

People's Planning
for Nava Kerala

The ever-smiling
red rays of the Sun

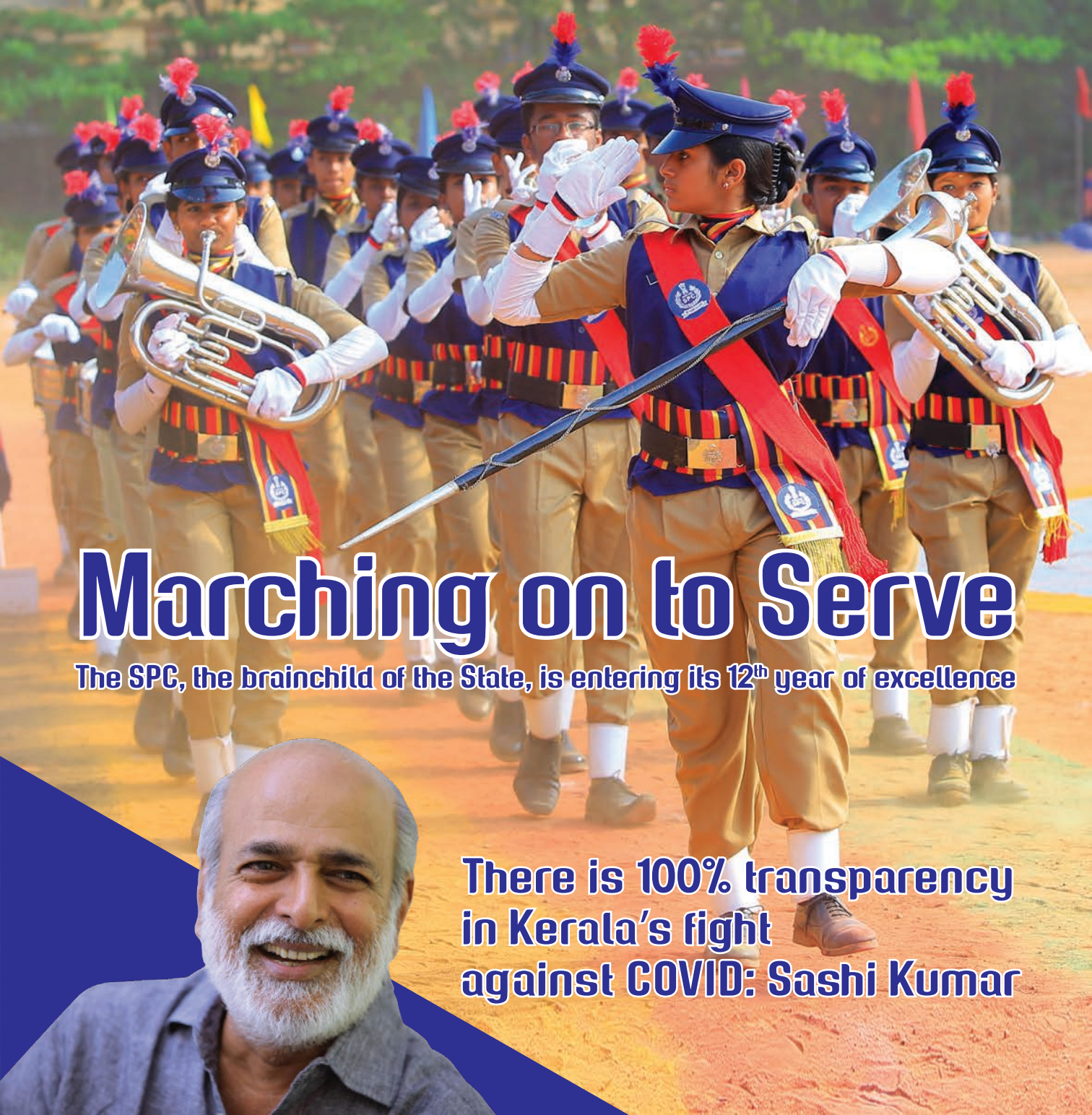
Ripples of Independence Struggle
in Malayalam literature

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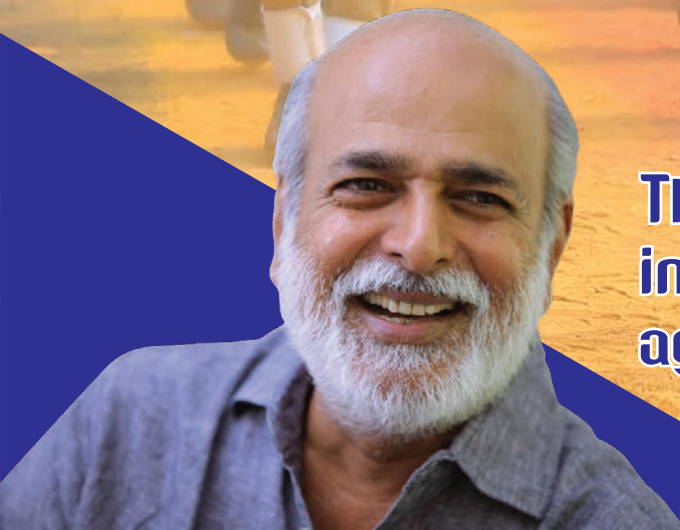
2021 AUGUST 01



Marching on to Serve

The SPC, the brainchild of the State, is entering its 12th year of excellence

There is 100% transparency
in Kerala's fight
against COVID: Sashi Kumar



Neeraj Chopra wins historic athletics gold medal in the Tokyo Olympics 2020





“THE RED RAYS OF THE EVER-SMILING SUN ARE SO BLESSED TODAY”

This is a translation of the first line of an Onam song penned by the gifted poet of Malayalam, Sreekumaran Thampi. He wrote ‘Enuum chirikkunna suryante chenkathir innethra dhanyathayarnnu’. The poet wishes to show that Onam has a special place in the hearts of Malayalis across the world. The rays of the sun are blessed, but they assume a more significant blessedness on Onam days!

But, since last year, Onam days have been marred by the ongoing pandemic. The contagion has been plaguing our lives, and dimming the lustre of not only Onam but other important festivals across the world as well. Our state has been engaged in a relentless battle against the COVID-19 pandemic and it is high time we gave our unconditional support to the government by totally adhering to the instructions frequently issued by the healthcare professionals. It is natural to feel we are on cloud nine when an important celebration comes but this time we must be more cautious. We have enjoyed many Onams and certainly there are many Onams to

celebrate in the coming years. At present, let us display our sense of propriety during these festival days, and our self-discipline will be lauded by posterity.

In August, we celebrate the silver jubilee of the People’s Planning Programme (Janakeeyasoothranam) which heralded a new era in the State by establishing local people’s authority in various areas of development and welfare, and limiting the scope of control of the state government over the local bodies. The local self-government system was structurally strengthened in such a way that no one could decide matters unilaterally. The People’s Planning Programme has laid the foundation for major changes in public education, public health, poverty alleviation, and housing. It is worth mentioning that the Pinarayi Vijayan Government assumed power for the second time in the very year we are celebrating the silver jubilee of People’s Planning.

There are other equally substantial reasons for conducting celebrations in this Onam month, though on

a muted scale. The Student Police Cadet (SPC) is entering its 12th year in August. With a view to making students committed citizens, the SPC has become an inevitable wing in most of the schools in Kerala.

One of the most talented and popular actors in our country, Mammooty, is completing his 50th year of presence on screen in August. By showcasing his multi-faceted talent in acting, the legendary actor has carved a special niche in every Malayali heart. Kerala Calling honours him by carrying an excellent article on the actor.

Articles on literature, festivals and tourism are featured in this issue. Let us not forget to take care of ourselves amidst the festival celebrations. Stay home, stay safe.

And do read this issue from cover to cover!

**Happy Onam
to all our readers.**

S. Harikishore I.A.S.
Editor-in-Chief

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More a celebration of the unborn future



K. Satchidanandan
Poet



Take a close look, and one can immediately see that Onam is more a celebration of the unborn future than that of some remote and inaccessible past.

The legend behind the Onam festival in Kerala is well-known: it celebrates the annual visit of Mahabali, the Asura king who had ruled what is now Kerala in the mythical past, driven into the netherworld by Vamana, a dwarfish incarnation of Vishnu sent on a mission to end Mahabali's rule upon the earth by the gods of Heaven jealous of the Asura king's popularity and his rule based on equality, justice and honesty. The famous Onam song dedicated to the legendary ruler lists out his virtues that made people across the society happy and contented.

We do not know more about Mahabali though there have been several conjectures. Examining a myth for its

historical content may be an interesting academic exercise but is of little use to the general public who celebrate the ideal king's return, a boon granted by Vishnu to fulfil the king's last wish to visit his subjects once a year.

Take a close look, and one can immediately see that Onam is more a celebration of the unborn future than that of some remote and inaccessible past. The legendary king embodies all the virtues needed for good governance: kindness, love, sense of fairness, equal treatment of all citizens irrespective of religion, caste and class, commitment to justice and truth and opposition to corruption of every kind. No one is sure such a king or a government ever existed

in reality, but that is certainly the Utopia we all hold dear, a dream for whose realisation all right-thinking people strive endlessly. Such a world may never arrive; but unless we hold this dream close to our hearts and dedicate ourselves to it working tirelessly and fighting injustices and inequalities of every kind, that casteless, classless, secular egalitarian world is never going to turn real.

A close look at the way Onam is celebrated will reveal more layers of meaning: the idols made of clay indicate its earthiness, the flowers collected from neighbourhoods mostly by children used for worship suggest human being's eternal relationship with nature, the new clothes exchanged and the feast that brings all family members together implies the fullness of happiness, the games that follow remind us of health and the songs sung and the dances performed tell us of the role of art in everyday life. And no one is left out: men, women, children, of every class, caste and religion that makes it a regional, and not a religious, festival.

Onam is also a marker of our regional identity wherever we are as it is celebrated by Malayalis in other parts of India and of the world. I myself have taken part in several such celebrations in the Gulf countries as well as in Europe. It is also a festival of literature: there is hardly any significant journal in Malayalam that does not bring out an Onam special number carrying some of the best samples of creative writing done during the year. And many

And no one is left out: men, women, children, of every class, caste and religion that makes it a regional, and not a religious, festival.

writers keep some of their best pieces for inclusion in these special numbers. Thus Onam provides another feast, this time, symbolic, of poetry, fiction and other forms of writing. Several films are released during the season and art exhibitions held besides the staging of plays and the holding of competitions for children. No one is deprived, no one is an outcast; it is an inclusive festival that brings us the message of unity and what it can achieve in the long run.

This year, like last year too, we are celebrating Onam during a pandemic that has left many scars on our bodies and minds, on our society and economy. But let us hope we will see better days and the message of Onam will enliven our dreams of a different world, a safer world that offers justice to all and realises the intimate bond between man and nature whose loss has been one of the reasons for the many tragedies we witness all around: deluge, drought, climate change and epidemics of all kinds. Onam is a reminder of that kinship telling us that man is not the lord of the earth: it is the home of several species of animals, birds and plants and we are only one among them and our history is but one line in the history of this planet, and our species-arrogance may well turn suicidal if we do not change our ways of looking at life, progress and development.

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People's Planning for Nava Kerala

M.V. Govindan Master
Minister for
Local Self Governments



It's been a meaningful 25 years. Amidst the glory of the core and tangible achievements, People's Plan has been recognized as a development initiative that the whole country desires to adopt. This model of decentralization by Kerala is phenomenal in the country. Most of the States in our country are still not ready to enact legislation in order to transfer the power of planning to the local bodies.

No other state has performed it as extensively as ours in every level of the three-tier Panchayati Raj System. Local self-government bodies do not have the political will to overcome the interest and pressure of the caste-feudal landlordism and capitalist powers. People's Planning was made possible in the wake of the Renaissance movement and the Left alternative development model in Kerala. When the concept of Navakerala becomes a reality, we will see strong progressions in the decentralized planning that has paved the way for new alternatives of public welfare and social protection. From the time of the E.M.S.Namboodiripad led government that came to power in the year 1957, the Leftist governments in Kerala adopted a different view and approach

in comparison to the other national and state governments of India. This resulted in the People's Planning movement that was kick started in the year 1996. In this new path of democracy, the gap between those who rule and those who are ruled has been narrowed. Ordinary people have the opportunity to decide what they want. Decentralized planning has helped to find solutions to their problems in a transparent manner. It is also a fact that this platform has been very helpful in realizing the popular alternatives of the Left.

The concept of Grama Swaraj was initially put forth during the Indian independence movement. Along with national liberation, decentralization was one of our goals at that time. Negotiations for decentralization have

been heated since independence. Panchayati Raj and Municipality laws came into force in various states with the enactment of the Guiding Principles of the Constitution and their inclusion in the Seventh Schedule so that the States could legislate on the Panchayat and Urban Governance. The panchayats and governing bodies of those days had no powers. During the British rule, urban institutions came into existence as a system for urban sanitation. They could not evolve with the progressive growth of a democratic society. Some states conducted elections as if there were no precise conditions. For some, the election has been extended indefinitely. When the Central Government received the report of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1958 stating the need to strengthen decentralization, they took the report in a facetious manner. They were not prepared to make strong legislation based on it. Panchayati Raj institutions, which functioned on the basis of laws passed by the state legislatures, were no-nonsense nooks and crannies. The situation in Kerala was no different.

Even before the establishment of United Kerala, the Travancore-Kochi Panchayat Act of 1950, the Madras Village Panchayat Act, the Kerala Panchayat Act of 1960 and the Municipal Acts of Kerala were introduced for the establishment of panchayats and municipalities across Kerala. Unfortunately, their powers were nominal. In the absence of a comprehensive and powerful constitutional amendment, the state legislation for decentralization was also ineffective. Until the early 1990s, the ruling class was able to hold on to power without the effect of persistent popular interventions for decentralization. The Panchayati Raj and Municipal Amendment Acts enacted in the year

The Government will strengthen the coordination of Local Government Departments and intensify the process of realizing the Local Self Government Public Service.

1993, paved the way for comprehensive decentralization of power in the country. States enacted legislation within the ambit of the Constitution Amendment Act. Factually, those laws were not enough to fulfill the aspirations of the people for decentralized planning. Prior to the amendment of the Constitution in Kerala, the district council law introduced by the E.K.Nayanar government (1987-1991), opened up a wide range of possibilities for decentralization. In the context of constitutionally amended laws, it would have been possible to bring power to the people in a much better way. But such a view did not emerge at those times.

Decentralization of power was one of the most important development priorities of the E.K.Nayanar government, who came into power in the year 1996. The decision of the Left government to hand over one-third of the State budget to the local bodies with full planning authority marked the beginning of the People's Planning. Based on the recommendations of the Sen Committee and the State Finance Commission, the Amendment Acts of 1999 and 2000 provided the legal framework for participatory regional planning. The Ninth Five Year Plan should be termed as the People's Plan, which ensured the public interest by eliminating bureaucracy in the planning and implementation of development projects. People's Planning was made a reality through an all-encompassing people's campaign that ensured the support and participation of the entire people, who understood the importance of people's involvement by educating the people on development issues.

People's Planning marked an exceptional turning point in the history of Kerala's development by establishing local people's authority in the areas of development and welfare, which limited the control of the state government

over the local bodies. The local self-government system was structurally strengthened in such a way that neither the ruling party nor the Front could decide matters unilaterally. People handed over meaning and power to the local governments. People's Planning has laid the foundation for major changes in areas such as public education, public health, poverty alleviation, and housing. With the exception of medical colleges and specialty hospitals, treatment centers came under the control of the local bodies. The schools were handed over to the local self governments. Moreover, in the areas of agriculture and animal husbandry, the leadership and control of local bodies were ensured. Local self-governments have emerged to lead the political and welfare work at the local level. That is how the Malayalis triumphantly accomplished the achievements that the whole country and the world consider as role models. Many challenges had to be faced in the early stages of People's Planning. The most important challenge was the lack of experience. The first annual plan of the people's planning period was prepared after more than a year of preparation. The planning framework, which includes the Planning Gram Sabha, Ward Sabha, Development Seminar, Action Committees, Plan Document, Block-District Plans and District Planning Committees, strengthened the structural foundation of People's Planning.

For the first time in the country, it was a reflection of the feminist politics of the Left to set aside 10 per cent of the plan outlay for women in the local bodies of Kerala. While there were very weak self-help groups in every part of the state in the early nineties, the Kudumbasree system, which was developed with the support of the people as part of the People's Planning campaign, ensured the comprehensive participation of women in the local development process. The E.M.S Housing Scheme came to existence for the poor who are facing the dilemma of not having a roof over their heads. It successfully put forward massive social development projects in the shadow of People's Planning.

The true essence of the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which empower elected local self governments to plan and execute development projects, cannot be found anywhere else in the country as in the case of the people's planning campaign in Kerala. Under the Left

The five-year activities of the government headed by Pinarayi Vijayan, who came to power in the year 2016, further highlighted the excellence of People's Planning. Planning committees at the local self government level has given a new dimension to local planning.



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan makes the inaugural speech during the silver jubilee celebration of Peoples Planning.

government, People's Planning is progressing in a brilliant manner. It is also a reflection of their political will. It is not a trivial matter that Kerala has reached the stage where implementation of development projects starts from the first day of the financial year. Ninety per cent of the project cost was deemed impossible. But Kerala has managed to achieve that goal as well eventually. When examined at various levels such as power, bureaucracy, day-to-day governance and financial security, one can see that Kerala has the strongest local self-government system in the country.

The five-year activities of the government headed by Pinarayi Vijayan, who came to power in the year 2016, further highlighted the excellence of People's Planning. Planning committees at the local self government level has given a new dimension to local planning. The second E.M.S Government came to power in the year 1967. The first government led by Pinarayi Vijayan was the first in the country to implement the concept of district plan introduced by the E.M.S government for the first time. Development activities under the auspices of Trithala Panchayats, Municipalities and various other Government Departments were coordinated at the district level. Local bodies also played a crucial role in disaster management after the 2018 floods. Disaster management schemes at the local government level have been hailed as a shining example in the history of people's governance.

