

Feel the Excitement

Summer vacation has just arrived. There is so much to learn for life. The season of choice has arrived and there is tremendous scope to grab the opportunities to learn to live. Especially, it is true of the youth who are just rising to the vigour of maturity.

While for many students out there, this is a time to enrich their skills, grow and expand their knowledge and pursue their hobbies, but for some it is a time to earn some money for their future plans.

With the competition being tough for higher education and also for jobs, the view about summer vacation as a relaxing period after the tight school or college schedule has undergone a sea change. When surrounded by an attractive circle, people are compelled to think deeply of which will foster innovation, creativity and responsibility in them. Realising this, many schools and colleges have started to offer vacation specials where the class rooms become a hub of interactive and participatory activities. These result oriented coachings aim at personality development, team building and language skills development.

Information technology and the advent of internet era have made the world small. Internet is now bringing a real class room experience by way of online education. Several institutions offer special online vacation classes in spoken English, soft skills, aptitude development etc.

Holidays also help one to discover one of our true friends, a friend who will patiently stick to all your likes and moods! It will be a lifelong exploration if you can transport yourself into the wonderful world of books. According to the famous author, Mark Twain, "The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them." Enter into the magic world of books where there is a lot to quench your imaginations.

With little imagination, you can get creative also. Give the children a chance to get acquainted with old traditions, long forgotten childhood games like 'thalapanthu kali' and enjoy the traditional rituals followed in the family.

This is a time for both the children and the parents to strengthen their bonds and understand each other better. Plan something that includes the whole family to have an ideal vacation. Just relax and enjoy your time together in a place where there is no cell phone ring or reality shows to distract. Play in the streams, cook out over open fire, read a book, take pictures, sketch or do anything you want to do or just be in a beautiful scenery, a waterfall, cool surroundings etc. Take care not to forget the kids' interests. Also ensure cleanliness of the water you drink and take precautions against health problems.

Don't wait. Use your time to the fullest. Enjoy a voyage through these pages for tips to get refreshed, empowered and learned for life.



enjoy and be enhanced

Schools are closed and vacations are here again! And children are very much excited. Naturally, after months of hectic study and exams they do need some relaxation.

Let us compare our human body with a motor vehicle. After heavy schedules of work all humans need rest. In the case of a motor vehicle after a long run the engine needs service, oil changes, repair etc. for its smooth running in future. Otherwise

its efficiency will slowly decrease. Likewise our dear little children do need some rest and relaxation. Relaxation does not mean that we must give permission for all their favourite activities –like allowing them to sit in front of the TV for hours, or talking over the phone, or spending a lot of time on the computer. Of course, the children must enjoy their vacation, but there should be limits for all this. Time is



precious. They must engage themselves in some useful activities at least for an hour or two daily. Now let us see how we can make the vacation fruitful and interesting for our children.

Vacation time plays an important part in personality development. We can utilise vacation period very effectively if we have a well planned list of activities that could be implemented. It is true that at times we will not be able to give much attention to develop good qualities in our children. So be positive and prepare an action plan for our dear ones for their vacation.

We must plan our activities according to our children's age. First let them clear the study table and room. Clear the clutters. Let the room be filled with positive energy. Go through the old note books and tear the blank papers so that they can make their own notepads for writing important points or for writing the lecture notes. In the case of text books, we can collect pictures from them to be used for next years' project work.

As it is very hot now, children will like to drink juices. So this is the best time to teach them how to prepare different types of juices. Invite them to the kitchen and ask them to help you in cooking. As the first step let them prepare their own favourite dishes. Please do not forget to give enough

appreciation for their first attempts. They can watch elders cooking food and thus learn to prepare food. Later they themselves can prepare breakfast items and curries. This will definitely be a great experience for them.

Children can wash clothes. After washing and drying let them fold and iron clothes if they are old enough to iron. Basic steps for stitching can also be taught during vacations. Let them enjoy their bathing. Ask them to take oil massage and do pedicure and manicure for themselves.

Nowadays our children do not realise the value of money. As it is vacation time let them prepare a list

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of things to be purchased for a month by verifying the provisions inside the store room. Elders can help and guide children in this case. Later they can select and buy things from the department stores. Older children can also be sent to remit the electricity and water bills. By doing these types of small activities they develop an important quality - patience. In addition they feel that they are being recognised as individuals and this helps them to build self confidence. They can also make a small garden in available spaces.

During our childhood we used to know by-heart a number of prayers and songs. Nowadays our children hardly know one or

two. They can be taught a few more prayer songs and also be taken to temples, mosques and churches on a regular basis.

During vacation many of us send our children to their grandparents' homes. This is a good practice as children learn many new things from the changed environment. But before sending them, we must tell them how to behave in their grandparents' home, and remind them not to misuse the freedom given to them. In case we are sending our children to their friends' homes, please make sure that you know the family members very well and confirm their invitation and convenience.

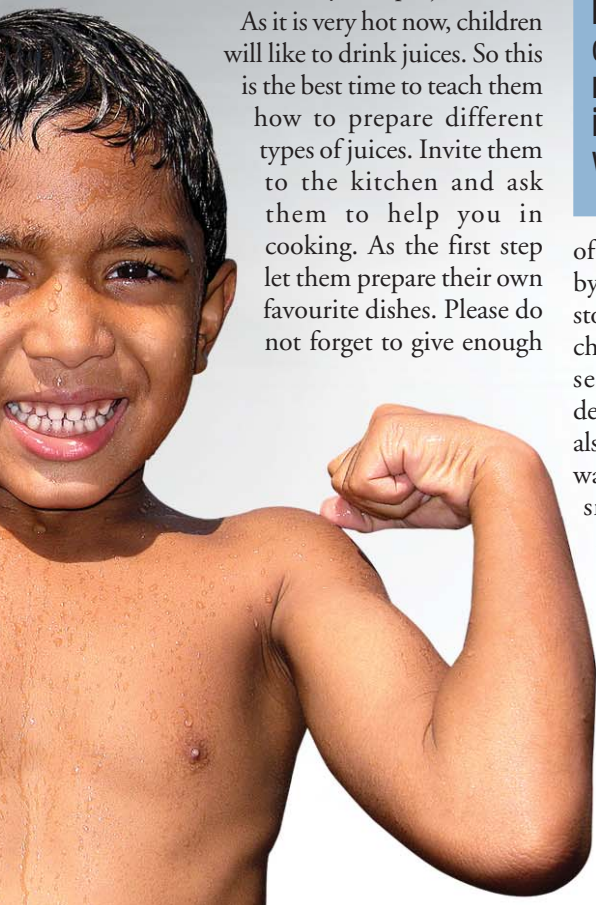
Do not forget to plan picnics and trips during vacation. It gives a mental boost for all the family members. Some parents say that they will not get leave during vacation. Do not forget that the best thing you can spend on your children is time.

The residents' associations can also contribute to children's vacation activities. Children can form groups and organise some games and picnics. The elder people and housewives can take turns in guiding the children. They can also teach them some simple activities.

Handwriting is an important factor. Let them write a page daily. This just takes 10 minutes. Vacation can also be utilised by elder children to make a strong foundation for the subject they find difficult. However, set aside a particular time each day for this and please do not spoil the whole vacation through classes.

If children want to learn swimming, skating or any sports activities during the vacation period there is no harm in sending them to these classes, but only make sure that the children's interest is given priority.

Many activities have been mentioned here, do not compel children to do all of them, select according to their taste and allow them to spend their time in the way they like most. Let children have a great vacation filled with variety and enjoyment this year. ■



Now most of the parents must be relieved that the tiresome examination ordeal is over for the child and the parent. The fortunate ones would be making plans to visit their grand parents or go on a short holiday or idle away the time at home. Some unfortunate ones would be forced to go for summer coaching camps for the entrance examinations. Whichever group you may belong to, one way or other all would be affected by the hot summer and the sickness associated with it.

Viral Infections

There are many common infections in the summer that can cause similar symptoms. This is surprising to most parents who expect infections, such as the cold and flu,

to occur only in the winter. Among the viruses that can commonly cause infections in the summer include enteroviruses (stomach bugs), parainfluenza (respiratory bugs) and poliovirus (polio). Although more common in winter, it is also possible to catch a rhinovirus - the common cold - in the summer. Varicella or chickenpox is also more common in the summer months and it may be worthwhile to think of vaccination against varicella, if you have not had chickenpox before. It is an effective vaccine recommended particularly for students attending coaching camps. Although Hepatitis-A producing jaundice is usually a mild illness, major epidemics have been reported in hostels, particularly so for children who have been used to drinking

boiled water. For these children Hepatitis-A vaccination is recommended.

Mosquito-borne infections

Mosquito-borne infections commonly by the arboviruses can cause dengue fever and the only way to prevent it is to avoid mosquito-breeding near your homes. It may be also worthwhile to remember that dengue is just like other virus infections but on repeated infection the chances for complications like dengue hemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome needing immediate hospitalisation is much more.

Skin infections

Bacterial skin infections, particularly staphylococcal infections are very common in the summer



Hot Summer

Burning
Health

months. Although in most children this may be mild infections seen in the back area, axilla and groins where you sweat a lot, in some children it may lead to abscess formation in different parts of the body. Repeated bathing, wearing loose cotton clothes and using fan would reduce this tendency.

Food poisoning

Another important cause of infections and illness in the summer months is food poisoning or food-borne illnesses. Because bacteria thrive in warm, moist environments, food poisoning is relatively frequent in the summer. Food poisoning can be prevented by frequently washing your hands and cooking surfaces, not allowing foods and utensils to become cross contaminated, cooking foods to their proper temperature and promptly refrigerating leftovers. Heat up only that much amount of refrigerated food that you need for the day and do not put back the left over in the fridge as repeated heating and cooling is not appropriate.

Stomach upsets

Stomach upsets can be very common on holidays as a result of a change in diet, added heat or a child being out of their daily eating routine. Try and stick to foods that children are used to and don't introduce new foods into the diet. Get them to eat small amounts regularly and bring along snacks, which will keep hunger at bay. When eating out, check that food is cooked thoroughly. While local ice creams are very appealing, they need to be avoided if possible. Again ensure that children drink water that is boiled and not boiled water mixed with ordinary water. Children should not take ice in their drinks, where the water is unsafe. Choose drinks that are pre-chilled from the fridge instead. Advise Children when swimming to avoid drinking the water as it could lead to tummy upsets or diarrhoea.

Diarrhoea /Dehydration

Diarrhoea can be caused from bacteria, viruses, and germs, for

example from infected foods. Symptoms range from a mild stomach upset for a day or two with slight diarrhoea, to severe diarrhoea for several days. Crampy pains in the abdomen are common. Vomiting with high temperature and headache can also develop in dysentery doing with blood mucous in stools. Always ensure that Children's hands are washed, after going to the toilet, petting animals, out playing and always before eating. Parents should always wash their hands before preparing food, after gardening etc... Visit the doctor who can prescribe special ORS sachets to treat dehydration. If a child is vomiting, wait 10 to 15 minutes before giving drinks again and get them to sip

Warm weather can make children more vulnerable to illness, which can result from too much exposure to the sun, overheating from running around and playing in warm temperatures. Children under three should be kept out of the sun and in the shade at all times and children over three should be kept out of the sun between 11a.m. and 3 p.m.

drinks slowly. Don't starve a child with diarrhoea.

Insects/Mosquito Bites

Insect bites and stings are very common in children, especially during visit to gardens. Stings can come from ticks, mites, mosquitoes, flies, fleas, ants, bees, and wasps. Most insect bites and stings only cause local reactions, including redness, swelling, pain and itching. Some children can suffer severe reactions such as anaphylactic reactions, which need to be treated immediately by a doctor or emergency department, depending on the severity of the reaction. If a

child is stung by a wasp make sure to remove the sting. Don't use twisters or squeeze it out as this can result in release of more "poison". Use a dull blade to scrape it out. For normal bites thoroughly wash the area with soap and water.

