



EDITORIAL

Theatre is life and life is theatre!

Oscar wild once said, "I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being." Theatre, as per dictionaries is "a large room or hall, usually with a raised platform and tiered seats for an audience, used for plays, lectures, film shows, etc". Yes, theatre can be a raised platform with all its limitations. But on this platform, all aspects of human life have been personified since its inception. Sophocles did it for Greece, Kalidasa did it for India and above all Shakespeare did it for the entire human race. But all these brilliant personalities knew one thing: Theatre is life and life is theatre!

There was a time in Kerala when theatre meant everything. We welcomed and admired every actor, and festival seasons were more vibrant and colourful with the plays played on the stages. It was in the life of a past young generation. More aptly, it was their life itself! But where is that spirit now? Where are those bright-eyed youngsters eagerly watching their life reflected on stage and waiting impatiently to hear poetic dialogues? Undoubtedly, theatre has played an important role in the formation of a new cultural climate in the social circle of Kerala. It shaped a new man, a

new society, thinking in new lines. It battled against dry old systems and questioned superstitious beliefs. As a catalyst, it enabled people to free from the past and the known and inspired to create a novel awareness in them.

Alas! The latest news about theatre is not much sweeter now. Nor is much bitter. There is a sense of indifference to the theatre among the new generations. Reasons may vary. At a time when every artistic form is readymade and at fingertips, going to the theatre at midnight seem a sheer waste of energy to the people of the new era. All concepts about aesthetics have been changed drastically and dangerously! At this juncture, it is the duty of those who still love the classical form to revive the interest in the theatre. In this context, Kerala Calling is coming out with the cover story 'Theatre is Life and Life is Theatre.'

It is our duty to rejuvenate and refresh the theatre into its glorious form with all its vivaciousness. Theatre is a compulsory teaching subject all over the world. The cover story underlines the importance of teaching theatre subjects among the present day students. Once again we can remember the greatest saying of the Bard "All the world is a stage, And all the men women merely players" Because life is theatre and theatre is life!

Mini Antony IAS
Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mini Antony IAS
Director, I&PRD

CO-ORDINATING EDITOR

C Ramesh Kumar
Additional Director

DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

K C Anil Kumar
Deputy Director

EDITOR

KM Aiyappan

SUB EDITOR

B Binu

CIRCULATION OFFICER

Shaila Beegum

DESIGNER

V S Prakash

DESIGN & LAYOUT

R Ratheesh Kumar
rash8590070404@gmail.com

PRINTING

Orange Printers Private Ltd.

Representatives:

- New Delhi** Dr. C Venugopal
- Thiruvananthapuram** S R Praveen
- Kollam** K Abdul Rasheed
- Pathanamthitta** R Sakthi Kumar
- Idukki** KT Sekhar
- Alappuzha** K R Pramod Kumar
- Ernakulam** T C Chandrasasan
- Kottayam** V R Santhosh
- Thrissur** M S Alikkunju
- Palakkad** C Ayyappan
- Malappuram** V P Sulabha Kumari
- Kozhikode** K P Abdul Khadar
- Wayanad** E Sajeev
- Kannur** E V Sugathan
- Kasaragod** K Abdul Rahman

SUBSCRIPTION

Payment for subscription can be made by Money Order addressed to the **Director, Information and Public Relations Department, First Floor, Secretariat Annexe, Thiruvananthapuram, PIN- 695 001 .**

The subscription amount in cash is received at Information and Public Relations Department, First Floor, Secretariat Annexe, Thiruvananthapuram, PH: 2517036

- State Information Centre, Press Club Building, **Thiruvananthapuram**, Ph: 2518471 ● District Information Office, Civil Station, Kudappanakkunnu, **Thiruvananthapuram**, Ph: 2731300
- District Information Office, I Floor, Civil Station, **Kollam**, Ph: 2794911 ● District Information Office, Ground Floor, Civil Station, **Pathanamthitta**, Ph: 2222657
- District Information Office, Ground Floor, Civil Station, Kuyilimala, Painavu **Idukki**, Ph: 2233036 ● District Information Office, Civil Station Compound, **Alappuzha**, Ph: 2251349
- District Information Office, First Floor., Civil Station, **Kottayam**, Ph: 2562558 ● District Information Office, Park Avenue, **Kochi**, Ph: 2354208
- District Information Office, Second Floor, Civil Station, Ayanthole, **Thrissur**, Ph: 2360644 ● District Information Office, Ground Floor, Civil Station, **Palakkad**, Ph: 2505329
- District Information Office, Civil Station, **Malappuram**, Ph: 2734387 ● District Information Office, Civil Station, Main Building, **Kozhikode**, Ph: 2370225
- District Information Office, Ground Floor, Civil Station, Kalpatta North, **Wayanad**, Ph: 6202529 ● District Information Office, Ground Floor, Civil Station, **Kannur**, Ph: 2700231
- District Information Office, Civil Station, Vidyanagar, **Kasaragod**, Ph: 255145 ● Information Office, Kerala House, 3, Jantar Mantar Road **New Delhi**, Ph: 23343424

Responses may be sent to

Mail: keralacalling@gmail.com

Phone: 0471-2518648

Fax: 0471-2331793



EDITORIAL MATERIALS

Articles/features appearing in this magazine are either commissioned or assigned. Nevertheless, other articles are also welcome. A maximum of 750 wordage is appreciated. Such items should be addressed to

The Editor

Kerala Calling

First Floor

Secretariat Annexe

Thiruvananthapuram

PIN 695 001

These may also be e mailed to

keralacalling@gmail.com

Unused scripts or photographs will be returned if self addressed envelopes having sufficient postage stamps are also sent with the articles.

VIEWS expressed in the articles published in *Kerala Calling* are not, necessarily, those of the Government. *Kerala Calling* welcomes free expression of divergent views and exchange of ideas through its pages.

TO SUBSCRIBE send Rs. 80 as money order to The Director, Information & Public Relations Department, First floor, Secretariat Annexe, Thiruvananthapuram, PIN 695 001.



Migration of Irula to Attapadi began by end of the 16th century.

At Attapadi they began settled farming. Irulas cultivated millets such as makka cholam or maize, ragi or French millet and chama or little millet, pulses like thuvara or red gram and oilseeds like groundnut. Cattle and goat rearing went hand in hand with farming. Soon goat rearing became the major livelihood of irulas and goats an integral part of their life.

**16 P N Panicker
The Reformist
Dr N A Kareem**

**22 Natya Hemantham
Showcases Bouquet of
Indian Culture
Binu B**

**34 Irular
The Seekers of light
G S Unnikrishnan Nair**

**40 Touch Me Not
Dr Lalitha M**

COVER STORY

Owing to the onslaught of electronic media today's youth and children are distancing themselves from such rich repertoire of our Temple Performing forms, Tantric visuals, Ritualistic, Martial and Classical audio visual forms. What is the relation between education and human relation? What is there something new in our scientific wisdom and formal educational study methods?

8 Theatre is Life and Life is Theatre Dr Raja varier



CULTURE

4 Sacred Groves Maleeha Raghaviah

OBSERVANCE

True poetry, according to Sidney, makes things 'either better than nature brings forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature.' The poet uses the tools of metaphors, images and other formal poetic devices like metre, rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration and repetition to couch ideas in a heightened language that gives his newly created world, the poem, its special charm, power and meaning.

Poetry The other way of using language

Khyrunnisa A

12

PHOTO FEATURE 24

HORIZON

S Radhakrishnan 32

GARDENING

Suresh Muthukulam 46

42

Literature
Vijayalakshmi
A devout feminist
Unnikrishnan Atiyodi



BOOK REVIEW

48 Bicycles of Amsterdam
A complete book on Dutch culture
Ammu Sreenivasan

TOURISM

26
Birding tourism
hub & spots in
Kerala
Abin KI





Sacred Groves

A majority of sacred groves are remnants of the once abundant low lying evergreen forests of the Western Ghats. This could be the reason why only few sacred groves are found in the fringes and high ranges of the Western Ghats. Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kollam, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts are known to have the largest number of sacred groves.

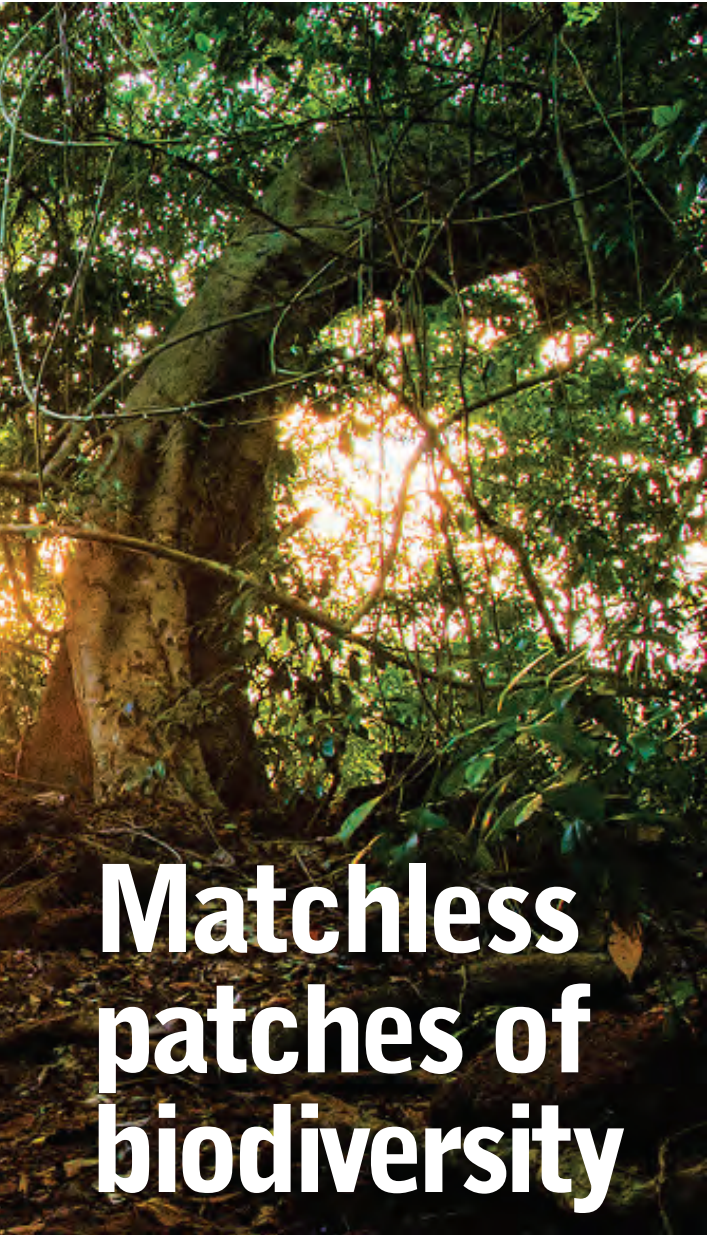
Traditionally, the existence of sacred groves in Kerala is viewed as a major effort to be conscious of and conserve the endemic vegetation much acclaimed for its rich biodiversity. The area of these protected verdant patches varied from 20 cents to large numbers of hectares with undisturbed vegetation- luxuriant and with innumerable tree species, shrubs, creepers and herbs. The ground is humus layered with an abundance of ferns and fungus. Sacred groves are evidence of Kerala's traditional and excellent method of preserving Nature and thereby sustenance of the environment as a whole. In fact, similar traditional

initiatives are in vogue in different parts of the country and the world through which ancient societies conserved the eco system for posterity.

What is laudable however at this particular juncture is that a silent and concerted conservation effort had continued in the State to preserve the verdant patches. Many sacred groves primarily in private hands continued to exist because of the nurture and care they received from the local population. Now to the elation of environmentalists and nature lovers, the number of kavus had not diminished to the extent it was feared. At a time when the environment is faced with

rampant hazards from population explosion and development projects, the findings of the documentation by the NGO have exceeded all expectations.

In Kerala, the sacred groves known in local parlance as 'Kavus' serve as a haven for many rare, endemic and endangered fruit bearing and medicinal trees besides butterflies, insects and lizards. It was customary for the members of the Hindu community to set apart a piece of the land near their ancestral house as the dwelling of Naga, the serpent god or goddess Durga. These green reserves also housed the sarpakavu, or residence of snakes. In fact, kavus or sacred groves concomitant with the



Matchless patches of biodiversity

temple and the tank was the backbone of the village economy in as much as it was an initiative to conserve the plant wealth and the water reserves of the region.

There was an unwritten dictum that no tree would be felled or even a branch or twig removed from these exclusive areas. People also worshipped certain particular tree species found in the kavus. The sanctity attached to the places where Nature showered its bounty had both spiritual and secular connotations. The sacred groves are means of expressing gratitude to the trees that sustained and supported life. A majority of sacred groves are remnants of the once abundant low lying evergreen forests of the Western Ghats. This could be the reason why only few sacred groves are found in the fringes and high ranges of the Western Ghats. Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kollam, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts are known to have the largest number of sacred groves.

Malabar is known to have a large number of the kavus. The Iringole Kavvu, the Kunnathurpadi Kavvu near Payyannur and the Theyyottukavvu in Kannur District are some of the largest sacred groves in the State.

Meanwhile, a dedicated and enthusiastic group of Nature





Kavus are also a haven for honey bee colonies. The honey bees are believed to migrate to outside locations from these colonies. The sacred groves were feared to become extinct in the State due to population explosion and there is no doubt that they had diminished in numbers and in extent of area over the years.

lovers have embarked on a worthwhile enterprise that would throw light on the number of sacred groves that continued to exist in Kerala. The painstaking initiative would not only provide a list, and the extent of area of these unique biodiversity green patches, but it would also ensure the mapping of these green belts that Kerala is famed for. Kerala had once abounded with sacred groves, an indication of the local people's age-old committed stand and belief that it was only of conserving the endemic plant species so that adequate water supply can be ensured for human and animal consumption through such environment protection.

The enumeration and documentation process of sacred groves which commenced some time back has revealed that these age-old green patches are far more in number than what the official figures place them at. M.S. Nair, Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, who is the President of the Institution of Foresters Kerala, the non Governmental organisation engaged in the conservation initiative opines that the listing of sacred groves that is now on in all districts of the State has thrown up an amazing and optimistic picture. Unknown to the civil society sustained efforts were on for years, by the owners to conserve and protect these sacred groves many of which are in individual hands besides in panchayat limits. In fact, 80 per cent of the sacred groves are in private hands and they have been consistently nurtured and protected, M S Nair opines.

The worthwhile effort by retired forest officials besides those interested in Nature conservation would no doubt be an eye opener, and provide a wealth of information of the natural biodiversity green spots that exist in the State and the need for concerted efforts to

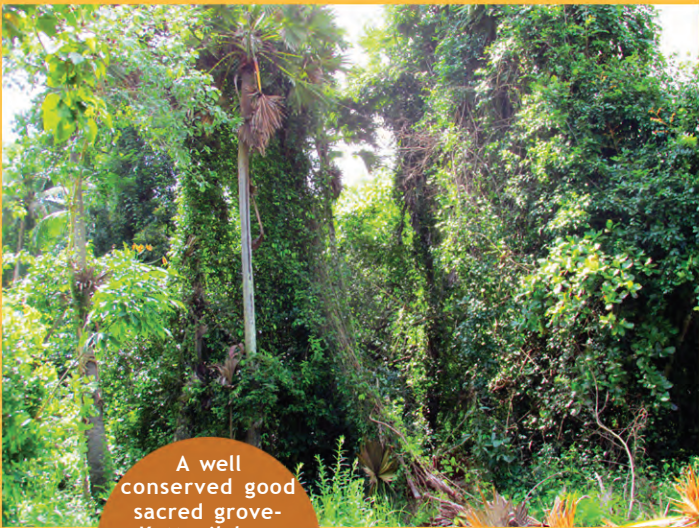
maintain and preserve them. The listing that has been completed in six districts would have details of the extent of each grove, the plant and animal species found there, geographical position, existence of water bodies, ownership, festivals and pujas conducted there, legal status, and the like. "It is a stupendous job but we are confident of completing the task we have undertaken.

In Thiruvananthapuram district as many as 452 have already been listed, far more than the existing official estimate. In Alappuzha district, the number is now 1500, and the listing is on in Kozhikode, Thrissur and Kollam districts," M S Nair says.





The red flowers are that of *Gloriosa superba* (Menthoni). The root of this plant is used by tribals for reducing the pain of pregnant women during delivery. It was seen in Edathara Nagar Kavu near Kilimanur in Thiruvananthapuram district.



A well conserved good sacred grove- Kottuvilakom madan kavu near Attingal in Thiruvananthapuram district.



