

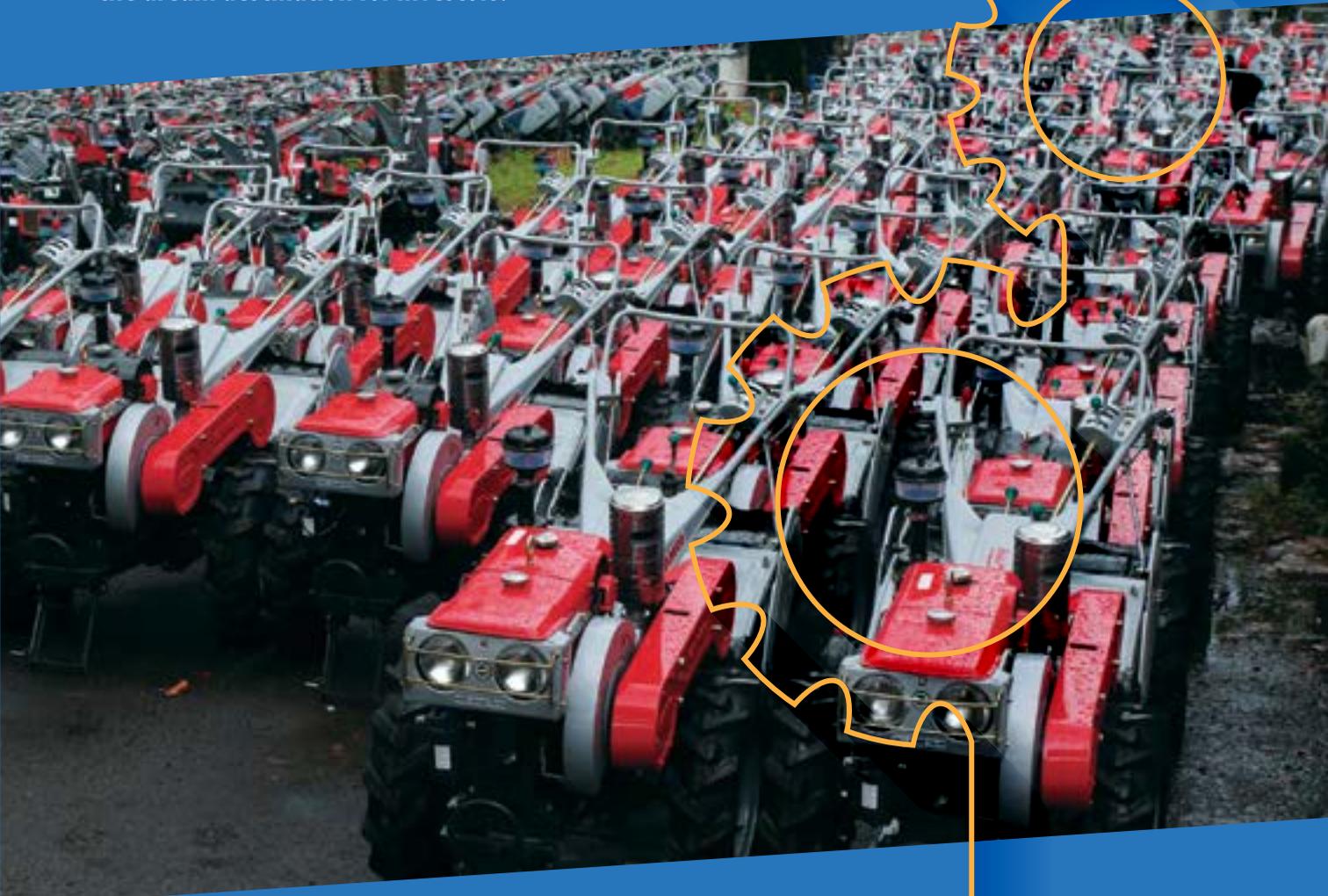
KERALA CALLING

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2021 July 01

Feel the ease of doing business in Kerala

Simplified procedures & unparalleled infrastructure has made Kerala the dream destination for investors.



Lifting India to Olympian heights



Mirabai Chanu wins the first medal(silver)for India in the Tokyo Olympics 2020. Her silver is the country's second weightlifting medal after Karnam Malleswari's bronze at Sydney 2000.

The fertile soil for dreams to flourish

Let us imagine an expatriate coming back to Kollam after 30 years of her stay abroad, especially in one of the GCC countries. There is an old image of Kerala that still lingers in her mind. After landing at the Thiruvananthapuram airport, she would have taken the conventional route to Kollam via Kesavadasapuram and Ulloor. She has heard that a bypass had been constructed but never travelled through it. The driver takes the bypass, and the NRI peeps through the glass window. She is at a loss! She cannot be sure whether she is in Kerala or still in the GCC country where she works. Skyscrapers and business showrooms occupy each side. She can see the name boards of international brands in front of each showroom. And she is awestruck while going past the magnificent Infosys structure and the first IT park in India, the Technopark that houses hundreds of IT companies! The age-old -image in mind about her native place has come crashing down! All the myths she has been carrying for years have come to an end. Her Kerala has been transformed!

This is not a mere figment of imagination at all. This is what is being felt by millions of expatriates or investors who drop in Kerala nowadays. Age-old myths about Kerala's industrial and business scenario have been uprooted, and in this God's own country, investors find their dreams getting materialised. This is reflected in all investment avenues across Kerala, not in any particular place. From being a tiny spot on the map, Kerala has become the dream destination of many an investor. Many businesses are thriving vibrantly in several cities in Kerala. Since 2016, investors have been infused with new confidence that Kerala is the right, fertile soil for investing their dreams. And they have not gone wrong. Within a short period, their dreams grew and flourished. Hundreds of youths found opportunities in lucrative posts.

The investors in Kerala trusted the Government here. The Government reciprocated with many flexible policies like the K-SWIFT, which eased several hurdles to set up businesses. The State strives to

create a conducive environment to attract major investments and to improve the Ease of Doing Business in the State, for sustainable development, given its ecological heritage. The State is proud of its most advanced society with the highest literacy rate in the country, the highest life expectancy, the least population growth, and the lowest infant mortality. Above all, the State has been hailed as a role model for developing countries to follow!

Kerala maintains a healthy ambience for investors by providing excellent infrastructural facilities like rail, road and harbour connectivity. Three state-of-the-art international airports that offer connectivity with every nook and corner of the world, high internet connectivity and instant data transfer facilities make Kerala an irresistible destination to invest in!

The July issue of Kerala Calling highlights this industrial and investment-friendly ambience of the State in every aspect.

The State is proud to have several projects that ensure the safety of women. By introducing more innovative projects to the existing ones, the Government has once again displayed its commitment to safeguarding the safety and rights of women.

The global tourism scenario has suffered a setback in this post-pandemic scenario. Kerala is not an exception. But we have had a magnificent history of survival. For reviving Kerala Tourism to its splendid glory, the Government has initiated several steps. Advice from prominent globe-trotters has been sought. The Tourism Minister has initiated innovative approaches by having a tete-a-tete with one of the prominent globe-trotters of our time, Santhosh George Kulanagara.

We have included the conversation in the current issue.

S.Harikishore I.A.S.

Editor-in-Chief

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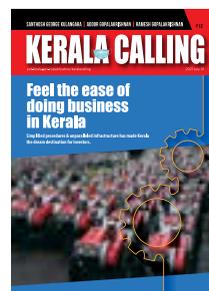
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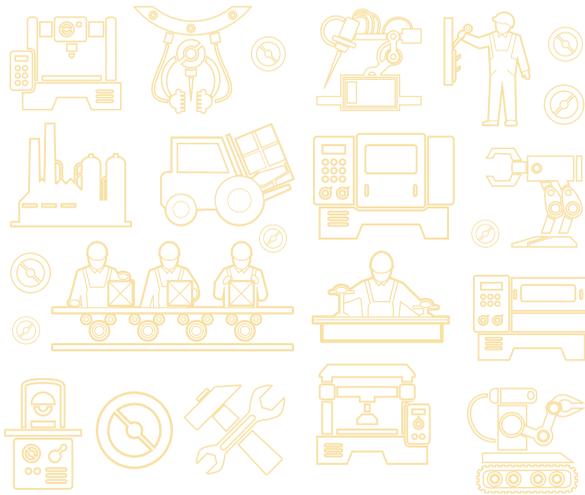
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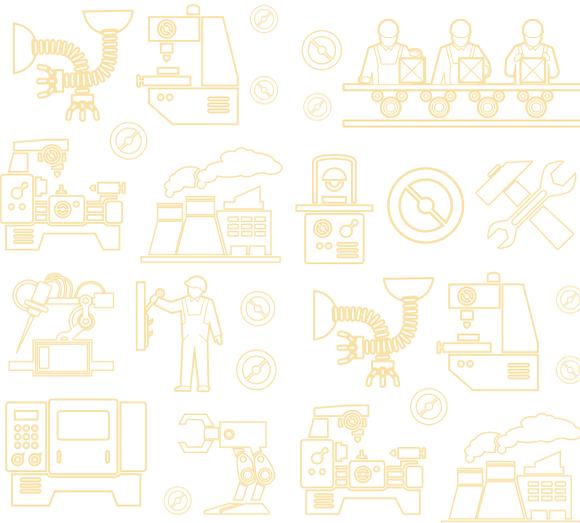
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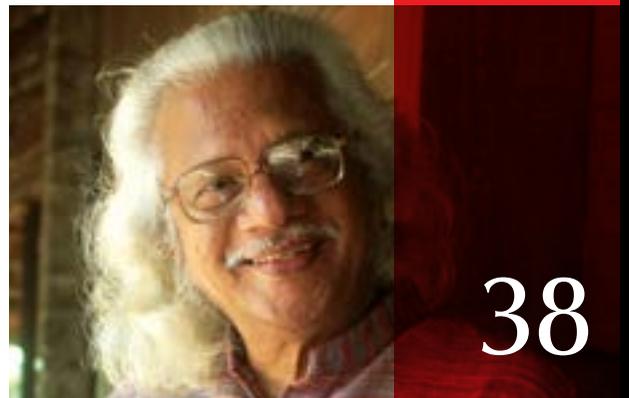
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Pinarayi Vijayan
Chief Minister

Brimming with opportunities

The future of Kerala is very promising. We have all the resources to seize the opportunities of this decade and continue growing as the best among the States in India. Let's join hands and make it happen.

The past year has been a period of unprecedented challenges for the industrial sector of Kerala. The spread of Covid 19 and the subsequent lockdowns went on to slow down the pace of the prodigious industrial growth that the State was witnessing. However, the timely intervention and recovery measures adopted by the Government ensured that the process wasn't derailed and we continued on the track to uninterrupted growth. Despite the shut downs and setbacks we had to face nationally, the Government of Kerala continues to do the people's business diligently, making it sure that our industrial sector is fully equipped to take on the challenges ahead.