Sunburn

Holidays can get very stressful if a child is unwell, especially when it's very hot. Warm weather can make children more vulnerable to illness, which can result from too much exposure to the sun, overheating from running around and playing in warm temperatures. Children under three should be kept out of the sun and in the shade at all times and children over three should be kept out of the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun is at its hottest. As child's skin burns twice as quickly as an adult's, it is vital to protect children from sun damage at all times. Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before they are exposed to the sun and reapply regularly, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Dress children in loose fitting cotton clothing, including a hat and sunglasses where appropriate. Sun cream should be applied to areas not covered by the protective clothing.

For children engaged in sports activities, the vast majority of heat-related problems are a direct result of the environmental conditions in which the athlete has been exercising. Apart from this, awareness of other predisposing factors like use of proper clothing, timing of workouts and attention to the hydration status of the participants would help a lot.

Tips for parents

Always carry a small first aid "kit" with you at all times on holidays, with non prescription medicines such as, antihistamines, antiseptic creams, paracetamol, sun lotions and insect repellent. Always be careful storing medication, especially in hot weather. Medication needs to be stored in a cool dark place and in certain instances be kept in the fridge.

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Time to Sharpen the Axe

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe', said Abraham Lincoln once. The same is true with teaching also. If a teacher want to conduct his or her classes effectively home work and preparation is much needed especially in higher classes.

According to studies conducted among employees during summer, it is found that about 40 percent are probably suffering from "summer seasonal affective disorder or "summer SAD" which leaves many demotivated, unhappy and even close to quitting their jobs. But the study could not find a teacher who is suffering from this disorder. And of course, this is because teachers get breathing time during summer vacation.

We should note that teachers were given with this privilege because of their strenuous work conditions and mental strain involved in their work. It is not that much easy to manage 40 to 50 students sitting in a class room

and continuously talk to them without loosing interest. In addition to teaching, they are also forced to solve and tackle different other psychological and personal problems of their students.

"With eight weeks holiday a year, teachers are more likely to use the summer period for extended breaks with 1 in 4 (25 per cent) using their time to take long holidays to stay at home - double the amount of most other professions," the TDA (Training and Development Agency) which conducted the study found out. The summer holidays also present an opportunity to spend more time with the family for employees in the education sector, with more than 40 per cent using the summer break to spend time with their children, compared to around 20 per cent for people in HR, media and marketing.

Recently I asked a senior teacher about her holiday plans. She said that she would simply take rest with the relief of escaping from the busy schedules. Another young





It is apt to remember the old Jewish proverb – ‘God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers’. And there is no fault in extending this proverb and say - God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers. And mothers could not be everywhere so he made teachers.

teacher told me that she would plan the family itinerary for the next year during that period so that she could work throughout the year without much strain and pressure from the family chores.

When asked the same question to a male teacher his answer was different. “I will spend the time to update my knowledge level by reading latest available material related to my subject and also will be on the lookout for collecting teaching aids.”

In a way all these views are essential for the making up of a good teacher. Relaxing is a must and it is true that teachers will get time to relax only at the time of summer holidays. But they should also spend some time to prepare for the coming academic year. While reading the materials which enhance their knowledge level, they can collect and organise teaching aids also. Instead of rushing at the last minute this will

help them to get organised well in time. They should also try to understand the attitudes and preferences of the modern child. This will definitely help them to manage the students of their classes more effectively.

Self analysis is another must do activity for teachers during the holidays. It is the analysis of one’s own personality without the help of another person. Teachers should not think that they are the only person who has the solutions to everything involved in leading a school. They should understand that only a combined effort of teachers, parents and students will bring in positive change.

Summer holidays will give time for teachers to look back to the attitude, behaviour and performance of their students. Such a close and critical monitoring will help a lot in moulding them to become good citizens. This holiday time can also be utilised to develop self restrain and patience. It is even recommended to undergo some short term courses in counselling, because in the present day scenario teachers will have to handle the role of a counsellor too.

It is apt to remember the old Jewish proverb – ‘God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers’. And there is no fault in extending this proverb and say - God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers. And mothers could not be everywhere so he made teachers. ■

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Be it nostalgia reminiscence or vacation - we do not have time to spare. Sweep everything off the floor and under the carpet. It is time to plan. Long brainstorming session - inside and out - to find out what is good for the 'generation next'. Option one: 'abacus' class. Gone are the days of poor maths. Abacus is a brain refresher. Search -the 'mouse' will lead you to the destination- the addresses, the contact numbers, transport facility, faculty details every thing ready. Choice no:1 is all set. Poor little kid is out there under the sun,

dreaming of a shade somewhere. No exits; you are trapped- Mouse traps.

Destination 2: Pruning the artistic skills. Does the child has any talent to prune? No questions. Search till you find. Here you may Scan through the advertisements- print, FMs or TV with one hundred and fifty channels at your finger tips, there is no dearth of sources.

Again, strategic discussions. Arguments. Painting? Music ? Judo? Cinematic dance? Fall in the line. Competition is mounting. These days' people with multiple skills have an edge

Let the shackles off



over others. Take cricket – Allrounders are fetching more money than the orthodox batsmen or bowlers. Move along the lines. No crossing.

And, the victim? He is now seen gazing at the sky. The decision makers are not worried. The gate is kept locked and no chance of the 'generation next' leaping out. With the amount of Cornflakes, pizza, burger inside, it is impossible to even alight a stair upwards.

Destination 3: Preparation for the IIT? How old is your child? Ten? Yes, there are foundation courses. What if the IITs decide to do away with the entrance tests after five years? Or, the IITs lose significance? Don't worry. Coaching will improve the child's Grades. Any problem? No, No. But, the timings? Nothing to panic. The Mouse is here search.

Where is that child? I saw him seated somewhere. After a long search the child was found in the terrace. Now aiming at a mango tree.

'Oh, God, what are you doing here?'

'What else? Can't you see? I want a mango.'

'Mango? It is inside the fridge. Come.'

'No, I don't need that. I want the mango, up in the tree.'

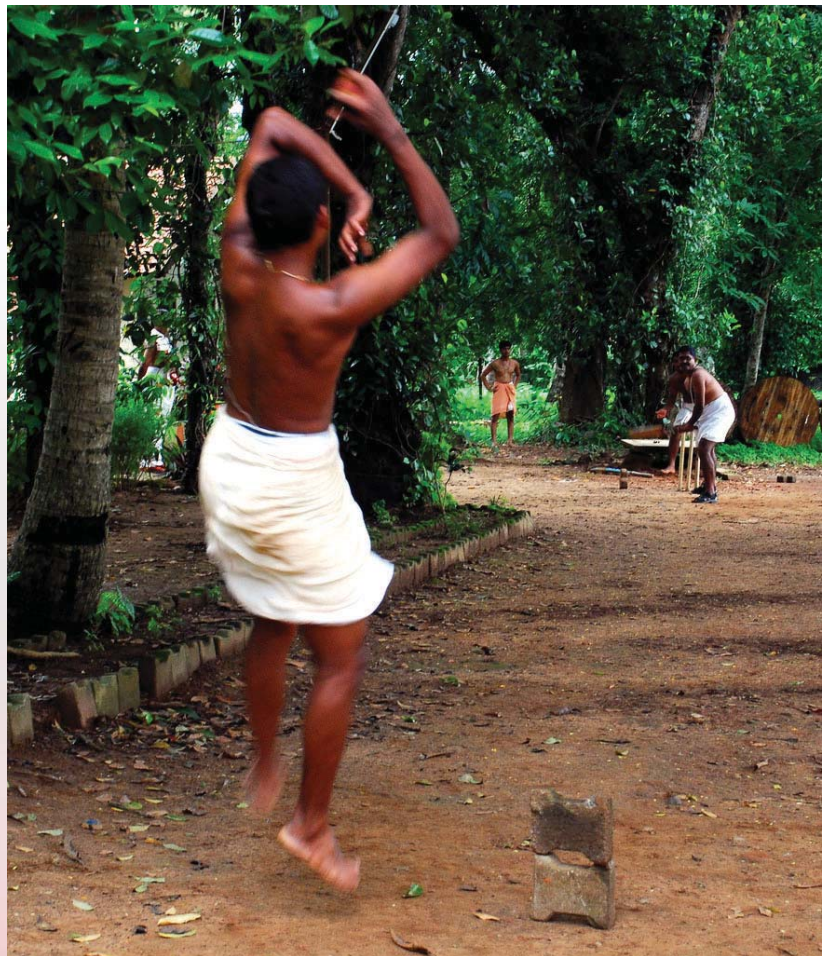
'Ok', compromise.

'Let me pluck it for you 'No, No. It is my mango. Let me do it.'

A Big crash, followed by the sound of a broken glass. Finished.

Brain-storming session came to a sudden halt. It is not viable to replace window glasses every day. Besides, cooling the heels after soothing the neighbours' ire consumes time. Not a perfect way to begin a day.

Where is he? Again in the terrace? My God! No he/ is here hiding under the sofa. After a lot of cooing and convincing, you go to the abacus class, up to 12 noon. Key boards 12.15 am – 1.15 pm. Break: 1.15pm -1.30 pm. When the child was ushered into the piano class it was 1.45 pm. The piano teacher enters, equally exhausted. The class, of course was a disaster. The



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teacher had to strike the keys with a push. The class dragged up to 2.30 pm.

Next, the judo classes. Frustrations welling up. It was so bizarre that one or two punches went for stitches. Need a way to give vent to your feeling, after all.

At 5 O'clock sharp, the kid is back. Brains rejuvenated, talents pruned and physique improved, a bandage in support. What else do you need? Being impulsive gives you the

chance to act. No brainstorming sessions. Just you and your kid. Follow his heart. Grab the chance to bring back the vacation – a cessation from work. Organise a picnic to the villages, to the bus stop, to the market, to the railway station. Give them a chance to watch the harvest, to run around the paddy fields, to feel the earth vibrates under their feet, to climb the trees, to talk to the common man. It improves their knowledge of life. It lessens their burdens.

Residents Associations or the PTAs can take the initiatives. Even the education department can organise short trips to unknown destinations- to the great rivers, to the silent valley, a visit to the homes for the elderly. No amusement park. Believe me; the children will start loving their parents a bit more. They will be more communicative, friendlier and better human beings. ■

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Gone are the days when children used to spend their two months of summer break from school, playing out in the open, swimming in the rivers or plucking mangoes and cashew fruit from the open temple property or even someone's orchard.

Children, who are now otherwise confined to the indoors, playing video games and watching cartoon network and movies get a chance to test their physical limits in the great outdoors with fresh vigour.

With parents busy in the rat race that life has become, children are often left to fend for themselves during holidays.

With business being the order of the day, this area has also been commercialised with skilled educational coordinators, arts schools, sports centres and even fly-by-night operators stepping in to make a quick buck.

Summer vacation offers a golden opportunity for parents to gauge the artistic and intellectual aptitude of their wards. Instead of wasting the leisure time of their wards, they can channelise their energy into learning skills that would stand them in good stead in future.

A break from routine





If your child is good at language he can be introduced to a new language during this period. There are cultural centres of France and Germany in Thiruvananthapuram offering courses in French and German. This is also a chance for kids to develop an interest in a culture quite different from his.

The Jawahar Balabhavan in Thiruvananthapuram has been training children in various fine arts for the past so many decades and many of its students have gone on to make a mark in the field of dance, acting and have also become renowned artists.

The State Public Library in Thiruvananthapuram conducts classes in public speaking and story telling. The Vylopilli Samskriti Bhavan also holds short term courses in cultural activities for children above 10 years.

Participation in sport not only

improves physical fitness and mental health, but it can also help children learn better coordination and social skills. Pursuits such as cycling and swimming have the added benefit of teaching children road and water safety.

The Sports Council gives swimming lessons for kids at the water works swimming pool and also at the one in Aakkulam.

These days even schools have started dance and music classes to keep their children engaged during the summer vacation. Various clubs in cities and towns across the State hold sport and cultural activities during these two months. Cricket coaching and skating are also taught in cities such as Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam.

The Lawn Tennis Club in Thiruvananthapuram helps kids pick up the rudiments of tennis during this period.

Also, check out your neighbourhood clubs to see if they are conducting any competitions in arts and cultural items. Competing in these events will surely boost the children's self-confidence and also engage them.