Interesting insights emerged during the documenting process. There are sacred groves in Kerala that are conserved and nurtured single-handedly with utmost reverence by individuals. A. Satyanathan, secretary of the Kozhikode district committee of the Institution of Foresters, Kerala describes sacred groves which are likely to be around 2,000 in number in the district, as reserves of endemic trees such as vella akil, irumbagam, pali, mallan pali, manjadi, ashokam, chandanam, and the like. The Chelavoor kavu in Kozhikode is a large one with extensive vegetation. He highlights the ecological value of the groves as air purifiers and water conservation mechanisms especially in urban centres. "In New Delhi for instance conscious efforts are on to maintain endemic tree patches as a means to combat pollution," he avers.

In fact, some time back assistance was given for the protection of 15 sacred groves in Ernakulam district. As many as 15 sacred groves in Ernakulam district had received assistance for their conservation efforts, with focus on protection of water resources such as ponds inside these green reserves. Those in possession of the green spaces were also urged to identify the plant species in the groves. Besides protection of water sources, the funds were given for fencing and propagation

of new species.

The diversity of species in these areas is mindboggling, and they are also home to a variety of reptiles, butterflies, birds and animals. Rare trees and creepers are also found here. Kavus are also a haven for honey bee colonies. The honey bees are believed to migrate to outside locations from these colonies. The sacred groves were feared to become extinct in the State due to population explosion and there is no doubt that they had diminished in numbers and in extent of area over the years. The present survey is cause for optimism for Nature lovers and environmentalists that environment conservation continues to engage the attention of the general public. Breakdown of the joint family, human encroachment and cattle grazing are the main reasons for the disappearance of sacred groves. The official figures put the number of kavus in Kerala as 1,500. But their number are believed to be much larger as per the documentation process now on.

Sacred groves have existed in others parts of the country too since time immemorial as patches of dense forest areas, venerated on religious grounds. Sacred groves represent the ancient Indian way of in situ conservation of genetic diversity. They are known to exist in the North Eastern States, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu besides in Kerala. ■

The writer is a journalist based in Kozhikode



Theatre is Life and Life is Theatre

Owing to the onslaught of electronic media today's youth and children are distancing themselves from such rich repertoire of our Temple Performing forms, Tantric visuals, Ritualistic, Martial and Classical audio visual forms. What is the relation between education and human relation? What is there something new in our scientific wisdom and formal educational study methods? What is that our youth and children are going to derive out of such outmoded pedagogy?



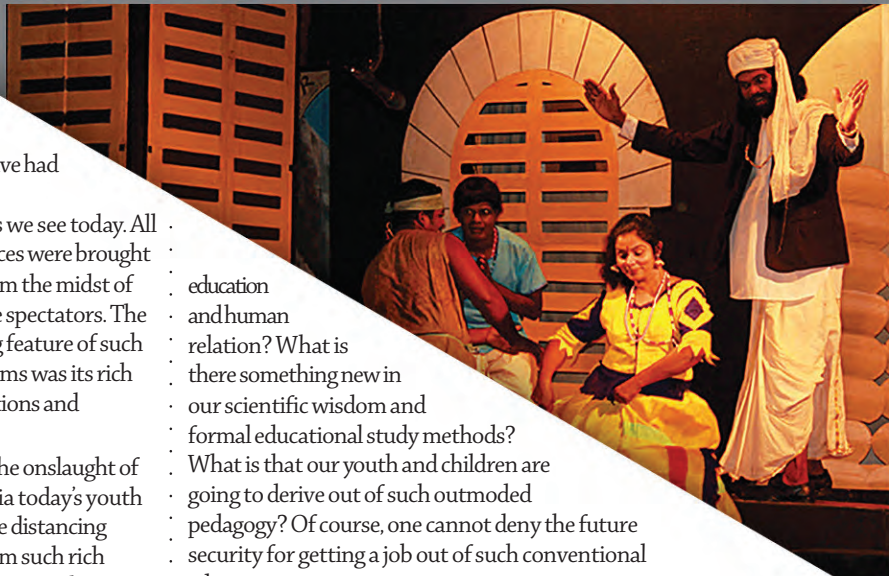
All the fine arts including Performing Art forms communicate ideas and ideologies through live theatre, particularly amongst the children and youth. We have a rich cultural heritage like Painting, Architecture, Temple Performing forms, Dances, Music etc. Modern theatre is replete with all these elements. When we discuss about theatre in its wider sense, we cannot confine to the so called proscenium theatre, with a hanging mike above the head, torn draw curtains and useless side wings. The tradition of India cannot be limited in these forms of raised platform and other staging paraphernalia.

Performing Arts from time immemorial have had no such formal artificialities as we see today. All our performances were brought to limelight from the midst of the inseparable spectators. The most appealing feature of such performing forms was its rich theatrical emotions and sentiments.

Owing to the onslaught of electronic media today's youth and children are distancing themselves from such rich repertoire of our Temple Performing forms, Tantric visuals, Ritualistic, Martial and Classical audio visual forms. What is the relation between

education and human relation? What is there something new in our scientific wisdom and formal educational study methods? What is that our youth and children are going to derive out of such outmoded pedagogy? Of course, one cannot deny the future security for getting a job out of such conventional education system.

The modern youth has a pertinent question to raise here. What should be the alternate method the modern youth requires? What he is going to gain out of all these traditional streams of study? In the





present context today's youth is well-equipped with the modern scientific development and technological advancement. Computers, Televisions, Mobile telephones etc. are just like his physical and mental limbs. Utilising the advantages and facilities provided by them, we have to look upon our yesteryears and their valued cultural ethos. Modern children and youth will have to comprehend the historicity in all its perspectives and should march to the modern world freely to exploit the gadgets. At the same time man should not become a machine and machine should not become a man. In short, he should not forget the human legacies left over by his elders. He should also identify yesterday's evils and inbuilt knowledge which could be useful for today's world.

The life of any person develops through his psychic and physical inhibitions. Only through these twin paths human being can reach to a totality of physical competence and spiritual ecstasy. In the human

development both these ways are inevitable. At the same time the modern student should not be a slave of the utilisation of modern gadgets by forgetting the age old traditional values. Modern technocrat is interested only in the physical needs of human life. But, what about the spiritual elevation of the modern youth? Such a technical ambience cannot in any way help humanity in its spiritual life and socio-cultural elevation. "Man is a social animal," said Aristotle.

Man is such an animal who can laugh and think. Thinking stream originates from the complex mind. Here he achieves spiritual gains in its humanistic angle. This self-elevation is beyond all externalised actions and activities. Human beings are part and parcel of nature in its vibrancy, vitality and virtuosity. Science and technology can help physical needs. They move through new roads of the so called progress and prosperity. When we move through such a path, we should remember that any scientific achievement should not go against the nature's phenomenal paradise. If the ball of a child falls on the ground due to the gravity of nature, it is a natural phenomenon. It is a process which we experience everyday without knowing its scientific process. It is a fact that against the relativity theory, man's scientific wisdom created aircraft





For any aesthetic experience we are governed by our own work experience and expertise. Any sort of experience is inbuilt in our senses. However, ecstatic state of mind is beyond all these senses.

which is totally against this gravitational force.

While we gain physical achievements like flying in the air, we should overcome the stumbling blocks of the nature in a systematic way. Besides, we should never forget the evocative inner layer of our mind. It can also create problems. If we want mental ecstasy it is very necessary that we should involve ourselves with the production process of Performing Arts as also to appreciate the different facets of artistic activity. We cannot deny the fact that in the modern age external requirements are increasing day by day and sometimes if these needs are not met we become dissatisfied. Here we ignore the spiritual inner impulses. Because of all these, whatever we achieve, we think something is missing and thereby we become unhappy and this tensed mind leads us to go against the nature's inherent rules and regulations. Here

comes the significance of artistic creations which, transforms us the parts of nature? In essence we can say that, nature helps us to do aesthetic creations.

In India we have about sixty four kinds of Fine Arts and Useful Arts. These Useful Arts not only give happiness but also meet our daily requirements. For any aesthetic experience we are governed by our own work experience and expertise. Any sort of experience is inbuilt in our senses. However, ecstatic state of mind is beyond all these senses. To get an ecstatic mind is not very easy but we have to indulge ourselves in making lofty artistic forms.

Individuality of any person originates from the birth itself. When the child grows into a full blown man, he recognises his physic and mind. While growing like this there should not be any room for inferiority complex and a feeling of emptiness. During the growth period of the child, the parents approach

should be congenial to the mental state. As we said earlier the parent's should come here and inculcate a feeling of independence among the children. They should also teach them, the over bearing significance of nature with its communicative impulses. Nature means all the inhabitants including animals and plants. It is a two-way traffic. Nature itself can teach, and one can learn lot from the nature. Are we having all these in our present day curriculum?

Compared to seniors, child mind is very fertile and the imaginative power develops rapidly. In any creative process imagination is the most important one. There is no boundary in the imaginative and improvisational capacity of any child. Let them have their own friends in the Nature. The lofty hills, enchanting greeneries, lullabying streams, murmuring tree branches etc. are his ambience friends. In his world

birds, animals, stars, sun and moon etc. too are with him. All these are not his romantic characters but real and natural. They are with him as his playmates. He can directly communicate to them.

The urge for acting is a thing of interest in any human being. It starts from childhood and extends upto his death. He imitates his father, mother, grandma, grandpa, birds, monkeys, elephants, police, teacher etc. We can consider this as his first lessons to improvised acting. Here we see the dual personality in him; first the actor, then the character. So is the case with Painting, Music and other Fine Arts. The basic purpose of this is to identify the imaginative capacity and helps its manifestation in the respective fields.

Any performance, whatsoever has its separate static emotion which should be the foundation for building up the future life and its creativity.



We have already seen that the men of Palaeolithic age, who lived in the forest caves, have had their own rude drawings, songs and ensemble movements which of course entertained and enthralled the then social milieu. Coming to the theatre, all these elements are harmoniously blended in it. Theatre in its totality is not the one confined to a closed hall where onlookers were looking at the front curtain raising and the amplified voice to hear. There are other theatre forms which are beyond the concept of this proscenium arch production. But there should be pristine theatrical endeavours where the audience is also involved whole heartedly. All such theatre forms have the intimate relations with human life, emotions, behaviour and cultural ethos, without damaging the original purity of the socio-cultural ethics.

Any Theatrical Art form for that matter has its regional differences and identity of ideas and structural specialities. What is happening today? We are all affected by the evil effects of globalisation, consumerism, market economy and common corporate managerial misdeeds. Infact we are loosing our regionalist identity and leading

to a commonality which kills our own hopes, aspirations and habits. In a way we are surrendering ourselves to these new tastes and temptations.

Theatre in its multi furious functions should definitely reflect the soul of human life.

Here, what are we going to teach our children? What sort of cultural programme, we are going to present before them? Why should we teach them the global values? What is the repercussion of such topics among our children? The irony is that, we don't enlighten our children with the aesthetic richness and cultural heritage, because it is the reflection of a human race. This race has its meaning value and root which are deeply embedded.

Under the circumstances teaching theatre subjects among the present day students would become almost important because, they get mental maturity, concentrated attention, wise judgement, capacity to take decisions, a sort of colour sense, sensibility to make different forms, mentality for sharing, sincere dedication etc. Theatre is a compulsory teaching subject all over the world, unfortunately not in our country. Acting children's theatre

performances are aplenty in most of the foreign countries. Theatre studies are imparted at primary, secondary and university levels. To build an individual theatre has a paramount importance. It can influence his personality development. It also develops physical and mental health of a person.

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. This is what we say always but the fact is, are we sincere towards this? Much has to be done in this respect. Any art, whether it is Theatre, Painting or Music it is more than life in its sense, sensibility and sensitivity. When we confront with any creative problem, if we get an energized and enthused 'self soul' one gets tremendous creativity. Then only the transparent mind of the spectator becomes receptive to accept and experience the emotional inputs of the performer. ■

The writer is faculty, Centre for Performance and Arts, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

Theatre is a compulsory teaching subject all over the world, unfortunately not in our country. Acting children's theatre performances are aplenty in most of the foreign countries. Theatre studies are imparted at primary, secondary and university levels. To build an individual theatre has of paramount importance. It can influence his personality development. It also develops physical and mental health of a person.



True poetry, according to Sidney, makes things 'either better than nature brings forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature.' The poet uses the tools of metaphors, images and other formal poetic devices like metre, rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration and repetition to couch ideas in a heightened language that gives his newly created world, the poem, its special charm, power and meaning.

Poetry

The other way of using language

We rarely bother to consider this, but the truth is there is a lot of poetry in our lives. From the lullabies sung to a baby to the nursery rhymes a little child is taught, from the songs you listen to or hum when happy or sad to the lyrics you make up in your head when you see lovely sights, from the rhymes you unconsciously adopt in speech to the striking phrases you use in everyday conversation that trace their origins to famous poems, it is poetry that reigns supreme. It has a wonderful heritage, but unfortunately it does not seem to get the respect it deserves, especially from students who are forced to study it in schools and colleges and who find their love for it very effectively killed by unimaginative and mechanical teaching. Understanding the potential of poetry to enrich life by expressing complex ideas, by highlighting injustices and cruelty through evocative language, and by celebrating beauty and upholding truth, UNESCO declared 21st March as World Poetry Day.

Poetry has the enviable distinction of being the earliest form of literature. According to the English poet Sir Philip Sidney, poetry was the forerunner of every other

form of learning. This is probably why the Romans called the poet 'vates', which means a diviner or a prophet. The Greeks made a taller claim for the poet by calling him the 'maker' and the English probably were of the same mind since the English word for poet derives from the Greek verb 'poiein' which means 'to make'.

True poetry, according to Sidney, makes things 'either better than nature brings forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature.' The poet uses the tools of metaphors, images and other formal poetic devices like metre, rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration and repetition to couch ideas in a heightened language that gives his newly created world, the poem, its special charm, power and meaning. Sidney's excellent definition, that poetry is 'an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termed it in the word "mimesis"

– that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture – with this end, to teach and delight', has echoes of the ideas of Aristotle, Plutarch and Horace, all experts in dissecting the art of poetry.


The beginnings of poetry were oral. Poetry is as old as history and is considered to have been the primary form of language themselves. Poetry is 'the other way of using language'. A widely accepted theory is that the beginnings of poetry can be found in ritual in early agricultural societies when magical spells were chanted to secure good harvests. In ancient Greece and Rome, poetry was an essential part of religious rites and was used to communicate stories of people's trials and triumphs. These stories were then handed down and became part of tradition and folklore. Some of

t h e
g r e a t e s t
early poetry is
found in the Vedas,
the Ramayana and the
Mahabharatha, the Iliad
and the Odyssey of Homer,
Lucretius's On the Nature of
Things, and Virgil's Aeneid.

When you think of the medieval period in the West, Dante and Chaucer are the names that leap to your mind. And naturally it is Shakespeare who takes centre stage in the Renaissance period, but there are other luminaries like Petrarch, Milton, Marlowe and Donne to add to the distinction and aura of the age. It is a long list after this – Dryden, Pope, Gray, Burns, Blake, the Romantics like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and Byron, the Victorian poets Tennyson, Arnold and Browning, Walt Whitman, Hopkins, the Symbolists Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud and Surrealists like André Breton. When T S Eliot came along to mark the beginning of modernity,

there were other key poets like Ezra Pound, Yeats, D H Lawrence and Frost jostling for attention. Other important names in the twentieth century include Auden, Dylan Thomas, Larkin, Ted Hughes, Allen Ginsberg and Seamus Heaney.

Every country has its own rich poetical history and its significant poets. India has a wealth of poets who wrote in the regional languages and in English. Kalidasa is regarded as the greatest poet in Sanskrit while Rabindranath Tagore who wrote in English and Bengali and penned the national anthem brought glory to India when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. Henry Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Sri



Poets are aware of their social responsibilities and often play a key role in influencing minds and initiating social, political, cultural and ethical changes by championing causes through the ideas they express in their poetry.

Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel, A K Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Gieve Patel, Keki Daruwalla, Kamala das and Vikram Seth are other famous names.

Malayalam poetry has its own luminaries. Ramacharitham, is an epic poem written in the late 13th and early 14th century when the Malayalam language was in its formative stage. Though some experts believe it is Tamil literary piece, it is considered to be the oldest available Malayalam book. The ancient trio of Malayalam heavyweight poets are Ezhuthachan, after whom the Kerala State Government's highest literary award is named, Cherusseri Namboothiri and Kunchan Nambiar. Ezhuthachan, regarded as the father of Malayalam, was associated with the Bhakti Movement and his poems are called 'kilippattu'. Cherusseri introduced devotional poems.