This fact is conspicuous in the supreme position Kerala is adorning in the Sustainable Development Index which lauds the industrial growth the State has been witnessing. Kerala has attained the second spot in NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index in the Ideal Business Climate and Human Capital categories; apart from being placed in a commendable fourth spot in terms of Good Investment Prospects. A number of innovative measures have been adopted to improve the Ease of Doing Business in Kerala. A three-member committee has been floated to study the prospects of changing the age-old rules and procedures with focus on improving the investment possibilities in the State.

As mentioned above, the most important step forward has been the decision to improve the Ease of Doing Business status of Kerala. In a world that is brimming with opportunities, we understand the importance of bringing significant investments to the State.

Pandemic relief measures

One of the most adversely affected areas, following COVID-19 is the Small Scale Industrial Sector. The Government has announced a package of Rs. 1416 to uplift the sector and help those in dire need. The tenure of the Interest Financial Help included in the 'Vyavasaaya Bhadratha' scheme has been extended upto 31 December, 2021. All MSME units will be supported with 50% Interest Financial Help during the period. Important industries including Rubber, Agriculture, Food Processing, Textiles, Unconventional Energy Production, Biotechnology enterprises and so on will receive 45% subsidy as help.

Aid offered to Nano Units too has been elevated. Interest subsidies are now offered to units with up to 10 lakhs capital investment. The KSIDC will offer Rs. 100 crore to 150 MSME units at 50% interest. Steps have been adopted to ensure that Bad Debt won't be marked for loans availed from KSIDC considering the Covid situation. The moratorium for the loans has been extended upto June 2021 and interest for 3 months have been waived off.

Similarly several relief measures have been announced and are on the anvil at this moment, which will help us to overcome the difficulties endured and assist us in the path to sustained development.

New initiatives

As mentioned above, the most important step forward has been

the decision to improve the Ease of Doing Business status of Kerala. In a world that is brimming with opportunities, we understand the importance of bringing significant investments to the State. Accordingly, plans will be formulated in constant interaction with the business fraternity of the state as well as the common people who are free to submit their innovative ideas. KSIDC will coordinate the activities related to preparing a proposal in this regard.

Keeping the modernisation of industrial units in mind, a Masterplan that details the future development programmes of the State is in place. This will lay out the activities envisaged for the next 10 years. Steps are being taken to increase the awareness of people and government servants regarding all the new rules in place related to industries; a move that will help to increase the speed of official processes and sanctions. Apart from this, single window boards will be set up in industrial parks for granting quick sanctions to investors. Another important direction given by the Government to the Industries Department is to ensure that files are cleared at the earliest possible time, without unnecessary delays and to tend towards a zero pendency drive.

The Government is planning to manufacture all the necessary medicines and health equipments needed for the State on its own. The Industries and Health Departments will jointly form a committee with the Industries Department Principal Secretaries, KMSCL MD and KSDPL MD on board. This is being carried out with the intention to make medical equipments and medicines available at lower rates and to further equip our domestic industries. The Government is also setting up a Pharma Park which is expected to bring in significant investments in the sector. Besides these, various investors have expressed interest in setting up medical equipments' manufacturing facilities in the Life Science Park, which will also be one of the important strides forward in the upcoming years. The phase 2 activities of The Life Science Park,

a venture of KSIDC, will commence in September 2021.

The land acquisition activities for the Kochi-Bengaluru Industrial corridor will be completed by this December. 2,220 acres of land has already been acquired in Kochi and Palakkad. Various clusters including food processing industries, pharmaceuticals, small engineering enterprises, botanical products, textiles etc., will be a part of the Palakkad centre, creating 83,000 job opportunities. Apart from this, 500 acres of land will be acquired for the Kochi Gift City project which will result in further economic growth of the region.

Yet another milestone venture coming up is the International Exhibition cum Trade Centre in Kakkannad, Kochi. The project which is slated to be completed in a period of 2 years will be a promising platform for all the MSMEs in Kerala to exhibit and sell their products. The project is expected to boost Kerala's

The Government is planning to manufacture all the necessary medicines and health equipments needed for the State on its own. The Industries and Health Departments will jointly form a committee with the Industries Department Principal Secretaries, KMSCL MD and KSDPL MD on board

industrial and agricultural sectors in a remarkable way by holding events that would benefit these segments and get an international appraisal.

The future looks bright

With all the above-said ventures and activities, the future would for sure be promising for Kerala. We have all the resources to seize the opportunities of this decade and continue growing as the best among the States in India. Let's join hands and make it happen. ■



P. Rajeeve
Minister for Industries, Law & Coir

Invest and flourish in this fertile soil

Kerala has come a long way in its industrial journey, winning titles along the way for considering the high importance of industrialised development. The State came first in the publication of the NitiAayog's Sustainable Development Index, scoring 75 points.

The second term of the Pinarayi-led LDF government of Kerala has successfully initiated the rebuilding of the economic base of Kerala as a knowledge economy, as mentioned in its election manifesto for a far-sighted agenda for the future industrial development of Kerala. This goal needs to be achieved by creating leaps in higher education facilities, maximising access to digital amenities, promoting innovative learning and taking bounds for startup ventures on a large scale. The second PinarayiVijayan government has a historical responsibility to take Kerala by the hand to this new phase of Nava Kerala Nirmithi.

Through negation and prejudice, a conscious effort was built over time to fog the public's collective memory about Kerala's industrialisation policies. This was to affirm incorrectly that Kerala is not an ideal place to invest or for industrialisation. It was the Left-led

governments that corrected such slanderous propaganda against Kerala.

It was during the LDF ministry that India's first IT park, the Technopark, came into existence in Kerala. Projects like the Smart City, again during LDF rule, are direct examples of how a state can protect its natural resources and still successfully make industrial development possible.

The first Pinarayi-led government created history when it gave



The State came first in the publication of the NitiAayog's Sustainable Development Index, scoring 75 points. In another index of NitiAayog, the India Innovation Index, Kerala came in second for business and human capital, and fourth in better investment possibilities

a peak performance index in development and negated the critics who doomed the completion of the Gail Pipeline Project even before its implementation. The government also gave great jump starts for startups in the state. We have leapt forward during the past five years in facilitating the basic amenities for private investment. The windows opened by KIIFB towards greater possibilities has also provided space for basic development and opportunity to strive forward in that direction. From a deep plummet in the profit of the state industries, dormant investment meets, outright selling of natural resources and state-owned industries from five years ago, Kerala has risen to historic glory by exposing such shams and realising tomorrow's opportunities today.

Kerala has come a long way in its industrial journey, winning titles along the way for considering the high importance of industrialised development.

The State came first in the publication of the NitiAayog's Sustainable Development Index, scoring 75 points. In another index of NitiAayog, the India Innovation Index, Kerala came in second for business and human capital, and fourth in better investment possibilities. According to the National Council for Applied Economic Researches 2018, the state of Kerala stands fourth in the index for investment possibilities, in terms of land, job opportunities, political stability and business awareness.

Making more flexible and simpler laws, the government of Kerala is making it a fertile land for investors and entrepreneurs alike.

The government has amended 7 laws and 10 ordinances in making the Investment and Facilitation Act in 2018. An online clearance portal in the name of Kerala single-window interface (K-Swift) has opened, to fast forward licence and registration in the state. A single application form to get a clearance from over 30 sections of the government has come into effect. If the sections don't clear the application within 30 days, an automated clearance is granted. A law passed by the present government eases the registration of micro and medium scale industries for those MSME industrial units that

are on the verge of launch but have not yet received clearance. For those industrial units with 100 crores investment, a law to give sanctions within a week of their application had been passed. It is now possible through the online window of K-Swift. An investment bureau has been created making KSIDC managing director its convener to ease the application process. A toll-free service to respond to possible investors and entrepreneurs, an investment facilitation centre to process applications instantly, industrial

Kerala is the eighth state to complete the District Business Reforms Action Plan for Ease of Doing Business, reaching for the tenth position in the business rankings this year.

licence up to 5 years validity, licence auto-renewal policy, allowance for special economic zones, periodic investors meets, etc, were some of the measures taken by the government to promote entrepreneurs and investors in the state the past 5 years.

Kerala is the eighth state to complete the District Business Reforms Action Plan for Ease of Doing Business, reaching for the

tenth position in the business rankings this year. A statutory committee was constituted at the district level to solve industrial disputes, with effect immediately from the start of the second term of the Pinarayi government. 2220 acres of land in Kochi and Bangalore is under acquisition for the Kochi-Bangalore industrial corridor, which is to be completed by December. 83000 job opportunities have been promised in its Palakkad cluster alone.

In the next five years, the LDF-led government is expecting an investment of 10000crores from the fields of IT, Electronics, Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology and Nanotechnology. TATA Elxsi, one of the leading companies in its field, has agreed with KINFRA for an investment worth 75 crores in the expanding IT Research and development projects. Over 6000 jobs are promised by this agency within the next 5years.

According to the new approach, a master plan for every government institution is formed and this will prioritize the funds allotted to the need and priority. Every state-owned enterprise is preparing



Disregarding all rumours, accusations and allegations, the State government is under resolute resolve to move shoulder to shoulder with the investors towards a better investment future in the state.

its master plan for the next 5 years. Experts and trade unions are consulted within specific time limits, and pieces of advice

are sought while formulating the master plan. Along with the existing industrial units, other sub-units which can benefit from the basic amenities of the existing units will be started.

The COVID -19 pandemic and recurring natural disasters have affected traditional industries such as handlooms, beedi, tapping and pottery. The small scale industries that were severely affected by the pandemic has received a booster package of 1416 crores. Extension of debt periods and special loan packages were received gladly by the small scale industries. An all-encompassing renewal of the traditional industrial sector will be achieved by this government. The coir production is aimed at a target of 70000 tonnes. The cashew sector aims to employ 10000 people.

To improve the working efficiency of the state-owned industries in a healthy and competitive manner, awards of excellence have been declared. The best government sector, best M.D, best officer, and best employee are the categories for award distribution.

Disregarding all rumours, accusations and allegations, the State government is under resolute resolve to move shoulder to shoulder with the investors towards a better investment future in the state. ■





Yusuff Ali M. A

*Chairman & Managing Director of LuLu Group International,
Vice Chairman, NORKA-ROOTS*

Our Government under the dynamic leadership of our Hon'ble Chief Minister has taken proactive steps which has attracted investments and generated employment in the past years.

One of the necessities to attract investments is the state-of-the-art infrastructure and the State has been providing quality industrial infrastructure for attracting industrial investments. The State has been taking steps which are necessary to position Kerala as a favorable destination for industrial investments and to encourage private investments in many sectors.