Of course, this is also the time for children to catch up on subjects that they have been performing poorly in. Another pursuit can be visits to places of historical significance about which the children would have read in their textbooks. This will give encourage them to learn more about local history and develop an interest in protecting them.

Summer camps

Summer camp is a supervised programme for children and conducted during the summer months in some countries. Children and adolescents who attend summer camp are known as campers.

The objective of summer camps is to offer an opportunity for the youth to grow, develop and practice the principles of togetherness and self-reliance.

The primary purpose of many camps is educational or cultural development. A summer camp environment may allow children to take healthy risks in a safe and nurturing environment.

There are very few summer camps in India. Kids and Teen Summer camps are popular in the northern parts of India where as in south India the trend of summer camping has not become very popular.

A word of caution

One thing that both parents and children should be aware of is that going out in the hot summer will lead to dehydration. So children should be encouraged to go outdoors early in the morning or late in the afternoon, rather than in the middle of the day.

The children should be provided with adequate refreshments and plenty of fruit juice and water. A first aid kit at home is also vital during this period when bruises and cuts are a daily occurrence. ■



Experience the Scenic



Planning for a refreshing trip during summer? Well, our State offers quite a few ideal summer hideouts, with a whole lot of options to relax and enjoy with your friends and family. Six hill stations of Kerala have been chosen as the best travel destinations for this vacation, and they are sure to give you the most wanted refreshing tint in the scorching summer.





Nelliampathy

Getting there

The nearest airport is Coimbatore (55 km) and the railway station is Palakkad (52 km). By road, a three hour trip from Palakkad will take you to the hill ranges. Nelliampathy is about 137 km from Kozhikkode, 160 km from Kochi and 382 km from Thiruvananthapuram .

This fascinating hill station near Palakkad offers the great scenic beauty of tea, coffee, orange and cardamom plantations. A visit to the forests, having teak of extra ordinary height and girth is sure to offer you an unforgettable experience. Nellikotta is the highest peak in the Nelliampathy ranges, which is definitely worth the visit, as well as the dam and park at Pothundi, about 17 km away. A trip to Seethakundu will offer you a panoramic view of almost one third of Palakkad.

Expanse

Wayanad



Blessed with mist clad mountains, spice plantations and vast stretches of green, Wayanad offers nature at its best. Amongst the major tourist attractions in Wayanad are the two rock caves of Edakkal Caves. The Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary is a must visit for the nature as well as the animal lovers. Pookot Lake is a popular tourist spot where you can visit the fresh water aquarium and the children's park, enjoy boating or even shop for a few handicrafts and spices. The Kuruva Dweep, the island famous for its birds, orchids and herbs is an excellent excursion option. Adventure seekers will love to choose the Chembra Peak, situated at an altitude of 2100 m. The Pakshipathalam situated in the Brahma Giri hills is renowned for the bird sanctuary that is home to several rare species of birds. Other places to visit are the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary, Lakkidi, Varambetta Mosque and the Ambalavayal Heritage Museum.

Getting there

The nearest airport and railway station is at Kozhikkode, from where private vehicle or buses can take you to Wayanad. Wayanad is nearly 110 km from Kozhikkode, 325 km from Kochi and 547 km from Thiruvananthapuram.

Ambanad

A 2,700-hectare plantation spread at Ambanad, in the high ranges of Kollam district is best for those who wish to enjoy nature. The route to Ambanad is brimmed with a vast spread of plantations, bubbling rivulets and gushing waterfalls. Ideal as a plantation tourism destination, Ambanad boasts of pineapple, cashew, pepper, nutmeg and rubber plantations in addition to tea. A couple of well maintained, high quality bungalows will offer you a classic retreat in a serene setting.



Getting there

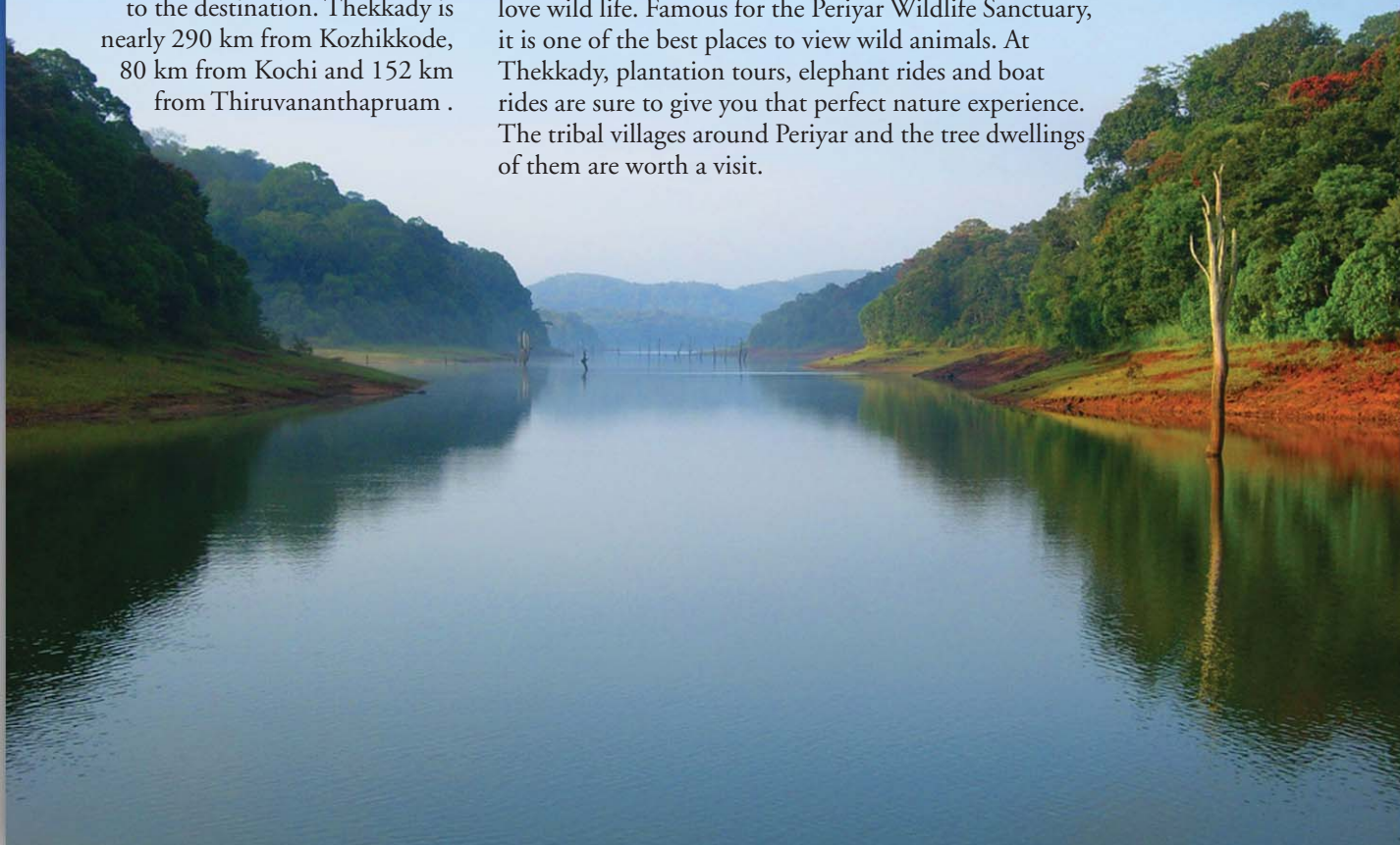
The nearest airport is Thiruvananthapuram, and the place is well connected by road and rail network. Ambanad is about 390 km from Kozhikode, 200 km from Kochi and 80 km from Thiruvananthapuram.

Getting there

Kochi is the nearest airport, while the nearest rail junction is Kottayam. A four hour trip by road from Kottayam will take you to the destination. Thekkady is nearly 290 km from Kozhikkode, 80 km from Kochi and 152 km from Thiruvananthapuram .

Thekkady

Thekkady is a pleasant heaven on earth for those who love wild life. Famous for the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, it is one of the best places to view wild animals. At Thekkady, plantation tours, elephant rides and boat rides are sure to give you that perfect nature experience. The tribal villages around Periyar and the tree dwellings of them are worth a visit.



Munnar

Once the summer Resort of the British Government in south Kerala, Munnar is a picturesque hill station on the Western Ghats. Unending expanse of tea plantations, pristine valleys and mountains, exotic species of wild flora and fauna and the aroma of spice scented cool air is sure to make you want to stay longer. The destination offers several sight-seeing and picnic spots including Anamudi, Eravikulam National Park, Chinnar Wild Life Sanctuary, Marayoor, Mattupetty, Top Station, Devikulam and Cheeyappara Waterfalls. The paragliding course conducted by the National Adventure Foundation is a definite attraction for adventure lovers.

Getting there

The nearest airport and railway station is at Kochi. Munnar is accessible by road from Kochi, Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram, Thekkady and Madurai. The destination is 356 km from Kozhikode, 132 from Kochi and 354 from Thiruvananthapuram.

Ponmudi

Ponmudi, the beautiful hill station in the State Capital has a cool, healthy climate. The forest trails at Ponmudi are ideal for trekking. The Ponmudi Tourist Complex will offer a comfortable lodging on the hill side.

Getting there

The nearest airport is at Thiruvananthapuram, from where a 2.5 hour trip by road will take you to Ponmudi. The destination is 500 km from Kozhikode, 280 km from Kochi and 61 km from Thiruvananthapuram.

The writer is consultant with the Great India Tourism Planners and Consultants International, Thiruvananthapuram



Vishu Prosperity Defined

PHOTOS : MURALI PAPPANUR

Vishu is one of the festivals of Hindus. It is indubitable that vishu is different from other celebrations by way of the method of celebration, time sanctity and scientific base.

Holy times

Vishu means 'equal state'. In Vishnupurana there is a reference to 'vishuvath' when day and night are equal. On two days in a year such a phenomenon happen- the first of Metam, the first sign of the zodiac and the first Thulam, seventh sign of the Zodiac. These days are supposed to be holy days. Metam equinox is the day when the sun turns from Meenam rasi, a sign of the zodiac to Metam rasi. Astronomically and astrologically these days are very important.

From the solar system the New Year starts from Metam. The malayalam months begin from Metam. In the astrological stars Metakkor comes in the beginnig . The climax rasi of the sun to Metamrasi. Vishu has that importants too- when we enter the Ucharasi of surya.

The Belief of the Origin of Vishu

Different myths prevalent as to the origin of Vishu. Some says that the myth has connections with the killing of Ravana. Ravana pestered even the sun and Sri Rama saved the people and Devas from the hands of Ravana by killing him. The memory of that is behind Vishu - a few say. A few others belive that Vishu is the festival in memory of Vishnu's escapade with Narakasura.

Chaitrolsavam

As vishnu is observed in the munth of



Chaithra it can be called Chaitrotsav. Human life is always connected with the things around him. The land, climate, atmosphere etc. always influence the life of humanity. Festivals like Onam, Makam, Thiruvathira, Karthika, Pooram etc. are associated with climatic conditions of the land. Utsav has a meaning something that produces happiness. To Keralites Vishu is an important festival. As the period is full of flowers and fruit, it is Vasanthotsav. Pooram is also like that. Pooram is celebrated during the nine days prior to the

Pooram in Meenam. In temples and houses a variety of flowers are used to honour the deity Kamadev. In the same way Vishu is also a time of flowers.

The major observance in Vishu is 'Kani'. In houses Kani is prepared either to poojaroom or 'patinhatta'. In temples and kavus it is put in the sanctorum. Flowers are hang and spread on the floor. The most important flower required is Konna (Cassia fistula). Besides, bunches of cocunut, arecanut, jackfruit, mango, other vegetables etc. are also placed beside the oil lamp.

Among the materials used for Kani, jackfruit, mango, coconut, rice, paddy, coins are important ones. Some put Kalams also beside it and in front of the house. Formerly, nine cereals in the sprouting stage were also put for Kani. Now it is seen only in certain temples. Similarly gold, silver or other coins are also used for Kani.