The three outstanding writers of the first half of the twentieth century who initiated modern literary movements and ushered in the era of modern Malayalam poetry are Kumaran Asan, Vallathol Narayana Menon

and Ulloor S Parameswara Iyer. While Ulloor stuck to the classical traditional mode, Kumaran Asan's lyrical poetry reflected social and caste injustices and became an agent of social change. Vallathol's patriotic poems hailed India's nationalistic movement. G Shankara Kurup, Vyloppilli Sreedhara Menon, Vayalar Rama Varma, ONV Kurup, Akkitham, Sugatha Kumari, K Ayyappa Panicker, Kadammanitta Ramakrishna, Satchidanandan and Balachandra Chullikkadu are some of the famous names in modern Malayalam poetry.

Poets are aware of their social responsibilities and often play a key role in influencing minds and initiating social, political, cultural and ethical changes by championing causes through the ideas they express in their poetry. Shelley was spot on when he claimed in his work A Defence of Poetry, that poets are 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world'. But not all poetry is political or socially purposeful. At bottom, poetry celebrates beauty and joy and the poet who has this special gift with words is able to offer aesthetic pleasure when he expresses his thoughts in his own

unique way. Alexander Pope in his famous poem An Essay on Criticism wrote, 'True wit is nature to advantage dressed/ What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed', and by expressing that idea excellently and succinctly, proved the truth of his own observation.

It is only fitting, therefore, that a special day is earmarked to observe this intrinsic form of literature. UNESCO recognised the important role poetry can play in the arts and in cultures the world over. It also wanted to encourage small publishers, who were well on the road to annihilation by the arrival of powerful publication houses, to publish poetry. Through the observance of this day, UNESCO wished to promote a return to the oral tradition of poetry recitals as well as to strengthen the association between poetry and other forms of art like dance, music and painting.

Much planning goes into making the World Poetry Day significant and memorable. Educators and librarians, especially, take the lead role in promoting the day by planning activities related to the

popularisation of poetry. Famous poets are invited to educational institutions, libraries, book stores and select gatherings and face-to face programmes are arranged. They share their work with the audience and take questions about their profession. Children are introduced to poetry in the classrooms and when poets who are enthusiastic about their trade take over from teachers, they are able to foster a genuine interest in poetry, its different forms, its meaning, how it should be read and appreciated and so on.

Awards to honour poets and other forms of recognition are made on World Book Day to bestow merit on poets and their work. People are encouraged to



write poetry and their attempts are judged and assessed by experts in the field. Exhibitions and poetry evenings are also held to highlight the work of various poets on this day. In other words, everyone lives and breathes poetry and feel completely refreshed and rejuvenated at the end of it.

Irina Bokova, the Director General of UNESCO describes poetry as 'one of the purest forms of linguistic freedom. It is a component of the identity of peoples and it embodies the creative energy of culture for it can be continuously renewed.' Since the power of poetry is transmitted from generation to generation, UNESCO feels

A decision to proclaim 21st March as World Poetry Day was adopted during UNESCO's 30th session held in Paris in November 1999 and World Poetry Day was formally designated to be held on March 21st every year to appreciate and support poets and poetry around the world. The first World Poetry Day was observed on 21st March, 2000. The purpose of the day was to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world and, as the UNESCO session declaring the day said, to 'give fresh recognition and impetus to national, regional and international poetry movements.' UNESCO hoped that such an observance would help support linguistic diversity through poetic expression and offer endangered languages the opportunity to be heard within their communities.

In some parts of the world, World Poetry Day was generally celebrated in October, sometimes on the 5th, but in the latter part of the 20th century the world community celebrated it on 15th October, the birthday of Virgil, the Roman epic poet and poet laureate under Emperor Augustus. The tradition to keep an October date for national or international poetry day celebrations still holds in many countries.

According to UNESCO, 'poetry contributes to creative diversity, by questioning anew our use of words and things, our modes of perception and understanding of the world. Through its free associations, its metaphors and its own grammar, poetic language is thus conceivably another facet of the dialogue among cultures...' World Poetry Day is an invitation to reflect on the power of language and the full development of each person's creative abilities.

Member States of the UN are encouraged to actively participate in celebrating World Poetry Day at both the national and the local level by enlisting the co operation, support of National Commissions, NGOs and public and private institutions like schools, colleges, libraries, publishing houses, poetic communities, museums, municipalities, cultural associations, local authorities and others.

compelled to transmit the legacy of Homer, Li Bai, Tagore, Senghor and countless others 'for it bears witness to the cultural diversity of humanity' and its importance as a source of linguistic wealth and dialogue must be given its deserved publicity.

By celebrating World Poetry Day, Irina Bokova declares that UNESCO wishes to 'promote the values that poetry conveys, for poetry is a journey- not in a dream world, but often close to individual emotions, aspirations and hopes. Poetry gives form to the dreams of peoples and expresses their spirituality in the strongest terms – it emboldens all of us also to change the world.'

Poetry, according to Mathew Arnold, is 'criticism of life' and as Coleridge put it, it is 'the best words in the best order.' It is to be hoped that regular observance of World Poetry Day will restore poetry to the high position it held in ancient times and people the world over will realize that it is not an outdated and boring form of art but a very vibrant and energetic one. To experience the vitality and excitement of poetry is to understand much of its meaning. ■

The writer is Associate Professor (Rtd), All Saints College, Thiruvananthapuram

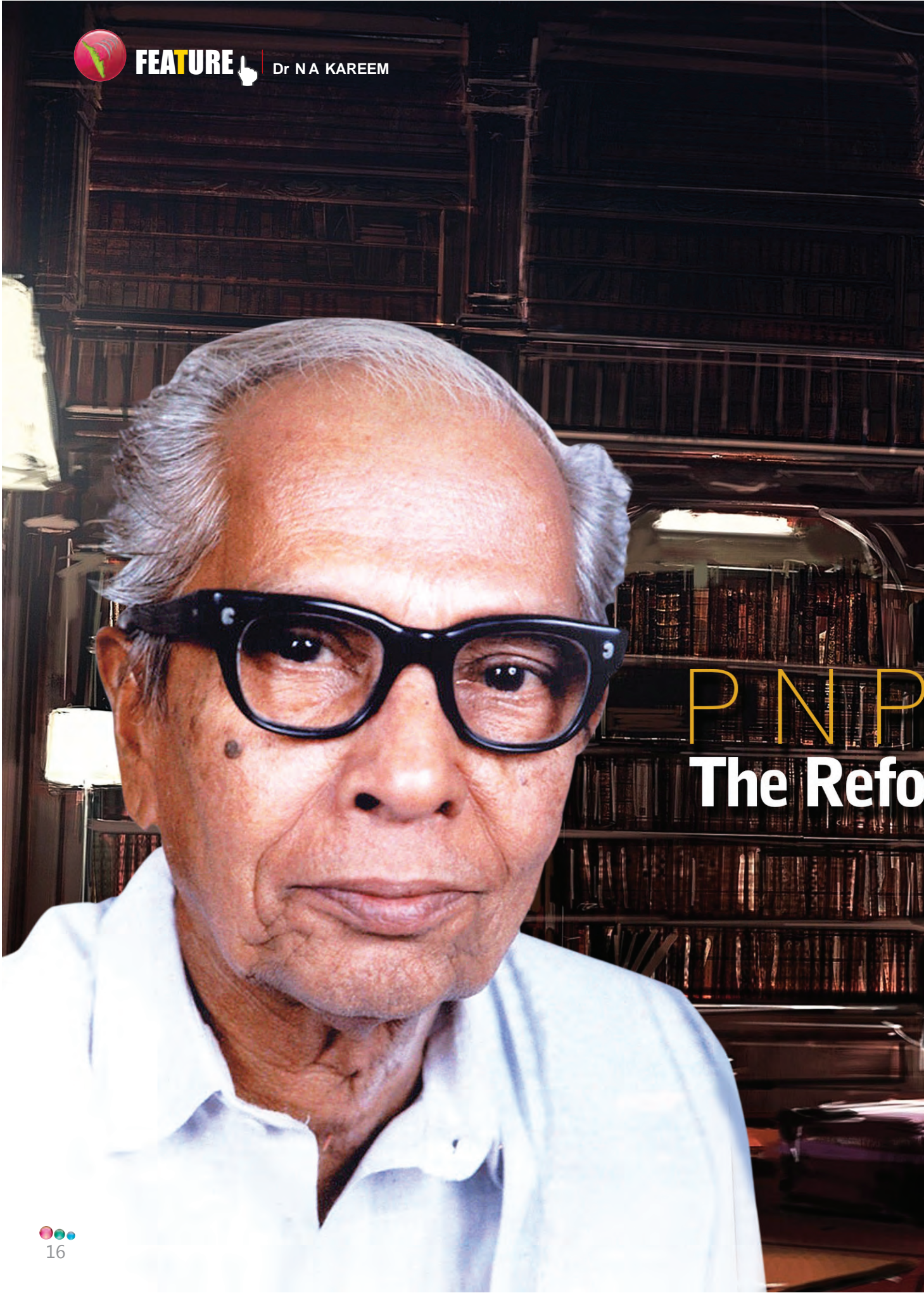


By celebrating World Poetry Day, Irina Bokova declares that UNESCO wishes to 'promote the values that poetry conveys, for poetry is a journey- not in a dream world, but often close to individual emotions, aspirations and hopes.




FEATURE

Dr N A KAREEM



PNP The Refo



PN Panicker's life gave credence to Ralph Waldo Emerson's observation that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man". A frail khadi-clad old man, he left a shadow that has grown over the years making him a legend in his own life time and there after. The activities of the Kerala Grandhasala Sangam (Kerala State Library Council) ignited a popular cultural movement in Kerala at the end of which the state acquired total literacy in the 1990's. It was the work of PN. Panicker who carried the message of education and development even to the remotest corners and neglected tribal pockets of Kerala.

The Grandhasala sangam which began humbly with 47 libraries in 1945, grew into a network of more than 6,000 libraries spreading over the towns and villages of Kerala. To give this activity a developmental format, he organized the Kerala Association for Non Formal Education and Development (KANFED). Together, these two Associations turned an activity into a movement which had a profound impact on the education, culture and development of Kerala.

Born in 1st March, 1909 in Kuttanad, in the erstwhile Travancore state, the young Panicker showed a keen interest in reading newspapers and books. Not only did he read them himself, he also read the daily

panicker myst

news to groups of illiterate people of all ages. In a small room given by the local co-operative society in his village, Panicker started a reading center called Sanadanadharmam Library. This was the little pebble which was to have a major ripple effect. An admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, Panicker was inspired by the Mahatma's words that "illiteracy is a cause and shame of the country and t should be wiped out as early as possible". Social historians of the state are of the opinion that the cultural revolution following the social emancipation movements initiated by Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, VT. Bhattathiripad and others was the outcome of Panicker's library movement. He walked through the state contacting men and women every where, generating awareness. The idea, inspiration and leadership for making Kerala the first totally literate state of the country came from Panicker and his KANFED. The state-wide popular movement called Sakshara Keralam through a time-bound intensive campaign involving thousands of voluntary workers achieved success on 18th April 1991.

Disturbed by the fissiparous tendencies that he saw growing in the country, Panicker also worked to foster social amity and harmony. For this he devoted his last years to the Friendship Village Movement (Sauhrudagramam). He continued travelling and working vigorously, sustained by his simple Gandhian life style and an indomitable will till he passed on 19th June 1995. The Government of Kerala observes 19th June annually as Vayanadinal (Day of Reading) with a week-long series of activities at schools and public institutions to honour the contribution of PN. Panicker

to the cause of literacy and education. The National Literacy Mission has been inspired largely by the work of this frail man who converted a simple slogan of "Read and Grow" into a powerful movement.

The Department of Posts honoured P.N. Panicker through issue of a commemorative postage stamp in 2004. The P.N. Panicker Foundation was established during the Sathabhishek year (84th birth anniversary of P.N. Panicker) under the Chairmanship of Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer to spearhead developmental issues focusing on inclusive growth in tune with the technological advancement. P N Panicker Foundation was the first organization in the country to popularize e-reading among the rural masses with internet facility in 2002. This initiative paved the way for establishing 25000 rural home e-libraries in 2010. This initiative has been the lasting contribution of the centenary celebration of P N Panicker.

Considering the commendable work carried out by P.N. Panicker Foundation, Govt. of Kerala organized an autonomous organization P.N. Panicker Vigyan Vikas Kendra under the Department of General Education, Govt. of Kerala to perpetuate the memory of the late P N Panicker, the father of the library and literacy movement to inculcate the reading habit and internalize scientific temper among youth to prepare them right from school and college education to get oriented towards

setting up of enterprises which will provide them with the creativity, the freedom and the ability to generate it.

P N Panicker was a legend in his own life time and is now celebrated as one of the architects of modern Kerala. The more we know about his efforts and achievements in the field of library movement, literacy campaigns and grass roots level developmental activities of various kinds, the greater the admiration we have for this frail old man. There is no place in Kerala that has not felt his foot steps as he had traveled far and wide always active and pleasant and bubbling with ideas for the rejuvenation of the people of Kerala by mobilizing them and making them aware of the inherent potential in them for the radical transformation of their own lives and the society as a whole.

The unparalleled library movement P N Panicker had organized, operated and captained from 1945-1977 with the people's participation was a landmark achievement in Kerala's development. The library movement with a network of more than 5000 big and small libraries mostly in the rural areas was almost a single handed achievement of Panicker that contributed immensely to the making of modern Kerala with its thrust on development on all fronts. The establishment of all these 5000 and odd libraries were made possible through the public contributions and emphasized upon a democratic style of

functioning. Panicker was the elected Secretary (CEO) of Kerala Grandhashala Sangham till the Government made it a statutory body. He worked with missionary zeal without owning an inch of land or any bank account till he breathed his last and did not accepting allowances or honorariums offered by the Government. The social historians recall that the library movement, Panicker organized is the corner stone of the so called "Kerala model of development".

It was a life-long devotion to the cause of literacy and sustained work in the field that made him a living god among the downtrodden. And his loving memory is honored in several ways by the people of Kerala in particular, and now, the country at large. Several institutions, organizations and movements have come up to commemorate his monumental contribution not only in wiping out literacy in the state but also for steering the state to the path of social, economic and cultural development. In short, he is considered as one of the principal architects of modern Kerala. In a life span of eighty six years of which nearly sixty seven years were spent in the service of the people with a single minded devotion and determination he could not only make his own state totally literate but also provide new and innovative ideas for wiping out the national scourge in other parts of the country. Time bound rigidly planned intensive campaigns with the active help of the people, enthrusing particularly



the illiterate beneficiaries among them helped him achieve his lofty aims he had developed this model during own work and experience gathered over the years. The rigidly time bound intensive model of Kerala was subsequently accepted by the National Literacy Mission and recommended to other states, a few of which experimented the total literacy campaign (TLC) model and produced impressive results, though not comparable with that of Kerala.

A village named Ezhom in the remote district of Kannur was the first village in Kerala to become totally literate. This was achieved by the sustained work of a group of young men and women of the village who worked in an untiring

P N Panicker was a legend in his own life time and is now celebrated as one of the architects of modern Kerala.





manner seeking inspiration, advice and guidance from P N Panicker. This feat of making a whole village completely literate socially awakened and culturally regenerated was unparalleled in the history of Kerala then. This total approach to the problem of eradicating illiteracy was a novel idea of P N Panicker. This approach soon got the imagination of other organizations and groups in Kerala. This resounding success paved the way to make one of the towns in Kerala – the Kottayam Municipal Town as totally literate town. The project of making the town literate in 100 days caught the imagination of the whole nation and received nationwide publicity and acclaim.

This bold experiment, bolder than two earlier ones, on its completion was hailed as a unique phenomenal success of combined effort. Later the imaginatively conceived idea of wiping out literacy in a district in a time bound manner was another success of popular participation. The project was preceded by an elaborate mass awakening programme which deeply penetrated into the nooks and corners of the remote rural areas of the district. Local voluntary organizations, retired teachers, public spirited young men and women, social enthusiasts and students were brought into this

project. It was this united enthusiasm that brought about this miracle of making a district devoid of even a small area of darkness in a little more than a year. Inspired and enthused by the success of this earlier time-bound projects a larger and more ambitious plan to make the remaining 13 districts in the state completely literate was drawn-up. Kerala became the first totally literate state in India not by a single stroke of literacy work but by the dedication and hard work of thousands of volunteers under the dynamic leadership of P N Panicker. He used to go to the remote rural areas and attract young men and women around him and enthuse them to take up literacy promotion work in their own unique style.