The ease of doing business by single window clearance was a step for attracting investments both from Non-Resident Indians and other foreign institutions. This was also a thrust for giving more opportunities for our young entrepreneurs who are interested to invest in our State.

Non-Resident Keralite Affairs (NORKA) of which our Hon'ble Chief Minister is the Chairman has been playing a vital role in the lives of Non-Resident Keralites, supporting them in times of need and lending them a helping hand.

NORKA-ROOTS is the field agency of the Department of NORKA and as the Vice-Chairman of NORKA-

ROOTS, I can say with pride that it acts as an interface between the NRKs and the Government of Kerala and a Forum for addressing the NRKs problems, safeguarding their rights and rehabilitating the returnees.

Today, the Government is keen on removing the hindrances faced by entrepreneurs. Scarcity of land is one of the problems for major industries. Land ceiling is also a hurdle. At the same time, as the Government is thinking to relax land ceiling laws to attract and boost investments that hurdle will be removed soon.

The focus of the Government is to make Kerala investment-friendly and to ensure a safe environment for entrepreneurs to invest with confidence. This is a right step in the right direction.

Kerala is today a state of many opportunities. We have a very investment friendly Government under the leadership of Honorable Chief Minister and his dedicated team. I request entrepreneurs and investors to capitalize the opportunities Kerala offers to investors and to invest either as a single investment or as a consortium. I encourage everyone to become strategic partners in the rebuilding, growth and development of the State.



Harsh Goenka

Chairman-RPG Enterprises

Over the past three decades we have witnessed significant development in the State, driven by policy changes from the government that have brought about greater transparency and balance in labour relations and investor relations. The past decade has been difficult for the plantation sector and Government of Kerala has proposed new policies

that will help revive the sector. At a time when global warming is causing major catastrophes around the world, our company, which is a proud torchbearer for green causes is looking forward to working with the Pinarayi Vijayan led Kerala government to take the State and the plantation sector to greater heights.



Malavika
Freelance journalist

Dream investment destination

Kerala is rewriting history by bringing key reforms in various labour, local bodies and factories laws to attract investments into sectors that are important for its future growth and development

.....
A scenic land blessed with lush greenery, tranquil backwaters and sprawling beaches, Kerala is also a State of immense opportunities. Keralites enjoy the best quality of life with education and health standards that can be compared with those maintained in western countries. Kerala is considered to have the highest literacy rates, life expectancy and lowest child mortality rates in India. Keralites, because of the highest literacy rates, have gained more opportunities in governance, and thus has more say in the administration. This is reflected in their overall urbanization, which has developed a quality of life through a process of living close to nature. Law and order in the State is rated as the best in the country. It is in this context that Kerala's industrial development should be viewed; not in isolation but along with its overall development that is on a par with some of the most developed nations in the world. The State is top in Human Development Index; leads in Health Indices; it is the country's

first Digital State; the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) on par with developed countries; it is the least corrupt State with 93.9% literacy rates and 100% home electrification.

Key opportunities in Kerala

In the agriculture sector, the State has a predominance of cash crops. Kerala is a major producer of coconut, rubber, pepper, cardamom, ginger, banana, cocoa, cashew, areca nut, coffee and tea. Spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, etc. are also cultivated. Rice and Tapioca are important food crops. On a national scale, 92 % of the rubber, 70 % of coconut, 60 % of tapioca and almost 100 % of lemongrass oil is

Lauding the contribution of the Malayali diaspora in expediting the economic development of the State, he said a proposal to convene a global meet to attract foreign investment is on the cards. The visits of delegations led by him to Japan, Korea, and the UAE had generated a keen interest in Kerala.

produced from the State. Kerala's agriculture has the distinction of having the highest gross income per net cropped area.

In the area of Biotechnology, Kerala offers enormous opportunities. The State's rich bio-diversity and the availability of skilled labour make it one of the most prospective locations for Biotechnology. Its advantages include being one of the most health-conscious states with high literacy, and rich exposure

to traditional medicines and healing. Additionally, the presence of established research institutions like Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Biotechnology, Indian Institute for Spices Research, Kerala Agricultural University, etc ensures adequately trained human resources required in Biotechnology. Since the Biotech industry in India is still in a nascent stage, especially in Kerala, appropriate support and guidance from the state government would be essential to encourage entrepreneurship and industrial growth in this segment.

The Government of Kerala announced its Biotechnology Policy in 2003. To achieve the vision in Biotechnology, to ensure hassle-free implementation and to provide sustained leadership and resources, two major initiatives, Kerala Biotechnology Board and Kerala Biotechnology Commission were made in 2003. The BT policy for Kerala is designed to catalyze the development and application of BT, taking advantage of the State's resources and emphasizing its specific needs while meeting global requirements. The policy is aimed to ensure the rapid exploitation of pipeline technologies and opportunities available in the State to products and processes and to promote the sustained build-up of an elite knowledge cadre and knowledge base through the strengthening and creation of educational and R&D institutions, establishing infrastructure and putting in place administrative, regulatory, legal and financial framework conducive for investment and growth of BT enterprises, for the economic development and human welfare.

With Kerala being a rubber-producing State, another key area is the rubber industry. Kerala contributes 90% of India's total production of natural rubber. There is no State intervention



in price control in the rubber industry as rubber prices respond to global prices.

Perhaps the best-known product of Kerala is the tourism industry. Kerala's unique culture and traditions, coupled with its varied demography, has made it one of the most popular tourist destinations in India. Beaches, warm weather, backwaters, hill stations, waterfalls, wildlife, Ayurveda, year-round festivals and diverse flora and fauna make Kerala a unique destination for tourists. The factors stimulating a flourishing tourism sector include scenic splendour, moderate climate, clean environment, friendly and peace-loving people with a high tolerance for cultural diversity as well as the potential for creating unique tourism products.

With the State accounting for 22 species of bamboo and two varieties belonging to six genera, it offers a unique opportunity to set up industries based on bamboo. The Draft Kerala Bamboo Policy focuses on the sustainable development of the bamboo sector with the active participation of stakeholders. The major pillars of this policy are sustainable management of existing bamboo resources in forest areas, plantations and



Dr. M I Sahadulla

*MD, FRCP (Ire), FRCP (Lon), MBA,
Chairman & Managing Director, KIMSHEALTH Co-Chair, FICCI,
Kerala State Council President, AHPI, Kerala Chapter Convener,
CII, Kerala Healthcare Sector*

KIMSHEALTH started as a Public Limited Company more than twenty years ago with a 250 bed hospital in Trivandrum and today has grown into a national as well as international healthcare provider with a total bed strength of 2000 and employing more than 7000 people. We had difficulties at times, not to undermine all the good things that have happened to us during our journey. Some of the recent activities of the Government, particularly at the time of this pandemic, have created a very friendly and positive environment for

the private health sector in general. The decision to involve private hospitals in the COVID campaign, be it vaccination or treatment, has been a very welcome move and is a classical example of public-private-participation. All these point to the fact that the Government of Kerala is fast changing its approach to new entrepreneurship. I sincerely hope that the Government will continue to undertake more initiatives to promote this new environment and culture for industrial promotion to become one of the most investor- friendly states in India.



G Karthikeyan

*President,
Kerala Merchants' Chamber of Commerce*

With the implementation of the single- window system as part of the Ease of Doing Business policy, around seventy- thousand small and medium scale industries are running successfully in Kerala. A great relationship between the Government of Kerala and industrial society is continuing. Kerala Merchants Chamber Of Commerce believes that the

Government of Kerala's policy which upholds the view to maintain a harmonious relationship between the Industries Department and entrepreneurs and by which to help the entrepreneurs would boost our confidence to commence new industries and business in Kerala.



in the homesteads, resource enhancement both in the forests and homesteads with the participation of stakeholders, better distribution of bamboo resources to the user groups and setting up bamboo-based industries. The policy suggests formulation and implementation of grower friendly rules and regulations on growing, harvesting, transporting and marketing and appropriate publicity, research and extension.

State Investment Potential Index

In 2018, Kerala emerged as an achiever in the State Investment Potential Index 2018, based on the six pillars of land, labour, infrastructure, economic climate, political stability and governance and business perception.

Releasing the Kerala-specific findings of the survey, conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, titled 'NCAER-State Investment Potential Index 2018' (N-SIPI) at ASCEND 2019, NCAER Director-General Dr. Shekhar Shah had said that Kerala ranks fourth on how it is perceived as an investment destination, after Gujarat, Haryana and West Bengal. "The perception driven pillar is a unique component of the N-SIPI, which focuses on the policy and structural backdrop that determines the business

environment in a state," he said.

V.K. Ramachandran, Vice Chairman of the Kerala State Planning Board, had said that when one mentions Kerala, the things that come to mind are health, education, water and greenery. Even while retaining those elements, the Government intended to add manufacturing as a synonym of Kerala.

Speaking at ASCEND Kerala 2019, Invest India Vice-President Dushyant Thakur spoke about the 10 investment strategies for Kerala, including investible projects; translating sustainable development goals into projects; asset recycling; aftercare and business models.

"The business model in Kerala is unlike any other, Israel being possibly the only parallel in the areas of innovation and startup," he said even while adding that aftercare was one critical aspect that states generally do not pay attention to.

Committed to simplifying procedures

During the Kerala 2020 global investors' meet in Kochi, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had said that the government was committed to pushing ahead with its policy initiatives to simplify investment procedures.

The Chief Minister pointed to a string of legislative and procedural initiatives put in

place by the state government for industrial growth in the state and said that many more such measures are on the anvil, to enable a fast, transparent and corruption-free investment regime.

A proposal to subsidise part of the wage commitment of newly set up industries for the first five years was also on the cards. "This is a scheme under consideration. I don't want to go into its details. This benefit will be available only to those units which provide ESI and PF benefits to workers. I also want to say at this stage that women employees will get at least Rs 2,000 more than their men counterparts under the proposed scheme. An estimated 37 lakh people will benefit," he said.

Lauding the contribution of the Malayali diaspora in expediting the economic development of the State, he said a proposal to convene a global meet to attract foreign investment is on the cards. The visits of delegations led by him to Japan, Korea, and the UAE had generated a keen interest in Kerala.

To remove the land constraints faced by big units, the 15-acre ceiling on the land to be held by these units will be relaxed. The units investing more than Rs.250 crore and providing over 1000 jobs will be entitled to this concession. Necessary changes will be made in the land legislation act to enable this. It will also lift the ban on women factory workers being put on the night shifts. The responsibility to ensure their safety will be with the employer.