Kerala was the first State in India to report the corona virus case. Kerala has the highest number of covid patients or vectors from other states and abroad. While the number of capitalist countries in the world could not resist the spread of covid, it was up to Kerala to overcome all adverse factors and control the spread of the disease to some extent. This excellence has earned us national and international acclaim. The exemplary functioning of the ward level vigilance committees, the setting up of community kitchens and the setting up of first line treatment centers were Kerala models that other states could not even imagine. Local bodies have been playing a crucial role in strengthening public awareness and mobilizing health workers to mitigate the impact of the epidemic even after the outbreak of the disease and the threat of the second wave of Covid.

The government led by Pinarayi Vijayan came to power for the second time in the silver jubilee year of People's Planning. It is moving in a manner that further illuminates the spirit of decentralization of power to the people. The Government will strengthen the coordination of Local Government Departments and intensify the process of realizing the Local Self Government Public Service. When the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the People's Planning Movement are organized throughout the state in a year-long manner, the Government will be able to move forward with the strength to create a People's Planning Navakerala from the old regimes of decentralization.

At this stage, the local bodies in Kerala are trying to inculcate a new culture of development. With the help of People's Planning, Kerala was able to overcome these crises that any nation would have been devastated by when the okhi, nipah, catastrophic floods, natural calamities and the covid pandemic hit us. It is through the participation of the people that Kerala has been able to realize world-class models such as Ardhram, Life, Public Education Protection Yajna and Green Kerala Mission.

We have a number of achievements to offer, including clean public spaces, an environmentally conscious community reclaiming the culture of agriculture and water conservation, and a leap into food self-sufficiency through prosperous Kerala. This Government is striving to make Kerala's people's development model adequate to meet the challenges of the new age. The Poverty Alleviation Program, the unparalleled interventions to provide employment to the unemployed, the new form of the Nava Kerala Mission and the intensification of efforts to achieve in the agricultural sector will make this Government more popular. The Government is moving forward with the vision of eliminating technical glitches, simplifying procedures and utilizing modern technologies to ensure transparency and efficiency in the day-to-day operations and planning activities of local bodies. In the fullness of the Silver Jubilee, let us write the brightest pages of the People's Planning movement.

All set to give away Onam special food kits



The Government is all set to distribute Government's Onam special food kits. Minister for Food and Civil Supplies G.R. Anil inaugurated the distribution of the special food kits. He also inaugurated the Supplyco Onam district fairs at a function at Putharikandam Maidan, Thiruvananthapuram. During the time of the pandemic, the State government took stringent actions to ensure that people were not starving during the pandemic. As part of this, the Government has introduced COVID packages to provide a helping hand to the people. The government also commenced 70 new outlets of Supplyco and renovated the outlets. Kerala has been able to modulate the prices of essential items more than any other State. The government has distributed Athijeevanam kits to ensure food for everyone. Actions were taken to distribute food grain to card-holders. Apart from this, steps have been taken to deliver ration items directly to tribal settlements. Minister for Transport, Antony Raju presided over the function and Minister for General Education, V. Sivankutty made the first sale of the Supplyco Onam district fair. Household equipment will also be available at the fairs. Branded products will be available on the market at a 5 to 30 per cent discount. The Onam special food kit included 1 kg sugar, 500 ml coconut oil, 500 gm green gram, 250 gm toor dal, 100 gm tea, 100 gm chilly powder, 100 gm turmeric powder, 1 kg salt, 180 gm of vermicelli, 180 gm of 500 gm raw rice, 50 gm cashew nuts, 20 gm cardamom, 50 ml ghee, 100 gm sarkara varatti or upperi, 1 kg wheat flour and one bath soap. The government would also conduct Taluk fairs, Onam markets and Onam mini fairs for the public. Besides that, the government is planning to establish Supplyco supermarkets in KSRTC bus stand complexes.



Nilav project to cut down power bills

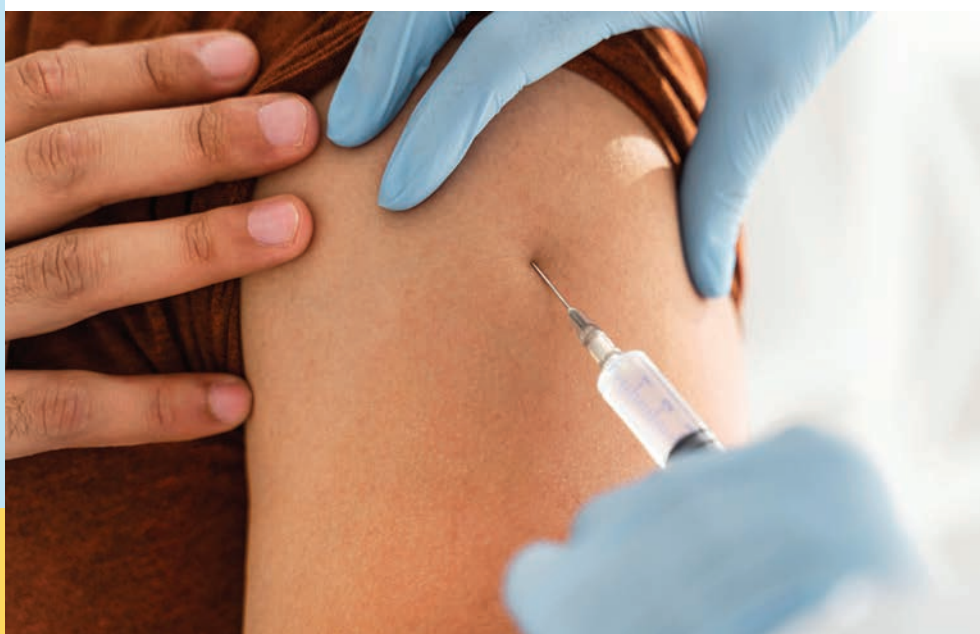
With the success of the Nilav Project, the government of Kerala is about to launch the second phase of this project. Nilav project aims to replace existing street lights with energy-efficient and environment friendly LED lights. About 2lakh street lights have been replaced in the first phase of this project so far. Apart from this, around 10.5 lakh street lights are being replaced as part of this project. The first phase was implemented in 446 local self institutions including 411 grama panchayaths and 35 corporations. The project would help to save 185 million units of electricity and help to save Rs 80 crore in power bills of local bodies every year. It is also estimated that the project, which costs Rs 298 crore and is being funded by Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), could also reduce mercury contamination of soil by 10.5 kg.



Kerala rises to every occasion



Sajini Sahadevan
Freelance Journalist



The scientific temper displayed by the people of Kerala is par excellence. It is once again proved during the vaccination drive against the COVID-19 pandemic. From the administration to the public, the Covid-19 vaccine drive has been approached in the most efficient and rational manner possible.

Kerala is in the news for all the right reasons yet again with the Pinarayi-led administration having ensured negative Covid-19 vaccine wastage. In May, in a tweet by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, it was announced that the Centre supplied 73,38,806 doses to Kerala but the State had a total count of administered shots at 74,26,164. This means even the extra dose available to factor in the wastage factor in each vial was used. In early June, Veena George, Kerala's Minister of Health, said that more than 1 crore people in the State had received the Covid vaccine and lauded the efforts of the health workers in carrying out the task with efficiency and sincerity.

Prominent voices in Kerala's scientific, socio-cultural and medical fields attribute this achievement to the training and dedicated service of health workers, right from the top brass of the health administration to the ASHA workers, and an educated population. Many

states are dealing with the challenge of convincing a vaccine-resistant population about the importance of registering to get the jab but in Kerala, as Ramesh B, editor of Sastra Gati, published by the Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad rightly said, "The situation was such that so many people showed up to the point where an extra dose was not available." Most recently there were news reports of health officials arriving to conduct an awareness campaign at a tribal village in Orissa, only to find that the members had fled, terrified after they had supposedly watched a misleading video on social media.

According to Dr KP Aravindan, pathology expert and member of the State Planning Board for COVID-19, Kerala's population has been exposed to much debate on the topic through media agencies, gaining awareness and reaching a sensible conclusion. "This is apart from the training imparted to the State's health workers. They are directed to open a

vial only when a minimum number of people have arrived at the centre.” Dr. Aravindan adds that while there is always the tendency for efforts by anti-vaccine activists to gain equal traction through various sources, the turnout of people who want to get vaccinated is encouraging.

Anti-vaccine advocates could not quite drum up a response from Kerala’s public. Ramesh says timely intervention by the State government made all the difference. “Yes, there were people including natural health advocates whose videos were doing the rounds even during the Nipah virus crisis. But the government took legal action against them. That is a strong message being sent out. This time too, the Health minister warned of legal action when such videos started doing the rounds. If the administration had taken a neutral stance, it would have left people in the dark. The clear stance gave good mileage to the vaccine campaign as people were left in no doubt about the government’s stand.”

This is not the first time Kerala has made news for its rational decision-making abilities. In 2018, the State was in the news for the way its people united to rise from the onslaught of the floods, a calamity unlike any that had occurred in the last 100 years in Kerala. “Kerala was able to set an example during the floods that were hitherto unseen in other states,” says Dr. Thara KG, Head, Disaster Management Centre, Institute of Land & Disaster Management. The following year, she points out how a mosque in Kavalappara was allowed to be used as a makeshift autopsy centre by the management of Salafi Juma Masjid after a landslide claimed many lives. The closest morgue at the Medical College in Manjeri was two hours away and the PHC nearby lacked adequate space. The members of the mosque arranged all the facilities required.

Kerala has such a culture, its health workers have been trained and given instructions well, its society, on the whole, is service-oriented, educated and this reflects on things. Now, everyone knows the vaccine is needed.

The number of health professionals in the State is more than in any other. A report submitted by the Finance Commission, which had a chapter dedicated to health for the first time, revealed that in 2018, Kerala fared above other states when it came to nurses per population.

Kerala’s success story takes two tangoes. Dr. Jayshree Maitreyan, community health specialist and social activist notes, “Without demand, there is no supply. So credit goes to Kerala’s health workers for achieving negative Covid vaccine wastage and to the people for coming forward to receive the vaccine.” She says considering Kerala’s track record it comes as no surprise that the State has reported zero vaccine wastage. “Kerala has such a culture, its health workers have been trained and given instructions well, its society, on the whole, is service-oriented, educated and this reflects on things. Now, everyone knows the vaccine is needed. Even the small percentage of people who were against the polio vaccine and now those who tried to spread misinformation have failed to make an impact. All vaccine-preventable diseases have been dealt with successfully through in between there were cases of diphtheria and whooping cough emerging again. Steps were taken immediately to contain the same. People are also anxious about the shortage of vaccines now so they are sensible and making use of the availability now. Due credit must also be given to health workers for the fact that they have succeeded in achieving zero wastage. The public does not know that part, the technical knowledge required to do so. It is, however, the demand on the part of the public that makes it a need.” Ramesh attributes this awareness to a generation of teachers in the 60s who, as part of the school syllabus, introduced the importance of health and hygiene to children. “This has always stayed with them and it continues in schools even now.” He recalls the Break the Chain campaign introduced by the State government in March last year which promoted scientific methods step-by-step to ensure people took precautions

to keep the disease at bay, installing taps with running water and hand wash at public spaces and urging private companies to do the same. “Even those with minimum awareness about the scenario know that the alcohol in the sanitiser removes microbes to a certain extent.”

“Malayalis, from youngsters to grandmothers have been waiting for the vaccine, considering it to be a life-saver,” Ramesh says. “As a much-debated topic, people knew that research was going on and so there was an expectation of a vaccine that would arrive very soon. Of course, there was a section of the population that was sceptical and so, hung back to see how the vaccine reacted on those who had opted for it in the initial days. But once they overcame that doubt and stigma, people have been getting registered. When it comes to health, people have been relying on authentic information.”

A report in the Indian Express (IE) quotes Sanjoy Bhattacharya, professor in History of Medicine at the University of York and author of *Expunging Variola: The control and eradication of smallpox in India (1947-1977)* and co-author of *Fractured states: Smallpox, public health and vaccination policy in British India, 1800-1947* as saying that the country’s success in eradicating smallpox was in large part due to its immunization campaign powered by countless community workers. It is reminiscent of the current scenario where ASHA workers have been instrumental in spreading information about the Covid-19 vaccine and convincing people to get vaccinated.

Ramesh points out an important factor: the number of health professionals in the State which is more than in any other. A report submitted by the Finance Commission, which had a chapter dedicated to health for the first time, revealed that in 2018, Kerala fared above other states when it came to nurses per population.

The pandemic has stretched human resources in the State but the health workforce has continued to hold for it, setting an example and proving to be inspirational in their work.

Bhattacharya puts it aptly in the IE report: “The hand that holds the vaccine is as important as the vaccine.”



SPC @ 12



Sarath P.
I & PRD, Thrissur



The seed was sown in 2006. In 2010, it germinated. Now, the Student Police Cadet (SPC) has grown into a gigantic nature standing by the State and people for every need even in crises. The States pride, SPC, is entering its 12th year

With diligence, tenacity and perseverance, dreams become attainable. In 2010, the State Government launched a Student Police Cadet (SPC) scheme with the objective of fostering a voluntarily law-abiding, socially committed, harmoniously co-existing and environmentally - aware generation. It aims to develop students' circles into a civic, purposeful, socially committed and service-minded community, alongside their academic activities. Despite being a juvenile police force, the SPC was able to successfully gain national attention for its vision and work. This flagship project from Kerala has also received worldwide recognition.

The public education system in Kerala is

far more extensive than any other State in India. The change in the contents of this comprehensive system has given a public front to our education model. The new curriculum enables a child to engage in learning activities from his or her experiential environment, availing their own method of problem-solving. Our public education system will attain its goal only when the gifts of these children will be employed for the good of the country. This is where the concept of Student Police Cadet stems from.

It aims to develop high school students into change leaders with the pre-requisite knowledge, skills, sense of responsibility and love for one another. It is a systematic operation that lasts for two

years. The project yielded twice as much as expected. The children enthusiastically fulfilled all their responsibilities. The disciplined demeanour of the cadets won much appreciation. With the scheme seeing success, the Department of Education and the Home Department have jointly initiated the necessary steps to implement it in all the districts.

In a short span of time, this scheme was put into practice by other States, with Kerala being their example. This scheme also helps to ensure the holistic development of a person's character by attaining the intended objective through education.

With the motto 'We Learn to Serve' in mind, SPCs serve the community with a selfless motive in contrast to the clichéd job-seeking mindset of their peer group. SPCs have successfully evolved as one of the most pertinent social products of the 21st century, integrating the unparalleled potential of the modern age. SPCs operate under the same discipline and leadership as the police system, but also acts as a partnership organization with various other departments simultaneously. Some of the schemes launched with this group's active involvement are 'My Tree My Dream' in collaboration with the Forest Department, the 'Shubhayathra Road Awareness and Traffic Education Program' in partnership with the Transport Department, a prevention of alcohol and drug abuse campaign in collaboration with the Excise Department, Mukthi scheme for waste management and Santhwanam treatment scheme in a tie-up with the palliative care.

SPC has organized a number of public welfare programmes by offering food, clothing, shelter, blood donation camps and a 'television challenge' under their leadership in order to help Kerala recover from the Nipah virus and natural calamities that have affected the state since 2018. The SPC scheme also enables cadets to acquire the attributes expected of good citizens. It helps children pick up many imperative skills required to lead a successful life alongside learning.

The concept of the SPC was introduced in 2006 as part of the Kochi City Police's 'Janakeeyam' project by the Kochi City Police Commissioner P.Vijayan I.P.S. during his tenure. NSS volunteers from selected schools in the city held discussions and debates on topical issues



with senior police officials. Over the next few days, the children were given the opportunity to work with the police as well as traffic police as assistants.

This incident underscored the importance of police and children getting to know each other and working hand-in-hand. This is where the idea of teaming the students up with the police on a longstanding basis came into play. When the State School Youth Festival, one of the largest art festivals in Asia, was organized in Kozhikode in the year 2010, the enthusiasm and sense of responsibility displayed by the student cadets trained by the police, brought the SPC project to the attention of the public as well as the media.

A generation of physically and mentally healthy people are indispensable in our country. Indeed, there is no other scheme as helpful as SPC in creating such individuals. Hence, the Government aims to provide the benefits of SPC to as many students as possible.

SPC was initiated as a police-youth experiment in 2006 in three selected schools of Kerala. Inspired by the remarkable results of this experiment, SPC was officially launched as a Kerala Government initiative on 2nd August 2010. The pilot phase marked the implementation of the SPC programs in 127 Govt/Govt-Aided schools of the state.

Around 65000 students in 803 schools are currently undergoing the structured two-year training under SPC program. SPC resource persons presently comprise of more than 2000 trained teachers, about 2500 police officers and various eminent personalities from different walks of life. About one 1.5 lakh cadets have graduated from the program over the last decade. It has been decided that the SPC scheme would be extended to 197 more schools as part of the Government's '100-day action plan'.



They made their Panchayath plastic-free

SPCs of Pattikkad GHSS removed 37 tonnes plastic garbage in six months.

The SPCs (Student Police Cadet) of Pattikkad, a small hamlet in Panancheri panchayat, kick-started a truly inspiring initiative recently. The cadets of Pattikkad GHSS have proved to be shining role models after setting a record by clearing 37 tonnes of plastic debris within six months. The waste removal project Mukthi, initiated by the student police, adds more lustre to the inception of the Student Police Cadet initiative which is celebrating its 12th anniversary. Though the waste removal project Mukthi, which started on June 5, 2015, faced many challenges, it finally caught national-level attention for its efforts.

With 23 wards, Panancheri is the largest panchayat in the Thrissur district. The mission was accomplished with 88 SPC cadets under the leadership of K. P. Nandini, CPO of the Pattikkad Government School SPC project. The project evolved from a need to treat non-biodegradable waste such as plastic at the source. It was implemented in the order of school-house-village. First, it was carried out on an experimental basis in the homes of the children. Even from the initial weeks, they continued to collect 100 kg of plastic trash from their respective homes, eventually reaching 1800 kg by June 30. They then approached Suchitwa Mission, with the requirement for agents who could transport the trash to waste processing units. The SPCs visited the grama sabhas as they had been trained in spreading



awareness from the individual unit of home to the village level.