The towering personality of this apparently simple and frail man was the main factor in the resounding success of all his movements like the library, literacy, social awakening and development at the people's level. His love of poor people particularly the tribals of the remote areas of Idukki, Wayanad and Kasargod helped him to establish deep emotional relationship with them and their life. The kind of change he brought about in communities that he used to visit regularly like a barefoot missionary, the result has been remarkable. Panicker's life was thus a devoted one



Familiarizing the masses in the use of ICT in acquiring knowledge and skills for improving their living standards through the use of internet.

- Reduce the digital divide in the villages.

- The creative convergence of digital arts, science, technology, and business for human expression, communication, social interaction and education.

- To provide access to information and quality education for the weaker sections of the society.

- Social inclusion of the under privileged through capacity building.

- Popularization of e-governance to ensure participatory governance through effective use of ICT.

- Adaptability to self employment/ wage employment /co -employment for generation of wealth with social participation.

- Building gender equity by sharing information.

- Providing opportunities for sharing views with the world through social media.

- To develop social capital by leveraging human potential through ICT.

- Sharing the success stories and knowledge of the community in organizing micro enterprises for better productivity and economic return.

- Democratization of information for citizen centric development.

- Building a unique public information infrastructure for good governance.

- Familiarizing e-commerce and e-services for economic empowerment and cost effective time conservation.

- To enhance the market of the village produce through social media marketing



together with the schools and handing over the administration of these libraries to the Sangam was celebrated as a public event in every village.

With the unification of Travancore and Cochin in 1949-50, activities of the Sangam spread to Cochin also. Late Paravur T.K Narayana Pilla, the then Chief Minister of Travancore - Cochin was fascinated by the yeoman services of Panicker and his team and gave all support to Travancore- Cochin Grandhasala Sangam. He himself became the President of Grandhasala Sangam which gave strength and direction of the movement. Late Panampilly Govinda Menon, who became the successor of Travancore- Cochin issued orders to amalgamate all libraries functioning in Cochin area with Grandhasala Sangam. He was a tower of strength to the initiatives of Panicker and thereby Sangam was got away from its teething problems. C. Kesavan, the former Chief Minister Travancore- cochin realized the potential of the library movement and issued orders to allot Govt. premises to house the Sangam's registered office in Trivandrum.

In the early decades of the library movement, the local people who took part in these activities voluntarily were primarily library activists. With the amalgamation of the library organizations of Cochin and

Travancore more workers became necessary and paid organizers began to be appointed. Their duty was to visit each and every village and motivate the local people to establish rural libraries. Centralized library activity thus came into being.

Rural libraries in Malabar were a different phenomenon politically and socially. As they were the centres of political activities, the British rulers in Malabar had always shown a negative approach to libraries. Assistance from the government was not therefore available to these libraries as was the case in Travancore and Cochin. With Independence, conditions underwent a sea change. For the first time in India, a library Act came into existence in 1948 in Malabar. Following this enactment Malabar local library authorities were formed with district education officers as secretaries. After 1959, local library authorities were formed in Kannur, Calicut and Palakkad districts. A number of libraries were formed on their initiative.

With the formation of Kerala State in 1956, Travancore – Cochin Grandhasala Sangham was renamed as the Kerala Grandhasala Sangham and its activities spread to the Malabar region also. Tanoor Sanchara Grandha Sala in Malppuram was the first Library, which joined the Kerala Grandha Sala Sangham. This was in 1957. At that time there were around 500 libraries in Malabar apart from those libraries under Local Library Authorities. Through the committed and hard work of Panicker who was the democratically elected Secretary of the Sangam for the consecutive 33 years, the Sangam grew into an apex body of 5000 odd libraries. During 1972 when Sangam celebrated its Silver Jubilee , a Samskarika Padayatra highlighting the slogan “Vayichu Valaruka” under the leadership of Panicker was performed from Kasargode to Kanyakumari. This was an epoch making event in the

The towering personality of this apparently simple and frail man was the main factor in the resounding success of all his movements like the library, literacy, social awakening and development at the people's level.

cultural history of Kerala since it was a noble attempt to organize a Jatha highlighting a theme for a social cause. Till then Jathas were conducted only for claiming the rights and other benefits. The Vayichu Valaruka Samskarika jatha was received at the street by the then Chief Minister C Achuthamenon.

During the period 1955-1975, the number of libraries under Kerala Grandhasala sangam increased from 1747 to 5280. This rapid growth is an indication of the effort of the sangam made to bring the entire library system in Kerala under its control. At the same time new libraries were also started under its initiative. The Sangam distributed grants to the libraries affiliated to it.

During 1975-77 under the cover of emergency a sectarian approach adversely affected the working of the Sangam. The government brought into being a Control board through an ordinance. For the administrative functions an 11-member committee with Education minister as chairman was appointed. Panicker was appointed as the first full time secretary. It is remembered that Panicker was the democratically elected Secretary of the Sangam for the last 33 years which shows the yeomen and committed services rendered by Panicker in building up the library movement in Kerala. Democratic functioning of the Sangham thus came to an end. This Control board system lasted for more than a decade. For revitalizing and re-democratizing the library movement, Kerala Public libraries Act came into effect in 1989. According to this Act, office bearers of the Sangham at the State, the district, and the Taluk levels were the elected members of libraries from the lower levels themselves. Thus, after the bureaucratic rule of a decade and a half elected bodies of the Sangham came into existence on the 27 April 1994.

As a social institution rural libraries in Kerala were very

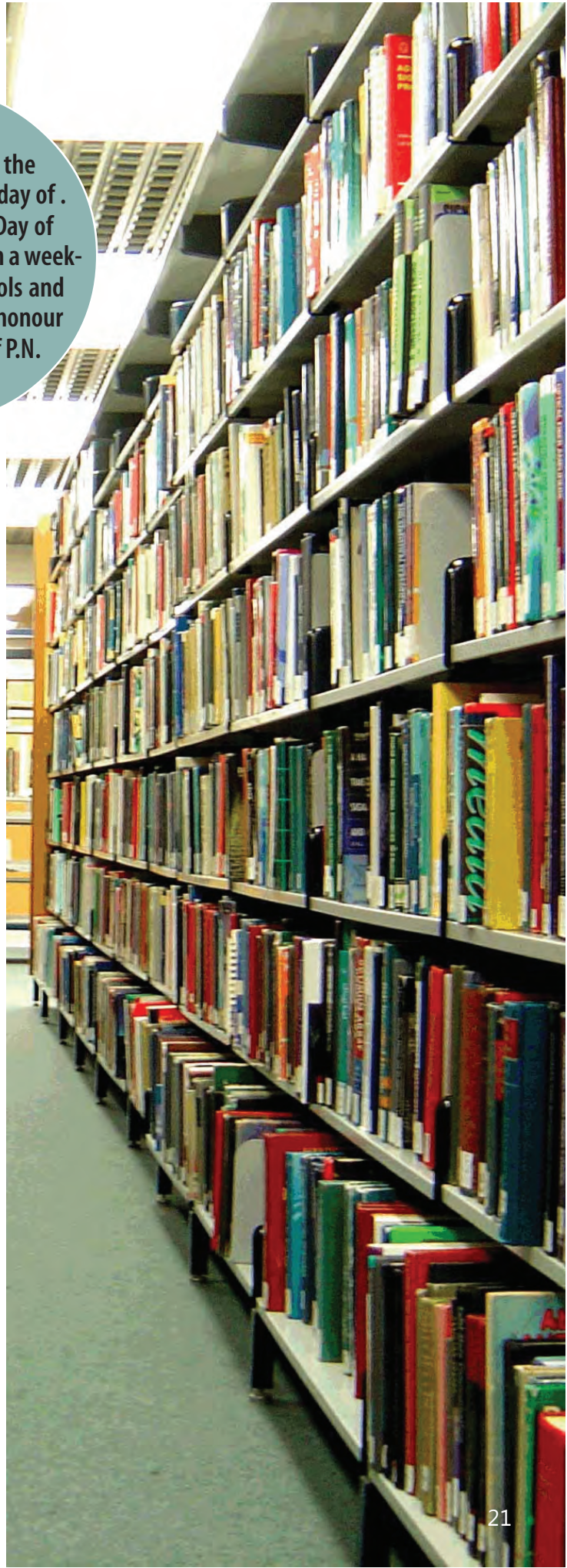
**Govt. of Kerala
observes 19th June the
annual remembrance day of .
P.N. Panicker as the 'Day of
Reading' every year with a week-
long activities in schools and
public institutions to honour
the contributions of P.N.
Panicker**

vibrant and effective in educating and informing people. These libraries were the centres of the community's social and political life and they led the cultural and literary activities of the society.

The impacts of the explosive development of the communication industry and information technology and the corresponding changes it brought about in the cultural sphere and on the reading habits of Keralites seem to be substantial. The electronic medium has already over taken the print media. The recreational activities of the society have undergone great change. The impact of the television, particularly through its mega serials and comic strips, on the reading habits of the people also seems to have been significant.

Govt. of Kerala observes 19th June the annual remembrance day of . P.N. Panicker as the 'Day of Reading' every year with a week-long activities in schools and public institutions to honour the contributions of P.N. Panicker to the cause of literacy and education. Panicker's birthday March 1st is observed as Social Activist's Day since Panicker was the first Keralite who preached and practiced social development through the frame work of voluntary and civil society organizations. ■

The writer is former Pro Vice-Chancellor of University of Kerala





Showcases Bouquet of Indian Culture

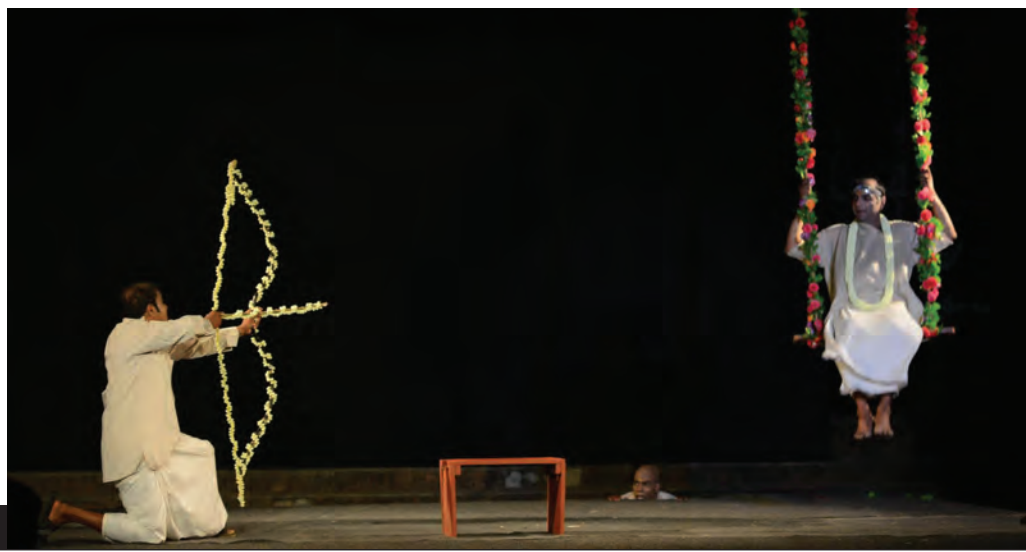
The Thirteenth Edition of National Theatre Festival of Kerala organized by the Information and Public Relations Department turned Kottayam, the city of letters, into a week long cultural hub. The festival titled as 'Natya Hemantham' was received whole-heartedly by the local people. It is a matter of debate whether the public could fully comprehend or understand much of what was happening on stage in most of the other language plays. But sometimes it was evident that, language was not a

barrier to artistic performance. They did appreciate whatever was communicable to them. The package of plays was rather motley in character, ranging from classical to commercial.

The Minister for Information & Public Relations and Culture K C Joseph inaugurated the festival at Indraprastha Auditorium, Kottayam in presence of a tightly-packed audience. P C George, Chief Whip presided over the function. Renowned playwright and director Kavalam Narayana Panicker delivered the keynote address. I & PRD Secretary Rani George, Cultural Development

Officer S. Bahuleyan Nair and others participated. I & PRD Director Mini Antony IAS welcomed the gathering. As a prelude to the event, an eye-catching procession was also arranged. The performances were conducted at two venues; Indraprastha Auditorium and Thirunakkara Maidan, the open air venue.

Natya Hemantham started with 'Dalan', the Marathi drama from Pune directed by Nipun Dharmadhikari. Dalan, the hilarious comedy play which was adapted from the short story by D.M. Mirasdar, was well-received.



'Urubhangam,' from Kasba Arghya, Kolkotha, was directed by Maneesh Mitra. The play, an odyssey to Mahabharatha was not a mere retelling. It tells and visualizes the world of Mahabharatha that traces a strain

of blood to show how a power nucleus is formed and demolished by its own, in due course of time. By the breaking of thighs of Duryodhana, it symbolically breaks down the pillars of power structure.

The Rajasthan-based Perafin Theatre's 'My Father- My Mom,' was a non-linear theatrical presentation. This non-verbal piece aided with fettle use of 'gibberish language' was a new experience to the audience. The composition involved interaction through choreographed physical movements and allegorical use of day-to-day objects. Another notable work from outside Kerala was 'Mrigaya,' the Assamese play directed by Gunakar Dev Goswami of Purbaranga Theatre, Guwahati. The play put forwarded the message that compared to selfish humanity, animals are preferably superior to humans. The play contains sharp

observations about the selfish behaviour of the contemporary society.

'Shoodra thapaswi,' brought from Mysore, in Karnataka, by Rangayana directed by C Basavalingaiah, was a visual poetry which follows the pattern of Jogathiya mela, a folklore tradition of South India, the rhythm of dance. The acting style and scenic design was very much notable. The play put forwarded the message of the great Kannada poet Kuvembu that the myths should be recovered for their metaphoric value and any attempt to make their denotative meaning more prominent is not

only counter productive but would amount to doing terrible disservice to the spirit of the time.

Madhyama Vyagoga by Natyakulam, Jaipur was based on Bhasa's Sanskrit Play. The play, directed by Bhumikeshwar Singh marvelously depicted the contemporary disregarded condition of the Indian Middle Class society.

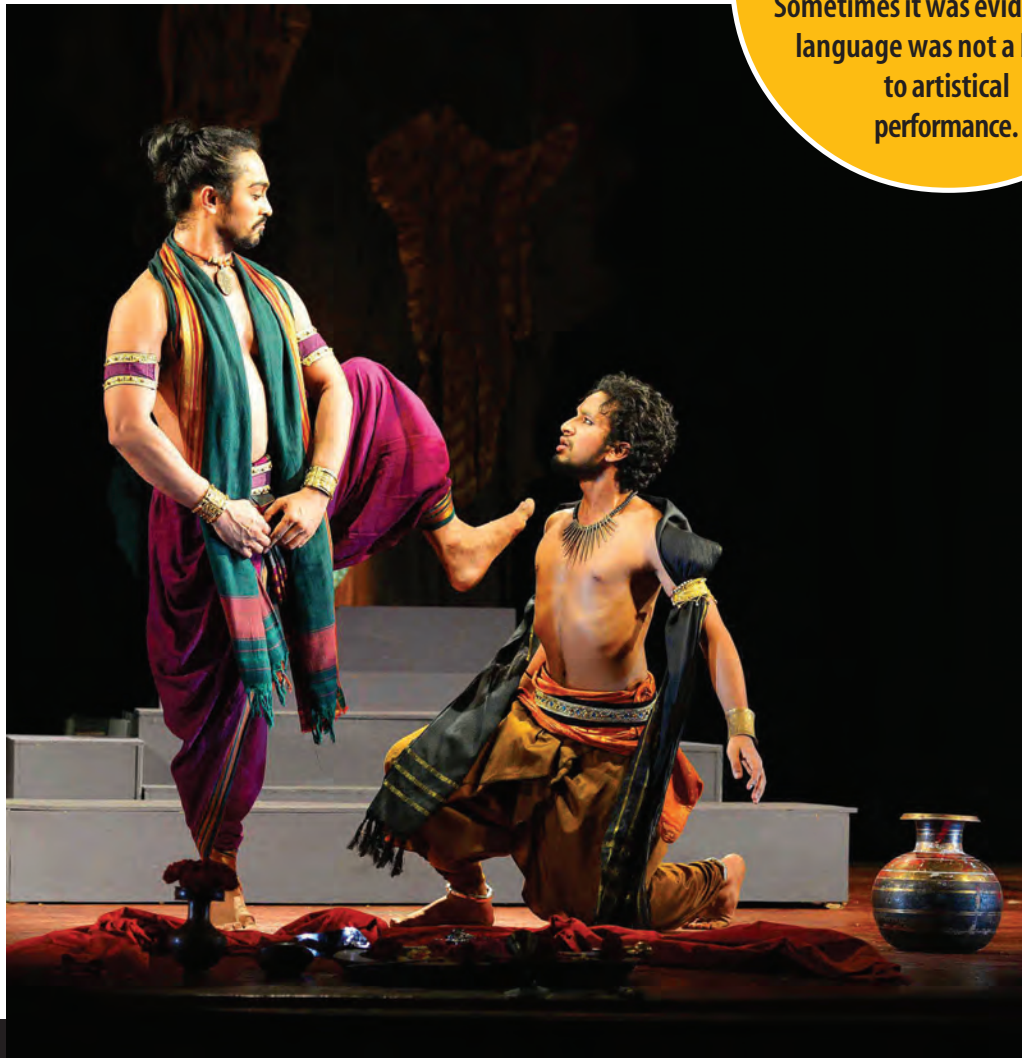
The play attempted to explore the emotional turmoil of Bhima with his son Ghatotkacha.