The ceiling for financial aid from Kerala Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) has been raised from Rs.35 crore to Rs.100 crore. In certain cases, KSIDC can also provide a higher amount. Measures will be taken to ensure greater involvement of local bodies in industrial promotion

and job generation, he added. The government was also taking steps to improve labour relations to ensure the smooth functioning of units right from the start and improve technical capabilities and skilled workforce.

“The investment climate prevailing in the state is most conducive. This is especially significant at a time when certain parts of the country and the world are in the grip of tension and anxiety. Here is an ideal destination where investment can be made in diverse sectors without having any tension or anxiety,” the Chief Minister had said at the investment conference.

At the concluding session of ASCEND Kerala 2020, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had said about Rs.1 lakh crore worth of investment proposals have been received. He said Rs.32008 crore proposals were received at the event from 138 projects. These investment proposals, more than anything else, were ample proof of the conducive environment prevalent in Kerala for setting up industrial units.

According to the Chief Minister, Kerala has the best investor-friendly climate at the national level. “In the Sustainable Development Goals Index brought out by the Niti Ayog recently, the State was ranked number one.” The Chief Minister underscored that industrial development, which was a major yardstick in the index, helped the state clinch the top slot. The Niti Aayog’s India Innovation Index ranked Kerala second in terms of the best business environment and human capital. The State also earned the fourth rank in the better investment opportunities category.

The Chief Minister reminded that the State has declared its resolve to set up a centralised mechanism for carrying out checks in industrial units. A



software-based complaint redressal system will be evolved.

In addition to the existing three-tier system, single-window boards will be set up at all industrial parks for speedy clearance for entrepreneurs, he said.

Reforms undertaken

As of January 15, 2021, Kerala became the 8th State in the country to successfully undertake the “Ease of Doing Business” reform stipulated by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. This enabled the State to become eligible to mobilise additional financial resources of Rs.2,373 crore through Open Market Borrowings. Permission for this was issued by the Department of Expenditure on 12th January 2021.

Kerala joined seven other States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, who have completed this reform. On completion of reforms facilitating ease of doing business, these eight States have been granted additional borrowing permission of Rs.23,149 crore.

A new law on the anvil

Kerala is now (as of July 2021) working on a new law to help entrepreneurs set up a business faster. “Legal Dispute Resolution System” Bill will be presented at the Assembly session slated later in July, according to State s month, said Honourable Minister

of Industries P. Rajeev.

The law aims to resolve industry-related disputes through an integrated system, as much as it seeks to punish officials who might create hurdles to the issue of business permits. A system will be put in place so that complaints relating to any department can be resolved through a single mechanism. With the law coming into force to support this, the process will get speedier and make a big difference to the ease of running a business enterprise in the State. The Industrial Law section has begun the work of preparing a rough draft of this Bill.

The aim of enacting the new law is to bring in a more business-friendly environment in the State. A committee to be set up under the new law will deal with complaints from entrepreneurs and the general public. The system will be set up at State and district levels. The decision of the committee shall be final and strict action will be taken against those failing to comply with it. Thus, officials will have no scope for out-of-the-way actions. There are also plans to make redundant several laws that have been rendered obsolete, including the Factories and Boilers Act. The “Kerala Investment Promotion and Facilitation Act” of 2018 was the ruling Left Democratic Front government’s robust step toward creating an industrial friendly atmosphere in the State. The government aimed to lend greater protection to business owners. ■



Noorsha Kalliyath

CMD, Kalliyath Group

In 1994, the District Industries center, Ernakulam allotted land at Edathala industrial estate, Aluva for establishing wire drawing industry - for Kalliyath Wires. In 1997, we were allotted land at Angamali industrial area for establishing wire drawing cum galvanizing plant for Kalliyath Steel Industries. District Industries center, allotted land at NIDA, Kanjikode Palakkad for establishing steel rolling mill - Gasha Steels Pvt Ltd in 2000 and availed term loan assistance of 5.37 crore from KSIDC. Along with that by allotting land at NIDA, Kanjikode Palakkad for Establishing Melting Unit - Thieh Ingots Pvt Ltd in 2008 our business attained next level of

success. SIDCO, allotted land at SIDCO Industrial Park, Angamali for Establishing Steel Fabrication Unit Steel Fab - Kalliyath Developers Pvt Ltd in 2007, and also availed term loan assistance from KSIDC - 6.25 CR. For Establishing LPG Cylinder Manufacturing unit - Kairali Structural Fabrication Pvt Ltd in 2007, land was allotted at Angamali and availed term loan assistance from KSIDC - 6.5 CR. Electric Connection for the all above Units were obtained in time from the KSEB also. The government has availed all applicable licenses/NOC from Factories and Boilers, Pollution Control Board, Panchayath/Municipality etc in time and helped us for running industries smoothly.



P. Ganesh

*Managing Director
GEFAB Facade Solutions P Ltd*

Started off my entrepreneurship journey during my student days itself 40 years back. That time it was selling normal annealed glass for buildings. Later in 1987 started off as a Startupreneur with about nine employees manufacturing aluminium doors and windows. This was a very rare industry then, since all windows were either wood or steel. We have gone through a long journey since our start in 1987. Today we have a direct human resource of more than 150 and another 100 indirectly. We established the first powder coat painting plant,

first processed glass manufacturing plant making toughened safety glass, energy efficient glass, and shatter proof laminated glass. We are the largest manufacturers of façade glazing for buildings. Besides we are business partners for Dormakaba range of glass hardware solutions and Shakti Hormann range of metal doors and fire rated doors. All our businesses are financially supported by KSIDC and SBI since inception. Handholding has been extremely good both during our challenging times and good times.



Veena George
Minister for Health, Woman & Child Welfare

You are safe in Kerala

The Government gives a lot of importance to the safety of women and children. The State Women & Child Welfare Department is focused on strengthening women's safety. The government considers atrocities against women with utmost seriousness and takes strict corrective measures against offenders. The Department is making efforts to spread awareness amongst the public about this.

The Women & Child Welfare Department is in the process of developing services that are available 24*7 for women when faced with an emergency. Services are provided in the form of the helpline 181, apart from 83 legal service centres and 39 family counselling centres under the government. Apart from this, online services are also available via the department's portal Kathorthu (<https://kathorthu.wcd.kerala.gov.in>). It provides online counselling, legal aid and the services of the police department exclusively for women. The portal is very helpful as a safe space where women and children

The Government aims to equip the staff of the Women & Child Welfare Department with high standards of training so that they may spread awareness among the public. A programme called Stree Suraksha, Nammude Suraksha is being organised for the same.

can air their concerns. Police services are available as soon as a person makes a request. Within 48 hours, arrangements are made for online counselling and appointments given for legal aid and police services. Everyone should make use of this online service that promises confidentiality and provides the required services.

The Government aims to equip the staff of the Women & Child Welfare Department with high standards of training so that they may spread awareness among the public. A programme called Stree Suraksha, Nammude Suraksha is being organised for the same. Service providers are given the training required to cater to the issues of any woman who contacts the Women & Child Welfare Department. Close to 83,000 service providers participated in the awareness training programme. It was organised for all 66,000 Anganwadi workers. The staff of various sections under the Department and those working in organisations for women participated. Classes were also taken on which department the various cases that come through ought to be referred to and the type of service to be provided. The main topic was related to domestic abuse and dowry. Training was also given on the measures for women's safety under the Women & Child Welfare Department, the Police

and the Kudumbashree. Those who have received this training will provide awareness to people in their localities as and when the need arises.

The Department intends to provide more training to Anganwadi staff regarding this. Gender awareness within the Department is also a part of the training to be given to staff at each level. ICDS supervisors numbering 1,327 are to be given all-round training starting next week on women-related topics at the panchayat level. Training will be given on the topic of gender, and laws and schemes for women.

The Government is working towards empowering women and children to be independent.

This includes providing quality education and vocational training to girl children who have been abused. A world-class model Women & Children's Home (Nirbhaya Home) is being constructed in Thrissur at Rs. 5 Cr. It is aimed at providing children between the ages of 12 and 18 with quality care. The centre is being readied to provide facilities for their mental and physical well-being as well as for standard education and health.

The Government is taking stringent measures when it comes to cases. Twenty-two fast track special courts have been set up to hasten the hearings of rape and other cases registered under the POCSO Act. The remaining six will be set up soon. The State Government's decision to set up POCSO courts comes to ensure speedy awarding of punishment for offenders and making courts child-friendly in the wake of an increasing number of attacks against children.

The State Women & Child Welfare Department has issued an order approving financial aid for children in Kerala who lost their parents to COVID. An amount of Rs. 2000 will be deposited every month from the Women & Child Welfare department's fund into a joint

account in the name of the child and its guardian till the former turns 18 years old. A fixed deposit of Rs.3L will also be started for each child. There are 80 such children. Efforts are on to include those who suffer from COVID-related diseases in this group. Children whose parents die a while after they have contracted the virus will also be allowed such financial aid.

The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation

A world-class model Women & Children's Home (Nirbhaya Home) is being constructed in Thrissur at Rs. 5 Cr.

(KSWDC) has implemented numerous programmes for the empowerment of women. The KSWDC is in the process of introducing various self-employment loan schemes, a Working Women's Hostel in every district, daycare-cum-vocational training centre for widows, training centres for women in tribal areas, She Pad, She Toilet and more. The Women & Child Welfare department is creating and implementing many such schemes for the welfare of women.

There is a need to spread awareness against the system of dowry. Each one of us should decide against accepting and giving dowry. Our daughters do not deserve to die or be killed, they are not meant to die untimely deaths at the end of a noose or engulfed in flames, in the name of such a system. A powerful widespread awareness campaign among the public is pertinent to resist the practice of dowry. It is the responsibility of the family and society at large to ensure the safety of women and children. They should be given every kind of support in the time of need and brought into the mainstream instead of being isolated. The Department is duty-bound to provide support for achieving the same. ■



Pink Protection Project to ensure the safety of women



In the light of increase in the cases of atrocities against women, the government of Kerala under the leadership of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has launched a new initiative titled Pink Project which aims to prevent dowry-related issues, cyber-bullying and humiliation in public places. The Chief Minister has flagged off the project at the headquarters of Kerala Police, with the presence of Director-General of Police Anil Kant and other senior police officials. With the launch of this project, the government is planning to ensure safety and protection for women in public places, private and digital spaces. As part of the Pink Project total of 70 vehicles including 10 cars, 40 two-wheelers comprised of Bullet bikes, and 20 bicycles have been allotted. The Pink Police Patrol System is also included in the Pink Project along with the other 10 components. As part of Pink Janamaithri Beat, the Police will conduct regular house visits to collect information on domestic violence from panchayat members, neighbours, and local people. The information will be then handed over to the Station House Officers for further action. As part of the Pink Beat system, specially trained women police officers have been deployed to monitor and to ensure safety of women in public places such as KSRTC buses, private buses, bus stops, in front of schools, and colleges. In order to smoothen this system Pink control rooms have been set up in the 14 districts to coordinate the activities. Team of officers will be deployed to find out anti socials among the crowd as part of the Pink Shadow Patrol. Another bullet patrol team titled Pink Romeo, has also been launched under the project to boost up the women security in the state.