Meanwhile, the mounting amounts of waste threw the appointed contractors into a dilemma about further collection and storage, eventually leading to their withdrawal from the mission. As the project seemed to hit a roadblock, the people of the area realised that this was no child's play that had been taken up by the youngsters. The intervention of

youth political organizations and parents led to the immediate inauguration of a few collection counters at the ward level without the activities affecting the classes of the children. The first working day of every month was then set aside to bring the materials from the centres to the school to send to the processing units. As the gravity of the project hit home, organizations from all fields - religious, youth, co-operative, traders

and residents association, came forward to support the kid cadets. They organized awareness programmes for reducing the use of plastic. Plastic waste was collected at every home without disposing of it randomly. The residents of the village offered their complete support and co-operation to the children who visited their homes every month. The project was later adopted by the Panancheri Grama Panchayat.

With Mukthi garnering national attention when the project had completed six months and as many days of its formation, it had also collected 37 tonnes of plastic. In April 2016, the Govt. HSS School was announced as the winner of the Asian Record of the Universal Record Forum and Global Warming award. The school later received at least 30 notable honours including the Suchitwa Mission award. To keep the momentum going, the school has organized a 'Collect Plastic Waste, Win a Cycle' campaign. Every academic year between 2015 and 2018, has seen a cycle being awarded to the first 10 students to have collected the most amount of plastic waste - that is 30 cycles to 30 children as a part of the project in three years. Efforts like this helped reduce the amount of plastic in the panchayat, the amount now hovering around 180 to 200 tonnes. The project had a successful run from 2015 to 2018 before it was taken up by Block Panchayat. The cadets created foundations for the trees at the school using plastic bottles and nylon threads. They also started organic farming, successfully harvesting spinach, ladies finger and green chilli on the school terrace. After meeting all the expenses for farming, the remaining amount of Rs.42,000 was given to the Attappadi Tribal Centre to help treat children with anaemia and a dialysis unit in the Thrissur district.

Standing by the people in crises

The SPC had a major role in saving Kerala from a catastrophe. The State has been battered by consecutive bouts of crises, from the floods of 2018 to the current pandemic. As Kerala soldiered on, the SPC stood by its side. The initiatives taken by the SPC to secure the safety of their land has been remarkable. Mission Better Tomorrow with ABT-Nanma to feed the hungry was one such project. It has helped feed 7 lakh homeless destitutes. Food was prepared at 24 centres in 19 police districts for



this. The programme then extended to include migrant workers, isolated tribal settlements, hostlers and hospital patients.

Dream Home



SPC also collaborated on the Dream Home project wherein 57 houses were constructed for the homeless. Three of them were completed during the lockdown while the construction of seven houses is still in progress.

Jeevadhara Blood Donor's Bank



Jeevadhara is a state-level network of blood donors organised by SPC for ensuring the availability of blood during the lockdown. Jeevadhara will provide blood donors when there is a shortage. More than 3.5 lakh blood donors have been included in the Jeevadhara blood bank within such a limited period.

The list largely includes police officers, teachers and the parents of SPC cadets. The project aims at expanding the list to include 10 lakh volunteers as blood donors.

Hashtag and awareness campaign



SPC cadets conducted awareness campaigns to stop the further spread of COVID-19. They sought the help of their parents to organize a 'Break Chain Make Change' campaign, creating short films, photos and caricatures to spread the message. More than 44,731 videos and photos were circulated on social media as part of the campaign. Government advisory and Covid protocol videos prepared in the native tongues of migrant workers was well-received.

Sadaram



A programme jointly coordinated by the bakers' association and MBT-Nanma with SPC, Sadaram to honour the efforts of frontline workers by providing them with food kits. These included health workers, sanitation members and police officers. Food kits and clothes were also distributed among ambulance drivers and staff at public crematoriums who performed their duties as fearless warriors during the beginning of the second wave.



Child Youth Centres Programme

Children suffered a sudden change in lifestyle as a result of the lockdown which caused them much mental stress. Kerala Police in association with NANMA Foundation, SPC and Our Responsibility Children Program under the Department of Women and Child Development department conducted many programmes to address this problem. They introduced many activities such as vegetable gardens, Paravaykkoru Thanneerthadam (Watering Holes for Pigeons), Haritha Bhoomi, WhatsApp classrooms, Vishu kaineettam, manufacture of masks and sanitisers etc., to make the lockdown more productive and creative.

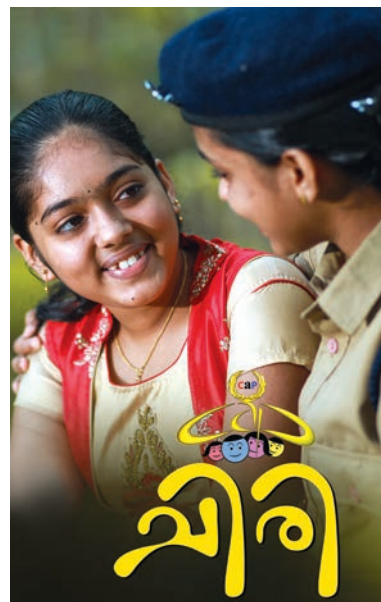
TV Challenge



The TV Challenge was introduced to resolve the limitations of the online education system. The scheme provided 5,230 television sets, 448 smartphones, 126 tablets and laptops, and 366 DTH/

cable connections to those students who were facing a roadblock in their studies due to insufficient technological support.

Chiri project



Started by Kerala Police to reduce the mental stress of children, the scheme aims to provide relief to students who have been affected by the lockdown during the pandemic. Students who have been mentally strained are provided counselling via telephone by their peer group. They were guided by experienced and service-minded psychologists, psychiatrists and teachers.

SPC Kutty Desk



Kutty Desk is a help desk started by students for their peers. SPCs advise students on how to develop their creative skills and stay safe from COVID-19 while staying at home during the lockdown. Kutty Desk was crucial in providing support to children who have been under immense mental stress. The Kutty Desk also supported students appearing for their tenth standard students in giving their public examinations.

Mere motivational talks and shallow awareness campaigns have little effect on children where creativity is needed to train and help them reach their highest potential. The desirable skills can be achieved through discipline, scientific training and creative exercises. SPC's activities are synonymous with these methods in such challenging times.



Sreejesh!

We are proud of you

Podium finish for the Indian hockey team in Olympics after 41 years and an Olympic medal to Kerala soil after 49 years. Sreejesh, we proudly cherish and profoundly value this moment. With just six seconds left, P R Sreejesh saved the penalty corner variation shot by Germany. India beat Germany 5-4 and won the gold. This was Sreejesh's third consecutive Olympics. India finished 12th and last in London and were 8th under the captainship of Sreejesh at Rio. Now his 21 year-long hard work paid off.

Now Sreejesh would be an inspirational figure for the youngsters, a role model indeed. Let us hope his amazing performance will inspire others to aim high.



Born to P R Raveendran and Usha Kumari in Kizhakkambalam, Pallikkara he had a humble beginning. His father sold their earning cow to buy him his first kit when he got selected to the junior Indian camp. Joined GV Raja Sports School as an athlete, he took up hockey in his 8th standard. Groomed by coaches Ramesh Kolapakka and Jayakumar, he made India proud many a time. He aimed for the ultimate and everything else fell in place.

The Indian hockey team won. No one won alone. But Sreejesh showed exemplary courage and motivated one and all in the testing times. Finally, his dedication and perseverance fetched him

the bronze. For we Keralites, the bronze shines more than like gold. Sreejesh, when he was 18, got a job in I O B but he joined the Kerala State service in the Education department where he was Deputy Director while winning the medal at a Tokyo. Sreejesh's wife Dr Anisha was an athlete in her school days in G V . Raja. They have two children. Anusree and Sree Ansh.

When India won bronze in 1972 Munich Olympics, Manuel Fredericks, who hails from Kannur was the goalkeeper. Later in 1980 Moscow, where India won gold Alan Schofield was the goalkeeper. He too got a Kerala connection that his

mother Grace is from Kottayam and he was born in Munnar and studied in Kalamassery. His father is Irish. But both Manuel and Alan got into the Indian team through Services, Sreejesh was groomed in Kerala. There were nine Malayalis in the Indian team for Tokyo 2020. Muhammed Anas, Noah Nirmal Tom and Amoj Jacob were in the 4 by 400 relay team which eclipsed Asian Record while finishing a creditable 9th. Now Sreejesh would be an inspirational figure for the youngsters, a role model indeed. Let us hope his amazing performance will inspire others to aim high.



Well done, India!



Sanil P. Thomas
Sports Journalist



The 120 plus Olympic bound Indian team had the onerous task of proving to the world that the Indian sports scenario is not languishing in the dark age as is generally perceived. And, they put us in good stead that our tricolour was hoisted seven times and our national anthem was heard once in the Tokyo Olympic venue, that too in the Olympic Stadium.

Hats off to Neeraj Chopra, who won the lone gold and the first medal for India in Olympics' track and field. For sure, August 7, 2021 Saturday will be etched in the Indian hearts for eternity. It was an incredible day for India in the land of the Rising Sun. Neeraj threw the javelin to 87.58 metres in his second attempt to win India's second individual Olympic gold, some 13 years after Abhinav Bindra won the first gold in shooting in Beijing. The elusive gold medal has finally been won by the twenty-three-year old from Haryana and the tricolour fluttered with the pride of every Indian, as Sachin Tendulkar pointed out.

From Henry Rebello and Baldev Singh in 1948 to Anju Bobby George in 2004,

it was near miss or bad luck. Neeraj was only the 12th Indian athlete to have entered the Olympic track and field final. The 11th was Kamalpreet Kaur in discus who finished 6th here in Tokyo. Neeraj dedicated the Gold for the Flying Sikh, Milkha Singh as the legendary athlete left us in June. He waited for over six decades to see an Indian athlete on the Olympic podium. Finally, his dream has come true!

For India, it was the best ever performance in the Olympics that we won seven medals bettering the six medal haul in London. India won one gold, two silver and four bronze this time, a giant leap from the one silver, one bronze tally in Rio in 2016.



Neeraj Chopra

Meerabai Chanu opened India's account with a silver in women's 49 kg weight lifting on the opening day indeed. The 26-year-old from Manipur had a total lift of 202 kgs; 87 in snatch and 115 in clean and jerk. The second silver was won by Ravi Kumar Dahiya in 57 kg freestyle wrestling. He lost the final against Zaur Uguev of ROC. Bajrang Punia added a bronze to the wrestling team's kitty winning the repechage match against Dailey Niyazbekov of Kazakhstan. The world number two, who had a knee injury and didn't rise to his best in the semi, came all out in the bronze medal match. It was the consecutive fourth Olympics India won medals in wrestling.

P.V. Sindhu, the reigning world champion and Rio silver medallist

For India, it was the best ever performance in Olympics that we won seven medals bettering the six medal haul in London. India won one gold two silver and four bronze this time, a giant leap from the one silver, one bronze tally in Rio in 2016.

It was after long 41 years that India touched podium in Olympic hockey. The team, led by Manpreet Singh who was India's flag bearer in the opening ceremony and with Keralite P R Sreejesh as the custodian, both playing their third Olympics did India proud by finishing third.

won bronze to become the second Indian after Suseelan Kumar to have two individual Olympic medals. Sindhu lost her semifinal to Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, whom she beat in Rio, in straight games but made a stunning comeback to beat He Bingjiao of China quite easily to grab the bronze. Lovlina Borgohain the lone athlete from Assam in the Indian squad won a bronze in women's boxing in 69 kg. Lovlina lost her semifinal to top seed and world champion Busenaz Surmenali 0-5 but the semi berth itself was enough for a bronze in Olympic boxing. She got a bye in the first round and had two upset victories in the next two. The bronze won by the Indian men's hockey team was the icing on the cake. It was after long 41 years that India touched the podium in Olympic hockey. The team led by Manpreet Singh, who was India's flag-bearer in the opening ceremony and with Keralite P R Sreejesh as the custodian, both playing their third Olympics, did



Bajrang Punia



P.V. Sindhu

Lovlina Borgohain

India proud by finishing third. Shattered by Australia 7-1 in the group stage, India made a superb comeback to have a quarter berth. India beat Britain in the quarter, lost to Belgium in the semi and came over Germany in the bronze medal match.

There were near misses for India as well. Our women hockey team lost to Britain in the bronze medal match after leading for quite some time. The distaff side led by Rani Rampal won many a heart. It was only their third Olympics and were 12th and last in Rio. Aditi Ashok who was second after three rounds just missed the medal in women's individual golf. We had high expectations on the 15 member shooting squad and archery, especially in Deepika Kumari who competed in her third Olympics. But they let India down. Vikas Krishnan's injury put him down in boxing. Six-time world champion and London bronze medallist Mary Kom could not make it to the semi-final as the 38-year-old lost her swiftness in moving. World number one women's wrestler Vineesh Phogat was just her shadow on the mat at Tokyo. Rowing team finished 12th. A performance to be counted.

Anyway it was a trendsetter for India in Olympics Tokyo 2020. Let us hope for the better in Paris just three years away.

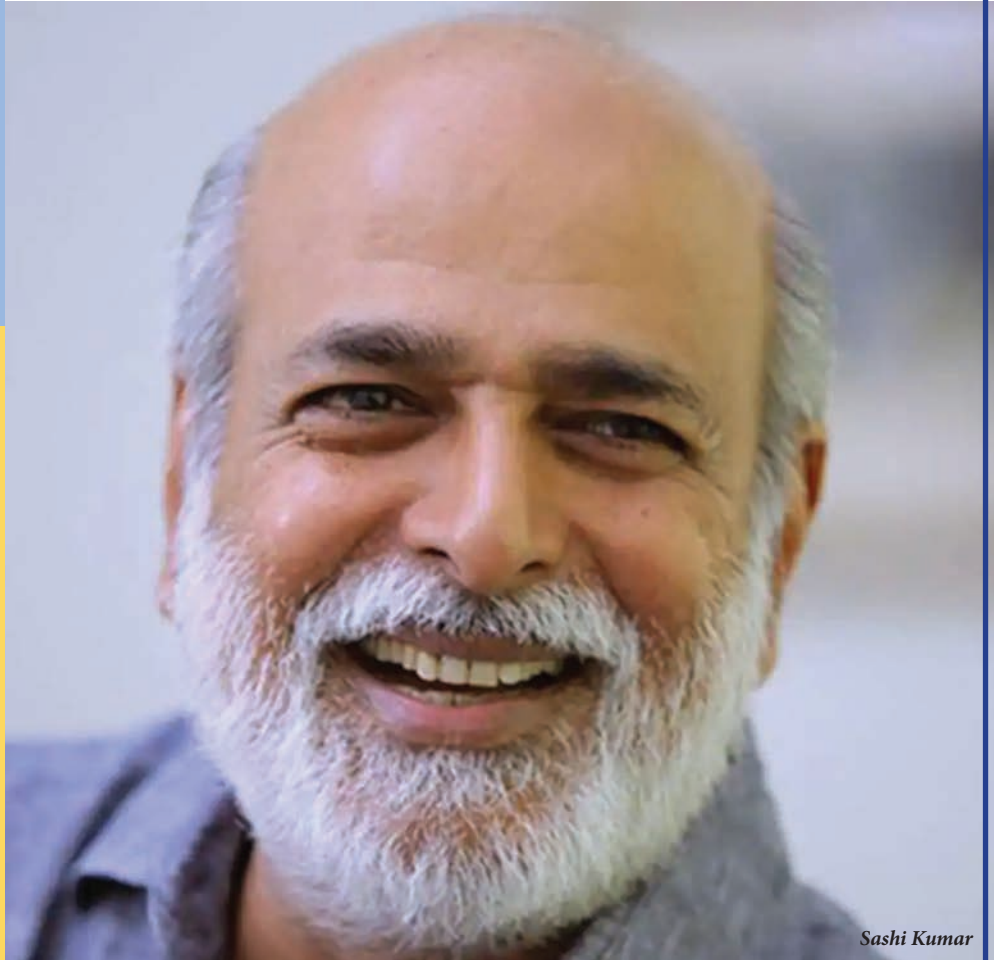


There is 100% transparency in Kerala's fight against COVID: Sashi Kumar



Aiswarya Thara Bhai

Senior journalist Sashi Kumar recently won the first Television Lifetime Achievement Award, instituted by the Kerala Government. With more than forty years of experience in the media industry, he has been instrumental in laying the foundation of a serious and secular television culture. Founder of the country's first regional satellite TV channel, Asianet, he is currently the Chairman of the Asian College of Journalism in Chennai. He is also the founder of Asiaville, a multilingual original content network which focuses on digital media. Sashi Kumar shares with us his thoughts on the changing landscape of journalism and how it maintains democracy and facilitates social change, in these turbulent times.



Sashi Kumar

COVID has completely disrupted the media industry. How do you look at the changes COVID has brought to journalism?

In terms of the liability and economics of journalism, it has created havoc. Even before COVID, the media industry was in a state of

disarray. Economically, it has been a disaster because revenue models have collapsed. Advertising has passed us by, and we don't know what is replacing it. Many journalist-based organizations have sacked a lot of people and cut down editions, many have wound up bureaus. In terms of the practice of journalism,



Sashi Kumar

COVID has had a peculiarly different effect on journalism in the sense that the true digital sense of the media has come into its own. Today we don't need to go to the office. They can work far more efficiently from home or do some field work and report from there. You don't need to clock in attendance. It is no longer the dominance of the written word; it is multimedia, so the journalist has become an autonomous being. She is not only the one who writes the story but also the one who makes the video version or audio podcast version of it. The multimedia nature of digitality makes multitasking important. It is going to get more and more accentuated in the future, I think. We are in a sort of flux. What will emerge from there will be different and refreshing.

How do you evaluate the way in which Kerala has dealt with the pandemic?