The popular theatres of Kerala were also included in the festival. 'Punarjani,' by Nireeksha,

Thiruvananthapuram, 'Satyam Parayunna Kallan' by Aksharakala, Thiruvananthapuram, 'Kathapathrangalum Pankeduthavarum' by Vilappil Vision, Mumbai, 'Beegum Panicker' by Theatre Repertory, fine Arts consortium of Sanskrit University, Kalady, and 'Macbeth' by Kalidasa Kalakendram, Kollam were also staged.

Auxiliary events like seminars, film screenings and meet the directors sessions were held at DC Books Auditorium. Dr. Raja Warriar moderated the sessions. Drama related short film screening was also done. Theatre's identity is not defined by the wool it pulls over the eyes of the audience, but by the magic it creates through energy. No doubt Natya Hemantham did indeed bring a breath of fresh air into the cultural landscape of Kottayam. ■

The festival titled as 'Natya Hemantham' was received whole-heartedly by the local people at Kottayam. Sometimes it was evident that, language was not a barrier to artistical performance.





PhotoFeature
Natyahemantham
organised by the Information
& Public Relations Department







hub & spots *in Kerala*

Birding Tourism is an emerging form of tourism in the state. In many countries it is advanced and a form of special interest tourism coming under the subset of Wildlife & Eco-Tourism. Birding tourism is all about visiting eco-systems like wetlands, lakes, paddy fields, forest, river banks, estuaries, bird sanctuaries and other spots to sight the birds where it arrives in mammoth numbers. The birding season of the state commences from the month of September and concludes by the end of May. Mornings & evenings are the best time to spot birds in significant numbers. Birding centers & spots in the state are discussed under three heads like Protected Areas, Budding Birding Destination's (BBD's) and Unique Eco-systems.

BIRDING TOURISM



Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary (TBS)

Thattekkad located sixty km from Kochi city is nestled along the banks of River Periyar near Kothamangalam. The sanctuary established during 1983 in the name of renowned ornithologist Salim Ali is one of the famed bird sanctuaries in Asia. It attracts both migrant birds and avid birders from different parts of the world. The birding season in Thattekkad runs between mid-August and February. Major birds spotted here are Frogmouth, Red wattle lap wing black bird, wild owl, bulbul, wild hen, open bill stork, myna, king fisher, Indian roller, darter, purple heron etc. Salim Ali spotted and identified different species of birds including resident and migratory birds in and around the region. At present more than 200 varieties of birds are sighted here and among them forty percentage are migratory birds. The sanctuary has an interpretation center which gives detailed information on bio diversity, documentation on birds, eco-systems and forest trail inside the sanctuary. There is also a watch tower inside the sanctuary to spot the birds.

Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary (MBS)

Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary (MBS) is the smallest protected area in the state located in Kochi city. Mostly wetland birds are visiting the sanctuary and a considerable number of migratory avian species also visits MBS seasonally. Besides this it is also a nesting site for other avian colonial nesters. A big colony of bats (Indian Flying Fox) around thousand in number had made the MBS as their home. Major species of birds sighted in MBS includes large cormorant, little cormorant, purple heron, Indian pond heron, cattle egret, great egret etc.

Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary (KBS)

Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary is one of the prime stopovers for migrant birds located in the western coast of India in Kozhikode district. It is spread over a cluster of islands which are extremely rich in bio diversity and scenic beauty. The sanctuary offers a splendid view of the adjacent river mouth and sea which simply makes it an exceptional one. Winged visitor's starts arriving to Kadalundi estuary by the mid of September every year and the season peaks during the months between December to January.

Providing shelter to more than 100 varieties of native birds and 60 varieties of migratory birds the sanctuary attracts eco-tourists and ornithologists for witnessing rare species of avifauna. Migratory birds such as terns, seagulls, sand plovers, sandpipers, green shanks can be seen in the sanctuary during the months starting from October. Whimbrels and Brahminy kites are the prominent native species of the region spotted. Furthermore tourists can also witness a wide variety of fishes, mussels and crabs in and around the estuary zone. The birds return to their breeding habitats before the arrival of drastic monsoon in June. Kadalundi was declared as a community reserve during the year 2008. The purpose of declaring the region as a community reserve is to ensure the sustainable conservation of estuary, migratory birds and vast stretches of mangroves through the effective participation and support of host community. The community reserve is spread over 150 hectares of the estuary area between Kadalundi and Vallikkunnu panchayats and is the first of its kind initiative by the Kerala State Forest Department.





Choolannur Peafowl Sanctuary (CPS)

This sanctuary is the unique one of its kind in the state established during the May 2007 exclusively for the conservation & protection of the national bird of India. Spreading over approximately an area of 500 hectares of reserve forest in Peringottukurissi Panchayath in Palakkad district and Malesamangalam in Thrissur district this sanctuary has a population of more than two hundred peacocks. Majority of the land area inside the sanctuary are having rocky terrain which provides an ideal habitat for peacocks. A watch tower is located at Malesamangalam for spotting peacocks and the vast terrain of the sanctuary.



Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary (KBS)

Locally known as Vembanad Bird Sanctuary it is situated at Kumarakom in Kottayam district on the banks of Vembanad Lake. The sanctuary is spread over fourteen acres having stretches of mangrove forest cover. One can take a boat ride in Vembanad Lake or along the Kavanar River to sight the migratory birds. The local birds spotted are the waterfowl, cuckoo, owl, egret, heron, cormorant, moorhen, darter, brahminy kite and the duck. Siberian crane, Parrot, teal, lark, flycatcher, and other birds are seen here during their respective migratory seasons. Some of the migratory birds even come from the Himalayas and a few from Siberia too.

Dawn is the ideal time for bird watching when the birds prepare to leave their forest homes and fly over the lake. The World Wide Fund -India and Kerala Tourism Development Corporation has introduced guided bird watching trails and opened an interpretation centre in Kumarakom.



Budding Birding Destinations (BBD's)

Besides the above mentioned protected areas there are numerous spots in the state famed for bird watching known as the budding birding destinations (BBD's). The major BBD's are mentioned below



Pathiramanal Island

The island ecosystem of Pathiramanal located on the Vembanad Lake has a Bio-Park. Oriental darter, a near threatened bird species has been found breeding here since few years. Indian rock python and smooth coated are the two globally threatened species that have been found in the island. Nearly eighty plus species of birds are spotted from the



island. The mangroves surrounding the island, the wetlands and narrow creeks within the island allure vast number of migratory birds. During recent surveys the numbers of birds spotted in Pathiramanal and Thanneermukkom Bund areas are showing an increasing trend.

Kattampally

The catchment area of the Kattampally River and the marshy wetlands on either side form a perfect milieu for a picnic spot for bird watchers to take a break and relax. The river, a tributary of the Valapattanam River and the waterlogged areas and the vast extent of brackish water fields have been a perfect spot for migratory birds. Kattampally wetland is rated as a biodiversity treasure house having thousands of birds including nearly 60 species of migrants. Kattampally is also the lone place in the Western Coast where the rare Oriental Pratincoles are known to be breeding since long years. Besides this it is also the feeding ground of the vast number of water birds nesting at the various heronries in Kannur district. Behind Vembanad and Kole this wetland holds the maximum number of birds in the State.

Gavi

Gavi is truly an eco-tourist cum ornithologist paradise and one can feel and experience it after making a visit. The backdrop of Gavi is covered with hills and valleys, tropical forests, sprawling grasslands, cascading waterfalls and cardamom plantations. Having more than 260 species of birds Gavi is a haven for nature lovers and birdwatchers. Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) is offering attractive eco-tourism based packages in Gavi which offers an opportunity to spot the birds.



Chettuva Backwaters

Chettuva the coastal village in Thrissur district is an abode for both migratory and shore birds. The canals, creeks, mangroves and the estuarine environment of Chettuva provides home for a wide variety of aquatic fauna and the arid zone forms the nesting grounds for aquatic birds. Mangrove islands constitute the perfect breeding and nursery ground for the migratory birds. The presence of vast cover of fresh mangrove forest provides an ideal habitat for a wide variety of migratory and shore birds which attract bird watchers and eco-tourists to Chettuva. Chettuva estuary is the ideal zone for watching both migratory and shore birds in massive numbers.





Athirappilly – Vazhachal Forest

Athirappilly is truly an abode of indigenous and migratory birds. The unique 180 metres elevation of riparian forest in the Athirappilly-Vazhachal area is the only location where one can see south Indian species of hornbills like the Great Hornbill (the State Bird of Kerala), Malabar Pied Hornbill, Malabar Grey Hornbill and the Indian Grey Hornbill. Birds prefer Athirappilly area because of the presence of big forest cover, gorgeous waterfalls and streams. Athirappilly-Vazhachal forest comes under the list of Important Bird Area's (IBA) from the state.



Vellayani

The fresh water lake of Vellayani and the paddy fields of Punchakkari in Trivandrum district is an abode for indigenous and migratory birds. The major migratory birds seen here include warblers, waders, blue tailed bee eaters, rosy starlings, common sandpipers, wood sandpipers and whiskered terns. The birding season in Vellayani starts in October and is a perfect abode for water birds.



Pakshipathalam

Pakshipathalam located in the Brahmagiri hills at Thirunelli in Wayanad district is a promising bird watching destination. The deep rock caves formed among the thick blocks of rocks at the northern top end of Brahmagiri are the abode of various birds. Special permission has to be obtained from the forest department to visit Pakshipathalam.

Besides the above there are other birding spots such as Kadambayar fresh water lake in Manakkakadavu near Ernakulam, Chavakkad beach in Thrissur, Muzhappilangad beach in Kannur, Nooranad & Aayiramtengu in Alleppey, Dharmadam Island in Kannur, Kavvayi Backwaters, Neeleshwaram-Thaikadappuram and Kumbala estuary in Kasargod etc.

Madayipara

Madayipara is a laterite hillock located near Pazhayangadi in Kannur. Being an incessant lure for ornithologists and eco-tourists nearly 140 different species of birds were spotted here. The rarest birds found here include the buff breasted sand piper and the collared pratincole. The site boasts migratory birds, laterite resident birds including an array of larks and also a few over-wintering birds. Mornings and evenings are the ideal time to spot birds in massive numbers. Besides birds it is also home to an assortment of butterflies and a wide range of flowering plants.



Unique ecosystems alluring migratory birds

Kole Lands of Thrissur

The vast tracts of wetlands in central Kerala have been witnessing a considerable increase in the arrival of migrant birds that use kole fields as their habitats. The Kole lands are one of the largest, highly productive and the most threatened ecosystems which have been declared by Ramsar Convention for protection of Wetlands and it comes under the Central Asian Flyway of migratory birds. Kole lands are multi purpose water based eco systems which comes under the category of Ecologically Sensitive Areas



(ESAs). Thrissur – Malappuram stretch is the largest Kole land zone in the state. The Kole lands are vital eco- systems where maximum numbers of indigenous water birds are sighted in the state. The birds commonly sighted in kole lands include King Fishers, Pond heron, Darter, Siberian cranes, Painted Stork, Glossy Ibis, Egrets, Large pied wagtail etc. Kole lands famed for bird watching in the state are Muriyad, Puzhakkal, Pullazhi, Kattur, Pullu, Manakkodi, Maranchery etc. The kole lands are facing great environmental pressures currently for its survival.



Ashtamudi and Sasthamcotta Wetlands

The brackish Ashtamudi Lake is the second largest water body and Sasthamcotta Lake is the biggest freshwater lake in the State. Both the wetlands are Ramsar sites and are known to accommodate a large number of water birds. Large egrets, brahminy kite and cormorants are spotted on Ashtamudi Lake during a recent bird survey. The only species of migratory birds spotted in Ashtamudi Lake are the whiskered terns and common sandpipers. Other notable birds seen on the lake include large egrets, open bill storks, white ibis and grey herons. In Sasthamcotta Lake the major birds spotted are whistling teals, darters, pond herons, purple moorhens etc.



Vembanad Wetlands

Vembanad Wetland is the largest lake situated on the western coast of India. Kuttanad is one of the unique tourism destination located in Vembanad Lake famed for paddy cultivations. The Vembanad-Kole Wetland system is a Ramsar site formed by an intricate network of estuaries, lagoons and canals which spans over 196 km in the north south and 29 km in the east west directions. Vembanad Kole is an abode for more than 20,000 waterfowls. Besides waterfowls other species of birds are also sighted here. The breeding season of resident wetland birds such as white ibis, little cormorant, egrets and herons, Indian Darter, kingfishers etc occurs between June and August.



Purathur Estuary

Purathur estuary is a major water bird census spot formed by the confluence of Arabian Sea, Bharathapuzha & Tirur Rivers located in Malappuram district near Ponnani. Purathur estuary is the biggest habitat of Seagulls in the state and it is proposed as an Important Bird Area (IBA). Gulls arrive in Kerala from Eurasia during the month of September onwards and stay here till the end of April. The notable feature of Gulls is that they spend majority of the time in the middle of the sand beds and mudflats of the river from morning to evening. Besides this numerous other water birds are also spotted in the estuary by renowned ornithologists.

A visit to the above spots will truly entice all forms of eco-tourists and ornithologists. The months from December to February are the ideal time to spot migratory birds in large numbers. Beyond leisure a visit to the above mentioned bird watching spots and ecosystems will surely offer an enriching experience and first hand information about the winged visitors.

The writer is Lecturer in Tourism, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam



Smoking affects brains of youngsters



A study in United States of America suggests a disturbing effect: Young adult smokers may experience changes in the structures of their brains due to cigarette smoking, dependence and craving. Even worse, these changes can occur in those who have been smoking for relatively short time. Finally, the study suggests that neurobiological changes that may result from smoking during this critical period could explain why adults who began smoking at a young age stay hooked on cigarettes.

The researchers found differences among younger smokers and non-smokers in the insula, a part of the brain's cerebral cortex that is involved in monitoring internal states and making decisions. The researchers focused on the insula because it is known to play a central role in the maintenance of tobacco dependence, having the highest density of nicotinic acetylcholine receptors within the human cerebral cortex.

By measuring cortical thickness of the insula in groups of smokers and non smokers, the researchers found that the amount of "pack-years" – the time of cigarette exposure – was negatively related to the thickness in the right side of the insula. That is, the more someone smoked, the thinner that part of the insula.

Transparent Colour Solar cells for Energy, Beauty

Colorful, see-through solar cells invented at the University of Michigan could one day be used to make stained-glass windows, decorations and even shades that turn the sun's energy into electricity. The



Fully Compostable Bio-plastic from Shrimp Shell

Researchers at Harvard's Wyss Institute have developed a method to carry out large-scale manufacturing of everyday objects—from cell phones to food containers and toys—using a fully degradable bio plastic isolated from shrimp shells. The objects exhibit many of the same properties as those created with synthetic plastics, but without the environmental threat. It also trumps most bio plastics on the market today in posing absolutely no threat to trees or competition with the food supply.

Most bio plastics are made from cellulose, a plant-based polysaccharide material. The Wyss Institute team developed its bio plastic from Chitosan, a form of chitin, which is a powerful player in the world of natural polymers and the second most abundant organic material on Earth. Chitin is a long-chain polysaccharide that is responsible for the hardy shells of shrimps and other crustaceans, armor-like insect cuticles, tough fungal cell walls—and flexible butterfly

wings.

The majority of available chitin in the world comes from discarded shrimp shells, and is either thrown away or used in fertilizers, cosmetics, or dietary supplements, for example. However, material engineers have not been able to fabricate complex three-dimensional (3D) shapes using chitin-based materials—until



now.