Aparajitha introduced



The Government of Kerala has introduced Aparajitha, an online platform for women to address and report crimes related to dowry harassment. The government of Kerala has decided to setup a team to look into

- the complaints regarding dowry. Through Kerala
- Police's online portal Aparajitha women can report
- cyber crimes and domestic abuse via the email
- aparajitha.pol@kerala.gov.in.
- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has directed
- the Director-General of Police to enhance its
- operations and resolve complaints without delay.
- He also said that instead of fearing what society
- would think, women facing domestic abuse need
- to raise their voice. Pathanamthitta District Police
- Chief R. Nishanthini would be the nodal officer.
- The State Police Chief would monitor the follow-up
- action on the complaints received.

Kerala's oldest equivalency course student Bhageerathi Amma no more



Bhageerathi Amma, Kerala's pride, the oldest equivalency course student passed away due to age-related ailments. Hailing from Prakkulam, Kollam, she had cleared class 4 equivalency course

- under Kerala State Literary Mission. Bhageerathi
- Amma was the recipient of the country's highest
- civilian honour Nari Shakthi Puraskar. Her
- contributions towards women empowerment were
- remarkable in every sense. Bhageerathi Amma
- was married at the age of 15 and while leading her
- busy homemaker life, she was not able to pursue
- the world of literacy. But with sheer courage
- and determination, she cleared her academic
- papers with good scores at the age of 105 in
- 2019. Her resolution and willpower to chase the
- world of letters make her exceptional in many
- ways. She was appreciated by various eminent
- personalities for her colourful achievement.
- Condoling her death, Governor Arif Mohammed
- Khan said Bhageerathi Amma personified sheer
- determination to become literate. Chief Minister
- Pinarayi Vijayan said she was an inspirational
- personality who stood as a symbol of women's
- empowerment and literacy movement in society.



The sky is the limit

Sruthi A. Sreekumar
Freelance journalist

Education has played a major role in redefining the thoughts of women in Kerala and generating awareness of the need for an equal society built on gender consciousness.

From fighting against breast tax to fighting for equality, women have travelled aeons for their freedom. It took decades for women across the world to even acquire their basic rights and earn their freedom to vote. Sadly, the freedom of women was not given but “taken”, through endless struggles over centuries, never giving up. The struggle continues to date. But we have come a long way. From renaissance to struggling to build a gender-conscious society, the dauntless gallantry of women across the world has paved the way and inspired revolutions. The chivalrous women of Kerala have consistently done their part through the years. From initiating freedom struggles to becoming world-famous ministers, the State of Kerala can proudly proclaim how its women have become role models to the world.

The Global Fund for Women poignantly wrote, “Women’s rights are the fundamental human rights that were enshrined by the United Nations for every human being on the planet nearly 70 years ago. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; to earn a fair and equal wage.” While women have come a long way in securing these rights, they are still often denied them, solely based on gender. This is where the small state of Kerala stands out. Kerala has been one Indian state that provided a model of development that is more open and inclusive of women. While the rest of the country has grappled with skewed gender disparities, Kerala has proved to be an exception. Be it literacy,

Kerala has been one Indian state that provided a model of development that is more open and inclusive of women.

life expectancy and mean age at marriage, women in Kerala have a higher score when compared with the women in the rest of the country. This has paved the way for the outstanding achievement of Kerala in terms of women's development, and as a result, the increase in overall human development. Kerala's female literacy is 92 per cent while the corresponding figure at the national level is only 65 per cent.

A benchmark for other states

"Kerala has set a benchmark for other states in gender equality, health and literacy hence visiting the state is like "taking a dip in the river of hope", once said Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former IAS officer and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi to the Times of India. He had praised the gender balance in Kerala, saying that the State is ahead of other states and even developed countries and Keralites can proudly say "men are equal to women here instead of women being equal to men".

With women constituting almost 52 per cent of Kerala's total population of 3.58 crores, Kerala has achieved enviable social development indicators. Its achievements in the areas of universal primary education both for boys and girls, favourable female-male population ratios, high literacy rates for both men and women, and high life expectancy rates for both men and women are a pride not only to the state but also to the country. The high levels of social development indicators are laudable and are a necessary condition for gender equality.

According to the Economic Review 2011, women outnumber men seeking employment in all the 14 districts of Kerala. Almost 60 per cent of total job-seekers are women. Occupational segregation, a sign

of gender inequality, is relatively very low in Kerala. Women are predominant in the professional and technicians/associates categories, which does not occur in any of the other Southern States. There is only a 3 per cent gender disparity in the elementary occupations, which is much less than in other Southern states.

Andree Wright, an Australian Historian who recorded changes in the image of femininity as portrayed in the Australian Women's Weekly through the war years, found that during the early war years, up to 1942, homemaking and motherhood remained the most important job for a woman. As the need for increased supplies of female labour became paramount, the Australian Women's Weekly began to change the image of its heroine, and magazine propaganda painted an attractive image of the 'working woman'. But as soon as the war was over, the 'working woman' ceased to exist for the Women's Weekly, being replaced by 'the bride.' While the rest of our country seems to be in the post-war period, Kerala prefers to be in the war zone, raising standards for its female population!

"Gender equality to me means my freedom to choose, my freedom to decide, my space to thrive irrespective of my gender," believes Dr. Divya S. Iyer IAS.

Kerala had exercised its first big step towards the constitutional promise of gender equality when it tried to pass the Education law for all in 1958. Though it failed initially, it succeeded where many other states have failed - to educate its women and ensure their access to basic services. The State has worked towards moulding its women to be aware of their rights, to fight for their freedom and to be gender-conscious. In an excessively culturally diverse state like Kerala, traditional ideas of what the behaviour of a certain gender should be can have a great effect on a person's life. Traditionally, if you're a man, you're not supposed to "get emotional", and if you're a woman, you're not supposed to "take charge" during an emergency. But this is changing, especially in Kerala,

the traditional gender roles are now more difficult to define.

Flying higher

A huge number of girls pursuing higher studies from the State. Those qualifying for further studies abroad are also rising in number, adding to the fact that the quality of education in the State is high and thriving. Kerala understands that its prosperity requires its women and men to be equal partners, socially, economically, and politically. This understanding has led to a lot of improvements in the primary and secondary levels of the education sector in the State, providing a healthier atmosphere for gender irrelevant growth.

"Kerala has set a benchmark for other Indian states in gender equality, health and literacy hence visiting the state is like "taking a dip in the river of hope", once said Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former IAS officer and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi to the Times of India.

The rules and roles accompanying gendered power relations are so ingrained in our culture that they are practically invisible, neither questioned nor challenged by most people. Many women and men never experience high levels of gender consciousness, instead function in a state of "gender unconsciousness" where they neither question the status quo nor work to change it. Gender consciousness begins with learning and educating oneself and others. It is slow but it is sure. The women of Kerala are discovering new paths that were not offered but merited. From holding important positions in critical decision making to decisions in their households, we can proudly say that the march is forward and that the state is proudly marching along with. ■



P. A. Mohamed Riyas
Minister for Tourism & PWD

On the path of Reformation & Renaissance

One of the worst affected fields globally by the pandemic is tourism. But Kerala has had a history of surviving every adversity when it confronted us. Besides, we make every crisis into a better opportunity to fly high. Tourism is no exception.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about much-needed introspection on the times we live in. The COVID era can also be divided into two parts, just like there are the pre and post periods of the World Wars, Indian independence and the like. COVID too will have a definitive influence on the times just like epidemics like cholera, smallpox and the plague. At a time when the world had made immense advances in many fields, it is COVID that has called the shots on how the world will function henceforth.

Tourism has been one of the worst-affected sectors on a global scale, bearing the direct brunt of the pandemic. Before COVID brought life as we know it to a standstill, Travel & Tourism was one of the largest employment sectors in the world. It offered numerous livelihood opportunities directly and indirectly. The closure of borders drowned the industry in crisis, even if temporarily.

Kerala Tourism is also planning a similar process where Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Tourism initiatives are carried out. Malabar is a place with unlimited tourism potential with untapped areas in its heritage, nature and history.



While it did result in a loss of jobs and a decline in salaries, the tourism industry will, beyond a doubt, rise to its former glory. It is important to conduct comprehensive research to understand the levels at which tourism will expand.

Travel has always been a cultural activity for people, having been a part of life from the age of primitive man to the most modern human being. Travel was a part of man's routine even when he was a part of tribes. It means that as long as man exists on the planet, there is no end to the scope of travel and tourism, even if in its most basic form. History has proved that innovative means to diversify and overcome a crisis has arisen from every challenge. The revolutionary changes that occurred in air travel after the World Wars are cited to be examples. The fact that high-speed, low noise aircraft designed for the wars were later introduced in air travel shows how the industry turns every challenge into an opportunity for advancement. Post-COVID tourism is to be planned and carried out with utmost attention.

In a scenario such as this, when something that is injured has to be nursed back to health, all precautions have to be taken. We all know how, sometimes, a treatment can backfire. The field of tourism functions in the future

only after scientific studies must be conducted. People are working behind the scenes the world over ensuring the same. UNWTO (UN World Tourism Organization) is taking the lead in this initiative. Nations around the world and international tourism organizations are formulating policies for this purpose. It is evident in the themes observed on World Tourism Day every year in the recent past. The theme for 2020 was Tourism and Rural Development. In 2019, it was Tourism as Jobs: A Better Future for All. Similarly, over the last ten years, the themes have been 'Tourism as the Digital Transformation', 'Sustainable Tourism - A

The toll for Developments', 'Tourism for All', 'One Billion Tourists - One Billion Opportunities', 'Tourism and Community Developments', 'Tourism as Water', 'Tourism and Sustainable Energy: Powering Sustainable Developments', 'Tourism

Linking Cultures', emphasizes the industry as one that is more people-centric and more socially responsible by the day. It also reflects the evolution of the sector into one that is now accessible for all whereas in the past it was more exclusive. It would not survive without

undergoing such a change.