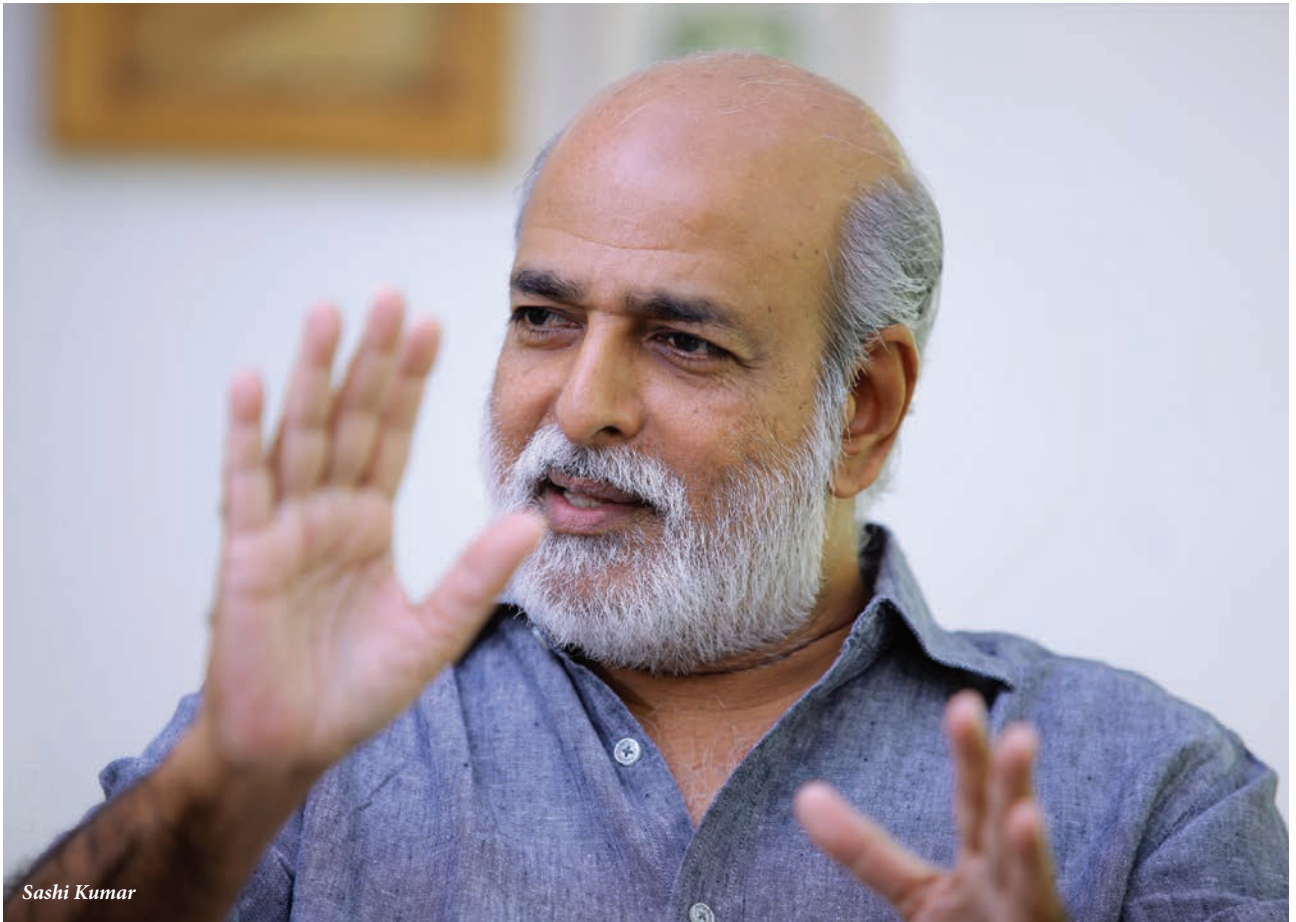
I think Kerala has done a consistent,

systematic and uncompromising job of tackling the pandemic. The fact that cases are rising is a reflection of that, in many ways. There is 100% transparency in Kerala. There is more and more testing. I am not one of those who are alarmed that cases may be rising. Scientific methodology is sound, and Kerala is a highly health-conscious state and right at the grass-roots level you have the health centres and there is a consciousness about the discipline and ethic about COVID protocols like wearing masks. I don't think Kerala should get worried about this pressure because some of the negative news that is trying to put Kerala in the spot is motivated. I think eventually, Kerala will emerge the winner. It continues to be exemplary.

When you look back, what has changed most in journalism?

I think journalism then was far more rigorous. We applied a lot more effort, not only in understanding

the subject we were writing about, whether it is cinema, west-Asian conflicts, centre-state relations, finance or politics. We applied a lot of mind and research and were very concerned about language. You wanted to write better than the best in the field. Rigor, research and expression in terms of language were very important. Today, partly because the nature of journalism has changed, because then it was journalism by appointment. If you wrote for the print, you wrote and gave it by the deadline for it to appear in the newspaper by the next day. In television, you didn't even have top of the hour news channels then. You had daily news bulletins, one or two a day, or you did documentaries or docu features. You had time to work for them. When journalism became 24 x 7, on television and in the digital age, it is by the minute and you don't have time for that kind of rigor or homework or research, or even to look at your language. You are looking at the quickest way of



Sashi Kumar

delivering something, not the best way of delivering something. That's the difference.

How do you look at the new world of political correctness? Do you think it restricts journalists in putting the right information across?

That's an interesting question. It is important to be politically correct because for a long time we have not been very sensitive to the way we used terminology. It was more of an expression of language, when it came to gender sensitivities, class or caste sensitivities or when it came to ideological persuasions. Today, that's a very dominant part of the journalist's subconscious where he or she shouldn't say something that is an affront to another's true sense of identity.

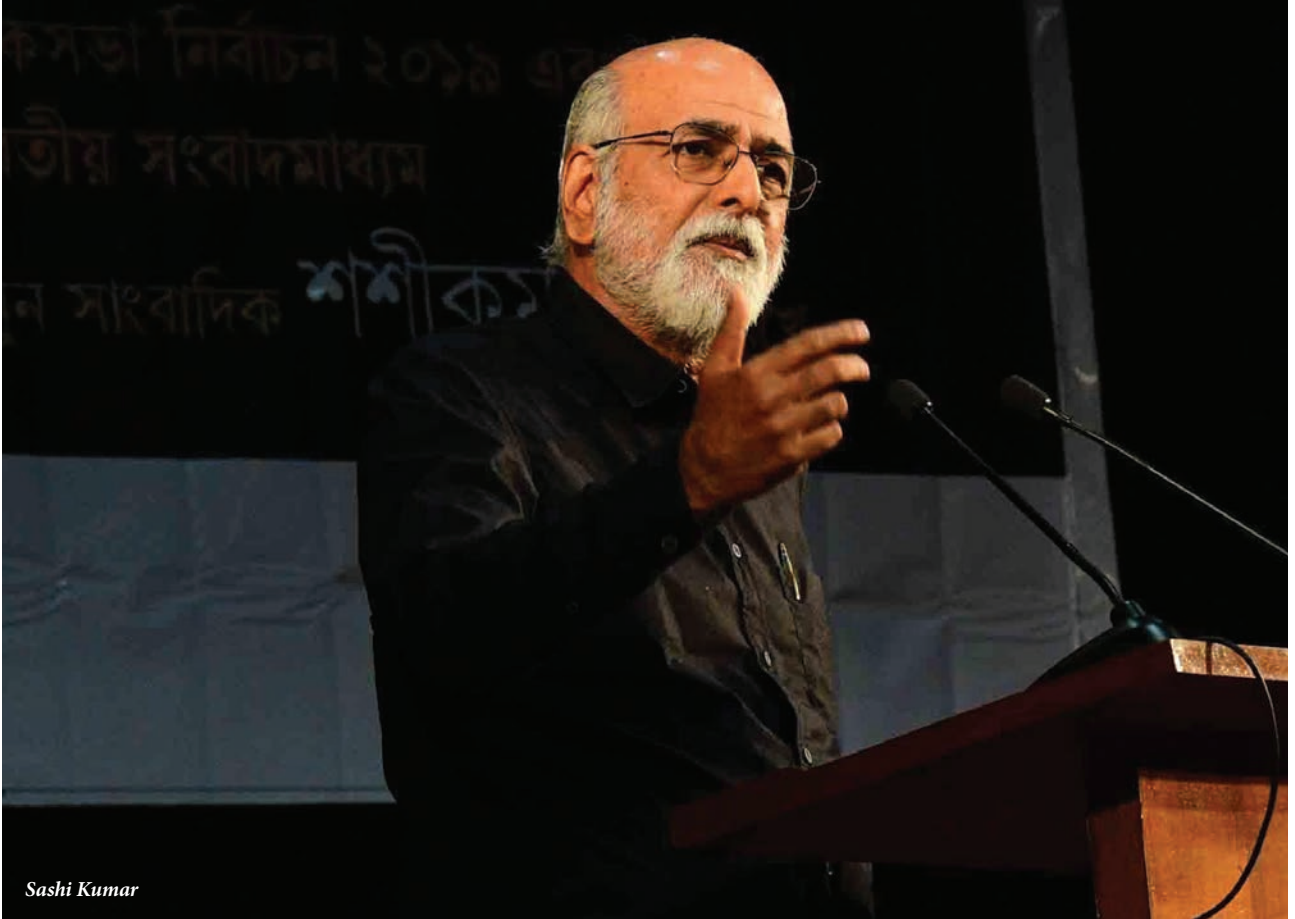
If you are a truly creative person, you can say that creativity is limitless,

I am not one of those who are alarmed that cases may be rising. Scientific methodology is sound, and Kerala is a highly health-conscious state and right at the grass-roots level you have the health centres and there is a consciousness about the discipline and ethic about Covid protocols like wearing masks.

that creative expression shouldn't be contained by a self-consciousness. We are far more self-conscious today. Gender consciousness, however, wasn't as good as today. You lived in silos then. The men kind of congregated in a particular context,

same with women. Feminist ideology was beginning to get popular, there were less awareness about equal rights and women's identity. Today, I think we have progressed a long way from there. Self-consciousness about political propriety whether it is a good thing, or a bad thing is a debatable issue.

I come from both cinema and journalism. In the cinematic field, it is a more about a true creative expression and you are not looking at being politically proper as much as being genuine in terms of what you convey. I certainly don't think that the role of film is to provide great political or moral messages to society. It is exploring the human psyche and existential dilemma of people. Then I think one must take risks with political propriety. In journalism it is not desirable because you are getting to a cross-section of society in a different sense.



Sashi Kumar

Are we going through a linguistic paradox, where on one hand we are reaching towards a greater sense of identity but at the same time we have the concept of dis-gender? Does it destroy language?

I don't think it destroys language but makes it very self-conscious in its use. It is some effort to keep telling yourself to watch out. You don't want to offend somebody, or tread on their sensibilities. We are also correcting a historical wrong because it has been a man's world for eons and that is being changed. Gender perceptions and experiences are going through a tectonic shift. Language is constitutive of your consciousness. We must therefore come up with a newly minted language which is in keeping with the spirit of the times, the zeitgeist of times. Particularly for someone like me, who has travelled through different generations, it is harder. There is a vestigial kind

of outlook on the world which I sometimes must fight.

Artificial Intelligence suggestions of news tends to bring us more of what we want to hear than what is really happening. What are the dangers of Artificial Intelligence when it comes to reaching the audience?

We thought digital media was going to be a democratic space where we choose the news we want, and what we can seek. In actual practice, because of the corporate manipulation of this space, of digitality, surveillance capitalism is rife. Digital capitalism is the most acute form of capitalism, like that of Google and Amazon. They continue to perpetuate themselves by making information about you their stock in trade. They harvest your vital information- your personality and you are fed what you are predisposed to consume. Therefore, what happens

is on one hand, you become a ready bait for advertisers as determined by these manipulations and on the other, there is fragmentation of the media landscape. I don't think there is anything like mass-media anymore. It is a misnomer. You have a multiplicity of echo chambers and filter bubbles where we are trapped in the same groups with the same circulation of the same kind of news, biases, tastes, prejudices and aspirations which are shared among the same set of people. We are all frogs in the well thinking the well is the world. We are not extending our mental horizons, rather we are narrowing it down. This leads to more intolerance and prejudices. Identity is not always good if you are obsessed with it. It can make you narcissistic and remove your sense of the other. The millennial who lacks a sense of the other tends to be self-absorbed. That is what is happening.



Ripples of Independence Struggle in Malayalam literature



Dr. Nithya P. Viswam
Assistant Professor in Malayalam
S.N. College, Varkala



Each work of literature, while being a fruit of the age and the region of its birth, also holds a mirror to the peculiarities of that time and space. It is in this sense that a literary piece becomes a cultural artefact as

well. There have been many writers who, conscious of the power of literature to touch the hearts of the people deeply and energize them, have composed works with clear-cut aims in mind.

In pre-independent

India too, many attempts were made in the creative field – as long-standing, relentless and difficult as our freedom struggle – to prepare the people for the challenges of the political movement. An exploration into

how the clarion call for national independence echoed in Malayalam literature and who made those attempts will help identify our cultural and historical consciousness with more clarity.

Long before the concept of independence became strong in the national political arena, it had emerged in Kerala through social reforms. Many communitarian, cultural and individual efforts to usher in the renaissance spirit had succeeded in giving an expansive definition to the idea of independence. Consequently, Malayalis gained enough awareness to stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest



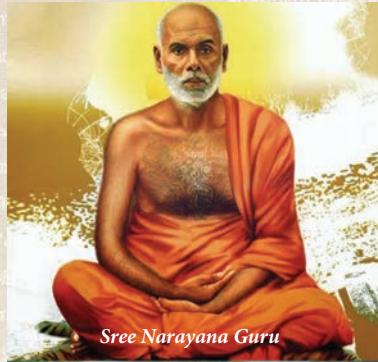
Pazhassi Raja



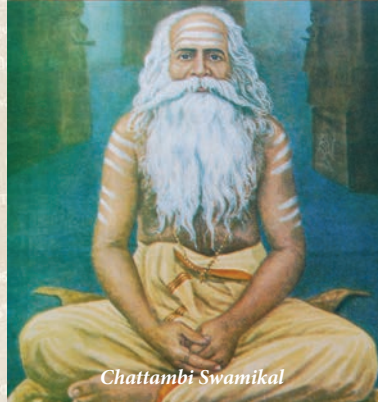
Velu Thampi Dalawa

of the country in the nationalist struggle or sometimes even be a step ahead of it. Fights for rights like the Channar Revolt, political retaliations like those of Pazhassi Raja and Velu Thampi Dalawa, communitarian organizational activities of SNDP, NSS, Yoga Kshema Sabha and Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam, renaissance leaders who gave shape to and led these movements, introduction of the printing press, publication and growth of newspapers, etc. were all products of higher thinking about liberty. Kerala had a history of journalistic and literary movements that strengthened and gave clarity to thoughts about independence and renaissance, and helped wipe out evil social customs. Giving as they did, strong ideational and emotional support to people to resist colonial rule, they ought to be considered an integral part of the history of our political struggle for independence.

The Indian freedom movement echoed strongly in all genres of Malayalam literature – short and long fiction, poetry and drama. The Malayalam short story was born out of the popularity of newspapers through which new literary forms struck deep roots in the language. Very quickly, it became potent enough to convey the messages of social, communitarian and political struggles



Sree Narayana Guru



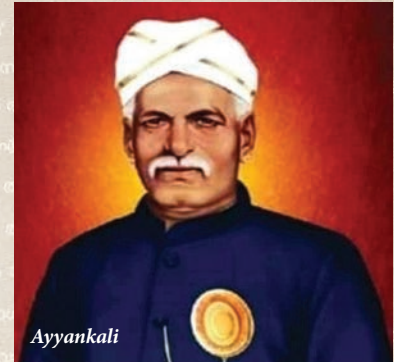
Chattampi Swamikal

in a subtle manner. The only Malayali to suffer imprisonment for writing stories was Ponkunnam Varkey. His crime – open attack on Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and the government. His political stories include those on his prison experiences too, like “Jailil Ninnu,” “Ente Samara Prathigna,” “Muzhumippikkatha Katthu,” “Karutha Thoppi” and so on. His stories showed a passion for the establishment of a classless, socialist welfare state.

Vaikom Mohammed Basheer brought into stories his own experiences as a participant in the Indian freedom struggle. The horror of the World Wars, the starvation it brought about, unemployment, corruption, black marketeering, politics that had become the refuge of opportunists and self-seekers, the passion fuelled by the independence struggle and the message of the nationalist movement – all these gave birth to stories like “Amma,” “Bharat

Matha,” “Kaivilangukal,” “Jailpulliyude Chithram” and “Policekaarante Makal”.

E.V. Krishna Pillai was a litterateur who strongly criticized foreign rule and the maladministration of the Diwan, using humour. He was a staunch nationalist and state Congress activist. He wrote “Manchester Baadha,” “Maruthahead” and “Yervadayile Sandhidoothan” when



Ayyankali



V.T. Bhattathiripad

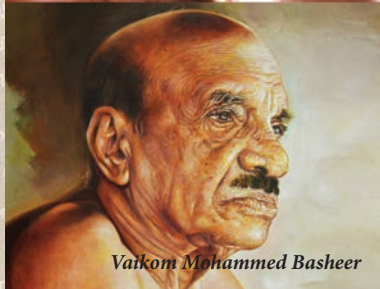
the freedom struggle and the nationalist movement began to create ripples in Kerala. In fact, the nationalist zeal first appeared in the Malayalam short story through his works.

Thakazhi, Kesavadev and others used their pens like swords to attack social slavery, inequality, evil customs, exploitation and poverty. In a broad sense, what S. K. Pottekkatt, who conveyed his social commitment through the power of suggestive beauty; Karoor, who composed his famous teacher-centric stories; Lalithambika Antharjanam, who wrote to bring about improvement within the Namboodiri community; K. Saraswathi Amma, who sought to disseminate the mesmerizing glow of enlightened womanhood; and Murkoth Kumaran who strove to bring about communitarian reform, sought was to propagate the great concept of freedom. Kovilan's stories, like “Gandhi

Thoppi,” “Pathaka,” and “Allahinte Samrakshanathilekku,” depict the experiences of an enlightened military man who craves for national freedom and unity. Ponjikkara Rafi wrote stories about the Quit India movement and the brutal administration of the British. What all these attempts reveal is that Malayalam short stories – rooted in social convictions and fuelled by noble ideas – played a vital role in dispersing thoughts about our freedom struggle. Malayalam novels that specifically focus on the freedom struggle and the nationalist movement are very few. But there have been several that fly towards the high skies of free thinking by making



Ponkunnam Varkey



Vaikom Mohammed Basheer

issues like communitarian and social inequality, unfreedom and evil customs stand in the dock and face trial. Among those that aimed at communitarian reform were Chandu Menon’s Indulekha, Muthiringode Bhavathrathan Namboodiri’s Aphante Makal, S. K. Pottelkatt’s Moodupadam, Kesavadev’s Bhraantalyam, Lalithambika Antharjanam’s Agnisakshi, and so on. The novel Kerala Simham, written by Sardar K. M. Paniker, revolves around the life and struggles of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja who died fighting the British colonial forces. Thus, the role played by Malayalam novels, though few in number, in turning the consciousness of the people towards the higher concept of freedom and preparing them for the struggle is not insubstantial.