The practice described above shows connection between the festivals of men and the surroundings. Man cannot forget nature and her blessings. The materials used for Kani clearly show the abundance due to agriculture. Here is an assimilation of Vasantholsava and Karshikolsav.

Kani

Kani is seen before the sunrise on Metam 1st. It should be seen before anything is seen on that day. Hence people go to the place of Kani closing their eyes. In the houses the eldest one wakes up by three or so in the morning and lights the oil lamp and leads the other members to the place to see Kani. In temples, the priest does these

things. He opens the doors of Sreekovil and shows the deity surrounded by the abundance placed there. In temples like Guruvayoor thousands of people go to witness the Kani placed there. Those who witness Kani at home, go to temples there after. The most important part of Vishu is the Kani and visit to temples.

After seeing Kani at home, people visit the neighbouring houses to see the Kani there, especially children. Now a days the practice is seldom found. The house owner often presents betel with areca-nut, unniyappam and coins to those who visit the house on Vishu.

Most often the things placed for seeing Kani are removed from there after a week. It explains that the joviality lasts for a week. Relatives from near and far may come to see Kani. They need visit the house within a week. Among Brahmins married woman would be living at the house of her husband. But they also come to her fathers house during Vishu. On their visit they will be given cocunut, money and other materials.

Presents on Vishu

As it is the practice to distribute new cloths and money to the family members by the Karanavar or Head of the family, during Vishu too, money is distributed. It is called Vishukaineettam. The yonger generations fall prostrate before the elder and the elder after blessing them pay Kaineettam. To get such money is believed to be propitious.

Farmers festivals

After seeing Kani, the cattle also shown Kani. A little Konna flower beside the oil lamp is used for this. It is prepared in the cow shed. Besides, eatables are also given to them. This symbolises an agricultural ancestry. On Pathamudayam, the tenth Thulam too the same rites are performed

Vishu is the end of scorching summer. A saying that after vishu no summer prevents among the peoples. The work connected with agriculture is commenced with Vishu. Formerly there was a practice that people





visited the fields after seeing Kani. Any way seeds will be sowed within ten days.

Vishu Feast

Like the feast on Onam, the feast on Vishu is also important. Feast is there on vishu and the day prior to that. A variety of dishes with the available vegetables around are used for the feast. Ripe mangoes and jackfruit have a place in the feast.

Vishuvilakku

It is a festival observed in some of the temples of Kerala. Most often it extends to seven days. It is even now observed in Annapoorneswari temple of Cherukunnu, Sreerama temple of Thiruvangadu, Tellicherry. Here feast was served in the morning and at noon porridge was given. In most of the Malliyot and Palot kavus, celebrations are during this period.

Vishu Prophecy Predictions

The astrologers predict the future of people based on the star and kooru of Vishu. Formerly village astrologers used to visit houses and precede the future of the people on Vishu. They

Kani is seen before the sunrise on Metam 1st. It should be seen before anything is seen on that day. Hence people go to the place of Kani closing their eyes.

got money and cloths as rewards.

In certain places the gold or silver coins put for Vishnukani are poured on the right palm and find the signs and future of person based on the way the coin lies, the elevation etc.

A few others roll coconut and find the good and bad that may come during the year. After taking bath a coconut is decorated with sandal paste and standing towards the east, it is rolled. At the time of stopping, the face is taken in to consideration. If it is towards the east, prosperity by way

of cattle and food are the results. If it is south east, injury and loss of agriculture; on South, the very life is in danger; if on South West, illness and loss of relatives; on west gain money and materials; if on North west, mental agony, loss of wife and fear of fire; if on north, prizes from the King, longevity and gain in every thing; if on North East, loss of agriculture, cattle, wife, relatives etc.

Present day relevance

The older glamour of Vishu is lost now. Yet reminiscences of it is still found in the society. Use of crackers have become more. Now the idea of Vishu has gone beyond the religious and has become the festival of all communities.

For students it is a time of joviality after the annual examinations. In villages ripe mangoes and jack fruit are abundant. Really man when at the abyss of poverty and sense of loss, sprouts a new hope of prosperity during Vishu. It is the blossoming of a new era in the life of man -- a time when blessing of nature and God shower an humanity. ■

Gandhian Vision

Right for Dignity

To an age conscious of Human Rights and its violations, Gandhi gave a system of rights that laid great emphasis on social service. It is easy to preach human rights but very hard to practice it. People should become aware of human rights and the violations of human rights should be viewed seriously.

Though the concept of human rights is very old, it assumed great importance only after the Second World War. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, has been proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for peoples and nations. It incorporates the traditional Civil Liberties, social, economic and cultural rights. The two international human instruments namely the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966, have given wide connotation in the concept of human rights.

In the Indian context, the concept of human rights is originated from Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Manusmriti and Arthasastra. All these reveal that human rights are interdependent.

Gandhian Perspective

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the rare luminaries in World History. According to Gandhi, there are several social evils that are the disastrous consequences of the neglect of values, rights and education. He had the vision that human rights emerge from the idea that each person is endowed

with a dignity, which should be respected by others irrespective of caste, creed and sex. He was confronted with a world of injustice, inequality and imperialism. It was a violent society with all kinds of evil practices. Hence man is the centre of all activities in the Gandhian system of thought. Gandhi said that the individual is the one supreme consideration and he realised that man is not meant for laws but laws are made for human beings. When man is transformed, the society and the country is transformed.

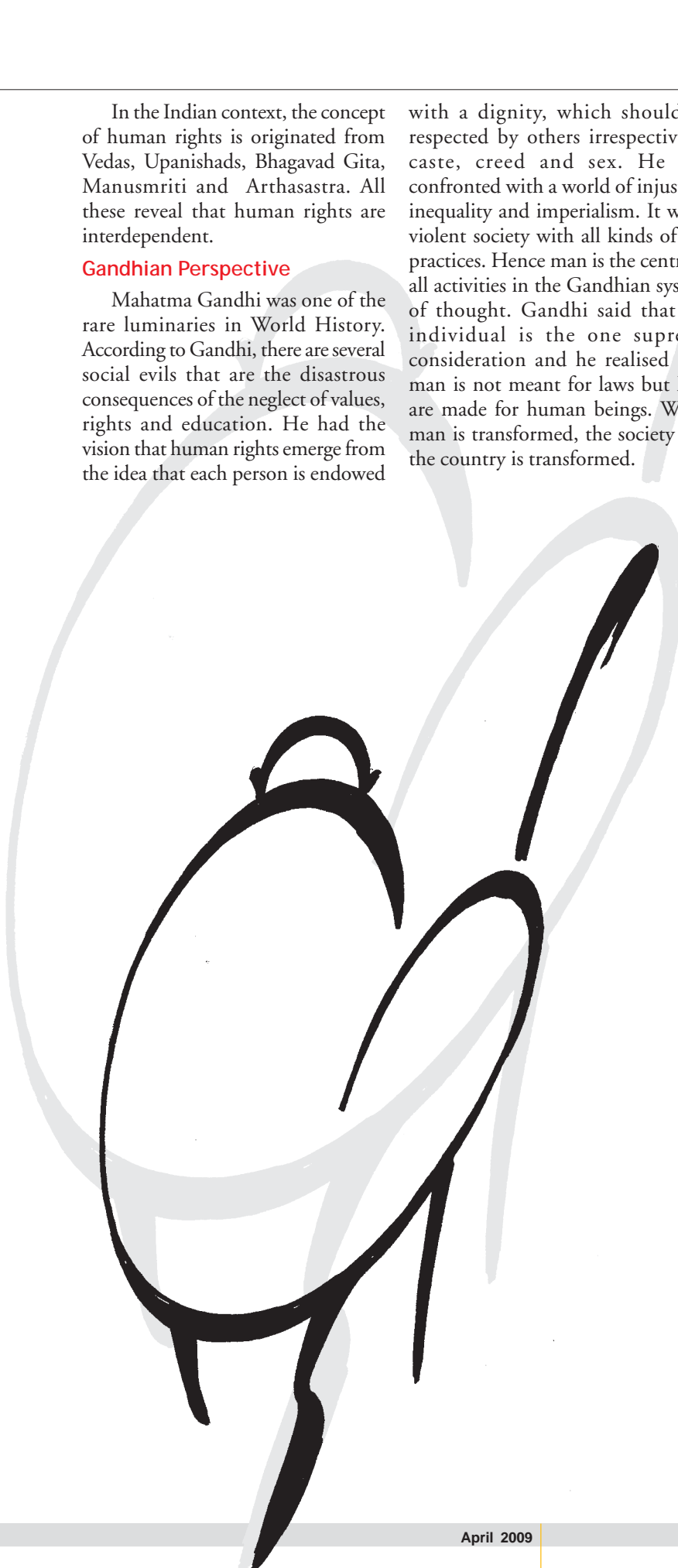
Gandhi's aim was a decentralised social and economic system where power will be not in the hands of a few rich but in the hands of the common man. Gandhian social philosophy of 'Sarvodaya' aims at the welfare of all, his concept of 'Bread labour' teaches the 'value of labour' and his 'Trusteeship' wants the rich to consider themselves as the trustees of the excess wealth which must be distributed among the poor and the needy. He was conscious of the rights of women and wanted to abolish untouchability from society and worked for the poor and downtrodden. Gandhi visualised an enlightened monarchy and a stateless democracy where there will be no distinction between the ruler and the ruled. All will do their duties voluntarily and not under compulsion from any corner.

Rights and Duties: The Vision of Gandhi

Gandhi attached greater importance to duties than to rights. Rights are the opportunity for self-realisation. The way to self-realisation is the realisation of one's spiritual unity. He emphasised the need to think of one's duties first and to leave the rights to take care of them. To Gandhi, rights are not created by the State or any other group but by the individual himself.

To an age conscious of Human Rights and its violations, Gandhi gave a system of rights that laid great emphasis on social service. It is easy to preach human rights but very hard to practice it. People should become aware of human rights and the violations of human rights should be viewed seriously. All human beings should have the opportunity to lead a life of dignity. The artificial barriers between man and man should be abolished. Equality, liberty and fraternity should become the law of mankind. As the elixir of life, human rights are the basic values, which sustain humanity irrespective of caste creed and gender. ■

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Celebrations Generation New

Truly said, festivals are occasions to express and exhibit the manifold splendours of man rather than those of the enshrined divinity who, in all grace, provides the mortals with a ritualistic pretext to hold out the best and finest in them. This is virtually so in the case of Keralites who sink their skin-deep

differences and indulge themselves in gay abandon to celebrate the annual festivals of local temples with infectious gaiety. And as the adage goes, 'not a single day rolls on in festive Kerala without the drums beating, the cymbals clashing and the deities and demons dancing to their rhythm'.



that swept the cultural traits and trends in recent years. To cite an instance, 'Ottanthullal' which was till a decade or two ago a must at most temple festivals is on the verge of extinction in spite of certain halfhearted attempts to sustain it. Invented and popularised by Kunchan Nambiar, the celebrated poet-performer par excellence, 'Ottanthullal' is the least complex and most appealing of all the dance forms in Kerala. Unlike in Kathakali, the dancer sings while enacting the puranic tales narrated in the songs which are lucidly simple but live with humorous anecdotes. He is supported by the attendant singer and the percussion duo of 'maddalam' and a pair of cymbals. The crown, costume and makeup are eye-catching without

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Come March and every tiny hamlet and sleepy town wake up to the drumbeats heralding the festival season and the whole land is instantly in the grip of a frenzy of celebration. March and April mark the peak of such festivities, even remote nooks and corners reverberating with recorded music, amplified incantations and highpitched theatrical utterances. Despite the scorching heat of the mounting summer, people throng the hallowed abodes of gods and goddesses – be they the small makeshift shrines by the wayside or sprawling premises of ageless deities – and revel themselves watching winkless, night-long performances of every art and sort.

Times have changed, and gone forever are the nights when temple precincts were lit with strings of serene oil lamps and vibrant with the strains of devotional music. They are now resplendent with arrays of countless colour bulbs weaving incessant psychedelic patterns and resonant with recorded cassettes blaring out hit numbers from latest films in relentless regularity. Old-timers may recollect with nostalgic relish the bygone days when traditional drums, bells and conch-shells signalled the annual holy fairs in all serenity.