The tourism sector has undergone reform at every juncture. A sector that is replete with creative ideas, it has always addressed the challenges that have come its way using this skill set. It is something that should be carried out even after COVID subsidies. The sector has faced much flak in the past for its modus operandi. One of the most important criticisms faced by it has been how the sector is available only to a limited section of the population. The regional population took on the role of mere onlookers. The sector functioned through high-end hotels, resorts, travel agencies, tour operators and the like, through predetermined modes. But the start of this millennium revealed tourism in an evolved avatar, introducing new trends most organically and culturally. Taking the regional population into confidence, the sector has already successfully introduced a perspective of development using Sustainable Tourism through Responsible Tourism initiatives. They have also resolved the two major issues in tourism development - environmental pollution and the decline of regional cultures. Post COVID tourism too will function by taking these new perspectives into account.

The government will look into all recommendations submitted for reviving tourism in the post-COVID period and do the needful. The Tourism Department will take meaningful steps to work in unity with Malayalis in the effort to revive the sector in a post-COVID Kerala.

It is these activities that will lay the foundation for tourism and operations in third world countries at the international level too. Tourism is a sector that is most able to function with social responsibility and co-exist with the environment while safeguarding one's heritage and all living beings in general.

Significance of Regional Tourism

Our tourism sector stood still all from the time the pandemic hit us. The growth of regional tourism is absolutely important to revive the sector again. People from all walks of life should be able to relate to our idea of tourism development. Regional tourism will be possible only when we depend on Responsible Tourism. Kudumbashree workers should be able to participate in this process for which professional training should be given. People should be involved in panchayat-level tourism development plans to provide innovative and practical ideas. Conservative processes should be replaced with liberal ones. Projects should not be sanctioned in all panchayats in one go. There

is a tendency to implement tried-and-tested projects in other places only for it to flop. Instead, all panchayats should adopt destinations that are best suited to their vision of tourism. Kerala will attain global status with each panchayat adopting a tourism programme to implement. The number of tourists who seek unique experiences is beyond what we can even imagine. The World Tourism Organization is drawing up plans where villages are also represented in tourism development. Kerala Tourism is also planning a similar process where Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Tourism initiatives are carried out. Malabar is a place with unlimited tourism potential with untapped areas in its heritage, nature and history.

The presence of Kannur International Airport is beneficial for us. The government is trying to promote 'homestays' as opposed to the message of 'Stay Home' once COVID is past us. Kerala was one of the first states to offer ways to overcome the crisis during the height of the pandemic. Even before the central loan scheme was announced, Kerala had introduced the Chief Minister's Tourism Loan Assistance Scheme for investors and workers with two special financial stimulation packages. The onus of paying the interest of the scheme was borne by the State government. The scheme was implemented with the co-operation of the State Level Bankers' Committee. Tourist guides were also given Rs.10,000 as financial aid. Houseboats were granted between Rs.80,000 and Rs. 1,20,000 for maintenance works. Kerala is the only state to have implemented a revival package of the sort in India. The new government has announced Rs. 30 Cr in the interim budget for recovering from the COVID crisis. The formalities required for implementing the program are

being drawn up. After the new minister for the sector has taken charge, the way forward will be discussed through meetings with people in the field. A meeting has been held with the authorities of the State Tourism Department and officials in related departments.

A meeting was held for DTPC (District Tourism Promotion Council) secretaries. 'Tourism destinations' are being introduced at the panchayat level to overcome the inactive state of tourism at the moment. Panchayat presidents have been asked to select new destinations after one round of meetings. They have already been held in Wayanad and Kozhikode. This has to be completed in other places at the earliest.

Vaccination drive - another milestone

The programme that is being carried out with vaccination drives in association with the Department of Health will set a milestone in the fight against COVID. Tourism sector employees should be given vaccinations on a priority basis so that they can display certificates saying so when they begin to interact with tourists. There is no news of similar plans in any other state in India. The Tourism Department has taken the necessary steps to support the opening up of tourism destinations in the post-COVID phase. There was an attempt to visit 25 tourist destinations to understand first-hand, their functioning and pros and cons. A meeting was also held with architects to discuss tourism development plans.

The government will look into all recommendations submitted for reviving tourism in the post-COVID period and do the needful. The Tourism Department will take meaningful steps to work in unity with Malayalis in the effort to revive the sector in a post-COVID Kerala. ■



Jerrin Jos

*Founder & CEO
Verteil Technologies Private Ltd*

Verteil Technologies is based in Infopark Kochi. Our vision is to transform the 40 year old legacy airline distribution landscape. As on today, we have successfully implemented an alternate and superlative distribution channel for 25+ leading airlines around the world including the likes of Emirates, British Airways etc. Though we address an international, multi-cultural clientele, from the start of our journey we were very clear on

- our plans to base our development centre in Kerala given the availability of some wonderful engineering talent with great work ethics, as well as the overall eco-system that nurtures start-ups. In fact, we have been beneficiary of the KSIDC seed funding initiative during our formative years and KSUM has given us a great platform to interact with investors and other successful personalities in the trade.



C J George

*Founder and Managing Director
Geojit Financial Services.*

Geojit was established in Kerala 35 years ago and the business grew reasonably well. We currently employ around 2500 people and have over 460 branches. When we sought capital for growth in 1994, KSIDC came forward and invested in Geojit, which in a way was a path

- breaking investment into a completely unknown sector at that time. Hence my experience with the Government and various Government authorities has been very encouraging so far and has been in one way instrumental for our growth too.



Tourism revival in a post-COVID world

Tourism Minister Mohamed Riyas and popular globetrotter Santhosh George Kulangara discuss the way forward for Kerala

Kerala's tourism industry was on a roll before the pandemic hit, sinking it into an unprecedented crisis in 2020. The LDF government, with its dialogue-based, solution-seeking approach, continues to look for productive ways to revive the industry. An excerpt from an exchange of ideas about the development and future of Kerala Tourism between P. A. Mohamed Riyas, Minister of Tourism and PWD, Kerala and the renowned globetrotter Santhosh George Kulangara

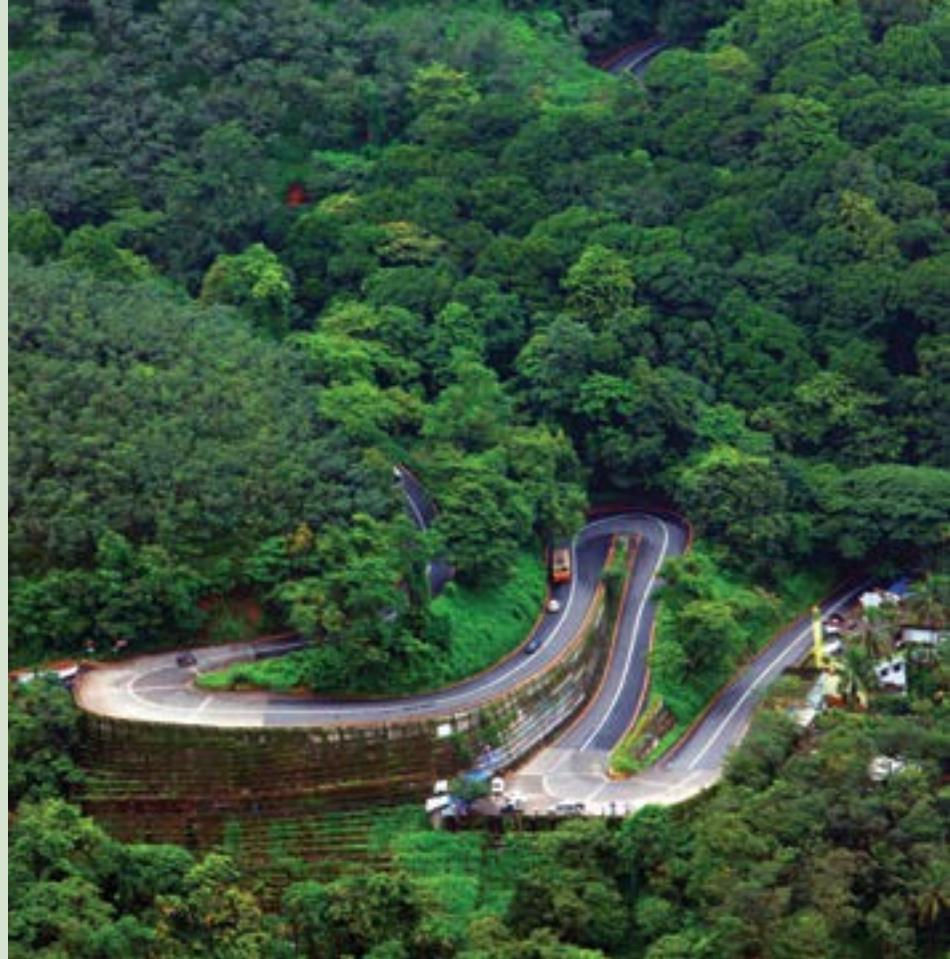
EXCERPTS FROM THE DIALOGUE

- **Minister:** As far as we are concerned, Kerala's tourism will see a hike as soon as this pandemic is over. It is one of the many reasons for this interaction with you.
- One is your experience and secondly, I think the best thing to be given to society is confidence. Tourism is the industry that was most affected by COVID. This industry will stand tall once again, no doubt. To give that confidence,

What we need is a campaign on things that are unique to Kerala. We should make our rural lifestyle also a product of our tourism belt

we believe that exchanging ideas with a personality like yourself will be of great scope. Our approach is to talk to as many people in this field as possible. So thank you for accepting our invitation. I will restrict myself as a listener as much as possible.

Santhosh: The Tourism Department or a Tourism Minister himself asking for an opinion regarding such things cannot be perceived as a small initiative. It is imperative that a willingness to understand and learn new things are the primary steps to attain growth. I am someone who travels with such an attitude. These lessons are for Kerala and its society. Our tourism industry is one that has been handed over to us as a legacy. It has to be handed down to the next generation as well. A youthful person being a part of this government is a blessing. There is a need to change a little from the tourism culture that has been followed. We need to think, what will be the scope of tourism in the world after 20 years? Say after 10 years, where will the brand called Kerala be? We should start our work foreseeing this. Post-Covid, Westerners need to start coming. We need to understand their basic behaviour or psyche. Covid forced a solitary or immobile period for them. These are people who have been wanderers from time immemorial. Sitting at home for two months is unfathomable for them. So when this situation dies down, there will be an



overflow of such travellers. What we need is a campaign on things that are unique to Kerala. We should make our rural lifestyle also a product of our tourism belt. Dishes prepared in our kitchens are delicacies that the Europeans have not even dreamt of. Our rural avocations, like the person tapping toddy, the rubber cultivation sector has many such opportunities. Experiences that these Westerners have never known or felt is real tourism. All over the world, heritage artforms survive only because tourists keep them alive by providing money in exchange for the experience of seeing them. What people should realize is that tourism is not something that depreciates cultural values. It actually augments it. To generate an income-yielding industry, it should become a heritage industry. Every village should get an income from this. It can become a movement. The whole of Kerala should turn into a resort ranging 600kms. Not individual

islands of resorts but one resort.