The nationalist movement and the freedom struggle left a deep imprint in the field of Malayalam drama too.

The dramatists and theatre activists of the time were aware that the play, as a popular medium, had the power to influence people. However, their opponents too were ever vigilant to stall their efforts and punish them severely. And in a bid to outsmart them, messages about freedom were conveyed to the masses by exploiting ambiguous usages (like puns) and the suggestive power of the puranas. As early as in 1876, the Dramatic Performance Act of the British government was in force, whereby no play could be staged without vetting by and permission from the police. Police action against drama in Kerala took place for the first time in the Malabar region



E.V. Krishna Pillai



Thakazhi Shivasnkara Pillai

which was under direct British control. However, a lot of songs and musical plays on nationalist awareness, freedom struggle and Gandhi-worship took birth in North Kerala.

Vidwan P. Kelu Nair infused social and political ideals into his puranic plays. Under his leadership, a Sanskrit school at Kanhangad (in today’s Kasaragod district) was opened to impart education along the lines of Gandhian values. He composed a prayer to be sung daily and wrote many plays and songs to propagate the idea of political freedom and renaissance. Even devotional plays were made to popularize teetotalism, homespun cloth, abolition of caste differences and so on.

Many plays were written to effect social reform and women’s emancipation like V. T. Bhattathirippad’s Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku, M. P. Bhattathiripad’s

Ritumathi, M. R. B’s Marakkudakkullile Mahanarakam, and also a play titled Thozhil Kendrathilekku jointly composed by a few Antharjanams.

Kesavadev, an iconoclastic figure in the history of Malayalam drama, along with K. Damodaran, Basheer, Thakazhi, Edassery and others led the Malayalam play – that were largely romances featuring high-bred heroes and heroines – to a realistic plane. He published Yachakapremam in 1936 that presented national social issues and stark realities of life as seen from a progressive viewpoint. K. Damodaran’s Paattabaaki popularized Karl Marx’s theory of class struggle,



Abhayadev



S.K. Pottakkad

and sought to make peasants and workers think about social inequalities and injustices. Thus by giving a fillip to realistic and progressive literature, creative minds introduced a new dimension to the genre and inaugurated a radical phase in imaginative evolution. Even as he followed in the footsteps of Ibsen to depict the emancipation of the individual, N. Krishna Pillai always focused on the grand concept of independence. Kuttanad Ramakrishna Pillai was one of the frontline warriors in our freedom struggle, and he also composed a lot of full-length and one-act plays on the Gandhian principles and the nationalist movement. Two of his plays “Prathima” and “Vellapokkam” were banned because of their explicit criticism of Sir C. P’s maladministration. Edassery’s “Koottukrishi” extolled the benefits of community living where class-, race- and financial differences did not operate.

Intensity of poetry

Of all the genres, Malayalam poetry was more intense in its engagement with the nationalist cause. The first Malayalam poem that took up the freedom struggle as its theme was V. C. Balakrishna Paniker's "Varshaachandran" (1908). Kumaran Asan's voice was strident and logical when he criticized social inequalities. "Oru Theeyakuttiyude Vicharam" was written in the firm conviction that the real taste of freedom cannot be savoured until the society is free of casteist thinking. He attacked the horrors of caste differences in "Simhanadam," "Orulbodhanam," "Oru paattu," "Duravastha,"



Lalithambika Antharjanam



K. Saraswathi Amma

"Chandalabhikshuki" and other poems. Vallathol's poems also showed a strong presence of the nationalist sentiment. He considered Gandhiji his guru as early as in 1920s, as his famous "Ente Gurunathan" attested. His compositions revealed his commitment to Gandhian principles and the ideas espoused by the Indian National Congress. Many of his lines played a crucial role in whipping up patriotic feelings among the masses. Poems like "Allah," "Nammude Marupadi" and "Jaatakam Thiruthi" indicate that he was a votary of religious tolerance and religious harmony. Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer was a poet in whose poems patriotism, righteousness, sacrifice, spirituality, cultural greatness were held up as high virtues. "Karnabhooshanam," "Bhaktideepika," "Heera," "Divyasaanthwanam," "Aikyagaatha," "Saubhagyagaanam," and others attest to it. G. Sankara Kurup

praised the values of nationalism, universal freedom, peace and so on. His "Swaathantryageetham," "Vandanam Parayuka" and "Prabhatavaatham" are famous in this regard. Pandit K. P. Karuppan's "Jaathikummi" spoke of the meaninglessness of casteist thoughts. His "Mahatma Gandhi Gaanam" revealed how deeply Gandhiji had influenced his thinking. Bodheswaran was a visionary who foresaw a united Kerala decades before it became a reality – as his poem "Kerala Gaanam" shows. Kallanmarthodi Ravunni Menon's "Ambiliyodu," "Naadukadathi," "Pavanaratnagarbhe," "Daaridryakootharange" and so on



Kovilan



Ponjikkara Rafi

showcased his patriotism and devotion to Gandhiji. Kuttamath's poems "Pathithapaavanam," "Srichakra Gaanam," "Suvarna Sopanam" and others proclaimed the greatness of Gandhiji's espousal of khadi, uplift of the Dalits, abolition of alcohol, communal harmony and so on. The other notable poets were Amshi Narayana Pillai, Kuttippurath Keshavan Nair, Vennikulam Gopala Kurup, Subramaniam Thirumumbu, Chengampuzha Krishna Pillai, P. Kunjiraman Nair, N.V. Krishna Warriar, Vyloppally, Edassery, Balamani Amma, Nalankal Krishna Pillai, M. P. Appan, Pala Narayanan Nair, Kadathanad Madhavi Amma, P. Bhaskaran, Akkitham, Vayalar Rama Varma, and others.

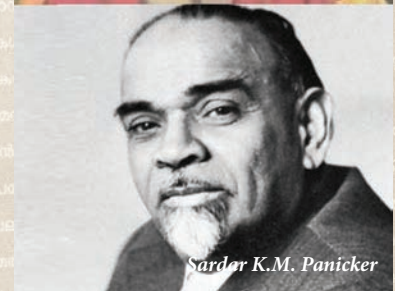
What such an exploration reveals is that Malayalam literature always had a communicative potential that was sensitive enough to capture and

convey even the slightest of regional, national and universal vibrations. As this overview shows, all the renaissance activities that took place before, after and alongside our freedom struggle impacted our literature with as much force as it affected our people. In turn, all the genres – short and long fiction, poetry and drama – strengthened and beautified Malayalam language. This is not to claim that all the works are of excellent artistic quality or are likely to have a timeless appeal. But they surely deserve notice for the sincerity of motives that gave them birth.

Edmund Wilson divides literature into



Kumaranasan



Sardar K.M. Panicker

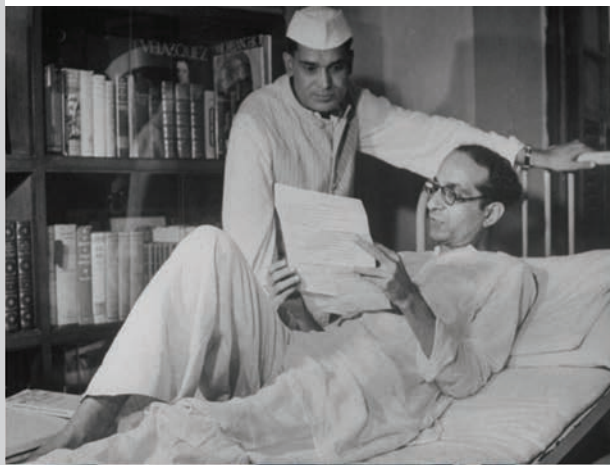
two: one that recreates the vastness and depth of life from a spiritual perspective, and the other that fulfils an immediate purpose. Works of Malayalam literature that revolve around the theme of the freedom struggle fall into both categories. As Rabindranath Tagore says, those that belong to the latter are like a cloudburst that sends water gushing down the hillslopes. The water may not stay long but what cannot be denied is that its moistness and the coldness have the power to soften the human heart and render it fertile, making it possible for the seeds of valour and patriotism to sprout, grow into huge trees and, in course of time, diffuse the fresh air of freedom into the atmosphere and produce the luscious fruits of renaissance. The relevance and worth of these works perhaps lie in that evocative power they wielded.



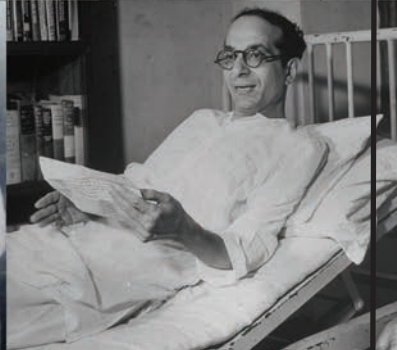
'Quit India' – a masterstroke by Yusuf Meherally !



Ajith Venniyoor
Social Activist, Author



Yusuf Meherally



The socialist who coined two of the iconic slogans associates with the freedom movement: 'Quit India' and Simon Go Back!

On the eighth August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for British rulers to "Quit India" and for the Indians to "Do or Die" to ensure this happen.

The iconic slogan "Quit India" was coined by Gandhi's close associate Yusuf Meherally, a Congress Socialist and trade unionist who also served as Mayor of Mumbai. Gandhi infused 'Quit India' with the spirit of his phrase "Do or Die"

Meherally, proposed the phrase during the momentous session of the then All India Congress Committee held on 7th and 8th of August 1942 at Mumbai when Mahatma Gandhi asked his team to propose a catchword which can give a clear message to Britishers to leave India.

Gandhi selected Quit India from among a dozen slogans proposed by different leaders including Rajagopalachari and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Addressing the large gathering at Gowalia Tank Maidan of Bombay, Gandhi said "There is a mantra, short one that I give you. You imprint it on your heart and let every breath of yours give an expression to it. The mantra is 'do or die'."

Meherally also published a booklet titled "Quit India" and popularised the slogan by preparing and printing 'Quit India' badges for the delegates of All India Congress Committee meeting. Immediately after the resolution was passed, the majority of the front ranking

leaders were arrested across the country. Meherally right away mobilized his socialist colleagues – Aruna Asaf Ali, Ram Manohar Lohia and Achyut Patwardhan – to take charge of the movement while hitting underground, just before he got arrested and detained in jail.

Early Days

Yusuf Meherally Merchant was born in an affluent pro-British Gujarati business family in 1903. Unaffected by their condemnation, he joined the national movement immediately after finishing his schooling from Bharda High School. He dropped his surname -Merchant - and qualified as a lawyer from the Government Law College in 1928 but could not enrol as because of his record of fight against the British. Meherally's panache for coining persuasive slogans had been proven even before the Quit India movement. In 1928, he came up with the catchphrase "Simon Go Back" in dissent against the all-British Simon Commission appointed by the colonial government.

As Sanchari Pal describes in the 'Better India', "Undaunted, Meherally and other young men dressed up as coolies to get access to the Bombay port where they greeted the members of the commission with black flags and the slogan "Simon Go Back". The resolute demonstrators were lathi-charged thrice but they did not budge an inch. As the news of the demonstration spread like wildfire, establishments across the city began observing spontaneous hartals. Overnight, Meherally's courage and slogan were on everyone's lips, including Mahatma Gandhi's. Not only had he dared to shout his slogan to the face of a powerful British politician, he had also defied the directions of his political

Addressing the large gathering at Gowalia Tank Maidan of Bombay, Gandhi said "There is a mantra, short one that I give you. You imprint it on your heart and let every breath of yours give an expression to it. The mantra is "do or die".

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seniors who counselled inaction".

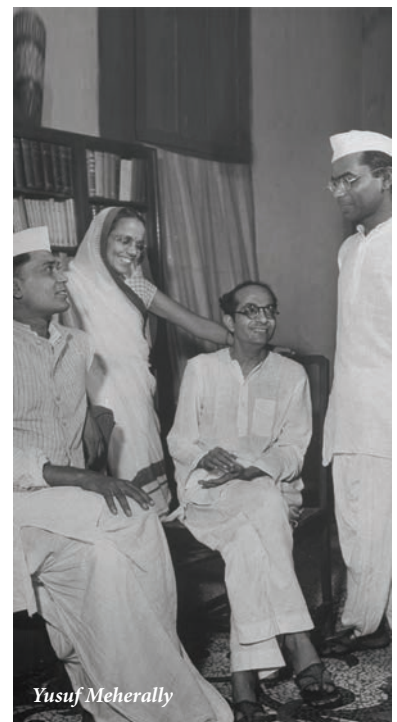
Two years later, when the Civil Disobedience movement was launched, Meherally and his team of young volunteers worked tirelessly to keep the morale of the public up in face of the severe repressive measures that the British unleashed. As INC's prominent leaders courted incarceration and went to prison during the Salt Satyagraha, Meherally kept the movement vibrant till he was caught and detained in 1930 for four months. In 1932, Meherally was again arrested for conspiracy and sentenced to a two-year term in the Nasik prison. It was here that he met and interacted with the radical socialist leaders of the freedom struggle.

After his release in 1934, he joined hands with Jayaprakash Narayan, Asok Mehta, Narendra Dev, Achyut Patwardhan, Minoo Masani and others to found the Congress Socialist Party. The organisation hoped to transcend communal divisions through class solidarity and bring about economic empowerment through decentralized socialism. Meherally was imprisoned eight times during the Freedom Movement. During his stint in Lahore jail in 1942 he was elected as the mayor of Bombay. By the time he was released in 1943, Meherally's health had deteriorated sharply but he continued to contribute to the cause of Indian independence. In October 1949, Meherally organised a one-of-its-kind exhibition that displayed more than 200 pictures and paintings that traced the evolution of India's freedom struggle since 1857. He also organised several cultural and literary events at Bombay's famed Kala Ghoda, inviting Indian personalities who were legends in their respective fields.

On July 2, 1950, Yusuf Meherally passed away at the age of 47, his death rousing the same passion in the public as his slogans. Sanchari Pal describes:



Yusuf Meherally



Yusuf Meherally

"Shocked at the loss of their beloved leader, all of Bombay was in collective mourning. The next day, the city that never stopped, Bombay stood still in the memory of the man who had literally given his lifeblood for the city's well-being and the country's cause".



The incomparable palliative model of Kerala



Joby Baby
Nurse

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian palliative care field are facing the likelihood of significant challenges to the delivery, availability and quality of palliative care for palliative care patients, with diseases other than COVID-19, and those who might die from COVID-19. One of the greatest concerns throughout this pandemic has been that a surge in demand for healthcare resources from patients with COVID-19 will overwhelm existing capacity and disrupt the care of people with other conditions, as has been seen in countries with high rates of COVID-19 infection.



Given the uncertainties of COVID-19, it is vital that we prepare for the full range of possibilities for healthcare and health resources, including the worst-case scenarios of morally distressing decision-making in pandemic triage. India has not yet comprehensively addressed these issues nor produced the tools – guidelines, protocols and ethical justifications – necessary to support clinicians who would have to implement the unavoidable and heart-wrenching choices of resource allocation and triage. According to WHO during the COVID-19 crisis, the hospital observed a reduction of about 50% in inpatient visits for palliative care. Some patients postponed appointments given the risk of potential infection. Instead of in-person visits, weekly phone calls and remote follow-up were given priority. Palliative care is also needed

for COVID-19 patients. It is of utmost importance for humanizing care so that it is effective and aligned with the expectations of patients.

Kerala Model

Kerala's stance on palliative care is well-known globally. In a panchayat, every bedridden patient is visited at least once a month by a trained palliative nurse. Procedures such as changing a urinary catheter at the patient's home and providing free palliative care medicines are carried out without many hurdles. Palliative care in Kerala existed way before the state's palliative care policy in 2004. We now have more than 450 non-governmental organizations working in palliative care, each taking responsibility for people within their locality. This doesn't exist in several low or middle-

income countries. This is a massive strength and is helping us deal with the current crises now.

Palliative care, which focuses on the patient and their families is essential at a time when post-traumatic stress disorder is high among patients and carers. In a pandemic such as COVID-19, the suffering of the patient is tremendous. In the palliative care movement, Health Care workers have tried involving communities and hundreds of volunteers signed up to help them.

Kerala Government Project for Palliative Care

Kerala is the forerunner in community-based palliative care in India. With the involvement of local governments and public participation, the quality of palliative care programmes have improved significantly. According to Information Kerala Mission the Grama Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations (grassroots level) are best placed to deliver palliative care services to the needy. The Grama Panchayat has carried out various care services including home care visits (Doctors, Nurses and other health workers), supply of medicines, supply of aids and appliances etc.

Successful Story From Kerala

In India Kerala is the first State Proving Doorstep Covid Vaccination For Bedridden Patients. Across Kerala, medical teams have a mammoth task cut out for them - to vaccinate around 1,68,000 bedridden palliative care patients at their homes. For now, around 1,000 have been given their first jabs over the week.

With local self-governance bodies like a panchayat's community or primary

Kerala is the forerunner in community-based palliative care in India. With the involvement of local governments and public participation, the quality of palliative care programmes have improved significantly.



health centre as the nodal point, each medical team comprises at least two palliative care nurses, a junior health inspector, an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker and a local body representative. The ASHA workers and panchayat-level elected representatives are a crucial link between the medical care givers and the beneficiaries. Many beneficiaries of palliative care come from the economically weaker sections of the society. The doorstep vaccination drive for the bedridden is being implemented with the help of 1,000 nurses, 16,000 volunteers and 26,000 Asha volunteers. The elected members of local bodies are also at the forefront of the fight against the corona virus. In Kerala, around 24% of the population has received at least one dose of the vaccines. However, the

medical teams on the ground are doing spot registrations for these bedridden palliative care beneficiaries.