The study reflects the next stage of a material called Shrilk that replicated the appearance and unique material properties of living insect cuticle, which the same team unveiled about two years ago in Advanced Materials. They called it Shrilk because it was composed of chitin from shrimp shells plus a protein from silk.

cells, believed to be the first semi-transparent, coloured photo voltaics, have the potential to vastly broaden the use of the energy source, says the researchers. They claim that the solar panels can be made any colour a designer want and can vastly deploy these panels, even indoors.

They can be on the sides of buildings, as energy-harvesting billboards and as window shades—a thin layer on homes and cities. Such an approach, he says, could be especially attractive in densely populated cities.

A meter-square panel could generate enough electricity to power fluorescent light bulbs and small electronic gadget. State-of-the art organic cells in research labs are roughly 10 percent efficient.

The researchers are working to improve these numbers with new materials, but there will always be a tradeoff between beauty and utility in this case. Traditional black solar cells absorb all wavelengths of visible light. These cells are designed to transmit, reflect certain colors.

Plants are more Intelligent than Assumed

Plants are also able to make complex decisions says scientists from the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research (UFZ) and the University of Göttingen, Germany. They have concluded from their investigations on the plant Barberry which is able to abort its own seeds to prevent parasite infestation. The results are the first ecological evidence of complex behaviour in plants and it has been coded in the renowned

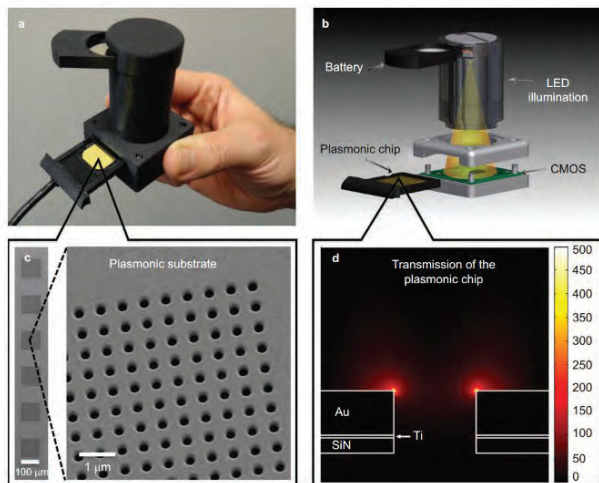
parasite punctures the berries in order to lay its eggs inside them. If the larva is able to develop, it will often feed on all of the seeds in the berry. A special characteristic of the Barberry is that each berry usually has two seeds and that the plant is able to stop the development of its seeds in order to save its resources. This mechanism is also employed to defend it from the tephritid fruit fly. If a seed is infested with the parasite, later on the

A complete medical check-up on a chip

It is possible one day to do a complete checkup without a doctor's visit, proves a latest discovery headed in that direction at the University of California. The researchers have developed an "optical lab on a chip" which is compact

and device is able to detect viruses and single layer proteins down to three nanometers thick.

The size, price and efficiency of this new multi-analyze device make it a highly promising invention for a multiplicity of uses. "Recent



and inexpensive. It could offer to quickly analyze up to 170,000 different molecules in a blood sample. This method could simultaneously identify insulin levels, cancer and Alzheimer markers, or even certain viruses. This new technique uses changes in the intensity of the light to do on-chip imaging. Only 7.5 cm high and weighing 60 grams, the

studies have shown that certain illness like cancer or Alzheimer's are better diagnosed and false positive results avoided when several parameters can be analyzed at once," says the scientists. The research team foresees collaborating with local hospitals in the near future to find the best way to use this new technology.

journal American Naturalist — the premier peer-reviewed American journal for theoretical ecology.

The European barberry or simply Barberry is a species of shrub distributed throughout Europe. It is related to the Oregon grape that is native to North America and that has been spreading through Europe for years. Scientists compared both species to find a marked difference in parasite infestation. Barberry, was found to have a tenfold higher population density on its new host plant, the Oregon grape", reports the study.

This led scientists to examine the seeds of the Barberry more closely. Approximately 2000 berries were collected from different regions of Germany, examined for signs of piercing and then cut open to examine any infestation by the larvae of the parasite tephritid fruit fly. This

developing larva will feed on both seeds. If however the plant aborts the infested seed, then the parasite in that seed will also die and the second seed in the berry is saved.

If the infested fruit contains two seeds, then in 75 per cent of cases, the plants will abort the infested seeds, in order to save the second intact seed. If however the infested fruit only contains one seed, then the plant will only abort the infested seed in 5 per cent of cases. The data from fieldwork were put into a computer model which resulted in a conclusive picture. Using computer model calculations, scientists conclusively proves that plant intelligence is entering the realms of ecological possibility. But it is still unclear as to how the plant processes information and how this complex behaviour was able to develop over the course of evolution.



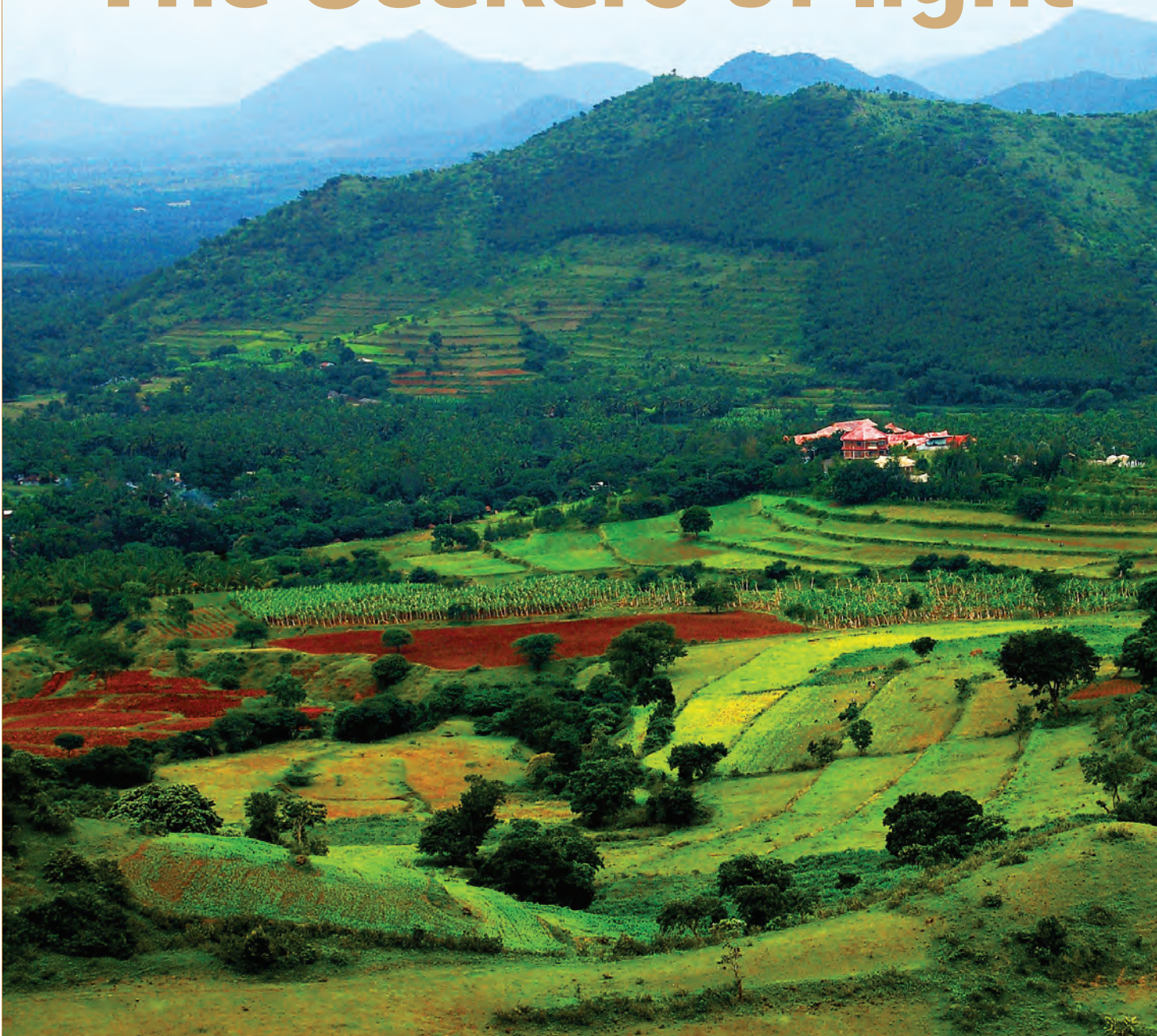
FEATURE



G S UNNIKRI SHNAN NAIR

IRULAR

The Seekers of light



Migration of Irula to Attapadi began by end of the 16th century. At Attapadi they began settled farming. Irulas cultivated millets such as makka cholam or maize, ragi or French millet and chama or little millet, pulses like thuvara or red gram and oilseeds like groundnut. Cattle and goat rearing went hand in hand with farming. Soon goat rearing became the major livelihood of irulas and goats an integral part of their life.

A vagrant sizzling wind was rotating above the valleys of Attapadi. Waving a branch of Seemakkonna (Gliricidia), Vellinkeeri called out loudly-“Kappi, Bola, Mara, move fast my children”. It was another hot, dry day at Attapadi and Vellinkeeri was taking his goats for grazing. Munching the grass on their path, the goats were following him like a group of disciplined children. Two watchdogs; chempan and vellan were going after the herd cautiously.

“These goats are not mine; my family had many goats earlier, but lost the goats, land and all, now I look after the goats of Gounders (Settlers). I have to

climb all these hills during this scorching sun with the goats. I earn some money, barely enough to look after my family.”- Vellinkeeri said. One goat cried out loudly. A long thorn has pierced its hoof. Vellinkeeri took the goat in his hands pulled out the thorn and applied the juice of a wild plant over the wound.

“This is the Vettugaya Poondu (Muriyampachila), the wound will heal fast, don't worry poor Thai”-saying this Vellinkeeri moved on.

Vellinkeeri belongs to the Irular tribe of Attapadi, who are in an intimate bond with the goats.

Attapadi, the unique place in Palakkad district of Kerala, nestled below the Western Ghats and Nilgiri hills is spread over an area of 745 sq. km. Rivers Bhavani and Siruvani flows through the valley providing water for the inhabitants, their cattle and crops. Western attapadi is a lush green area that receives copious rainfall. On the contrast, Attapadi region on the eastern slopes of Western Ghats is a rain shadow region. Agali, Puthur and Sholayur Grama Panchayats are there in Attappadi. The traditional occupants of this land are the tribes belonging to Irula, Muduga and Kurumba clans. The tribes of Attapadi worship Malleeswaran Kadavul Swami, who is believed to live on the Maleswaran peak at a height of 5459 feet. They worship the mountain peak as a huge 'Siva-linga'. Sivarathri at the Malleeswaram temple is the most important festival celebrated by the tribes.

The Irulas are the second largest tribe in Kerala, and have the highest population density in Palakkad district. In Tamil, the name "Irular" means "people of darkness". This could refer to their dark-colored skin or to the fact that all-important events traditionally take place in the darkness of night.

According to a story, long ago a man named Koyan Pattan (Pattur) lived on earth. As humankind increased, wickedness and wrongdoings increased among them. God then decided to destroy mankind from the face of earth. But Pattan was leading a good life. In a vision, God directed Pattan to get into a pumpkin and escape from the punishment. The pumpkin was so huge to accommodate Pattan and his family. It began to rain and flood for many days and the pumpkin floated and saved only Pattan and his family. He had many children. The Irulas believe that they are the descendants of Koyan Pattan. Coimbatore is

believed to have named after Koyan Pattan.

There is another legend of a goddess who wanted to create a group of people who could collect honey without being stung by bees. She created a person out of her own sweat, who could collect honey and remain unharmed. Irulas believe that bees flee because of the smell of their sweat. They have traditionally been honey collectors, climbing down steep cliff sides during the darkest nights of the New Moon with hand made ladders or climbing up tall trees. Later they took up shifting cultivation and migrated from Tamil Nadu to nearby places.

Aadodu Valkavaru

Migration of Irula to Attapadi began by end of the 16th century. At Attapadi they began settled farming. Irulas cultivated millets such as makka cholam or maize, ragi or French millet and chama or little millet, pulses like thuvara or red gram and oilseeds like

Attapadi, the unique place in Palakkad district of Kerala, nestled below the Western Ghats and Nilgiri hills.



groundnut. Cattle and goat rearing went hand in hand with farming. Soon goat rearing became the major livelihood of Irulas and goats an integral part of their life. The goats and tribes co-existed, loving and supporting each other during the hard times. The Irulas express themselves as "Aadodu Valkavaru" or "Those who live with the goats".

At present, farming activities in the tribal hamlets have diminished due to water scarcity and shortage of money. Many of the tribal families have given their land on lease to settlers, which were later alienated by them. Now goat and cattle rearing are the lone source of income for most tribal families.

The traditional Irula houses are made up of bamboo, mud, and grass and are built in a row in close proximity to one another. Each Irula family have at least four or five goats with them. Goats are part of the family and roam around freely inside the houses. The number of goats in possession is considered as the status symbol of tribal families. Often, goats are also given as dowry at the time of marriage.

Raised Sheds constructed using bamboo and other locally available materials are used for keeping the goats. The sheds have

good aeration and there is provision for goat dung and urine to pass down. Separate bamboo basket or "Kedapu" is used for keeping goat kids. At night, goat kids usually sleep with members of the family. Irulas call the kids affectionately as "vava" or baby. Milk of mother goat is set-aside for her vavas. Irular don't drink goat milk, except as medicine.

Sipping the Ragi kanji served hot with Saara (a horse-gram based curry made of wild greens), 82-year-old Irula woman, Chellamma of Vannanthurai Ooru says- "During olden days we used to get rain and hence grass was available in abundance. The goats used to graze on their own in the hills and forests. Then, no butcher shops were there. Occasionally we will slaughter a goat and eat it. Eventhough we consider goats as one among the family, eating them to satisfy hunger was not considered as a sin. We used to drink goat milk boiled with jaggery and eat curry made using goat milk and spiny Amaranthus (Mullu Keerai). Both served as rejuvenating medicines.

Earlier we never had to go to the hospital. Now our eating habits have changed and diseases are more common. There are no trees and hence no rain, so farming became impossible. Money obtained by selling goats for meat purpose is the sole income for our families. Now we can't afford to eat goat meat"

Sacred Animals

Goats are an integral part of the rituals and traditional treatment of irulas. Sacrifice of goats to please guardian gods is still practiced in Attapadi. Traditionally, the main deities for the Irula are ancestors, clan spirits, village spirits, the mother goddess, and spirits of disease and trees. Each clan has a particular goddess who is worshipped in all rituals and life style ceremonies. This goddess is considered to be the guardian or protector of the clan. She protects against evil spirits named Muni and Odi.

At the temples of Vanam Bhadrakali, Maariamman and Muneeswaran, goats are given as sacrifice during festivals. They are bathed in turmeric water and slaughtered after pooja. The meat is cooked and distributed among devotees. Goat sacrifice is practiced as a part of burial rituals also.

"We use the entire organism and its body products like flesh, bones, teeth, bone marrow, fat, testicles, as well as their products like milk, curd, butter, ghee and even the urine and dung in traditional medicine. They are used either alone or in combination with herbs. Goat's milk is drunk to reduce heat in the body and reduce weakness. Crushed Keelanelli plant (*Phyllanthus amarus*) mixed with goat's milk or paste made of the bark of jungle mango diluted in a cup of goat milk is consumed thrice a day for the cure of jaundice. Mullu Keerai (*Amaranthus spinosus*) Leaf paste along with goat milk is taken

The Black Beauties of Attapadi

The black beauty of the irula hamlets is the "Attapadi Black goat". This is one of the two registered native breeds of Kerala, the other being Malabari. During olden days Attapadi Black was the only goat breed that was reared in Attapadi. Now population of black goats have been reduced to about 40 percent and Malabari goat is also grown here. Indiscriminate breeding has resulted in the loss of genetical purity among this breed. This sturdy breed developed solely by tribes is facing serious threat of extinction and has been enlisted in the insecure category by Food and Agriculture Organization.

The breed is medium sized, lean slender bodied and has shiny blue-black coat. It has bronze colored eyes and black horns with curved backward oriented tips. The ears are black and pendulous. The tail is curved and bunchy. These black goats are poor milk producers. They are reared mainly for meat and manure. One and a half year old bucks reach 35 kilograms while females attain 31 kilograms. The height of bucks and female goats are 67 centimetres and 63 centimetres respectively.