Minister: There are many unexplored destinations here. An important publication states that one of the 10 least explored destinations in the world is Malabar. When I say Malabar, Wayanad plays an important role in that area. History, culture, as you mentioned before, and different living patterns of people. The cuisine is one of many approaches we are exploring. As part of that initiative, we are putting forward the norm that every panchayat should have at least one destination. We need to add that. So in every panchayat at least one destination. Each district will have a destination map at the next stage, and as you said, a state destination map. These are the things that, for us, are on a drawing board stage.

Santhosh: There are a few things that we need to do. The Government should develop an app for this venture just as you developed an app for PWD. The app would primarily be



to post, suggest destinations, rituals and celebrations, lifestyle, highlights, pictures, probable destinations, and unique lifestyles in the locality of these villagers. Each individual should be able to post these through this app. We can give slots on the app for participating in unique rituals and observing the lifestyle, partaking of the cuisine etc. Like Wikipedia, the natives of that land themselves can edit too.

Minister: When tourists from abroad come to Kerala, the pattern of their visit is very predictable. They just see 4 districts. But that's not Kerala. This is a problem. How can we change that approach?

Santhosh: The opportunity to promote unique experiences through social media should be explored. In other words, popularise those tourists who are coming here to take in the experiences and lifestyles mentioned. Once they witness such encounters, they will spread the news through social media among like-minded travellers. Our diversity of lifestyle, culture, heritage, food are features we can promote. For example, there is a dish called Panam-Kanji in our land where a palm tree's core is turned into a paste. I think it is something that people used to eat when they were going through

rough times. Imagine providing a tourist with the means to videograph this process. The scope of social media is endless.

Minister: We will definitely act on this. If we study the segment of tourists coming from abroad, the most numbers coming to Kerala are from the UK. But China is far closer to us than the UK. If we study tourism statistics in the world, the Chinese are at the forefront. So why are we not able to attract Chinese tourists?

When we say Responsible Tourism, it is very important to bring together everyone in our society. For instance, whenever we go to a country, we return with a souvenir that reminds us of that country or its heritage

Santhosh: We need to identify their taste. Flights from Beijing to Sri Lanka are sold out. When the same flights come to Kochi from Sri Lanka there are fewer passengers. In short, they are not coming to Kerala. They are experiencing the before said,

from Colombo, and returning home. One explanation could be Buddhism. Things that attract the Chinese are differences and similarities in culture. I doubt whether we have done enough presentations regarding these matters in China. A lot of Malayalis go there to import products.

Minister: We can make them our tourist ambassadors.

Minister: We all know the scope of Responsible Tourism. Can you please comment?

Santhosh: When we say Responsible Tourism, it is very important to bring together everyone in our society. For instance, whenever we go to a country, we return with a souvenir that reminds us of that country or its heritage. To put it simply, when you go to the home of a person who has been to Paris, you will find a miniature Eiffel Tower there. That's how we know that he has been to Paris. There is nothing of the sort to exhibit when someone goes from Kerala, which he can showcase in his living room. We can initiate students from our fine arts colleges. We can even have our cuisine made into souvenir sculptures. Secondly, there must be an exhibition. There should be an amphitheatre in every village. There must be a place where all the tourists who are living in different homestays can socialise with each other. The village artistes can perform there in the evenings. There are a few 'Panchavadya' artistes in every village. There are times when they are not busy. If they perform once a week, whenever they are free, they will also earn a living. Then there can be outhouses, constructed adjacent to the houses, as homestays. If there are 50 in a panchayat, when these are occupied, there will be linen that needs to be washed.

There is a scope for employment there, renting cycles is a business as is supplying food. If this is situated near the banks of a river or backwater, even the boatsman will make something extra. Cab drivers can arrange a trip to see Wayanad. So include industries or society in a comprehensive manner.

Minister: You spoke about culinary diversity. Kerala, compared to other states in India, is a very small state. But its menu is far more extensive than any other state in India. How can we use that to grow our tourism?

Santhosh: There are a couple of options. We are slowly losing many of our recipes. For example, tribal dishes like bamboo shoots, which you would find in Wayanad, are very healthy and peculiar dishes. In today's generation, not many people know about it. Why not make these tribal villages tourism destinations? Not just to be exhibited, but for tribals to host tourists. Also, tribals can take them trekking, introduce nature and the forest to these tourists. Tribals would also generate an income as they are running the show. Some can build an encampment similar to that of the tribals, resembling every detail of their village for the tourists. People overseeing everything there should be from among the tribals.

Minister: The brand ambassador is a tribal himself. We have such a legacy in Wayanad.

Santhosh : Second thing, when these tourists come, we all know the most important product at all tourist major destinations is food. Unfortunately, we have not used this source yet. When we go to a resort we eat whatever is served there. Other than that, we don't have a decent food street like in SE Asia and Europe. When eating dinner with thousands of people on a street, it gives out

positive energy. A person never enjoys eating alone. Calicut, Kochi Mattancherry towards Fort Kochi, Trivandrum near Kovalam are places where we can have a food street. The culture of a 'food street' should come here at any cost. We don't have anything engaging to do here after 7 pm. These people are paying money for 24 hours. When a tourist comes here for five days he's spending money for five days and five nights. If he comes to Kerala, he only has the daytime to enjoy. Night time should be for food and exhibiting art forms. When they are strolling down the food street, a performer has the opportunity to perform there. This is what many people say about the life of Europe. That's what these other nations have all copied.

Minister: Our concept of tourism, as I said earlier, is not just about natural beauty, but gives great importance to history as well. Kerala's history is beyond explanation. That history, especially the freedom fight, rebellion against colonisation, numerous cultural movements, how can we help them go forward with tourism hand-in-hand?

Santhosh: A small problem with Kerala's history is that it's in our hearts and classrooms. Its presence is not felt in the urban or rural areas. Where there are historically relevant buildings, they should be made into tourism destinations. Laws should be made to accommodate such a philosophy. History needs to be seen and experienced with examples, otherwise, they will end up as empty words. We can show them Harappa and Mohenjodaro which is why we can assert its relevance and history. What if they were not there?

People would just say we are bluffing.



Minister: As you mentioned about history, there is culture too. In this year's budget, we have announced a Literary Circuit. From Beypore Sultan'Vaikkom Muhammad Basheer's Beypore via Tirur via Ponnani we reach Thrithala. This circuit will keep developing in the future. It could possibly be the first time a Literary Circuit is being taken up in a budget session. How can we develop this?

Santhosh: This should evolve into a cultural circuit for other art forms as well. There should be performances of those art forms. When we arrive at Kazakh, we should feel the stories which were about the place. It should not be just buildings or structures, there should be life and performance. As a result, there will be employment and it will help in the discovery of many artists. We should add performance to this agenda. This will be attractive not



just to foreigners, but to our students, like college students who will start coming here for educational tours. Any tourist destination's primary growth is through the footfall of local tourists. Kovalam wouldn't have attracted foreigners at first. It would have been Malayalis. When we go to the house of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, below that mangosteen tree we should be able to see him. We should hear the music there, the song 'Soja rajakumari' should be what welcomes us there. We should hear him looking inside and calling out. In short, there is an opportunity for audio/video, light and sound, and it should be used for such projects.

Minister: Similarly, we have introduced a 'biodiversity circuit' in this budget. You know, Quilon. What is your viewpoint on that?

Santhosh: I remember travelling through Australia while we were filming 'Sancharam'. We went

to a woody area in an amphibian vehicle where the guides stop near each tree and tell us about the age of a tree and teach us how they calculate it. If we can demonstrate things in such an entertaining manner with guides they should also be a part of our team. People who have studied botany or have a doctorate in the subject should take them up. They should be skilled in communicating. It should not be a stroll in the woods, there should be an element of entertainment. We should be able to show them life in the forest.

Minister: Since you mentioned the PWD portfolio, I'm asking, when we handle PWD there are a lot of encroachment cases. We can actually use this land for tourism purposes. There are architects who can play a major role in them. How can we utilize this opportunity?

Santhosh: When we are constructing a building or structure, the Tourism Department should be responsible for that. We should make sure that whenever we are building something, it should have Kerala aesthetics. When we are travelling and we come across a 200-year-old house we won't move on without enjoying its beauty, we may not even look at the other buildings. Many buildings in Kozhikkode have decayed with time, but the ones that are still there, the ones that are preserved are something that we deem worth going to see for ourselves. We are not supposed to find pride in what the British constructed here. We need to find pride in our ancestral achievements. How will we do that? By giving examples of this sort to the next generation and pumping them up. After two or three generations, they will be doing a job next to a Japanese, Chinese, American or French person. They will be showing us the house their great-grandfather had constructed. In return, what are our children going to show them back? We should have the foresight to see these things.

In the future, the respect a society gains will be on the basis of his ancestry and heritage, not by the amount of money people have. This is something that our people should understand.

Minister: Cleanliness is a very important aspect. Each individual should have the social responsibility of cleanliness around them.

Santhosh: When my home becomes a tourist destination, I am bound to keep it clean. Just like cleanliness, we are not teaching aesthetics to children. Be it cinema, art forms like Kathakali. The reason people underestimate many art forms is that they do not understand many nuances about them. Aesthetics and cleanliness should be part of children's curriculum from a very young age itself.

Minister: Farm tourism has similar scope. Where would you say has the most potential for tourism in Kerala? Which are the unexplored destinations here in Kerala?

Santhosh: North Kerala is unexplored. All locations for cinema shoots happen in Palakkad, but I have seldom seen tourists go there. If a village in Palakkad gives us a feeling of warmth that we see through a lens, why can't we introduce the same and make Western tourists experience it?

We can't change Kerala into what we said, in a day or a month. But what if we can take one panchayat in Kerala and make it a model, in a time frame of say five years, to exhibit that after our plan is up and running. This is how the entire state would look. If it needs to be overseen by an IAS officer then give him the authority. If we can succeed in achieving a feat of that sort, then each panchayat will take the initiative.

Minister: I feel positive about this meeting for the tourism department. Thank you for spending this time with us.

Santhosh: Thank you. ■



Suresh Kondoor

*Managing Director
Contour Holiday Resorts Pvt LTD.*

As a NRI investor in Kerala, we incorporated a Private Limited company called Contour Holiday Resorts Pvt Ltd to explore the tourism and hospitality opportunities within Kerala in the year 2006. KSIDC provided us with the first financial assistance as a loan and had supported us in every step of our growth. Various departments of the Government of Kerala were extremely supportive in clearing all necessary documentation and certifications. We are very thankful to the Government of Kerala for all the support extended.