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The survival of the vaccinated



N.V. Ravindranathan Nair
Senior Journalist



The survival of mankind is undoubtedly associated with the discovery of vaccines. Vaccines have helped the human race overcome the deadly viruses from time to time

In a pandemic situation like the one prevailing now, perhaps the only word that brings some hope is 'vaccine'. But one of the greatest challenges being faced is delivering the lifesaving vaccines to the entire target beneficiaries without delay. But there are hurdles galore in achieving this mammoth task.

A look at the history of vaccination in India and learning from the past experiences could help derive directions to attain new goals.

History has it that trained vaccinators had to chase down people to forcefully vaccinate them against Smallpox in the 19th century and even in the 20th century. Though there has been no such collective resistance against vaccination

from any particular community or geographical area as existed in the past, still there is some vaccine hesitancy sabotaging the massive effort to contain the pandemic.

Giant leap on the vaccine development front

Humanity had to wait for over 3000 years to get immunised against smallpox. WHO started an intensified Smallpox eradication programme in 1967 and within a decade Smallpox was eradicated from the world. But the 20th century witnessed a giant leap on the technological front.

The success in eradicating deadly smallpox in India has led to the extended

programme on immunisation in 1974. The advent of genetic engineering and the rapid strides made by mankind in biotechnology has helped create vaccines against many other diseases. The discovery of cells that could be cultured in vitro that can be used as a substrate for viral growth has brought about a sea change in this field. The oral Polio vaccine, the Measles, Rubella, Mumps and Varicella vaccines were all made possible through the selection of clones by cell culture passage invitro.

Today immunization in the country is not limited to six classic vaccines for children. ie, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Measles, Poliomyelitis, and Tuberculosis.

Infants are routinely vaccinated against diseases like Rubella, Hepatitis B, Haemophilus Influenza and Type B rotavirus (a major cause of Diabetes in children).

Launching Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) (1978) and then Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) (1985) it could extend smallpox vaccination, typhoid vaccine trial in Indian army personnel, and setting up of vaccine institutes in almost each of the then Indian States.

In the post-independence period, the BCG vaccine laboratory and other national institutes were established; a number of private vaccine manufacturers came up, besides the continuation of smallpox eradication effort till the country became smallpox free in 1977.

Though the preventive efforts from diseases were practised in India, the

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“There has been vaccine hesitancy even among the educated.” says Dr T Suresh Kumar, Public Health enthusiast and the former state secretary, IMA.

reluctance, opposition and a slow acceptance of vaccination have been the characteristic of vaccination history in the country.

“There has been vaccine hesitancy even among the educated.” says Dr T Suresh Kumar, Public Health enthusiast and the former state secretary, IMA.

“The urgent need of the hour is to get all people over sixty years vaccinated against Covid 19. Even though they are not going out frequently, the other members of the family who go out frequently could be carriers of the virus and infect the aged people in the house” points out Dr. Suresh Kumar.

As per the recent nationwide survey data, only 61 per cent of the nearly 30 million infants in India, had received all due vaccines. But it may be noted that there are at least 27 causative agents against which vaccines are available and many more agents are targeted for the development of vaccines. The implementation of a vaccination programme and ensuring that the benefits of vaccines reach to each

and every possible beneficiary is a challenging task. Referring to the drop in funding the vaccination programmes, Dr.S Ganapathy, a Public Health activist pointed out that Government should pump in more funds to develop vaccines. “So far we have not developed a vaccine against leprosy which is bouncing back with vengeance. There is an increase in tuberculosis cases. The most cost-effective way to contain tuberculosis is to vaccinate people against it” Dr. Ganapathy says. He also stresses the need for imparting awareness among people to come forward to receive vaccines including the one against Covid 19 without further delay.

History

The pieces of evidence indicate that smallpox inoculation, which leads to often mild disease and preventing that person from future serious diseases was common in India. Edward Jenner, an English physician and scientist who pioneered the concept of vaccines including creating the smallpox vaccine, the world's first vaccine, performed his first vaccination against smallpox on an eight-year-old boy named James Phipps, on May 14, 1796. This groundbreaking discovery set the foundation for immunology and vaccination. Anna Dusthall, a three-year-old child from Bombay became the first person in India to receive the smallpox vaccine on June 14, 1802. The Compulsory Vaccination Act was passed in India in 1892.



Endearing Ezhimala



Dr. Aparna Ajith
Asst. Professor in English,
S.N.C.W. Kollam

Far from the madding crowd, there lies a scintillating hillock braving the landscape and stifling weather in Ramanthali Panchayat of Kerala's Kannur district. The land of seven hills has a rich history and an incredible seafaring tradition that makes one spellbound.



Ezhimala, a panoramic view

What a joy it is to feel the soft, springy earth under my feet once more, to follow grassy roads that lead to ferny brooks where I can bathe my fingers in a cataract of rippling notes, or to clamber over a stone wall into green fields that tumble and roll and climb in riotous gladness!

Helen Keller, the acclaimed American author and disability rights advocate sensed the pulsating vibe of nature in its myriad shades. This holds true for the picturesque hamlet, Ezhimala, ravished by the verdant of the vibrant hues. Far from the madding crowd, there lies a scintillating hillock braving the landscape

and stifling weather in Ramanthali Panchayat of Kerala's Kannur district. The land of seven hills has a rich history and an incredible seafaring tradition that makes one spellbound. This jewel on the Kerala coast, known by numerous appellations comprising Eli, Eli Mala, Ezhimala, Ezhimalai, Mount D'Ely, etc. was the former capital of the ancient Kolathunadu kingdom of the Mushikas. As per the legend, the seven hills are a part of the Rishabdri Mountain that fell to the earth when Lord Hanuman was bringing the life-giving elixir, 'Mritha Sanjivani' on a mountain in his hand. A few pieces of the mountain dropped here and they turned out to be the sapta shaila or Ezhimala.

This jewel on the Kerala coast, known by numerous appellations comprising Eli, Eli Mala, Ezhimala, Ezhimalai, Mount D'Ely, etc. was the former capital of the ancient Kolathunadu kingdom of the Mushikas. As per the legend, the seven hills are a part of the Rishabdri Mountain that fell to the earth when Lord Hanuman was bringing the life-giving elixir.

The hills, renowned for plants with medicinal properties, witnessed the battles between the Chola and Chera Kingdoms of the 11th century. According to historians, Vasco da Gama was led straight to Ezhimala by his pilot who had earlier informed him that this mountain would be his maiden glimpse from the Indian subcontinent. All these still reverberate in the rhythm of this riveting hamlet. Mount Dilli Light House, an old tower of great antiquity, and Ezhimala Hanuman statue make one reminiscent of its glorious past. Lord Buddha visited Ezhimala as per a legend and one of the ancient Buddha Vihars was at Madai located at the east of Ezhimala. The ecological paradise of Madayipara enchants one with its alluring flora and fauna. The wonder lavished by the colours in the striking backdrop bestows a real visual feast to the spectators. How can one not fall for the backwater stretches fed by Kavvayi, Kankol, Vannathichal, Kuppithodu, and Kuniyan Rivers? Rural village tourism, backwater tourism, and Aqua-tourism have great potential in this pristine land dancing in greenery. The eclectic spirit of Ettikulam beach and Ezhimala beach will definitely make one feel for the mystic of sea waves.

The hills, renowned for plants with medicinal properties, witnessed the battles between the Chola and Chera Kingdoms of the 11th century.



Statue of Lord Hanuman



Naval cadets at Ezhimala Naval Academy

Chootad beach and its casuarina trees are a miraculous fascination to the tourists. This enchanting 'sapta shaila' remained unknown and unheard till the Indian Navy rejuvenated it. There arises the echo of daring drills in the endearing land of seven hills. Indian Naval Academy, Asia's largest Naval Academy lies in this charismatic hamlet. The rustic innocence permeates in, around, and within the seven-peaked mountain. A worthy and virtuous locale for the navy personnel to kick off life's sailing to diverse hemispheres. Ezhimala is indeed a land of esteem to explore and a land of oceans to adore its shore. The warmth of the villagers and their affectionate gestures make an outsider feel everything is familiar and fathomable in the flourishing seven hills. This serene hamlet can never let one go from its

visual and mental landscapes.

Lord Byron resonates somewhere here:
"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, there is a rapture on the lonely shore, there is society where none intrudes, by the sea and music in its roar: I love not man less, but nature more"

The warmth of the villagers and their affectionate gestures make an outsider feel everything is familiar and fathomable in the flourishing seven hills. This serene hamlet can never let one go from its visual and mental landscapes.



Monsoon-the lifeline of agri-based economy



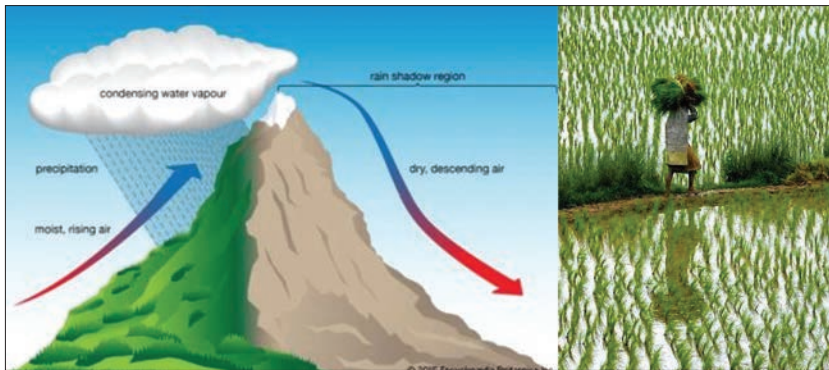
Dr. Gopakumar Cholayil
College of Climate Change and
Environmental Science
Kerala Agricultural University,
Vellanikkara

Agri-based Indian economy is often referred to as the “monsoon economy”. It reflects the critical role of the monsoon in the Indian agricultural sector. In fact, the whole economy of some agriculture-based countries like India is depending upon the behaviour of the monsoon.



Agricultural production of these countries is determined by the onset and further behaviour of the monsoon. Long breaks during the monsoon will lead to poor rainfall and thereby leads to drought. Floods and droughts during heavy and deficit monsoon years respectively will adversely affect Indian food grains production. Thus it can be concluded that the monsoon is the backbone of the agriculture-based economy of South Asia. Almost half of the world's population lives

in areas covered by the Asiatic monsoon and most of these people are subsistence farmers. Therefore, the onset and cessation of the monsoon are vital to their livelihood to grow food and to feed themselves. Too much or too little rain from the monsoon can mean disaster in the form of drought/famine /flood. The Indian summer monsoon is important to India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and other neighbouring countries. Monsoon satisfies about



Leeward side of a mountain receives less rainfall

90 per cent of the water of these countries.

In India, the Southwest monsoon contributes about 72 per cent of the annual rainfall and, thereby adds to India's Agriculture, which in turn accounts for 19.9 per cent of the GDP in 2020-21 offering livelihood to more than 60 per cent of the population. The southwest monsoon season generally called Indian summer Monsoon rainfall (ISMR), supports 75% of the 'Kharif crop of the country. Indian agriculture is heavily dependent on monsoon, especially crops like cotton, rice, oilseeds and coarse grains. Even a short delay in the arrival of the monsoon can badly affect the economy as is evidenced in the recent decades. A timely and 'good' monsoon with even temporal and spatial distribution contributes to a bountiful harvest.

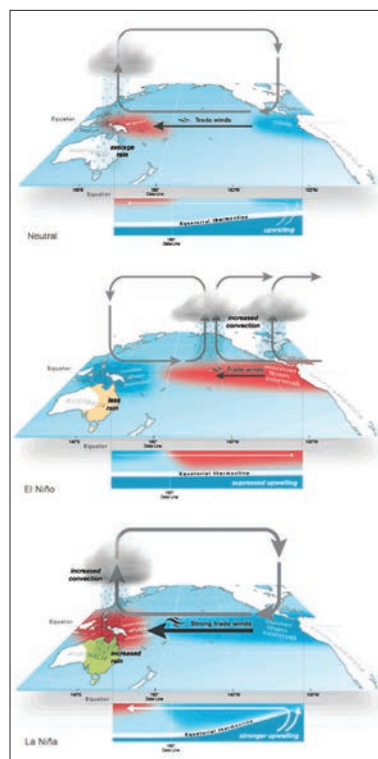
July/August rainfall is very important as far as the agricultural sector, as it is a crucial time of farm operations across large areas of the country.

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Forecast for the 2021 southwest monsoon Rainfall

According to the forecast issued by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) issued on 15h May 2021, Southwest monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall over the country as a whole is most likely to be normal (96

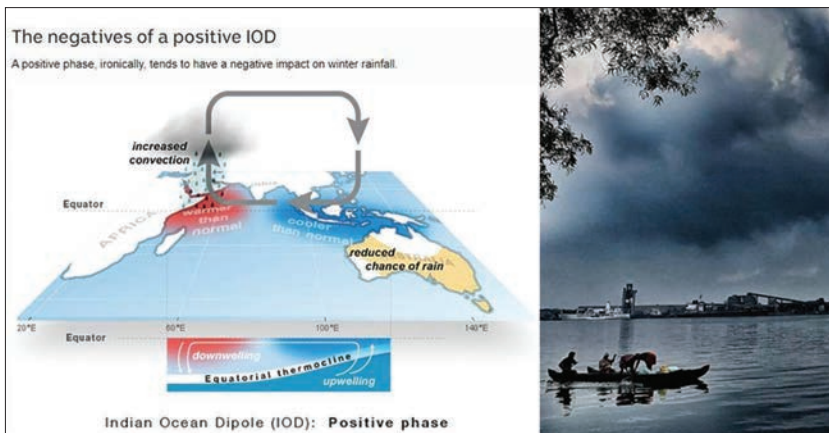


Three ENSO phases (Neutral, El Niño and La Niña)

to 104 % of Long Period Average (LPA). Quantitatively, the monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall is likely to be 98% of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of $\pm 5\%$. The LPA of the season rainfall over the country as a whole for the period 1961-2010 is 880mm.

Neutral ENSO conditions over the Pacific Ocean and Neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions over the Indian Ocean are prevailing. The latest global model forecast indicates neutral ENSO conditions are likely to continue over the equatorial Pacific and negative IOD conditions are likely to develop over the Indian Ocean during the ensuing monsoon season. As sea surface temperature (SST) conditions over the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are known to have a strong influence on the Indian monsoon, India Meteorological Department (IMD) is carefully monitoring the evolution of sea surface conditions over these Ocean basins. IMD will issue the updated forecasts in the last week of May 2021. In addition to updating for the April forecast, forecasts for monsoon season (June- September) rainfall for four homogenous regions and forecast for the month of June also will be issued.

Since 2003, India Meteorological Department (IMD) has been issuing the operational long-range forecast (LRF) for the southwest monsoon season (June-September) rainfall, averaged over the country as a whole in two stages. The first stage forecast is issued in April and the second stage or update forecast is issued by the end of May. These forecasts are prepared using the state-of-the-art Statistical Ensemble Forecasting system (SEFS) that was developed indigenously by IMD. In the second stage, in addition to an update for April forecast, additional forecasts for monthly rainfall for July and August for the country as a whole and forecasts for seasonal rainfall (June to September) for four homogenous regions of India are also issued. Since 2017, IMD has been also using a high-resolution dynamical global Climate Forecasting System (CFS), which was developed under the Monsoon Mission of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)



Role of Indian Ocean dipole

Onset of monsoon

Based on the long series of data from 1870 to 2020 (151 years), the normal data of onset of monsoon was worked out and it is on 1st June with a standard deviation of seven days, varying between 25th May and 8th June. The monsoon directory of Kerala indicated that the earliest onset of monsoon was on 11th May in 1918 while belated monsoon on 18th June in 1972.

Trends in rainfall over Kerala

On examining the annual rainfall pattern, it is clear that annual rainfall is declining since the 1960s. The decline in monsoon rainfall is significant, though inter-annual variability is noticed. It may be noted that during the last forty decades, excess rainfall was received only during 1981, 2007, 2013, and 2018. In all the other years, monsoon rainfall was either deficit or normal (+/-19%).

Rainfall pattern in Kerala in a changing mode...

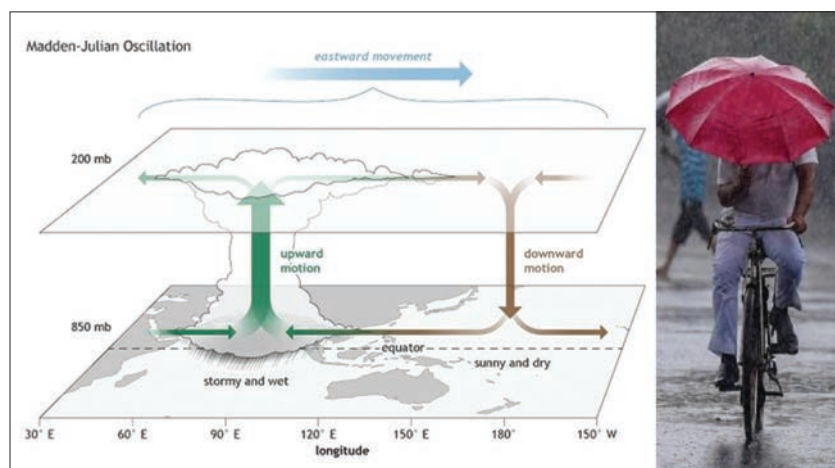
On examining the rainfall data over various locations across the State, it reveals that the intensity of rainfall has been changing in the recent decade. Heavy rainfall (64.5mm to 115.4mm of rainfall in 24 hours) events have become quite common. The chances of getting very heavy (115.5mm to 204.4mm in 24 hours) and extremely heavy (>204.5mm in 24 hours) events are becoming common in a climate change and warming scenario. Such rainfall

events often lead to flash floods. Landslides /mud slips have become more frequent in the recent decades could be attributed to the receipt of extremely heavy rainfall with 24 hour period. During 2018 and 2019 flood events in Kerala, exceptionally heavy rainfall of the order of 400mm in a day received at Nilambur (2018) and Alathur (2019), respectively inundating those geographical areas. The landslide events of Pettimudi in Idukki the district is an example to point out for extremely heavy rainfall pouring gallons of waters over an area in a short period. It is pointed out that the Pettimudi disaster, which took 64 human lives was due to a 'cloud burst; phenomenon. In a warming scenario, the ability of the atmosphere to hold water vapour increases and thereby the chances for the formation of a rainy cloud with extraordinary water content. Such clouds, under favourable circumstances, become gigantic

and develops vertically. This type of clouds produces thunder and lightning even during the monsoon period accompanied by hails. This is a clear sign of changing nature of the monsoon clouds over the State in recent years. Areas in the State, especially in the mid and high ranges of Idukki and Wayanad districts are more vulnerable to landslide events. In a warming scenario, the chances for the occurrence of heavy to very heavy and extremely heavy rainfall events are becoming frequent and therefore proactive measures are to be taken to minimize human life and property loss of the inhabitants living in the areas.