According to Dr. Sosamma Iype of Veichur

Conservation Trust, Black goats of Attapadi are highly accustomed to the dry climate; water scarcity and grazing habit. They have long legs compared to other goat breeds, which make them suitable for climbing uphill. They are able to feed on dry, scanty vegetation and to withstand the scorching sun. The incidence of Floppy kid syndrome, an acute onset of profound weakness in goat kids, is negligible in this breed. Attapadi Black has high level of disease resistance also. The taste of Attapadi goat's meat is better than other breeds. The tribals believe that the meat of this goat, which feeds on medicinal plants, is medicinal. It is organic also.

During 1989, a Government Goat farm was established in Attapadi in order to conserve black goats. A herd of about 100 black goats including bucks are kept here. They are not allowed to mingle with other breeds in order to maintain the genetic purity. During daytime, the goats are allowed to graze freely in the farmland and during night they are kept in sheds. Kerala Veterinary and Animal Science University has undertaken conservation and research activities on Attapadi black goat.





with food to cure stomach ulcer. hills.

Body is smeared with goat urinated mud at least one hour before the bath for curing eczema. For skin ailments we apply the paste made of the bark of jungle mango tree in goat's urine on affected portions. Vertebrate and bone marrow of goat are used in preparation of drugs for tonsillitis, throat inflammation and lymphatic ailments." - Explains Veluswamy, a tribal medical practitioner at Agali.

Herbal therapy is adopted for goats also. Tender neem leaves pounded with curd or water mixed with tamarind fruit is given as medicine for most diseases. Chanting of mantras is also practiced.

The Shepherdesses of Attapadi

Goat rearing in Attapadi is mostly a product of the hard work of tribal women. They walk several kilometres during daytime through the hills and valleys in order to gain a subsistence income for their families. Daily morning, after finishing household activities women take their goats for grazing. A sickle is kept in hand for cutting twigs and branches. Grazing of about 8 hours is required daily as the grass is scarce. Each goat can identify its owner and vice versa.

At Karai Ooru, Maruthi was sharpening her sickle and getting ready for the day's work. It was almost 11 o'clock in the morning. The air was thick with the odour of goat droppings. The goats were roaming everywhere — inside the houses, in sheds just outside the houses, and on the roads between the houses, steeply inclined roads carved from the hills.

Soon Maruthi started the day's uphill walk with her goats. Goat herds led by women moved out of almost every house in the Ooru and started to hike the

It was 12 o'clock noon and the ray of the scorching Sun was heating up the hill top. Maruthy shouted loudly - "Appu, come here".

Appu, one of her bucks, was trying to taste the plantain leaves in a settler's plot.

"O Maariamma, I am fed up with Appu, if the Gounders finds out this, they will abuse me, they may not even allow me to climb the hill through this way" - Maruthi screamed.

Three young kids were with her. They pulled Appu by his ear and he obeyed.

The kids skip school often and join their mother during the work. For Maruthi, Goat rearing is the main source of income for her family. Her husband does labour work, but hardly spends anything for the family.

Maran and Chinnan were preparing to take a little nap in the "Kudusal". Kudusal is made of local materials like jute bags, dried grass and coconut leaves packed layer by layer. Even during hottest hours of the noon, temperature inside the kudusal will be less than the surrounding area.

"I am 78 years old and my brother is 72. We have to take a little nap after drinking Kanji, or else we will become too tired. The goats will move here and there. Our dog will look after them. After the doze we will call all the goats by their name; Badri, Sasi, Sankaran and all. Then everyone will gather here." - Explained Maran.

It was nearing 4 o'clock in the evening. Kaliaamma was resting in the shade on the banks of Siruvani, her goats quenching their thirst after a long day's walk.

"We climb the hills during the whole day. But



nowadays Goat rearing in Attapadi face many problems. Drought and reduction in grazing area has resulted in shortage of grass. Other than this, we could not get a good prize for the goats due to the exploitation by merchants and middle men"-says Kalliamma.

Along with other socio-economic problems, the reduction in farming and goat rearing also contribute to the hunger, malnutrition and poverty in tribal hamlets of Attapadi.

According to Lovely Augustin, Asst. Director of Agriculture, even during summer there is abundance of water in Bhavani and Siruvani. A well-managed group irrigation system that provides water for the farming activities is a good way to rejuvenate farming activities in the hamlets. Fodder cultivation should also be promoted so that goat rearing becomes lucrative. Goat dung is available in plenty. Traditional crops like ragi, millets and groundnut along with other crops like vegetables and plantain can be cultivated organically and the produce sold with organic branding. The exploitation of middlemen in the marketing sector should also be tackled. For all this, an intensive Development Programme is needed.

The rays of evening Sun was painting an orange hue on the sky above Malleeswaran mudi. It was almost 6'o clock. The herds of goats were returning to their homes along with their human companions. At Naykarpadikka ooru, Rami was waiting for her daughter's return with the goats. Some goat kids were sitting around her, expecting their mothers to come. Soon the Ooru became filled with cries of joy. The herds were returning one by one. Re-union of goat kids with



mother goats was an awesome scene, kids sucking milk and mothers licking and caressing their offspring's after a whole day's parting.

"I am 82 years old now, till about 5 years back I used to take goats for grazing; now my daughter has taken up the job. During younger days I have fed my own milk to goat kids who have lost their mother. Goats are an integral part of our life. They save us from hunger and misery and we look after them in

whatever way possible by us"-Rami explained.

Night was getting darker at the Karai Ooru. Everyone was getting ready for Elelakkaradi, a dance form of irulas. A fire was lit and leather membranes of traditional drums warmed up in it. Initially youngsters in the hamlet were the dancers. Later pace of the dance became fast and everyone in the hamlet except sick and very old people joined the elelakkaradi. Giving little rest to the worries and tensions they praised the guardian gods, mother earth, cattle and goats by singing and dancing together.

Urgent steps are required to revive the farming and goat rearing in Attapadi or the life of tribes wholly dependent on this for their livelihood will worsen further. Irulas consider goats as gifts given by gods for eliminating their poverty. They believe that Malleeswaran kadavul swami and the goats will save them during difficult times. A new saga about the relation between humans and animals is being written here, on the earth of Attapadi. ■

The writer is Asst. Director of Agriculture, Kerala State Biodiversity Board



Touch Me Not

Neither the clamour for equality nor strong women's movements have been able to bring out the desired changes in the status of the fair sex or to the way she is abused, even in the 21st century.

What is most shocking is the atrocities being committed against innocent little girls, babies in fact, of not even 20 months old. Fathers forcing themselves upon their own daughters – their own flesh and blood – and brothers doing to their sisters what a brother should not – these stories fill us with disgust and

revulsion and make us wonder what has happened to the society in general and to family systems, in particular. Helplessness also creeps in when we realize that society cannot be changed overnight. Then how are we to protect our daughters? How can we make them safe?

True, our society is slowly waking up to this social sickness. Conscious efforts are being taken to prevent, safeguard and protect the young girls from being abused by their fathers, brothers or such close male relatives and if needs be, even rehabilitate these unfortunate souls. But as we all know, and as in any case, isn't prevention better than cure?

There are many factors that indicate possible child abuse

Physical indicators involve the child's appearance such as unexplained physical injuries (eg. Bruises/ abrasions /missing teeth). Such children often tend

to hide these injuries by wearing dresses with long sleeves.

Behavioral indicators involve characteristics of the child's behavior. Abused children exhibit fear of certain places, people or sometimes even certain activities. They tend to withdraw into a shell, do not communicate much, cry excessively and appear to be wary of physical contact. On the extreme side of the spectrum, we come across children who are very aggressive and rebellious. They may develop eating and sleeping problems and may even act out inappropriate sexual behavior due to their premature understanding of sex.

Environmental indicators point to the social or familial conditions from where they come. Lack of communication or even conflict between parent and child, especially in large families, indicates an environment ripe for possible child abuse. In some cases, the child may not be having a parent or a guardian to protect her. Loopholes and laxity in laws and policies dealing with child abuse indirectly provide an escape route to the offenders and thus even embolden them to continue their exploitation.

Tips for children on how to stay safe

Do's

- Confide in your mother if a close male relative is making you uncomfortable, especially through touch
- Stick together in groups
- Have a trusted adult accompany you
- In case of emergency, find a police officer or other trusted adult for help
- Always keep a safe distance between you and others (which is three arm-length)
- If taking a walk, especially at nights, follow a safe route where there are other people and which has good sidewalks and lights
- Run away if strangers ask you to go somewhere
 - If you feel unsafe with someone, yell for help and get away in the opposite direction as fast as you can
 - Be bold. Don't lose courage.

Don'ts

- Never take anything from strangers
- Never talk to strangers or answer any questions, without a parent's permission
- Never go anywhere with people you do not know
- Never get into a stranger's car
- Never enter a stranger's

harmless and not meant to do any harm or with any other amoral intent; it never hurts or makes one feel uncomfortable; but if repeatedly done or unwarranted, one should pay attention to it.

Friendly touch: showing care and affection in a positive manner; again, hugging is to be understood as a show of affection only for those whom one knows very well.

Hurtful touch: painful – should be reported

Touching oneself: Little kids do it out of curiosity. As a child grows up, she becomes conscious and doesn't do it in front of others. Though this type of touch cannot be construed as abuse, such behavior has to be corrected. Tutoring the young about which parts can be touched when others are around and which are to be avoided, will help.

What should adults do?

Child maltreatment is endemic (See Box). Children encounter many dangers and social difficulties in their daily lives and the worst of these usually involves their lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of social rules and norms regarding physical interactions between and among other people.

Realizing this, as a beginning, young children should be taught the social and physical boundaries of physical contact, especially touch. Young children have to gain insight into acceptable and unacceptable physical contact. Adults need to encourage appropriate touching behaviours and discourage inappropriate touching behaviours, both in boys and girls.

The rules of physical contact can be tricky. But it is essential for children to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable touch to lessen the

risk of abuse. Young children should understand when and where it is permissible for them to touch other people, when and where others can touch them, why self-touching sometimes needs to be private and what to do if a touch turns out to be abusive. At the same time children should be made aware that touch can give affection and assurance as well. This will help them navigate their way through the complex and confusing sexual jungle and help navigate the complexities of social rules and norms regarding physical interactions, traditionally a sensitive area to broach. Parents can help the young ones by providing clear and simple guidelines, backed up by the reassurance that a trusted adult is always at hand to help if necessary.

Everything usually starts with a look or an inappropriate touch. For the sake of convenience, types of touch have been classified as:

Accidental touch: Usually

What statistics tells us...

Two out of three children are physically abused and every second child faced emotional abuse.

Of the 69% of physically abused children, 54.68% were boys. An equal percentage of boys and girls faced emotional abuse.

Of the children physically and emotionally abused in family situations, parental abuse constituted 88.6% and 83% respectively.

65% or two out of three children experienced corporal punishment.

Of the 53.22% of children who faced one or more forms of sexual abuse, 5.6% reported being sexually assaulted. The worst affected were children on streets, at work and in institutional care.

32.1% of the children had experienced with one of the substances like alcohol, bhang, ganja, charas and heroin.

Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar & Delhi have almost consistently reported higher rated of abuse in all forms as compared to other states.

* Source: National Study of Child Abuse; conducted by Prayas Institute of Juvenile Justice in collaboration with Ministry of Women and Child Development; supported by UNICEF, Save the Children Fund(UK)



Not touching: Drawing the line and being clear about the do's and don'ts of touching is also equally important. Children have to be taught to keep a distance from strangers and also not to touch anyone who does not want to be touched.

Having the picture taken: This is also an intrusion into privacy. The recent Film 'Drishyam' deals with the aftermath of such an incident and proves a point as to why and how parents should be both watchful and protective.

Listen, listen, and listen

The biggest myth is that dangers to children come from strangers. In most cases, the perpetrator is someone the parent or child knows or who is often trusted by the child and the family. It has been found that 50% of abusers are persons known to the child or in positions of trust and responsibility. But most children do not report the matter to anyone either out of fear or because their previous experience has taught them that the adults don't believe them. In most cases the parent overreacts in panic and most painfully, does not listen. Children can also sense the confusion and doubt in the adult's mind and this makes the child develop self-doubt about the very sagacity of confiding such things to the parent. The tendency then will be to keep the abuse as a 'special' secret.

The only solution to this is for the parent to keep calm and believe the child. Listen to the child, answer her questions honestly, respect the child's privacy, give positive messages, take steps to stop abuse and if required, arrange medical examination and even get professional help. By listening positively to the child, trust will be developed and this will definitely empower him/her. Compassion, patience, the willingness to understand, trust and respect them – these are some of the enabling actions that will help the child and this is possible only when there is the willingness to listen. Communication becomes easier then.

There is no panacea. But it is our duty to protect our children, especially the daughters, from getting hurt for no fault of theirs. And keeping them safe and successful later in life is possible only if we can keep them safe and successful early in life. ■

The writer is Librarian, SCERT Kerala



VIJAYALAKSHMI

A devout feminist



Dr M Leelavathi attributed a feminist perspective in the poem “Thachante Makal” because this poem of Vijayalakshmi tries to establish gender-equality and questions the dichotomy on women. Coventry Patmore depicts woman in an angelic tint which is not earthly:

“Her disposition is devout,
Her countenance angelical;
The best things that the best believe
Are in her face so kindly writ
The faithless, seeing her, conceive
Not only heaven, but hope of it”
(The Angel in the House)

The Victorian society ardently hoped that women should be completely pure and untainted and reasoned that her freedom should be curtailed to that extent. A fallen woman was ostracized and prevented from returning to ordinary society.

Dr Leelavathi lauds the concept of feminism in Vijayalakshmi as a continuation of the feminism of the great ‘grandma’ poetess Balamani Amma. Subordination to male becomes effective when she enjoys the sweet affection of him where marital life becomes one of sharing the virtues of life. Man and woman have equal

responsibility in maintaining the essential love for each other. That is what Balamani Amma wrote in 1937 in “Vazhiyil Vechu”:

‘Here, in this public path, in this severe sunlight
Let us move forward together, in contentment’

Thus concludes the poem. Modern ladies sever the old concept of their destined duties which has led her to a pathetic position in life. Mutual regard and affection make life sweet because there is no hegemony of any kind from either the woman or man. True feminism exists when men and women maintain mutual respect, so thinks Balamani Amma. Emancipation from the patriarchal supremacy need not be a subject of enmity between the two genders, it is an area where respect for each other and understanding each other become necessary. Kamala Das, Vijayalakshmi, Anitha Thampi, Ashitha, Priya AS, etc. are the modern vociferous speakers of the liberation of women, according to the great Indo-Anglian poet Sachithanandan. He says that Balamani Amma drew verbal pictures of lady love that of a bride, a wife, a house-hold woman, a mother, a grandmother, a servant-maid, an employee and even an angel. All these roles have a divinity devoid of any spite against male-class, at the same time express self-respect and dignity. Balamani

Amma boldly put on trial the epic characters like Parasurama, Srirama, Valmiki and Bhishma. (Dr Leelavathi says)

Coming back to Vijayalakshmi, her poems “Mrigashikshakan”, ‘Oru Puravriatham’, ‘Aaru Njan?’, ‘Kuttasammatham’, ‘Devasuram’, ‘Thuna’, ‘Ariyumo’, ‘Kaddinam’, ‘Andyapralobhanam’,

‘Samavakyangal’, ‘Oru Nalum’, ‘Pazhnizhal’, ‘Sisira Geetam’, ‘Nee’, ‘Swandam’, ‘Ninte Peru’, ‘Kaaval Naya’, etc. are examples of feminist tendencies. She has composed about 199 poems between 1980 and 2010.

An animal trainer evokes terrible feelings in the animal who cannot escape from his tyranny. He could command meek submission of the caged animal. At times reminiscences of the past flash to the animal’s mind which has to be suppressed at the simple stare of the trainer out of fear. Once a slave, always a slave!
(Mrigashikshakan— Animal Trainer)

The poem ‘A Prayer’ (‘Prarthana’) begins narrating the dense cobwebs on the ceiling above, meaning blue canopy where the moon is seen as if someone has lighted a lamp and the ambience where the jasmine flowers spread fragrance. It is really refreshing as the cool breeze soothes. While the birdie reaches the cage-window without staggering, an unseen face and a mother whose heart is filled with agony seem to the poet like the blemish inside the image of the moon.

‘Lord, if you afford light

Lacan’s reinterpretation of Freud on woman’s suppressed envy of the phallus in no way is applicable to Vijayalakshmi. She upholds the significance of women in her poems.