Synonymous with the temples of Kerala are a host of performing arts, pristine and profound, classical as well as folksy, which attained greater glory on the festival venues. But most of the common and ritualistic art forms which once enjoyed pride of place in festival programmes are relegated to the background in the flux of change



Contd. from page 27

being gaudy and the solo performance provides wholesome fare to the classes and masses alike. That such an elegant dance has unceremoniously been side-tracked by the modern day 'break-dance' and disco-dance', that too on the sacred premises of a temple, is uncharitable if not blasphemous and points to the seamy side of the fast changing scenario of our festivals.

Classical music had long been considered as an essential item, especially in the major 'devaswoms' and eminent vocalists and instrumentalists were avidly sought after at these centres. And naturally, the standard of appreciation is far higher in and around such 'temple-towns' like Neyyattinkara, Chengannur, Ettumanoor, Haripad,

din of multi-piece orchestra.

Till quite recently, 'Kathaprasangom' was a regular feature and perhaps the most popular in the festival proceedings throughout the State. It has a lot in common with 'Harikatha', the only dissimilarity being in content. While 'Harikatha', is a devotional discourse in verse based on a divine theme, 'Kathaprasangom' narrates a story, a social one in most cases, embellished with elucidations and recitations from its poetic original. Though an obviously affected diction and stylistic repetitiveness came to mar its former charm, 'Kathaprasangom' in its prime had brought poetry closer to the common man. But today, 'Kathaprasangom' is not patronised

by festival authorities as of old; it is more or less spurned in favour of curious items like 'mimics parade' that thrive on blatant imitation and parody.

Branded 'professional drama', a new breed of escapist extravaganza has been playing havoc on the festival platforms for quite some time. There is hardly any professionalism or drama worth the name about these performances. But it has come to stay with disastrous consequences. Its protagonists strut about the temple stage with malicious glee sweeping aside the beloved art forms of yore. Commercialisation is what ails their act; vulgarisation is what they are at.

It is interesting to note that temples had never been the nurturing chambers of Malayalam drama right from its inception more than a century ago. The early practitioners presented their plays in a community setup encouraged by the elite. The dynamics of drama gathered momentum gaining wider social appeal and approval over the decades. But till the 70's, temples did not open their doors to professional drama, any drama for that matter. Almost every city had its fine arts society which organised theatrical performances periodically for its members, but now the sponsorship has changed hands to festival committees. The new brand of 'drama' – call it ballet or by any name – has taken over from the professional troupes of repute and a curious concoction of sentimentalism and sensationalism is doing the rounds as routine festival fare.

However, the future is not that bleak. Gladly enough, improvisation and innovation has had a certain impact on the festival platform as well. And of late, 'Tayambaka', 'Panchavadyam' - the percussion ensemble, rendition of 'Sopanam' and a few robust dances of the folk variety have indeed added to the audio-visual celebration of our festive nights. Such a harmonious blend of the old and the new is indeed a happy auguring. ■



Vaikom, Thrissur and Guruvayur among others than in the pretentious parlances of sophisticated cities. But the expectant connoisseurs and genuine lovers of music are being denied the chance to enjoy the famous and favourite exponents from far and near perform to their hearts' delight. Adding to the dismay is the fact that classical music performances are replaced by 'catchy' ganamelas which provide rhythmic fare along with the

Synonymous with the temples of Kerala are a host of performing arts, pristine and profound, classical as well as folksy, which attained greater glory on the festival venues.

Professional Education Trends Spin Fast

Entrance exam season has begun! Plus two students are busy with entrance examinations for the professional courses. They have to write a series of examinations during this summer. There is a growing apprehension among the students and parents regarding the choice of professional courses. Questions like, which course is best, which course has more career potential etc. are often raised by them. Plus two students with Mathematics and Biology are in a dilemma regarding the choice of medical, engineering or agricultural courses. Moreover reports on impact of economic recession make the issue more complex.

Kerala entrance examinations for Medical, Agricultural and Engineering courses for the current year will be held from May 25th to 28th. Students should not select a course based on the compulsion from the parents. It should not be based on existing vacancies available in the Government sector. Try to dream about the research and development that will take place after 4-5 years. Student's aptitude and interest must be given adequate weightage.

Medical courses

In Kerala more number of parents are interested to admit their children

to medical courses. But the number of medical seats available when compared to engineering are less than 10 percent. So competition is very high. As per WHO recommendations, 500-1000 number of population needs a doctor. But this ratio cannot be achieved easily in the State due to scarcity of doctors. In order to achieve the above status it will take, minimum a decade. Cuba's achievement in this regard is really commendable in having a doctor per 500 number of population. Thus it is clear that there is better employment potential for doctors in the State, hence Biology students can give first choice to MBBS course.

Moreover potential of doctors in the State will further improve if the concept of family doctor is implemented in rural areas. There exist enough vacancies of doctors in the Department of Health Services.

Dental graduates have only limited number of posts in the Government sector. But they can start private clinic under self-employment venture. Recent decision to reduce the duration of the BDS course will affect the career prospects of dental graduates within the country and abroad. As per the directions of Dental Council of India, the State Government has been compelled to reduce the duration of BDS course





to five years with effect from 2008-09. Previously it was four and a half years of study period and one year of internship. With this decision, duration of BDS course will become five years without having internship. After completing internship he/she can practice with confidence. While overseas dental education is giving due importance to skill development and hands on training programme with internship and externship in leading hospitals, dental graduates under the new stream without internship will find it very difficult to adjust with the new situation.

Dentistry is one of the important professional courses having immense career potential in United States and Europe. In USA Dental surgeons are earning more income than any other professionals. In United States patient has to pay huge fee for dental ailments. Now a days more number of dental graduates from India are interested to pursue higher education from USA or UK. During their study period they are preparing for dental licensing examination. In order to complete the licensing examination successfully, a student must be required to undergo externship in United States/UK under the guidance of a licensed dental practitioner. A student without undergoing internship will find it very difficult to

successfully complete the required externship programme and licensing examination.

Ayurveda degree programme BAMS is acquiring momentum in the country and abroad. Now a days people are more interested to pursue ayurvedic treatment than modern medicine for chronic cases. Ayurveda doctors have enough potential in European countries, UK and United States. As part of health tourism this sector can exhibit spectacular growth within the country and abroad.

Homoeopathy is emerging as one of the promising areas in the health sector. Being cost effective, homoeopathic treatment can be easily accessible to lower income groups.

Homeopathy is more prevalent in Canada, European countries and United States.

Even though Nursing, BPharm and BSc MLT have been excluded from entrance examination, these courses have better career potential within the country and abroad.

Globally nursing has emerged as one of the key areas generating more employment. Almost all countries are facing scarcity for nurses. Developed countries face difficulty in meeting the ever-growing demand for nurses. Since the demand gap is very high, Indian nursing schools can exploit this situation. International Council for Nurses (ICN) and Florence Nightingale International Foundation

has revealed that developing countries can play a key role in reducing this global problem. Potential for nurses are more in USA, England, Canada, NewZeland, Ireland, Switzerland, Scotland, Australia, Wales and in certain African countries. BSc MLT students can start accredited laboratories under self-employment sector. They have umpteen opportunities in Middle East countries and abroad.

Agricultural courses

Compared to other courses, agricultural courses are also not free



from unemployment. But there is enough potential for pursuing specialisation and research abroad. They can choose MBA programme for better career options. They can also join for specialisation in Agri business management, supply chain management and retail management at National Institute of Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad or Indian Institute of Managements where 100 per cent placement is assured. Agricultural graduates can undertake research in agricultural universities. They can apply for agriculture research scientist examinations. Among agricultural courses Veterinary science, Dairy science, Agriculture and Forestry have more opportunities under government and private sector when compared to fisheries and agricultural

engineering. Veterinary graduates have umpteen numbers of opportunities in Canada, European Union and United States. Moreover, agricultural graduates can specialise in Bioinformatics and Biotechnology, which are having immense potential within the country and abroad.

Engineering courses

In the engineering sector existing priorities must be redefined. Nano technology, Mechatronics and Bioinformatics are emerging as the future promising technological areas. Global economic recession has started affecting some of the potential employment sectors in the country. It has not even spared the IT industry! In order to overcome this crisis, major IT companies are taking stringent economic measures like freezing of increments, allowances etc. Moreover they have started retrenching employees with poor work efficiency. Their major objective is to reduce the number of work force. But recruitment will be reduced in the coming years.

During 2007, more than 65 per cent recruitment in the IT industry was through campus recruitments. Now it has been reduced to less than 20 per cent. As a sequel to



Industries have started preferring engineering graduates with specialisation in management for technical and managerial post. Now in order to get better placements, students have to face tough competition.

retrenchment, IT industries are more interested to select experienced candidates rather than fresh graduates. Satyam scandal has made a black mark on Indian IT industry.

The major preferences for the students were to join IT; Computer Science or related engineering courses till 2008. Of the 30,000 Keralites passing out from the engineering colleges of the state or from nearby states, more than 40 per cent is from IT related disciplines. Their sole objective is to get in to a pioneering IT company. But the situation is changing day by day. Major new generation courses like Mechatronics, Nano technology, Biomedical science; Bioinformatics, electronics and communication, Mechanical engineering, Dairy technology, Environmental engineering, Maritime engineering and BTech in fashion technology are emerging as the major placement oriented courses. Civil, Architecture and Chemical engineering graduates can pursue post graduation abroad for better placements.

In order to overcome the major threats in the employment sector, engineering students should acquire better skills in their respective fields and knowledge on management principles. Recently, more and more engineering graduates have started taking MBA from the best business schools within the country and abroad. Industries have started preferring engineering graduates with specialisation in management for technical and managerial post. Now in order to get better placements, students have to face tough competition. Only those with better skill, work experience and specialisation can sustain in the job market. NASSCOM has revealed that more than 75 per cent of engineering graduates in the country have poor knowledge and skill. So in the emerging job market, engineering graduates may not get a mere walk over; but an assessment based on work efficiency and performance. ■

The writer is career journalist.



Pineapple Jam

One kg pine apple pulp (got from 1 ½ -2 kg of pine apples) one tsp citric acid

A pinch of food colour (yellow)

Half tsp pine apple essence

Method: The pineapples should not be over ripe., nor under ripe.

Remove the peel of the pineapple. Remove the eyes of the pineapple. Grate the pineapple with a stainless steel or aluminium grater. The core can be crushed and its juice used for making syrup or squash.

Take the weight of the grated pulp, add water at the rate of ¼ litre to one kg of the pulp. Heat it over fire till it is soft. Take sugar according to the weight of the pulp. Add citric acid and sugar. Cook till all the water in it evaporates. Mix well and immediately off the gas. When it is cold pour into sterilized and dry bottles.



Gooseberry Jam

One kg gooseberries

¾ kg sugar

Heat the berries in a little water brushing them with the help of a ladle. Add the sugar and heat them over a brisk fire. When ready carry out the 'plate test' to make sure the jam is set. Then off the gas. For this test take a spoonful of the boiling jam on a plate and allow it to cool. If it sets on cooling and there is no water separating out of it, the jam is ready to be bottled.

Banana Jam

One kg banana pulp

¾ kg sugar

5 gms (one tsp) citric acid

Peel the bananas, cut them into small pieces, or mince to a pulp. Divide the sugar into equal parts. Mix one part well with citric acid and add to the banana pulp. Heat over a brisk fire. Carry out the plate test to make sure the jam is ready. When it is cool transfer to the sterilised bottles or jars. Close tightly.



Grape and Apple Jam

Half kg grape pulp (without seeds)

Half kg apple pieces (or pulp)

One kg sugar

Half tsp citric acid (or juice of one lemon)

Use a good variety of grapes. Violet coloured one is the best. Cut them in halves and remove the seeds. Heat them for a while in ¼ litre water. Add apples, cut in fine pieces (or pureed in a mixie). Add sugar and citric. Now boil briskly till set a setting point. Now off the gas and allow to cool and pour into bottles. Then cap the bottles tight.