Crop calendar may have to reschedule?

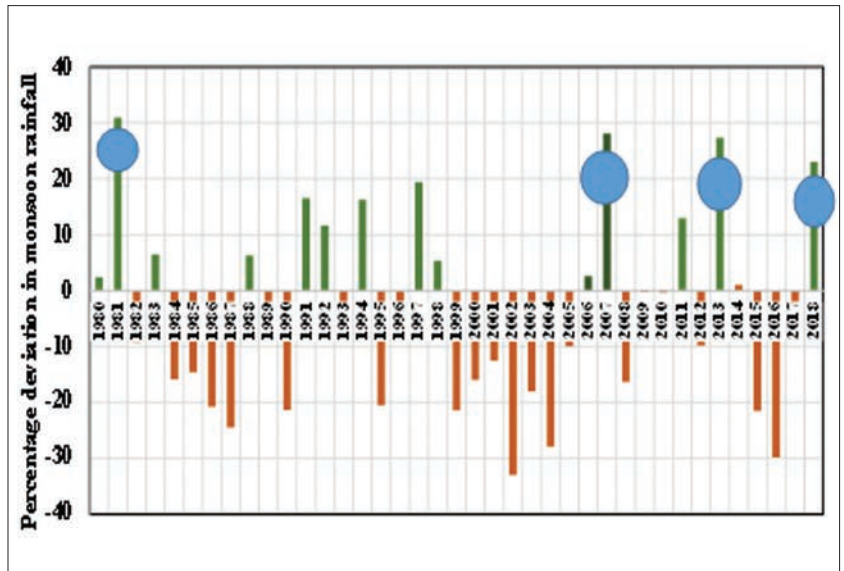
June and July constitute the best half of the monsoon as far as the State is considered. A major portion of the rainfall is being received in these two months. In a changing climate and warming scenario, it has been observed that monsoon rainfall during June and July are declining while the contribution of August and September rainfall to the total monsoon rainfall is increasing. This will have serious implications in the long run. Though inter-annual variabilities are noticed, this trend in rainfall distribution pattern poses a threat to the agrarian sector, especially to the first crop of paddy and other crops which depends solely on monsoon rainfall. The traditional Njattukvela calendar being practised in the State is based



Madden Julian Oscillation

On examining the annual rainfall pattern, it is clear that annual rainfall is declining since the 1960s. The decline in monsoon rainfall is significant, though inter-annual variability is noticed.

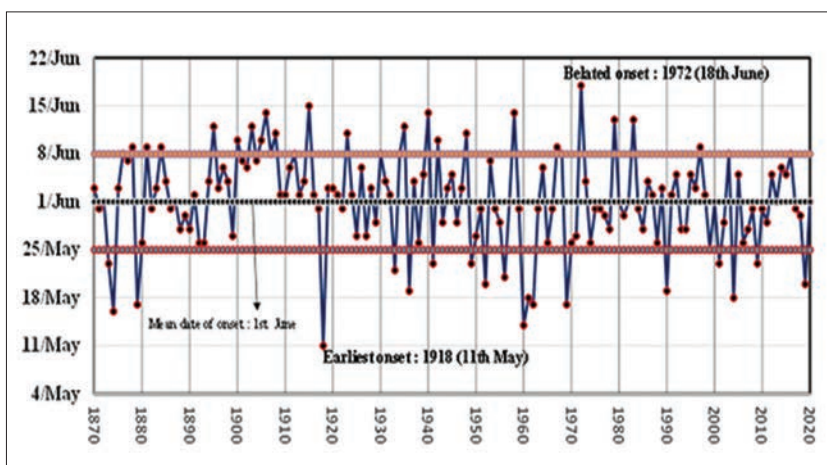
on the timely onset and further progress of the monsoon. We have come across years in which monsoon failed miserably during Thiruvathira Njattuvela, the rainiest Njattuvela in Kerala. In a climate change and warming scenario, vagaries and uncertainties in monsoon rainfall cannot be ignored. The State must be prepared to face the evil consequences in the event of a poor monsoon that may lead to severe drought or a heavy monsoon season which may lead to a flood situation as experienced in 2018 and 2019. Water management should be given due priority. Even though the State is blessed with plenty of rainfall and with status as one of the wettest State in the country, we fail to manage or conserve water for the future. All the water that pours during June through September flow away to the Arabian sea within 48 to 72 hours. During years in which post-monsoon rain is poor and summer showers fail, the situation becomes worst across the State as we experienced during summer 2016. It was one of the disastrous drought



Inter annual variability of monsoon over Kerala

years, the State has ever witnessed. Likewise, the occurrence of floods too cannot be ignored in a warming and changing climate scenario. The possibility of the occurrence of a flood situation during monsoon 2021 cannot be pointed out at this time. It may be noted that even continuous or moderate rainfall creates water logging in our towns and cities and even in rural areas. The need of the hour is to clear out the drainage channels for free flow of water during monsoon so that the rainwater will reach the major channels and finally to the sea. Changes in land use pattern are the major culprits that trigger landslide/mud slip across the mid and highlands. Strict measures are to be taken to

ban illegal, anti-environmental activities are totally banned in such ecologically sensitive areas/fragile zones. This will go a long way in preventing landslide during heavy rainfall events and thereby human-animal life and property loss. Areas vulnerable to landslides should be demarcated and documented with GIS/GPS technology. Flood prone river basins, flood water mapping etc should be carried out to minimize the loss and damage caused due to extreme weather events. Last but not the least, prime concern should be given to protect and maintain the remaining inland wetlands as they are the most efficient sinks at the time of floods and the most valuable water pots during drought periods.



Onset of monsoon over Kerala from 1870 to 2020





Every inch an avian paradise



Ignatius Pereira
Senior Journalist



Though some visitors to the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary of the Kerala Forest Department may not be able to see many of the bird species that live there, the sanctuary is by all parameters an avian paradise.

Visitors feel that they missed the birds because of the impression that the birds would show up and impress those arriving there. The fact is that most birds, in their natural habitats, remain elusive most of the time. The birds become active only shortly before daybreak. They are also very active at dusk. But most visitors arrive at the sanctuary well after sunrise and leave well before dusk. Moreover, the bird trail for visitors is permitted only along a small portion of the sanctuary. Many visitors arrive with the impression that the bird trail portion will be full of birds. Spotting birds in their natural evergreen tropical forest habitats requires a lot of patience. They cannot be spotted like birds in the open wetland regions.

The fact that Thattekad is an avian Paradise was a discovery made in the year 1933 by the Late Dr. Salim Ali, the "Birdman of India." That was a discovery

by fluke. The Maharaja of the erstwhile Travancore Kingdom, Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma (1924 to 1949) had made a big contribution that helped Dr. Salim Ali make that discovery. Thattekad was part of the Travancore Kingdom at that time. Chithira Thirunal Maharaja was a great lover of nature and had a tremendous fascination for birds. Sometime in the year 1932, a desire sprouted in him to get a better idea of the birds living in his kingdom. He had a bird survey in mind but was very particular on getting the right person for the job. A search was launched to identify the person for that job. That search moved over to Bombay to the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). Salim Ali who was attached to the Prince of Wales Museum, under which the BNHS functioned, was by then a known ornithologist. When the Travancore authorities contacted BNHS, Salim Ali was camping at Kotagiri in the

Nilgiris preparing the groundwork for carrying out a bird survey in the princely state of Mysore. For some reason, Salim Ali thought of carrying out the Travancore survey first. On agreeing to it, Chithira Thirunal Maharaja allocated a sum of Rs. 10,000 for the survey which was a big sum at that time. Salim Ali finalised plans to carry out the survey from January 1933 to December the same year. Accompanied by his wife Tehmina, Salim Ali began his journey to Travancore in a motor car driven by Ali himself.

The historic Travancore Bird Survey by Salim Ali began from the rain shadow regions of the Western Ghats through Chinnar and Marayur, then to Munnar. The survey team comprised N.G. Pillai, the then curator of the Thiruvananthapuram Zoo as the representative of the Travancore Maharaja. Then one day at dusk, the team reached Thattekad from Munnar en route to Kothamangalam. The team had no plans to camp at Thattekad but wanted to reach Kothamangalam that day itself. But people living in Thattekad cautioned the team against travelling to Kothamangalam. The 9-mile to Kothamangalam had about 6 miles passing through dense forests. The natives of Thattekad warned Salim Ali that during that part of the year many wild elephant herds enter the route soon after dusk and it would be dangerous to pass that way after dusk.

So unwillingly Salim Ali camped at Thattekad that night. Early next morning shortly before sunrise Salim Ali woke up and stepped out of his room to listen to whether there were any birds there. To his surprise, he could hear and see more birds there than anywhere covered till then under the Travancore survey. More

As per recent surveys carried out at Thattekad, the sanctuary and peripheral areas provide a permanent and temporary home to 522 species of birds. 45 per cent of that comprises migratory birds and 17 per cent of migratory birds seen there are international migrants.



A revised eco-sensitive zone for the sanctuary's eastern boundary had been worked out by the government. The government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is taking earnest steps to amicably implement the same in cooperation and to the satisfaction of the stakeholders."

than bird population it was the bird variety at Thattekad that captivated Salim Ali. The variety captivated him to such an extent that he camped at Thattekad for 12 days during which he recorded the presence of more than 160 bird species there. This had thrilled Salim Ali and it led to him noting in his book "The Fall of a Sparrow" that "Thattekad in northern Travancore, which lingers in my memory as the richest bird habitat in peninsular India I have known".

But nothing much to protect and conserve this avian paradise was carried out for the next fifty years. It was only in the year 1983 that 25.16 square kilometres of Thattekad forests was notified as a bird sanctuary. But the problem for the sanctuary was that it also comprised 9 square kilometres of human habitats on the northern side. So in reality the sanctuary comprised only 16.16 square kilometres of forests. In the interim, the noted bird scientist, Dr. R. Sugathan, was appointed as ornithologist of the sanctuary and in the year 1992 an ecotourism programme was launched thereby opening up for visitors an area of 2.5 square kilometres called the Salim Ali Bird Trail.

Dr. Sugathan says that it is the topographical position of Thattekad which made the location a great home for resident birds and a wonderful destination for migratory birds. Thattekad is along the flyway of many migratory birds. The migratory birds arrive there during October and leave during March. He says that 99 per cent of the birds of Thattekad are related to the plants that grow there. Some could be for nest requirements, others for food and still others for shelter. Dr. Sugathan had surveyed and created baseline data of all plants and animals of the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary. Apart from the plants,

the Thattekad sanctuary also provides comfortable wetland facilities for the water birds.

As per recent surveys carried out at Thattekad, the sanctuary and peripheral areas provide a permanent and temporary home to 522 species of birds. 45 per cent of that comprises migratory birds and 17 per cent of migratory birds seen there are international migrants. 32 species of water birds have also been counted at Thattekad. Dr. Sugathan said that the Ceylon frogmouth is the star bird of the sanctuary. These birds were long thought to have gone extinct in the Western Ghats. But it was Dr. Sugathan who rediscovered them during the mid-1970s. He said in the past even though there were plenty of birds at Thattekad, large mammals were rarely seen. However now, at least 42 elephants are regularly seen within the sanctuary. The presence of other larger animals like tigers, gaurs and leopards is appreciably increasing.

Wildlife Warden of the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary B. Rahul said that "a revised eco-sensitive zone for the sanctuary's eastern boundary had been worked out by the government. The government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is taking earnest steps to amicably implement the same in cooperation and to the satisfaction of the stakeholders." Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the sanctuary is now closed to visitors but would be opened when the lockdown is lifted. Assistant Wildlife Warden of the sanctuary T.M. Rasheed said that even though only a small portion of the sanctuary is open to visitors; it attracts good crowds. Before the lockdown there was a daily footfall of more than 1000 visitors used to arrive during weekends and holidays, Mr. Rasheed adds.



Is it prudent to invest in Bitcoin at this time?



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The investors in India are pouring to crypto currencies in unprecedented numbers, posing a hazardous trend. While it's a cause to rejoice for the crypto-exchanges in India, the surge happens devoid of regulations from the central bank/state. Bitcoin exchanges regard the RBI's new notice as a green light, but the magnitude of risk could be disastrous.

Bitcoin, a type of crypto currency, was created by a group (Satoshi Nakamoto) in 2008 is the most digitally traded wallet which is decentralized and traded without middlemen using a public ledger called block chain. Other digital payments require a trusted third party, like a bank/automated unit, to authenticate a transaction. Bitcoins aren't present physically, amounts are stored on a public cloud-wallet, a personal database that you save on your digital gadgets. Despite reports of a possible ban on crypto currency in India, authorities who grasp the actual potential influence of crypto currency on our economy should examine a variety of factors. A forward-thinking crypto strategy can help improve India's whole economic base and propel the country toward becoming a worldwide superpower.

Bitcoin's legal status in India

Bitcoin is legal in India since 2012, but banking is prohibited. The Reserve Bank of India issued a notice in April 2018 directing banks to ensure that

crypto customers have no accessibility to banking services. The central bank has frequently cautioned investors and the financial system about the potential threats such unregulated currencies pose. The notice was to prevent citizens from acquiring crypto currency. But in March 2021, the order was overturned by the honourable Supreme Court as it believed that the RBI can't impose excessive limitations on crypto-currency trading as it's not illegal.

What can crypto are used for? Can it replace currency?

Despite all the hype about crypto-currency, in reality, it will buy you nothing and can be regarded only as a store of value. Though the bitcoins have numerous advantages it also possesses many limitations.

- Bitcoin transactions are final and cannot be reversed. Bitcoin wallet, is not safeguarded by insurance.
- Wallets can't be seized / audited by banks/court. Expenditure/withdrawal limitations can't be placed on Bitcoin-

Bitcoin is legal in India since 2012, but banking is prohibited.



wallets and management lies with the owner alone.

- Bitcoin isn't user-friendly. For those who aren't technically proficient, it's complicated.
- Time-delay occurs while verifying transactions across the network. A dishonest individual misuses this by rapidly clicking, and submitting a double payment of the same coins to another person.
- Another problem is lack of crypto-knowledge.
- Digital assets, particularly crypto and Bitcoin, are vulnerable to security threats.

The investors in India are pouring to crypto currencies in unprecedented numbers, posing a hazardous trend. Till May of 2021, Indians have invested almost 6.6 billion dollars in crypto currencies, compared to roughly 923 million dollars till April 2020. Though it's a cause to rejoice for the crypto-exchanges in India, the surge happens devoid of regulations from

The investors in India are pouring to crypto currencies in unprecedented numbers, posing a hazardous trend. Till May of 2021, Indians have invested almost 6.6 billion dollars in crypto currencies, compared to roughly 923 million dollars till April 2020.

central bank/state. The lack of laws exposes Indian investors to further dangers. Bitcoin exchanges and investors have taken the RBI's new notice as a green light, but the magnitude of risk, could be disastrous. Therefore, it's necessary to discuss if the investment in Bitcoin is risky or not.

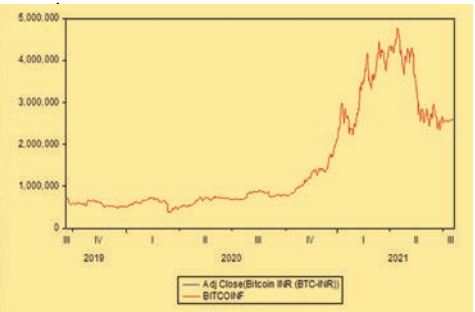
As on 20-09-2019, the price of one Bitcoin was Rs. 724993.94. After then, till 25-07-2020, a negative-growth rate with an unswerving volatility was noted on the performance of Bitcoin in Indian Rupee. The percentage of growth rate was either one digit/two digits (maximum of 23%) till 02-09-2020. From 03-09-2020 to 07-10-2020, the percentage of growth rate in the price of one Bitcoin was remaining at one digit. From 08-10-2020 onwards, there has been a continuous growth rate in the percentage and on 16-12-2020, the price



of one Bitcoin was Rs. 1568584.75, with a corresponding growth rate of 116.36%. This means, exactly after 1¼ years from 20-09-2019, the growth rate was 116.36% on the price of one Bitcoin in Indian Rupee. The trend was encouraging for the investors and on 02-01-2021; the price of one Bitcoin was Rs. 2348254.25, with a growth rate of 223.9%. The trend was elevated and on 08-02-2021; the price of one Bitcoin was Rs. 3369115, with a growth rate of 364.71%. On 17-02-2021, the price of one Bitcoin was Rs. 3796127, with a growth rate of 423.61%, one of the cardinal wonders of the world, especially under the clutches of black hands of the pandemic. On 09-04-2021, a rise in price was seen on one Bitcoin, which amounted to Rs. 4352631.5, with a corresponding growth rate of 500.37%. The all-time high value for one Bitcoin was Rs. 4774301, with a growth rate of 558.53% on 13-04-2021. On 18-04-2021 onwards, by evaluating the price of one Bitcoin, a drastic lessening in value was noted and on 04-07-2021; the price of one Bitcoin was Rs. 2570830.25, with a growth rate of 254.6%. In this

direction, an attempt has been done to examine the current scenario of Bitcoin and project the price of Bitcoin in Indian Rupee up to a period of 20-07-2021. The price of Bitcoin in Indian Rupee is predicted to be Rs. 2592779.95 on 17-07-2021. The predicted price of Bitcoin in Indian Rupee will be Rs. 2591652.67 on 18-07-2021. The predicted price of Bitcoin in Indian Rupee will be Rs. 2592304.55 on 19-07-2021. Finally, on 20-07-2021, the predicted price of Bitcoin in Indian Rupee will be Rs. 2594158.91.