To the sea, the wind
Then on Earth,
I, with a self-pierced nail,
On my scalp, fall
At thy feet'
(Prarthana)

Her prayer is to retain a sector of the spectrum in her heart, or to fix 'Sreevalsam' of the Lord on her breast, for a moment. In that case she will melt herself like the snow, in the arm of the Lord!

Her poem 'Puravaritham' (A Mythology) speaks of the shameless black mark inside the full moon. Blood oozes out from the wound, tears fill her eyes, fangs get broken, the back bone gets broken in the beating, and there are sores evoking a burning sensation and shiver—all these are a routine in life. 'Fate itself got rubbed out, you reach me, and we become shelter to each other.'

Vijayalakshmi's style of coining words has a charm that evades a concrete sense. "Words strain/crack and sometimes break, under the burden/under the tension, slip, slide, perish/decay with imprecision, will not stay in one place/will not stay still' (Four Quartets—TS Eliot). She rejuvenates old ideas and concepts about Nature, about life and about human behavior. Her poem "Thachante Makal' ('Daughter of the Carpenter') is different as poems about Perunthachan are centred on the great carpenter and his son. The precocious son of the great carpenter evokes the jealousy of his father which ultimately leads to the death of the son which leaves a puzzle whether the chisel was dropped on the boy's neck deliberately or not. Vijayalakshmi's theme is based on the story of the daughter of Thachan:

I bowed before him,
He supports thousands of temple towers,
With the tool box and scale I leave,
Lest there should be
Another prey to the wide chisel'
(Thachante Makal')

Vijayalakshmi expresses reservations on the ghastly death of the son of the carpenter. The holy book on architecture ('Vasthuviedya') entered in her as rot memory along with her brother when their father taught the complicated science to both. The scholarly advice of the father was that they should have practical knowledge too along with the theory. Her memory is rife with the

countless constructions of her father which include temples, palaces and other structures which the great man planned and executed artistically in perfection. Her brother too, at a very young age, started independently such works which were extolled as artistic marvel.

"Below a very huge tree
A tender plant cannot grow
Willingly one should remain
In the hot sun for full growth" (Thachante Makal)
Thus he matured into perfection and could muster the respect of all even surpassing the fame of his father. The carpenter's daughter remembers those halcyon days while tears drop out of her eyes. The boy matured into perfection and could muster the respect



of all even superseding his great father.

Reminiscences of the talent exhibited by the father and son form the integral part of the poem 'sharpening sensibilities, heightened imaginative feelings' which the Romantic poets apply as a technique. Meanwhile the big, wide chisel that caused

the death of her brother when it slipped or deliberately dropped from her father's hand becomes a cliché due to too much repetitions! Though an adept in wood craft, she never entertained the idea of having disciples because her mind was clouded with agony as a result of the loss of her brother, then her father. Her journey with the tool box was aimless, but she remembered her grandfather who left behind each of his children on the way telling his wife "If the infant has a mouth carved by God, He will feed it!" We read this poem with a feeling of awe, and an irresistible pain spreads through our veins when the daughter of Thachan reveals her thoughts. Original impulses of a hapless girl get translated by Vijayalakshmi that straight away go into the heart of the reader.

A true romantic whose love for beauty, whose instinct and whose sharp sensibility get sharpened in all the poems:

'Memories are autumnal, nostalgic
Dusk in tear-filled eyes, thinking about you

Heart in pain, again wound-scars"
(Aaru Nhan! Who am I?)
She introspects on her wasted love which she compares to the eggs in the broken nest as a result of a tempest. She expresses her ineligibility to sing about her lover:

'I am a feeble Saranga bird
Whose first year of love had a smell-
Of the soil, carried by the wind.'

(Aru Nhan)
They have parted one summer though memories are lush green. Another poem, "Kuttasammatham' or Confession too was written in the same vein. The lover falls in the lonely bed which is devoid of death or forgetfulness. Until her head shatters, until her last breath, and until her throat

bursts, she will go on singing. Her poem 'Devasuram' is dedicated to her poet-husband

Balachandran.
Here too we cannot find even an iota of hatred towards the male community. She sings:

"Prince, dear,
so many are the melodies for you,
Drinking the essence of moonlight I became

A demon traveler,
With me is the silent death,
You beat your eye lashes to threaten it

And make it run!
With the pen of midnight-lightening, he had inscribed on the wall which became a vociferous tragedy. There were occasions of verbal duel, and fights like arch enemies resulting in sleepless nights. The sheep of peace bow, white doves fly up while the jasmine buds open. That smile becomes

Dr Leelavathi lauds the concept of feminism in Vijayalakshmi as a continuation of the feminism of the great 'grandma' poetess Balamani Amma. Subordination to male becomes effective when she enjoys the sweet affection of him where marital life becomes one of sharing the virtues of life.

a festivity removing the black clouds, and amidst the cantankerous outbursts, there remains her full-fledged sacrifice. Craving to be near him, wanting to be endeared to him, she attempts to lick and clear the wound. Those nail scratches have to be cured. She expresses her wish to be with him till the fag end of life.

When she begins to sing, unknowingly, nostalgic feelings creep in and the thought of her bosom friend becomes the subject of the poem. 'Thuna' ('Support'), another poem, too is addressed to her friend with whom she had spent memorable days of ravishing love. She basks in the early sunlight which is an unforgettable spring of her life where her heart beat is a fast rhythm of love. That friendship is heart-rending and everlasting.

In the poem, 'Ariumo?' ('Do you know?'), so many questions are aimed at her darling who ought to be inseparable, and all the existing wounds have to be healed. The poem 'Katinam' ('Severe') too is the call of heart to get united and the fusion of the male-female hearts become purified. Love is a wild fire in which both the lovers burn in the fire. It is a willing sacrifice, a monument of day-and-night fusion of infatuation.

'Andyapralobhanam' ('Final Temptation') is a comparatively long poem of Vijayalakshmi with allusion to 'The Ancient Mariner', 'Cleopatra', 'The wreck of the Titanic', 'Shakuntala' etc.

Final temptation,
Piercing brightness-
Through my flesh.
The bright opens its eyes
Shut leaves sleep
Wet still is the forest
Shadow elephants eat
In the moon-lit forest path'
Here too reminiscences of her lover peep through from her Id-Ego-Superego and her memory lane. In Samavakyangal' ('Equations') she tells us that the garb we wear is intended to hide ourselves between each other. The unclothed bodies remain far away though they are beloved. Never had she remained separated from him, though she is a mere rustic girl whose feet remain on Earth, who sweats in the sweltering heat. No border is fixed between them, and being too close they cannot see each other. Like the dawn,

their love is a balm and a tranquilizer. She equates herself with her lover and confirms that the sorrows and joys they have are the same to both in equal proportions.

The same spirit of affection can be seen in her lines in the poem 'Oru Nalum' ('Never Again'). Here too the ephemeral rainbow, the flow of the wave, the momentary dream, and everything that flash to disappear get the word form of poetic talent. Her partner should remain with her in all seasons like the banks near a river.

The poem 'Pazh Nizhal' ('Wasted Waves') tells us that sunlight on that day was like love with unlimited glitter of gold. It was as pure as tears. He loved her, and she craved to carry him in her hands. Alas! The sunlight and the brightness of the gold are all gone! Dreams, fondness, sorrows and festivities were the blend of memories that has left her. At times she has to hear the bitter word 'nuisance' from him when she comes near. She cannot call him for they are apart, belonging to different races. She wanted to catch his hand, but he left transforming himself into a shadow. In the 'Sisirageetam' ('Song of Winter') she remembers him who had burnt out, who had become a shadow with fruitless memory of devotion. It was a perennial departure, the final wave, the dream of the never drying ocean of voice.

The same theme of unquenched love is depicted in the poem "Nee" ('You') in which she speaks of the two separated lovers who are in the two poles in the sky. The distance is deliberately maintained while she is ever in search of him. That is the irony!

'Your Name' (Ninte Peru) is another poem with the

same agony of separation.

'Dear companion, I forgot words
My handwriting itself is half rubbed
I stretch towards you the drops

The drops of delicate drain'
(Ninte Peru)

She might have forgotten her tragic life. All those glorious days too are forgotten, those sunny days would never come again!

Virginia Woolf protested patriarchy, but Balamani Amma, Sugata Kumari, Kamala Das and Vijayalakshmi are against phallogocentrism and Gynocriticism. Mutual love is the criterion where the hegemony of either man or woman doesn't have significance. Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud on woman's suppressed envy of the phallus in no way is applicable to Vijayalakshmi. She upholds the significance of women in her poems. The wonky way she builds close affinity with her man is part of Indian culture. Men and women are mutually exclusive. About seventeen of her poems are built on this milieu. ■

Statement about ownership and other particulars of Kerala Calling Monthly

(Form IV – See rule 8)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Place of Publication | : | Thiruvananthapuram |
| 2. Periodicity of Publication | : | Monthly |
| 3. Printer's Name | : | Mini Antony IAS |
| Whether citizen of India | : | Yes |
| Address | : | Director, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram |
| 4. Publisher's Name | : | Mini Antony IAS |
| Whether citizen of India | : | Yes |
| Address | : | Director, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram |
| 5. Editor's Name | : | Mini Antony IAS |
| Whether citizen of India | : | Yes |
| Address | : | Director, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram |
| 6. Name and Address of individual who own the newspaper | : | Government of Kerala |
| | : | I, Mini Antony, declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. |

Sd/-

Mini Antony IAS
Publisher

Thiruvananthapuram,
28.02.2014.



The Flower of Jesus

The Spanish Missionaries saw a flower which by its peculiar shape and floral arrangement resembles a true symbol of the Passion of Christ. Jacorno Bosciom, a monk who wrote about the Torments of Christ, got drawings of the strange flower and found several symbols of

Christ's crucifixion, such as radial filaments in the form of a wreath representing the Crown of thorns, the ten petals and sepals symbolising ten disciples, three upper stigmata as the three nails, and the five lower anthers symbolising the five wounds of Jesus. Gardeners throughout the world really love this plant since

it has both "passion" and "flower" blended in the same word. Thus the peculiar flower was named "The Flower of Jesus", which is really the Passion Flower. Rather than the common Passion flower there is a special variety named Perfumed Passion flower. Here the vine has cylindrical stems covered with red-brown hairs





when young. The leaves are three lobed up to 15 cm long. Scientifically named *Passiflora vitifolia*, the species name *vitifolia* is derived from the shape of leaves resembling that of grapes. So it is also called Grape Leaf Passion Flower and Vine-leaf Passion Flower. The flowers are stunning bright crimson red, up to 9 cm diameter. The flowers are fragrant too. The vines climb by tendrils produced in the leaf axils.

Passion flower is prolific blooming perennial vine that bears fragrant blooms, edible fruits and attracts butterflies throughout the summer. This evergreen climber possess exotic looking flowers. Butterflies love Passion flowers since they can lay eggs on the vine so their developing caterpillars can feast from the vine. They grow in any types of soil as long as the soil is well drained. But generally it likes moderately fertile and partly

sand loamy moist soils. Full sun or dappled light is ideal. The fast growing vine will grow between 15 to 30 feet in a growing season. The vine's long growing tendrils will cling to anything in its growing path, making a perfect solution to cover a newly built arbour, fence or a landscape. Quick growing in warmer areas these vines quickly cover fences and trellises with lobed, hand-shaped foliage and fascinating flowers.

There are over 400 species of tropical Passion flowers (*Passiflora* spp.) with sizes ranging from ½ inch to 6 inches across. They are found naturally from South America to Mexico. The vibrant colours and heady

fragrance make the Passion flower plant a welcome to any garden. Passion flowers can be propagated by soft wood cuttings taken from mature wood in early summer. Soft wood cuttings dipped in any rooting hormone will take 2 to 3 weeks to root. Slowly move the plantlet to a sunny place. Plant outside when it start to sprout or grow. You may plant it near a fence or trellis, since it will climb aggressively once it gets started. A Passion flower vine grown on a trellis works well as a backdrop for a butterfly garden because the vine provides food for different types of butterflies. Passion flower can also be grown from seeds, but very slowly. The seeds may take up to a year to germinate. Keep the plant moist but not wet. Use any fertiliser mixture like 18 complex or 19 complex every couple of weeks. Because of its quick growth rate, passion flower is a top pick for growing on lattice to create a beautiful privacy screen all summer long in the garden. It is perfect for use on trellises and fences. ■





Bicycles of Amsterdam

A complete book on Dutch culture

As far as my understanding goes, this book must be the ever first travelogue in an Indian language showcasing the habitual passion of the Dutch people for the bicycles, which for them is synonymous of their life and culture. The 160-page book, “Bicycles of Amsterdam” (Malayalam) authored by Raju Raphael, a senior journalist and the present Director of Kerala Press Academy India went for Journalism Teachers Training in RNTC, Netherlands (Holland) recently. The book depicts the real life passion and enthusiasm of the Dutch people in general and those living in and around Amsterdam in particular, for bicycles. The author had travelled all across Holland on bicycle and has witnessed and comprehended the life of the Dutch people and their fondness for bicycles. The book also tells the story of the heritage transport culture of Holland, a place which is having lots of similarities with Kerala, the southern province of India, the homeland of the author, where the bicycle culture could possibly be replicated.

Raju had gone to the details of the Amsterdam, the capital city of Holland, better known as “city of story tellers” and its history of bicycles in his book. Holland is almost the same in size of Kerala but have only half in population – 1.6 crores. Believe it or not, the number of bicycles in Holland number about 1.3 cores. No wonder that the country has an embassy for bicycles (Dutch Cycle Embassy). The facts and figures the author has revealed through the book is astonishing

for the Indians, where it is a shame or an inferior matter to ride on a bicycle. According to the author, thanks to the info he gathered from the Dutch Cycle Embassy and from his own journalistic enquiries, a Dutch citizen uses his or her bicycle for about 40 percent of travel requirements. And, for them the use of bicycle has nothing to do with their social, political or economic status. And the use of a bicycle is very common for all the Dutch and form part of their daily life, be it the Prime Minister or an ordinary worker.

The book also tells us about the 20,000 kms lengthy exclusive bicycle lanes in the Netherlands, which connects villages and cities, Fiet (bicycle) yards attached to metro, rent-a-cycle culture and the alike. All roads, be in the city, suburb or interiors or even in forests, have special lanes earmarked for bicycles and are interconnected too. The facilities the authorities put up for their “national vehicle” and the figures of citizens of The Netherlands pedaling their most lovesick two-wheeler make the story most astonishing. It is estimated that the Dutch people make it about 15,000 million kilometers a year, on their bicycles, along the length and breadth of the green Holland. Perhaps something which might be more incredible is the fact that all the trains of Holland put together travel less than the bicycles do in a year. And, it could be nothing but this fascination for bicycles that must have freed the Dutch from difficulties of air pollution, many a physical disorder, causing due to lack of exercise and obesity.

The book is an encyclopedia



on the Dutch bicycle culture, where the density of bicycles is the highest compared to any place in the global. There are about 28 lakhs of bicycles in Amsterdam city alone, the population of which is 25 lakhs only. And, no wonder there are bicycle thieves also everywhere in Holland. The most instances of stealing of cycles also happen in Amsterdam. It is estimated by the Amsterdam authorities that about 60,000 bicycles are stolen a year in Amsterdam alone. The book also tells us the story about the legalized prostitution he witnessed in the red district areas of the in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

The chapter on his ride to the neighboring country of Belgium gives us an astonishing experience. His narration of the crossing of the border of the Holland into Belgium without even a check post and his comparing the instance with that of the very many checks and breaks we have within and while crossing over to the neighboring provinces within India was witty enough to think and thank the free

and fair culture, facilitated by the European Union.

All these and more about bicycles depicted in the book takes us through a nostalgic memory of our school days when it was bicycles, the then passionate vehicle of a teen, which has since been transformed to a motor bike or a motor scooter these days. The book is a real info-entertainer for all ages and for those who love travelling in general and to make it abroad in particular. The book makes us think why we hate bicycles and love the motorcycles. The books moots a ‘green’ mode of transportation and brought our attention to the importance of bicycles in the green transportation system. This character differentiate the book from others travelogues. Maybe there is a comeback to the older days where it was the cycles that were the proud belonging of a teen. Undoubtedly, most of those who read this book would aspire to make it to the Amsterdam, the city of story tellers.

The portions on the journalism training and the ambience of Radio Netherlands Training Centre (RNTC), is purely an academic one though, it gives us a glimpse of the training culture of the great institution.

On the other hand, the skill of Raju Raphael as a story teller is exemplary. If building the interest among readers is the major quality of writer in literature, “Bicycles of Amsterdam” is a classic example. I am sure this book will bag major literature awards this year. As a reader, I express my gratitude to the Green Books, who published the book. ■