Jack Fruit Jam

One kg jackfruit bulbs

ghee as required

¾ kg jaggery

Cut the jackfruit into very small pieces. Add ¾ litre water and boil the fruit for 15-20 minutes till soft. Now mix in ghee, and jaggery heat briskly till setting point is reached. You can test if it set by placing a spoonful of the jam in a plate. If it sets it will not flow freely on the plate. Do not over cook. Fill the jam in sterilised jar, then cap or seal.

Make up Making up of a Character

In both folk arts and tribal arts, primary importance is given to masks and facial makeup. In dance forms, facial makeup is used mainly to enhance the charm of the dancer. But in folk or tribal art, it is to create a new character that makeup is used. In ritual arts, for example, the performer is transformed into a 'divine' character. Facial makeup and masks are of much more significance in such cases than even the costumes. Whatever the role of the character - be it a demon, ghost of divine bearing - the audience gets the feel and flavour most importantly from the makeup.

Almost all the old visual arts used facial covering or makeup to create an impression of a new make-believe. Not only in folk and ritual arts but classical forms as well, the relevance and predominance of makeup can be

perceived. Rich in visual art, particularly performing arts, Kerala has realised the importance of makeup since long ago. There are in fact written manuals on makeup the rules of which are strictly followed throughout the state.

Diverse in style and different in application, the effective use of makeup can be discerned in the classical arts such as 'Koodiyattom', 'Krishnattam' and 'Kathakali', folk arts such as 'Kummatti', 'Porattu' and 'Kakkarissi' and ritual items such as 'Theyyam', 'Mudiyattu' and 'Padayani'. A lot of artistic sense, creative skill and imagination go into the makeup of the above mentioned forms. Makeup, in fact, is an intricate art that demands minute observation, surgical precision and above all, a deep sense of perfection.





In Kathakali, the artists wear thick facial makeup, depending on the types of characters they enact. Significantly, certain characters ('Satwika') are known as 'Pacha' (green) which amply suggests their 'mental makeup'. Even though costume and headgear play a prominent part in distinguishing a character in Kathakali, it is the facial makeup - completed slowly and patiently - that impresses upon the audience even at first sight.

It is quite different in the case of folk and tribal arts. Rice paste and black powder are the main ingredients of makeup in the folk. Masks will be made of arecanut 'Paala' (that part which covers the flowers). Tender leaves of coconut are also used for decorating the face in certain cases. The surface of the 'Paala' will be coloured according to the characteristics of the role.

One can discover a blend of painting and sculpture in the facial makeup of both classical and folk-arts. This aspect is more evident in classical arts than in folk forms. In both instances, makeup does not involve in application of colours for mere

decoration. It follows the age-old principle of 'Natyasastra' which lays stress on the 'character' rather than the performer concerned.

The basic colour that forms the background, and the other hues used to project certain parts on the face, the eyes, the cheeks and the lips in particular, pursue an old pattern that has been proved most effective. For example, when the eyes are darkened around with subtle lines, the character begins to look 'different.' Such improvisations can be made according to the need and mood of the play, dance or the protagonist.

Modern makeup owes a lot to the traditional ways, especially in the use and fusion of several colours (black, orange, white), so as to highlight the expressive skill of each performer. Present day painting has much to learn from the 'old school' of the unknown masters of yore as to how to use colours the natural way rather than the synthetic way in which it is loud and gaudy by and large.

Padayani

Padayani is a ritualistic art form that is performed in some of the



villages in South Kerala. The participants wear heavy make-up and dance to the accompaniment of 'Chenda' and other instruments. The whole village assembles to witness it with a deep sense of devotion and spirit of unity.

Padayani's origin has a legend about it. Goddess Bhadrakali who sprang up from Shiva's eye killed Oarika the Asura king, but could not control her fury. The attendant Bhootas of Shiva danced before her wearing masks and make-ups. Pleased with their performance, Bhadrakali showered them with blessings. It is believed that the dance is recreated by the villagers so as to invoke the blessings of Mother Goddess.

In another sense, Padayani represents a collective attempt of the villagers to drive out the evil and bring in the good in society. It also symbolises the unity of the village folk while striving together to clean their minds and lives and seeks the boon of Nature for the common good. As such, Padayani signifies a social purpose, that of fighting against the powers of darkness and celebrating the advent of light.

Padayani is performed mainly at the temples in Kadammanitta,

The make-up of Padayani is done then and there with materials available locally. The masks are made of 'Paala' or thick bark of the arecanut leaf. White, red, black, green and yellow are the colours used.

Ezhumattoor, Kottangal, Othara and Puthukulangara located in Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts. It is performed at Aalpra Thacharikkal temple in Kottayam district as well. It is in the Malayalam months of Kumbhom, Meenam and Medam (January to April) that Padayani is held as the prime feature of the festivals at the above-mentioned temples.

The ten-day festival starts with Bhagavathi (Mother), dressed in green, is brought down from her grove and given a sword and pedestal. The devotees pray that their sins may



be pardoned and they be blessed. The prayer is done as 'Vaythaari' which accompanies the subsequent dance as well.

From the third day onwards, devotees disguised as 'Kolams' appear amid the light of several torches and the dance picks up as the drum, beats and shoutings rise to a crescendo. The eighth day is the day of 'Valiya Padayani' in which many art forms such as 'Pooppada', 'Nayattu' and 'Kuthira' take part. The colourful costumes and various make-up glittering in the blazing light of torches is a memorable sight.

The make-up of Padayani is done then and there with materials available locally. The masks are made of 'Paala' or thick bark of the arecanut leaf. White, red, black, green and yellow are the colours used. Needless to say, these are 'natural' colours. Dried mango leaf is powdered to make black. Red is made from red brick and yellow from turmeric white the inside and outside of 'Paala' are used for white and green respectively.

In 'Theyyam' a linear method is used whereas in 'Padayani, colours are filled within forms. In 'Theyyam' facial make up is most important while in 'Padayani make up on the mask is what is paramount. The background of the facial make-up in **Theyyam is orange, but in Padayani, green and other complementing colours are used on the mask.** The latter also employs geometrical patterns to enhance the visual effect. In either case, designs are done with indigenous material, that is, material supplied plentifully by Nature.

Padayani as we witness today, has been supplemented by several arts-painting, dance, music and percussion. Above all it radiates the spirit of a rustic people in communion with Nature and the present day artist has to imbibe a lot from it in terms of application and dedication. ■

Flower Dramatic

Gloriosa Superba – the climbing Glory Lily, is a striking tuberous plant with brilliant wavy-edged yellow and red flowers. The name ‘gloriosa’ comes from the word ‘Gloriosus’ which means handsome and ‘superba’ from the word superb, clearly alluding to the beautiful flowers which appear from November to March. In Malayalam it is called ‘Mandoni’ and is also known as Tiger claw, fame lily, fire lily and climbing lily.

In bud, the pale green petals face downward. As the blossom matures, the petals elongate and wrinkle and gradually arch backward while sequencing through a spectrum of colours from green to yellow to scarlet. The stamens are extremely prominent and spread outward in graceful curves. It is the bizarre shape of the flower along with its vivid colours that make one gasp at first encounter.

Even if it is a member of the Lily family unlike most lilies, it is a twining vine that is able to grasp with tendril formed at the tips of the leaves. It is fascinating to watch a leaf tip elongates into a slender tendril that

coils around nearby supports to get a grip. The glory lily vine grows fast in warm weather, blooms then dies down to the ground. After a spell, another vine emerges from the tuberous root.

Nature to tropical jungles of Africa the plant like moist, well drained, rough, rich soil. This can be propagated by offsets (new plants at the base of an existing vine) on divisions of tubers. Plant the tubers horizontally in March-April. The flowers are produced during July-September. The plant requires frequent watering in the flowering phase.

Gloriosa superba is the national flower of Zimbabwe. It is also the state flower of Tamil Nadu and in 2004 was adopted as official flower of the de facto rebel lands of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. A postal stamp was issued by the Indian Postal Department to commemorate the flower.

Gloriosa is good for trellis, or screen or a fence, providing colour in green house and conservatories with its exquisite flowers.





The land of Kerala, just a little more than one per cent of the geographical area of India, is a museum of soil types, thanks to the varied topographical features, high rainfall and geologic conditions unique to the State. We have a beautiful landscape - a fascinating mosaic of rivers, lakes and backwaters, rolling mountains, luxuriant greenery, evergreen forests and cultivated plains. Beneath its richness there are sores already beginning to show up. Soil degradation and pollution is noticed as a matter of urgent concern. Land is a scarce resource in this small State of very high population density. Any developmental activity would tax this precious gift of nature, though we do not often realise it.

Soil is the most precious natural resource on this planet and it has to be perpetually kept in a stage of high productivity for sustenance. The productive potential of soil depends on its health. The health of a soil is largely defined by its functions. The basic functions of soil are

- Sustaining biological activity, diversity and productivity
- Regulating storage and movement of water
- Filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposition
- Storing and cycling nutrients and other elements within the earth's biosphere
- Providing support of socioeconomic structures (i.e. buildings, roads) and protection for archeological treasures associated with human habitation

These functions are not only important to agricultural issues, but directly affect many of our other current concerns - sustainable

Soil health Strategy the Urgent Need

development, biodiversity, global climate change and environmental quality.

Soil health is determined by a combination of physical, chemical, and biological properties such as its texture, organic matter content, water and nutrient holding capacity and depth. It differs with changes in these attributes. For example, some soils, because of their texture or depth, are inherently more productive, as they can store and make available larger amounts of water and nutrients to plants. Similarly, some soils, as a result of their organic matter content, are able to immobilise or degrade larger amounts of potential pollutants. Soil management can either improve or degrade soil health. Erosion, compaction, salinisation, acidification and pollution with toxic chemicals can and do degrade soil health. Increasing soil protection by contour cultivation, crop residue management, crop rotations, organic matter addition and careful management of fertilisers, pesticides and other inputs of the farming system can improve soil health. Soil health in its broadest sense is enhanced by land use decisions that weigh the multiple functions of soil and is impaired by land use decisions that focus on single functions. So in order to enhance soil quality, everyone should give priority to such practices that would keep soil in good health which will in turn reflect on the total productivity of the ecosystem.

Just as we can assess human health we can evaluate soil quality or health.

Soil is the most precious natural resource on this planet and it has to be perpetually kept in a stage of high productivity for sustenance. The productive potential of soil depends on its health.

Healthy soil is a combination of minerals, rocks, water, air, organic matter, micro organisms, insects and worms. The intricate web carries out a process that continuously refines the soil and maintains long term soil fertility. Soil health, even though depends on the physical and chemical properties of soil, it is more closely linked to the biological properties of soil.

There is a positive correlation between soil organic matter content and soil microbiological activity. Decrease in soil organic matter content and microbial biomass and increase in erodibility are strong indicators of decrease in soil health.

Soil health assessments are conducted by evaluating indicators. Indicators can be physical, chemical, and biological properties, processes, or characteristics of soils. They can also be morphological or visual features of plants. Indicators are measured to monitor management

induced changes in the soil. For example, soil organic matter is a widely used indicator, because it can provide information about a wide range of properties such as soil fertility, soil structure, soil stability, and nutrient retention. Similarly, plant indicators, such as rooting depth, can provide information about the bulk density or compaction of the soil.

The recent report on the State of the Environment by Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, presents a dismal picture of the status of soil quality in the State. Deterioration of quality has already set in and the figures indicate soil degradation at different stages which needs immediate intervention. High pressure of population as also the socio economic structure in Kerala necessitated a relatively high proportion of land use as built up area. Extensive deforestation, intensive cultivation and unscientific developmental activities in the State have resulted in destruction of natural ecosystems, soil erosion (and increased risks of landslides), accelerated run off, loss of top soil along with nutrients,

Keep soil resources in good health:

Addition of organic manures, green manures and other sources of organic matter.

Appropriate soil conservation practices like contour cultivation, bench terracing, grassed waterways and wind breaks to minimise or prevent soil erosion.

Integrated plant nutrient system through use of organic, inorganic and biotic sources of nutrients in judicious combination for different farming situations.

In situ soil and water conservation and suitable land use in conformity with soil capability.

Adoption of cultural practices such as mulching or planting cover crops in order to conserve soil moisture.