During this bearish period, it is not prudent for the investors to take a risk. But, after comparing the current price with the initial purchase-price, if the investors feel it's satisfactory, then it's the right time to sell it off. Whereas, if investors consider this as a long-term investment, anticipating a bullish trend



in the near future; can be retained as a long-term investment. For prospective/budding it is advisable to consider the short term and long-term volatility in price before purchase, as it can be noted that the positive/negative changes in Bitcoin are on extreme ends during certain periods. From the graph above, it's clear that, bitcoin-prices are highly volatile. Therefore, the future trend must be watched by the Indian investors before investing in Bitcoins apart from keeping in mind that crypto currencies are unregulated in India and there is still no governmental agency to oversee/safeguard it. So, investors have to consider this as a warning signal before getting into the roller coaster Bitcoin ride!

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On screen for 50 years & still young!



A. Chandrasekhar
Senior Journalist and
Film Critic

Mammootty the iconic megastar in Malayalam Cinema has been the youth's 'Embodiment of Masculinity' for many decades. Mammootty, the actor, continues to be that such an influence in the film lovers, while we celebrate his 50 years of a successful film career



Mammootty

While reviewing the 'image' that Mammootty, the actor has imparted in the Kerala society, the words of researchers Caroline Osello and Fillippo Osello* proves so valid. They observe: "Mammootty has an affinity with roles implying powerful and high-status men in control, strong in family drama...One might wish to be like Mammootty." True, Mammootty the iconic superstar in Malayalam Cinema has been the youth's 'Embodiment of Masculinity' for many decades. Mammootty, the actor, still continues to be that such an influence in the film lovers, while we celebrate his 50 years of a successful film career, starting from his cameo appearance in Anubhavangal Palichakal (1971). But

what made Mammootty and Mohanlal, the star duos of Malayalam Cinema this much popular is indeed something to be seriously researched upon.

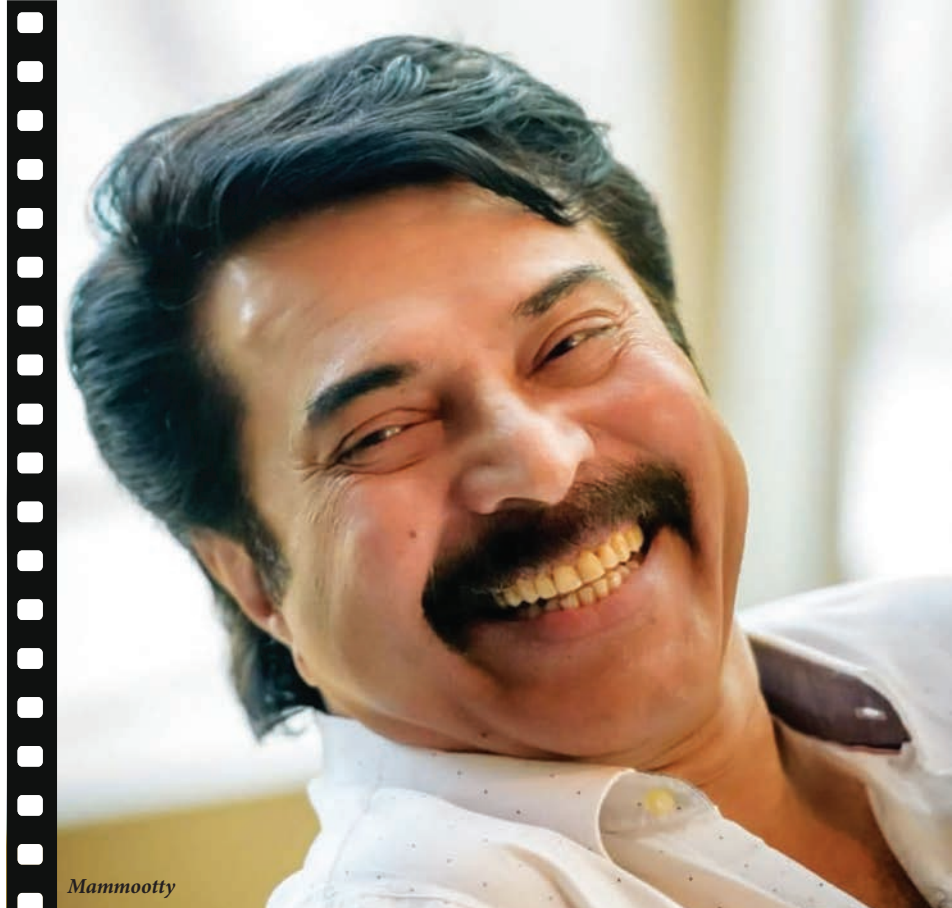
Definitely, Mammootty's stardom has been the aftereffect of his utmost hard work as well as painful failures. Starting from side roles as in Devalokam and Vilkanundu Swapnangal, both written by MT Vasudevan Nair, Mammootty slowly pushed himself to the forefront through the portrayal of strong supporting characters as seen in Ahimsa, Mela, Yavanika and Munnettam. But his journey as a 'Single Hero' got noticed with films like Trishna (1981). But as a method actor, his character selection has landed him in a fix after

doing archetypal 'family man' roles repeatedly in movies of Joshy and Sajan. Such films got sarcastically labelled as "Mammotty, Petty and Kutty" (referring to the archetypal representation of Mammotty's father role, the portmanteau representing his business class social status and Baby Salini enacting his daughter) which happened to the success formulae. On the contrary, the very same trio gave rise to a creative crisis in the professional life of the talented actor by which, Mammotty's movies became box-office blunders one after the another during the late eighties.

It was through the epic success of *New Delhi* (1987) written by the late Dennis Joseph and directed by Joshy, Mammotty emerged himself from the ashes as one of the pivots of Malayalam mainstream cinema along with co-star Mohanlal. Mammotty along with Mohanlal, through his stardom and the innumerable characters that he did portray across his film career, reflected as well as addressed the male psyche of Kerala. While the Male population acknowledged him as their icon, someone who has to be followed as a model in physique, fashion, behaviour etc., the Female audience admired him for the 'Family Man' image that he did impart in the society through his films. He has been so particular in selecting roles that matched his image as a caring and understanding husband, a responsible father or a sincere friend. It may not be exaggerating to say that young women of the eighties dreamt of getting husbands like the character portrayed by Mammotty.

Professionally, the importance of both the actors Mammotty and Mohanlal is that they did try to bridge the gap between two parallels in Malayalam Cinema- the Commercial Mainstream and the so-called Art House movies. It should be noted that though being a victim to the 'screen image', Mammotty as an actor did try to break the image

As a socially committed citizen, Mammotty, the multi-time National Award-winning actor has been so particular in maintaining his status as a responsible person all through his personal life.



Mammotty

Mammotty holds the record for having repeated the most as the lead actor in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films including *Anantharam*, *Mathilukal* and *Vidheyam*. At the same time, he did try his best to overcome stereotypical representations in mainstream movies by daringly portraying meaningful characters in movies of Maniratnam, Padmarajan, Bharatan, Hariharan, I.V Sasi, Jayaraj, Sathyan Anthikkad etc.

right from the beginning of his career in the movie *Padayottam*, the 1982 movie itself, in which he dared to play an elderly villain and father to Mohanlal! He loved himself to get associated with off-beat films of eminent filmmakers like the legendary Adoor Gopalakrishnan, K.G George, T.V Chandran, P T Kunhumammed, Shyamaprasad etc. Mammotty holds the record for having repeated the most as the lead actor in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films including *Anantharam*, *Mathilukal* and *Vidheyam*. At the same time, he did try his best to overcome stereotypical representations in mainstream movies by daringly portraying meaningful characters in movies of Maniratnam, Padmarajan, Bharatan, Hariharan, I.V Sasi, Jayaraj, Sathyan Anthikkad etc. He invested his stardom to make his commercial movies more down-to-earth at the same time added a pinch of glamour and glitter to the Arthouse movies. His entry to other language movies was not simply a try of luck. On the contrary, he did meaningful movies like *Baba Saheb BR Ambedkar*

in English directed by Jabbar Patel, Swathi Muthyam and Yatra in Telugu, *Dalapathy* and *Kandukonden Kandu Kondan* in Tamil.

As a socially committed citizen, Mammotty, the multi-time National Award-winning actor has been so particular in maintaining his status as a responsible person all through his personal life. He is an inspiring father, who shaped the careers of his son and actor Dulquer Salman and daughter Surumi. Mammotty didn't mind to publicly acknowledge his political lineage. While being the Culture icon, he leaves his mark as a social influence, someone to be heard upon, a serious opinion maker in Kerala. And this social status is the most meaningful outcome of his endless hard work and dedication.

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The ever-smiling red rays of the Sun



Ramesh Gopalakrishnan



Sreekumaran Thampi

Love, separation, celebration, get-togethers, departures – all these emotions and events that get portrayed in Sreekumaran Thampi's Onam songs – give them a kind of unique and kaleidoscopic richness. Love is a festival. Onam too is one.

Brightness, sweetness and vibrancy as considered the three qualities that characterize true poetry. Viewed from this perspective, Sreekumaran Thampi is the foremost among the great poets of Kerala. He is also a poet who has composed the greatest number of Onam songs for Malayalis.

Kerala once had a golden age of Onam songs. If Malayalis the world over assemble under the grand umbrella of cultural unity once every year, it is during the time of Onam. Precisely for this reason, Onam songs constitute a definitive cultural insignia of Malayalam.

“Muthe nammude muttathum muthukkudaluyarnallo” [Precious one, beautiful parasols have sprung up in our garden too], “Poovani

ponnin chingam” [Chingam month with its flowers], “Poovili poovili ponnonamaayi” [Flowers, flowers, Onam is here], “Thiruvona pulari than thirumul kazhcha vaangaan” [To accept our Onam offerings on this morning], and others are some of the Onam songs that Sreekumaran Thampi composed for Malayalam films, and they have been considered all-time hits in the field of playback music. What is amazing is that many other Onam songs, whose poetic beauty is even more outstanding, have taken birth from the quill of this same poet.

In 1969, HMV brought out an audio cassette titled “Madhura Geethangal, a compilation of 12 Onam songs written by Sreekumaran Thampi, that

were set to music by the legendary V. Dakshinamoorthy and sung by K.J. Yesudas. Six of those songs had been penned when the poet was a college student! This collection became such a hit that “Madhura Geethangal” was published again the next year. Two years later, HMV brought out “Madhura Geethangal 2”. However, only six of the 12 songs included in it were written by Sreekumaran Thampi. The musical score for three of them was done by V. Dakshinamoorthy, and for the other three by M. S. Baburaj. Needless to say, all of them stole the hearts of Malayalis. Seeing the commercial potential of these works, HMV put together these 18 of Sreekumaran Thampi’s Onam songs and released it globally under the English title “Sheer Magic”. The same collection was later released under another name “Ennum Madhuram”.

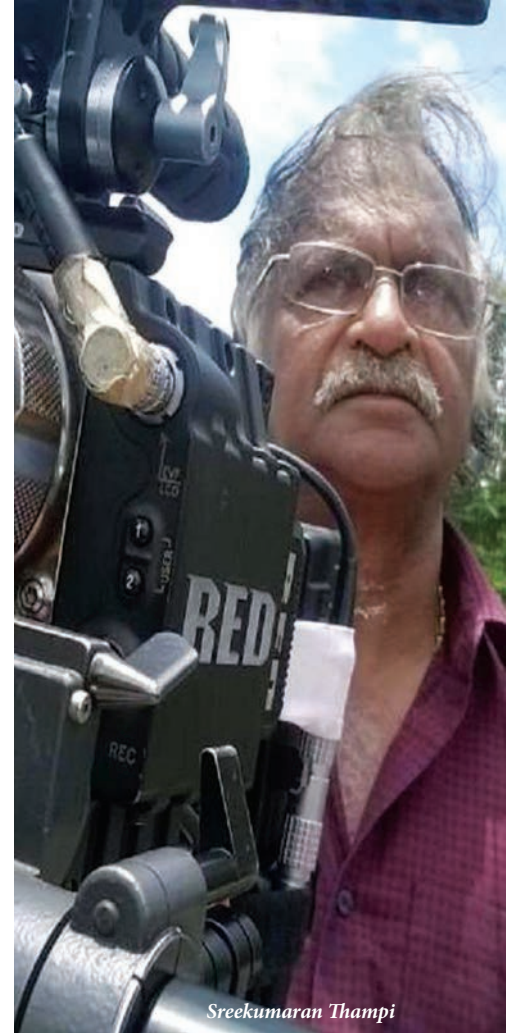
Here’s another line that attests to the sheer craftsmanship of Thampi: “Uthraada poonilaave vaa, muttathe pookalathil vaadiya poovaniyil ithiri paal churathan vaa vaa vaa” [O Uthradam moon, come and shed a little milk on the withered flowers of the garden]. This line speaks not merely of the specialty of Onam in a poor man’s home but allows another interpretation as well. The great romantic poet P. Bhaskaran wrote a line: “Naazhiyoori paalukondu naadaake kalyaanam, nalanchu thumbakondu maanathoru ponnonam” [Feast to all in the land with a little milk, Onam in the skies with a few thumba flowers] in which he imagined the Onam floral carpet made with stars in the moonlit sky. Sreekumaran Thampi preferred to remain on the ground and point to the cultural symbol of the land of King Mahabali. If P. Bhaskaran opted for a romantic fantasy, Sreekumaran Thampi preferred a realistic truth.

In another poem that begins with “Mudipookkal vaadiyaalenthomane, ninte chiripookkal vaadaruthomane” [Matters not if blooms on your hair wither, O loved one. The blooms of your smile must not]. What the poet wishes to convey is that to each person, Onam is a celebration of the mind too. Onam cannot be celebrated merely with creature comforts. The ornaments of mental purity and simplicity are what make the festival of Onam culturally rich in the truest sense. The line “Nilakkaatha dhanamenthinomane, ninte madiyilen kanmanikallillayo” [Matters not if you have no wealth, O loved one. My

darlings on your lap are there] makes the poem more emotionally intense. Later, Sreekumaran Thampi would write Onam songs whenever Yesudas asked for them, in order to be released by the latter’s Tharangini music company. Thus in 1983, Yesudas brought out “Utsava Ganangal” [Festival Songs], a series of songs written by Sreekumaran Thampi and set to music by Ravindran. In the wake of its immense popularity, the same team released “Utsava Ganangal 2” in 1985, and “Ponnona Tharangini” in 1992. The role played by these Onam songs in tapping the value of Yesudas’ mellifluous voice cannot ever be overemphasized.

Love, separation, celebration, get-togethers, departures – all these emotions and events that get portrayed in Sreekumaran Thampi’s Onam songs – give them a kind of unique and kaleidoscopic richness. Love is a festival. Onam too is one. Love is a celebration of youthfulness, that can either come to fruition or end in sorrow. Its fate is decided by Nature. But as long as people are in love, they are caught in a whirl of celebration. They celebrate love with the same festive joyfulness as they celebrate Onam. That is why love and Onam are so interlaced in Sreekumaran Thampi’s songs, and Thampi himself is convinced that is the reason for the enormous success of his Onam songs. In the light of his personal experience, he admits that there was no social structure in Kerala that could herald and honour the feisty spirit of Onam as much as the now-defunct joint family system.

Sreekumaran Thampi cut his teeth on Onam songs with the composition “Thuyil unaru thuyil unaru thumbikale” [Wake up, wake up, damselfies]. What followed was a virtual flood of Onam songs that captured a myriad different moods, and captivated a million hearts. All of them still resonate with the Malayali sensibility because they are very close to Malayali life and experiences. One can listen to the songs several times over, and enjoy them each time in a different way, to suit the aesthetic appeal of that particular moment. If you search a song that begins with “Ennum chirikkunna suryante chenkathir innethra dhanyathayaarnu” [The red rays of the ever-smiling sun is so blessed today] on YouTube, you will be drawn to several links that inundate you with mesmerizing pictures. In one, you see a procession of the smiling faces of film



Sreekumaran Thampi

stars like Madhubala, Nargis, Nutan, Hemamalini, Dimple Kapadia, Sadhana, Nanda, Mala Sinha, Rekha, B. Saroja Devi, Sharada and so on. In another, you will see the radiant face of the rising sun from the beginning of the song till its end. In yet another, you will see sights from a mountain top facing the rising sun. If you choose to listen to its karaoke version, you will see the awe-inspiring magnificence of a rainbow smiling against sunrays. As all these scenes accompany the poetic segments of the song, it is very clear that they are loving gifts offered to the poet who composed those evocative lines.

Viewed from this perspective, Sreekumaran Thampi’s Onam songs reveal that they are really multi-dimensional. The poet’s philosophical signature is not hard to find in lines like “Pookkalam kaanunna poomaram polee nee poomukha thinnayil ninnu” [You stood at the threshold, like a flower tree viewing a floral carpet], “Oru nullu kaakkapoo kadam tharumo” [Will you loan me a pinch of kaakkapoo blooms?], “Oru swaram madhutharam” [A voice, sweet to hear], “enthum marakkaam enkilum aa raathri ennum ormikkum njaan” [I can forget all but that night will forever remain in mind] and so on.



IBM to establish a state-of-the-art product engineering, design and development centre

IBM, one of the leaders in IT, announced that IBM Software Labs is working to establish a state-of-the-art product engineering, design and development centre in Kochi to advance Hybrid Cloud and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. IBM Software Labs are leading global innovation centres that develop and deliver next-generation software portfolios and cloud offerings. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had a very fruitful meeting with Sandip Patel - Managing Director, IBM India and Gaurav Sharma - Vice President, IBM India Software Labs and extended Kerala's wholehearted support to the new venture. During the meeting, the LDF government's vision of making Kerala a Digital Knowledge Economy was presented and gathered their valuable feedback. They also discussed the changes needed in the IT policy and the role of technology in rebuilding the economy that has taken a heavy hit during the pandemic. This centre in Kerala will focus on developing solutions, infusing global design techniques, agile methodologies and advanced technologies including automation, data and AI, and security to support the requirements of the government and global customers. "Undoubtedly, IBM's expansion will pave the way for a huge leap in Kerala's IT development. The government of Kerala would ensure the commitment and support required to materialise the project" says the Chief Minister.

Men in Blue



Goal keeper PR Sreejesh with his teammates after winning the bronze medal in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics

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