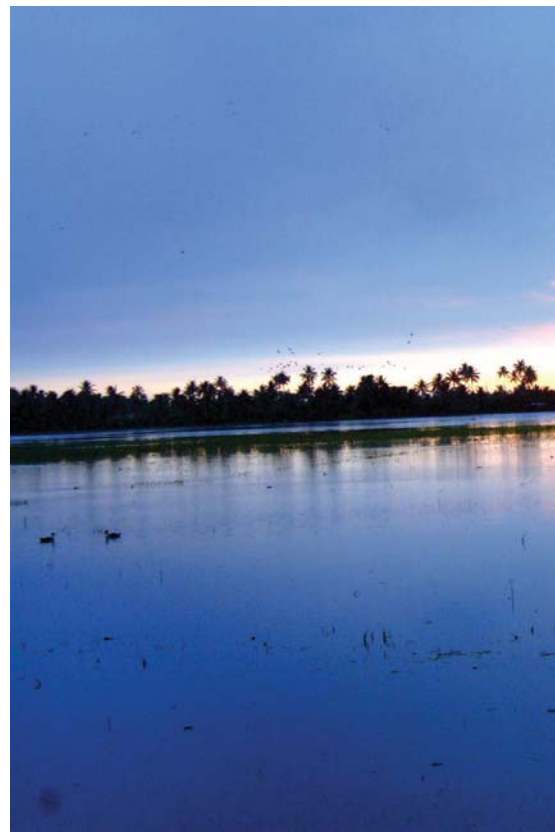
Wildfires that ravage California and other major forested areas around the world are speeding the pace of global warming as they pump more and more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

And the planet's rising temperatures that spur droughts and hotter summers, in turn, are sparking even more widespread fires.

Those warnings come from an international team of fire specialists from six nations, who declare that the global science agency that governs international actions aimed at reversing climate change must

include the effects of forest fires in predicting how fast temperatures will rise in coming years.

The report on wildfires and climate is being published in the journal *Science*. One of fire's most significant contributors to global warming are the thousands of acres deliberately torched each year - particularly in the tropics - to clear forested land for farms, according to three leading authors of the study. That kind of deforestation accounts for about one-fifth of all the human-caused greenhouse gas emissions every year, the scientists agreed.





PHOTOFEATURE
BY PHOTOLOVE

Shutter speed of a camera can vary, but the nature's clock has its unchanging pace. Clicks from Kuttanadu Dawn.

Photos
Dalu Parameswaran
I & P R D