Ameliorative practices such as liming for correction of soil reaction and to overcome the toxicity/deficiency problems of soil.

Efficient water management practices to arrest water logging.

Proper selection of crops and cropping systems with inclusion of legumes.



hydrological degradation and reduction in productivity. Industry, in particular, takes its toll on this precious resource, by way of both mining and pollution. Excessive and injudicious use of pesticides and fertilisers aggravates the situation. Kerala soils are under the pressures of steep gradient from east to west, heavy rainfall and heavy anthropogenic interventions. Because of the very high population density, all forms of biotic pressure on soil is high and hence it is an immediate and critical necessity to map and monitor soil quality and promptly take remedial measures, where needed.

In the State, more than 67 per cent of the total geographic area is subjected to soil degradation due to different factors like erosion, landslides, water logging, acidification, pollution etc. Soil erosion by heavy rainfall with landslides has become a common phenomenon in high altitude zones. When compared to the national average, the rate of soil loss in Kerala is very high. Large areas of long settled marginal lands are now under intensive crop production as a result of high and rapidly growing

population. Human settlements compete for use of agricultural lands. Over exploitation for subsistence and commercial uses has led to large scale loss of vegetation for soil cover.

Soil degradation causes both direct and indirect degradation of water quality. Soil degradation from erosion leads directly to water quality degradation through the delivery of sediments and agricultural chemicals to surface water. The indirect effects of soil quality degradation may be as

The overall strategy for managing soil health, increasing crop yields and sustaining them at a high level must include an integrated approach to the management of soil nutrients, along with other complementary measures.

important as the direct damages resulting from sediment delivery, but they are often overlooked. Erosion not only results in the direct transport of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides to surface waters but also reduces the nutrient storage capacity of soils. A reduced nutrient storage capacity may lead to less efficient use of applied nutrients by crop plants and a greater potential for loss of nutrients to surface water and groundwater. The pesticides held by soil organic matter or clay may become more mobile in the soil environment as erosion reduces organic matter levels and changes the soil texture. This results in a reduced biological activity, which in turn will slow the rate at which pesticides are degraded, increasing the likelihood that the pesticides will be transported out of the soil to surface water or groundwater.

The overall strategy for managing soil health, increasing crop yields and sustaining them at a high level must include an integrated approach to the management of soil nutrients, along with other complementary measures. Sustainable agricultural production incorporates the idea that natural resources should be used to generate increased output and incomes, without depleting the natural resource base.

Certain government initiatives introduced recently give sufficient thrust on organic farming to protect soil health. In line with the National Project on Organic farming, the State Government has launched an organic farming policy initiative under the name 'Jaivakeralam', with a view to free agriculture from its dependence on synthetic fertilisers and pesticides and to use organic manures and bio pesticides instead. Going organic, thus, will help enhance soil health and promote production of organic food which is safer. The methods used in organic farming, like crop rotation, nutrient management through addition of crop residues, animal manures, green manures and composts, cover cropping and mulching are eco-friendly and helpful

in creating integrated, humane, environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural production systems.

In fact, the homestead farming system that was once effectively practiced in Kerala is one of the most cost effective and eco-friendly systems of agriculture. Livestock and poultry are essential components of the system. This system is ideally suited for maintaining ecological health and preserving bio diversity because a variety of crops for food, fodder, timber, green manure etc. along with natural vegetation are grown in the homesteads utilising the available space to the maximum. Wastes generated are used up effectively in the homestead itself, thus enriching the soil and improving productivity. But because of large scale urbanisation, the system is slowly vanishing.

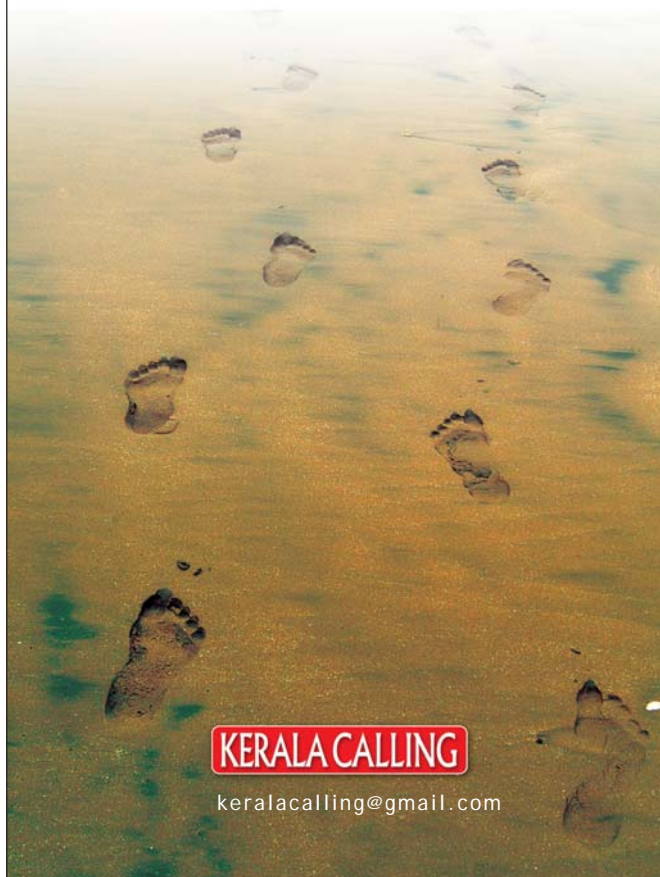
The Report of the National Commission on Farmers emphasised the significance of preserving soil health and the need for adopting low input sustainable agriculture. Dr. M. S. Swaminathan feels it is high time that we started a Soil Health Enhancement Movement in India. In the ambitious Rs.1839.75 crore special package for Kuttanad, sufficient thrust has been given for soil health improvement. An eight-point action plan christened 'Thazhava Plan of Action' (TPA) has also been formulated aiming at sustainable food security. Some of the recently introduced state initiatives like Group Farming, Ellarum Padathekku, though focused on reviving paddy cultivation will have positive impact on ecological health. Strict adherence to the Kerala Land Conservancy Act will go a long way in preventing undesirable interventions with soil. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme also could perhaps help to revitalise the degraded lands and improve soil health. There should be a state level campaign on the indispensability of organic manure.

It is an urgent need to develop and implement a soil protection strategy to protect soils from unsustainable land use practices and pollution. Soil protection should be taken into account at all levels of environmental decision making. Doing so will help soil to be recognised as a precious resource and a life support system, which it truly is. ■

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Knowledge for Understanding Customers

When we consider Knowledge Management application of Customer Relationship Management in the e-business era we have to consider initially the characteristics of e-business and also the usable definitions of KM and CRM applicable to the specific situation

With the advent of Internet economy the pace of business has picked up. In order to keep up with this e business becomes imperative to even the well-established brick and mortar businesses. Electronic commerce's main feature is that it uses the web to sell products and services. Where as e-business can be defined as the activity where you manage your entire business, where all the complex processes and activities are coordinated and where you weave a web of collaborations all facilitated by the web. As we have studied in our economic sessions the web provides the 'perfect market' where there is perfect information and



knowledge of what has gone by and what is going to happen. So smart e-businesses are using knowledge drivers personalised to create digital stores that treat each customer as though he/she was their only one. In order to do this effectively e-business must comply with most of the following.

- a) They should use transaction level responses to facilitate real time response for which extreme coordination is necessary between all the functional units
- b) E-business should also facilitate the transfer of knowledge about a customer across all the levels so that the customer can make a transaction as an old customer whichever be the transaction point
- c) Any successful business will also have to use customer history so that they can predict new needs and also cross sell through the right channel
- d) They should also have an integrated front office function so that no blame transferring occurs and also the whole process runs smoothly

And as the saying goes in e-business The four P's of marketing has been successfully replaced with the space age substitutes, where products means customised products and services, price has also crossed over to agent based and individualised pricing, place has no relevance and promotion has been taken over by two-way question and answer sessions and customer relationships. So in the e-business scenario we can see that customer relationship weights out more than all the other 'selling' practices existing.

CRM: An Insight

Customer Relationship Management mainly deals with a combination of processes and technologies that tries to understand the company's customers from different perspective. This in order facilitates the differentiation of products and services to meet the different customer needs. In simpler terms what CRM aims at is customer satisfaction, customer loyalty in face of high customer turnover and growing customer acquisition costs.

As we all know, CRM existed from time immemorial. But in the earlier days it was in the form of one to one relationship, which existed between the customer and the vendor, now that one to one relationship is aided by the technology boom. In effect, it allows tracking of zillions of customers on a one to one basis at some cost. According to studies it costs a company five times as much to get a new customer as it does to keep an existing one.

In the present economy where the customer participation replaces customer research, CRM should aim at acquiring a constant stream of new business from existing customers based on continuous customer interaction from a long-term point of view. Usually in CRM customers can be classified into three categories, most valuable, growable and to be gotten rid of. In CRM



KCRM

KCRM is the knowledge enabled customer relationship management. This comes into being when Knowledge Management, collaborative relationship management and e-business overlap. There are some basic steps that accompany adopts when they decide to implement a KCRM system. The first and foremost step is to align the strategy of the whole company towards the acceptance and use of such a system. The second step is the audit and analysis of the present condition to find out the gaps in the existing structure. After the audit process the designing team is drawn up and the technology to be employed is charted out. Further down the lane there is the development and result driven implementation of KCRM. After this evaluation process starts along with further refinements to be made. Even though this is the deployment process a whole lot of change management with respect to cultural changes as well as rewards has to be brought about to effectively implement the KCRM system.

Now thinking about how knowledge based CRM can help E-business, there are many ways but the most prevalent one is making available the existing knowledge. KM also helps to synthesise, predict as well as pave the way for inferences in the behavioural pattern as well as needs of customers. It also helps CRM to co-ordinate all its activities so that the whole business presents a single unified front to the customer. With the help of Km CRM can also build preemption strategies to prevent valuable customers going away. Along with this there is also integration of external knowledge so that business does not always look inside for information. These are the core functions in which KM aids CRM.

business success is in keeping existing customers rather than going all out to get new ones. So basically four fundamental ideas contain the essence of CRM.

- a) Maximizing revenue through already existing relationship
- b) Excellent service is provided consistently by using existing customer knowledge
- c) Processes can be well defined due to the integration of knowledge of past transaction to effectively sell to the existing as well as new customers.
- d) Loyalty is something which can be developed over a time period by offering customised products and services and also resolving minor issues before they become serious problems

In order to fulfill these we should take into account the life cycle of CRM which consists of 1) Acquisition where products and services are differentiated according to different customers, and is also backed with proactive support. 2) Enhancement is where you cross sell to increase the value of each customer 3) Retention is where we retain customers by delivering products which meet customers needs

For this life cycle to be completed effectively each company should recognise customers who are valuable to them. And also in the e-business we should have an integrated relationship management support infrastructure, which will allow us to be more responsive.

Knowledge Management

Before managing knowledge we should delve into the intricacies of knowledge. Knowledge is one step more than information, it is actionable information and it also depends on the owner how his intuition is worked along with the information. While information is usually processed data knowledge is something, which emerges out of experiences. With respect to customer care knowledge lies in connections, conversation between people and experience based intuition.

Knowledge is basically of two types, explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is the one, which is readily available in written form. While tacit knowledge mainly exists within people. Tacit knowledge is very difficult to formalise and is mainly conceived from trial and error. In order to communicate this tacit knowledge it needs a rich and vast communication medium.

So the objective of knowledge management is to manage both these types of knowledge or rather the whole of organisational knowledge to create value for the business to maximise its growth and value. In 'The Loyalty Effect' Fred Reichheld and Tom Teal (HBS press, 1996) says that up to half of a business enterprise will be lost to the competition over a period of 10 years due to employee attrition. It is in this context that KM becomes relevant. ■

When one of our late social reformists quipped there are only two 'jathi', as male and female in this land, he perhaps nearly missed another jathi our nutmeg, the nut and mace spice! But true to the cogent words, in this jathi too there are two 'jathi', as male and female. And only the female tree produces the nutmeg of commerce - two separate produces from the same tree, namely nutmeg (the dried kernel of the seed or jathikka) and the red colored mace or aril, embracing the seed, jathi pathra.

Jathi (JaiPhel) or nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) is of colonial heritage. However, ever since its introduction from Moluccas to India during the eighteenth century by the colonial masters, this evergreen tree spice is an integral part of Kerala homesteads.

Nutmeg is dioecious. The seedlings segregate into distinct sex. Male and female sex are more common. But occasionally bisexual trees are also seen. Within the bisexual type, again bisexual female and bisexual male trees are seen. Female trees are the productive ones. The male trees being unproductive, vegetative propagation such as grafting, budding and top working are adopted to ensure the female sex of the trees.

Nutmeg is commercially propagated through grafts. Epicotyl grafting is more common. Scions collected from high yielding mother trees are grafted onto young nutmeg seedlings (root stocks). This vegetative propagation not only ensures the sex of the tree but also reduces the juvenile phase.

Grafts come to bearing by the fifth year though the peak production is after 15 years. Fruits take nine months to mature.

Grafts are planted at a spacing of 9 m x 9 m in pits of 0.75m x 0.75m x 0.75m size filled with organic manure and soil with the onset of rains.



Jathi Remedy Handy

A male graft may be planted for every 20 female grafts in the field. Young grafts need shading. Planting as intercrop in coconut gardens will be very ideal. During summer months irrigation is necessary.

Two high yielding varieties are now available. 'IISR Viswashree', released by the Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode is a high yielding variety suited for Kerala. 'Konakan Sugnath' is another variety released for the Konkan region by the Konkan Krishi Vidya Peet. A high yielding tree produces about 7,000-10,000 fruits per year.

Nutmeg has both culinary and medicinal uses. It is used in small quantities in garam masala in the Indian cuisine and also an

important component in the Mugal cuisine. It complements many non-vegetarian dishes. Nutmeg mace is preferred in light coloured dishes for the bright orange saffron-like colour it imparts to the dishes. It goes well with pies, puddings, custards, cookies and spice cakes. In the European cuisine nutmeg and mace are used in potato dishes and processed meat products besides soups, sauces and baked goods. Immature fruits are used for making pickles while the fleshy pericarp can be used for making jams and jellies besides pickles.

Nutmeg has both healing and curative powers. Nutmeg seed had been an integral part of the kitchen remedy (Ura marunnu) in the olden

days in Kerala for gastric complaints of children. Nutmeg used in small dosages can reduce flatulence, aid digestion, control diarrhoea, vomiting and nausea. Nutmeg is also a cure for insomnia, dehydration, skin ailments, rheumatism and common cold.

Nutmeg is a sex stimulant too. Nutmeg mixed with honey and a half boiled egg makes an excellent sex tonic.

Myristicin and elemicin present in the nutmeg oil is responsible for the medicinal properties of the spice. At higher doses, however, myristicin is hallucinogenic too. Even nutmeg itself can produce epileptic convulsion and lesions in liver, at higher doses. ■



Economy needs Stimulus Surplus

Policy makers all over the world have been devising new ways of spending more and more public money to stimulate their rapidly slowing economies. The old classical canons of prudent public finance such as keeping spending within the bounds of revenue has been given way to Keynes' and Lerner's idea of deliberate unbalancing of the budget to follow an appropriate counter-cyclical approach. Governments and

central banks all over the world have flooded their economies with massive sums of money to ease the effect of global economic crisis.

Until October, Indian academicians, fiscal experts and policy makers were confident enough to keep the Indian economy away from the frightening thunder from the world economies. So they were talking of only minimal impact of the global meltdown on the Indian economy.

The effect on economies such as India has been mainly thought of in the form of reduced capital flows and export earnings. Compared to other countries like China, the influence of these two being limited, India was considered under safe net.

Considering only limited impact on the Indian economy, government initially depended mainly on monetary measures to boost the economy. The Reserve Bank of India

(RBI) reduced the cash reserve ratio, the statutory liquidity ratio, bank rate, repo rate and the reserve repo rate step by step. While reduction in the cash reserve ratio, statutory liquidity ratio, bank rate and repo rate enable the banks to provide more loans at cheap rate, reduction in reverse repo rate encourages the banks to lend more to the productive sectors rather than keeping their surplus funds with the RBI. The RBI has taken a number of other measures to provide additional liquidity to specific sectors including housing, export and commercial real sectors.

But there is always a timelag in monetary policy. The interest elasticity of investment and other spending items is very low during depression. When there is a gloomy picture before the investors and consumers and when the marginal efficiency of capital is at the bottom level, any cut in the interest rate through monetary policy would have only little effect to boost the economy. This is particularly true in the case of Indian economy where money and capital markets are not fully developed, banking habit is not widespread and the influence of black money is strong.

Under such circumstances a strong fiscal stimulus package is highly essential to augment and strengthen the economic activities. There has been a sharp decline in exports and a fall in investment and consumption demand. To counteract this, large public investment has always been deemed necessary in areas such as physical and social

infrastructure. At the time when the private sector is likely to fall short of its targets and is under constraint for resources, the case for massive public spending becomes stronger.

Unveiling the much awaited economic stimulus package to boost up various sectors of the economy from the global downturn, the government announced a stimulus package of Rs. 20,000 crore for infrastructure, industry and export sectors for the current fiscal year. By providing an additional plan expenditure of Rs. 20,000 crore, the total amount of plan and non-plan expenditure for the current fiscal year is expected to increase to Rs. 300,000 crore.

The central value – added tax on non-petroleum products has been reduced from 14, 12 and 8 percent to 10, 8 and 4 percent for various categories. Full exemption from basic customs duty has been effected on naphtha to provide relief to the power sector. Apparently, the package drawn up seeks to boost power, exports, housing, automobiles, small and medium enterprises and infrastructure development.

Here arises a crucial question on the fiscal policy of the Central Government. Is it possible to boost up the economy by setting aside just Rs. 20,000 crore as an additional public expenditure? The centre has chosen to rely more on interest rate

and indirect tax cuts than public spending to boost the economy. This is despite the fact that it would take months for the tax and interest rate cuts to produce any desirable effect whereas public spending has an immediate effect.

A comparative analysis of the bailout of India with that of other countries shows that India has not become aware of the need for pumping more money into the economy especially through public expenditure. This is a serious lacuna in the context of a negative growth rate in the industrial sector. While countries like China, Germany, Korea, the U.S and Japan declared a huge bail outs ranging from 6 to 15 per cent of their G.D.P, Indian bailout constitute less than only one per cent. This is shown in the following schedule.

India has two options here; either to prove that India is strong enough to safeguard ourselves against the current global economic crisis or to enhance immediately the bailout with due weightage to public spending. ■

The writer is Head, Dept. of Economics, Devamatha College, Kuravilangad, Kottayam



Bailout Package

Country	Bailout (billion \$)	Bailout as % of G.D.P)
U.S	730	6.08
China	500	15.63
Germany	400	12.50
Japan	225	4.6
Korea	130	10.83
Russia	36	2.06
India	7.5	0.54



Japan's latest supermodel - a robot

The new Japanese humanoid robot HRP-4C displays a range of emotions

The walking, talking girlbot will be getting practice soon, as she's set to make her catwalk debut at a Tokyo fashion show.

Scientists from Japan's

national Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology reportedly designed the 5-foot (ish), dark-haired creation to look like an average Japanese woman between the ages of 19 and 29. Unlike the average Japanese woman,

however, HRP-4C has 30 motors in her body that allow her to walk and move its arms and 8 facial motors for blinking, smiling, and expressing emotions akin to anger and surprise.

According to the Associated Press, the

robotic framework for the HRP-4C, sans face and other coverings, will sell for about \$200,000, and the technology behind it will eventually be made public so people can come up their own moves for the bot.

The government-backed AIST says she's mostly being developed for the entertainment industry--for use in amusement parks, for example, or as an exercise teacher--and is not yet ready to help with daily chores. So unfortunately for those eager to hire HRP-4C as a home or office assistant, for now at least, her main job is to look pretty--or odd, depending on your perspective.



Dealing with Parkinson's

A new study from researchers at Stanford University is providing new insights into how deep-brain stimulation works to treat people who suffer from Parkinson's disease.

Researchers found that the largest effect in "Parkinsonian" rodents occurs not by stimulating cells in the subthalamic nucleus, but by stimulating the neural wires, called axons, that connect directly to it from areas closer to the surface of the brain.

In another study, also published in the March 20 edition of the journal *Science*, researchers spoke of promising results with a device that is implanted on the spinal cord.

Researchers studied the effects of the device, which applies electrical stimulation to the dorsal column, in mice and rats.

Parkinson's is a movement disorder that primarily affects people over the age of 50. It can cause muscle rigidity, tremors a slowing of physical movement and a loss of movement in some cases.

Downturn to help cut emissions

In the best tradition of "every cloud has a silver lining" comes an Australian report which suggests the current global financial downturn will help to reduce carbon emissions.

The Federal Government's climate change adviser, Professor Ross Garnaut, made the observation that the crisis may halt the growth of carbon emissions for a period of two to three years. However he said that despite this expected lull, the Australian Government should go ahead with its planned emissions trading scheme (ETS) due to be



In Brief..... 50-plus new species

A brilliant green tree frog with huge black eyes joins jumping spiders and a striped gecko among the more than 50 new animal species that scientists have discovered in a remote, mountainous region of Papua New Guinea.

The discoveries were announced by Conservation International, which spent the last several months analysing more than 600 animal species the group found during its expedition to the South Pacific island nation in July and August.



System remotely tracks fish groups

New technology is allowing researchers to watch the movement of large groups of fish as they gather and later split up.

Using a system called ocean acoustic waveguide remote sensing, scientists observed Atlantic herring gather off Cape Cod, Mass., to spawn in the dark, according to a report in the journal *Science*. With dawn, the fish return to deeper waters and scatter.

New, improved MRI methods

Two new techniques using different approaches to see molecular changes inside people's bodies could lead to faster, more-detailed imaging scans.

The magnetic resonance imaging technologies manipulate the spin of molecules to provide detailed scans that one day could rapidly do things like analyse how well a drug is working or tell how fast tumors are growing, the researchers said in the journal *Science*.

introduced next year.

"With colleagues, I have said there may be no overall emissions growth for two or three years through the current recessionary episode," Professor Garnaut said.

"The most likely course is a return to growth that shifts back the curve of emissions levels over time by two or three years," he added, "That would mean that global emissions levels expected in our review for 2030 would not be reached until 2032 or 2033."

Asteroid tracked from space to Earth

They saw it coming, and they got what was coming to them. For the first time, researchers not only detected an asteroid in space, but also tracked its progress and then collected its debris after it crashed to Earth.

The car-sized asteroid, dubbed 2008 TC₃, landed in northern Sudan on October 7, 2008, scientists report in the March 25 *Nature*. The study combines for one asteroid data that are usually separate: Comparing data from observations of the asteroid while it was in space with analysis of its meteorite fragments on Earth will yield new insights into asteroids, the scientists say.

Small asteroids like 2008 TC₃ are fairly common, with about one asteroid impacting Earth each year. But these small asteroids are usually not spotted until they enter the Earth's atmosphere. "It's like when bugs splatter on the windshield. You don't see the bug until it's too late," says physicist and

study coauthor Mark Boslough of Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M. Bigger asteroids are easier to spot but are much less common. "You'd see a baseball coming towards the windshield much sooner," Boslough says. And it's hard to detect the small asteroids because even powerful telescopes can only scan a small portion of the sky each night.

As 2008 TC₃ hurtled through space, researchers studied the spectra of sunlight reflected from its surface to get information about the asteroid's mineral composition. The spectra showed that the asteroid was likely to come from the mysterious F-class of asteroids, a class only observed in space but not yet found as a meteorite on Earth.

Monitoring 2008 TC₃'s progress, researchers correctly predicted that it would impact the Nubian Desert of northern Sudan about 19 hours after it was first spotted.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing a fireball as the asteroid exploded over the desert.



PHOTOFEATURE
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Here blends history with nature.
The palm fringed Anchuthengu
fascinates us with its historic
monuments.

Photo: Haris Kuttippuram