Vimal Govind MK

*Managing Director | CEO
GENROBOTICS*

We Genrobotics began our journey from Kerala as a hardware startup company, specialized in the development of Robotics & AI. We are focused on building world-class robotic solutions for the healthcare, Oil & Gas and Sanitation Industries. Today, our robotic products are serving over 14 States of India and having a presence in the UAE and UK. Kerala startup ecosystem is a well-established culture for entrepreneurship. Moreover, the startups' development schemes are helping to nurture emerging technologies and noble innovations, which are very attractive as well as suitable for investors to support and build scalable business enterprises. We can proudly say that Genrobotics is backed by frontier change-makers of the Business world like Mr Anand Mahindra, Mr Rajan Anand (Managing Director of Sequoia Capital), Unicorn India Ventures Ltd and Sea Fund.



Dr. Shaijumon C S

Associate Professor of Economics
Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology

A healthy budget for addressing COVID-19 emergency

The vision of development strategy proposed through the budget is “Health above all” or “Health First”. The budget has declared that the economic policy of the government is to ensure equitable healthcare, nutrition and sustainable improvements in employment, income and economic welfare. Major highlight of the budget is the announcements for the Health sector in an unprecedented manner. Finance minister has focused on high spending in Health sector with several projects and plans to boost the public health system for effectively addressing the existing and potential waves of health emergencies. Government has announced the Second Covid Package of

- Rs. 20,000 crore to face the socio-economic and health challenges that are emerging in the backdrop of the second wave. The package includes Rs 2800 crore for health emergency situation, Rs 8900 crore for meeting the crisis due to loss of livelihood and Rs 8300 crore for providing interest subsidy to the loans for economic rejuvenation.
- Along with the announcement of free vaccination for all people of the State, commencement of vaccine research and the creation of industrial ecosystem for medical equipments / consumables, the budget has proposed six new initiatives in the health sector
 - Setting up of isolation wards for contagious diseases in all CHC, Taluk, District and General

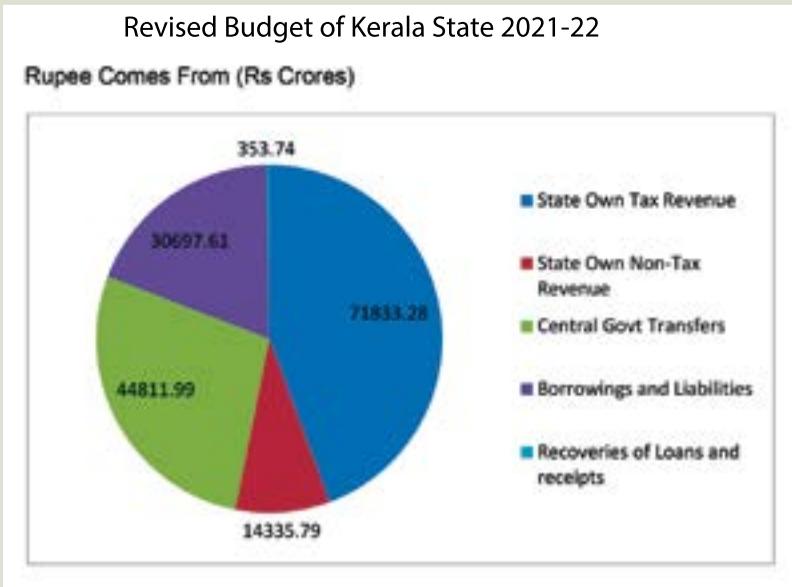
hospitals by using Asset Development Fund of MLAs.

- Convert all Autoclave Rooms in Taluk, District and General Hospitals into Central Sterile Supply Department
- To establish a separate block in every medical colleges for managing contagious diseases
- Paediatric ICU wards in selected District hospitals and Medical colleges
- Proposed to set up a Liquid Medical Oxygen plant with 150 metric ton capacity along with 1000 metric ton reserve storage capacity.
- An institution will set up in the model of Centre for Disease in USA, for medical research and mitigation of contagious diseases.

The thrust areas of health sector in the budget clearly shows the vision of the government to address not only the crisis due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, but also to equip the State for meeting the potential health emergencies due to possible threats of different diseases and thereby the loss of life of people.

Financial Rejuvenation and Agriculture

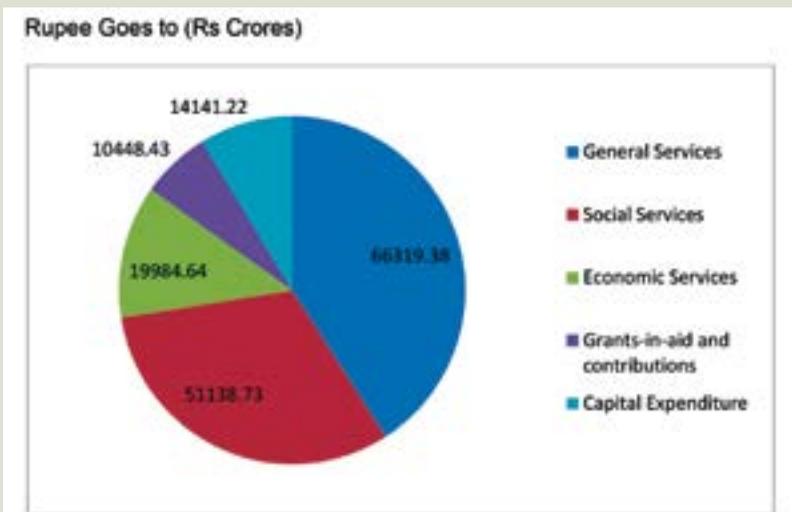
The budget has announced a financial rejuvenation loan scheme through primary cooperative societies and commercial banks for addressing the livelihood crisis due to COVID-19. There are three components to this; Cooperative Initiative for Agriculture Infrastructure in Kerala (CAIK), loan scheme for labour enterprises and loans to Kudumbashree neighbourhood groups. Interest rates for such loans will completely borne by the State and the refinancing schemes of NABARD, loan packages of Centre Govt, Reserve Bank of India etc will be utilised. Improving investment credit in agriculture sector can boost private capital formation, creation of local markets, warehouses, processing units



etc. under the loan scheme for labour enterprises, loans at reduced rates will be made available to start new enterprises in agricultural, industrial and service sectors for rejuvenating the non-operational enterprises. An amount of Rs 100 crore is earmarked for interest subvention.

The budget aims to provide Rs 2000 crores as loans during this financial year for boosting agriculture infrastructure in the State. Making Krishi Bhavans 'smart' and modernisation of Agriculture department for attracting youth to the farms sector and guaranteeing fair price to farmers have emphasised in the budget proposals. Modern technologies

like cloud computing, blockchain, data analytics, artificial intelligence etc will be used to upgrade the distribution of inputs, output, modernising agri-infrastructure and marketing of agriculture products. Five agro parks will be established and funds are allocated for value addition in dairy sector. The budget is also aiming the diversification of farming sector by promoting the cultivation of fruits like rambutan, avocado, dragon fruit, mangosteen etc. and allocated Rs 2 crore for its initial expenses. Finance minister has also allocated funds for building fish processing infrastructure and subsidy for rubber farmers. In the agriculture sector, the Government is focussing on



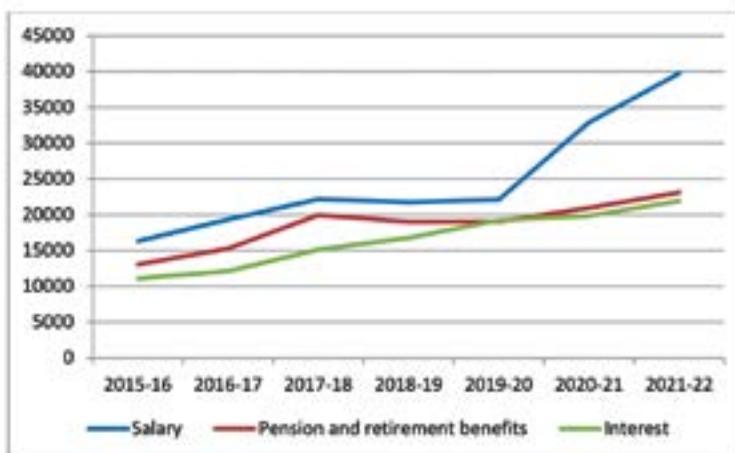
encouraging entrepreneurship, value addition and diversification for enhancing the farmer income at a very substantial level.

Industry, Environment and Tourism

The revised Kerala budget aims to provide concessional loans worth Rs 2000 crores for during this financial year. Entrepreneur support scheme will get Rs 25 crore and another Rs 15 crore is earmarked as margin money and interest assistance scheme for nano industrial housing units' project. The budget also announced a loan scheme for making fuel efficient and eco-friendly electric two wheelers and automobiles to those who engaged in various ordinary jobs like newspaper distributors, fish vendors, retailers, home delivery boys etc. Finance minister has also announced a low interest rate entrepreneurship loan for SC/ST community. He has assured that special attention will be given for rehabilitating about 14,32,736 Pravasias returned to Kerala due to Covid pandemic. The budget allocated Rs 5 crore for the initial phase of Smart Kitchen Project implementing through KSFE for reducing the difficulty in domestic work. It is also proposed to set up a Venture Capital Fund with a corpus of Rs.100 crore to activate the rapid growth of small scale enterprises and start-ups. The fund would be mobilized through the participation of KFC, KSFE, KSIDC, Kerala State Co-operative Bank, Commercial Banks and the deposits of Non-Resident Keralites. The focus of the government is to enhance the industrial base of the State by uplifting local infrastructure with the help of LSGs.

Impacts of global climate changes have affected the State in the form of torrential rains, flood, sea erosion, changes in flow of rivers, changes in crops, etc and it affected badly the livelihood of a large section of people of Kerala. Finance

Trends of Major items of Revenue Expenditure (from 2015-16 to 2021-22) Rs Crores



Minister has announced Rs 500 crores Environment Package for promoting sustainable development and conserving ecology. The storage capacity and the free flow of water bodies of Kerala have been severely affected because of the deposit of silt, clay, sand, waste etc due the recent increase in rain and flood. A comprehensive program has been proposed to protect the banks of canals and rivers, removal of deposits in water bodies to ensure its free flow and carrying capacity, construction of mangrove barriers etc. An amount of Rs 50 crores allocated as initial fund for the package and it will be jointly implemented by the water resources, environment and LSG Departments.

Coastal area is very important for the economy of Kerala because ten percent of national coastal area is in Kerala and nine districts of the State shares it. In the budget, a two-pronged approach has been adopted for coastal development; the coastal conservation and improvement of coastal infrastructure. Bathymetric and hydrographic studies will be conducted for finding out the technologies most suitable to the structure of our coastal areas. Expertise of various institutions to be utilized for formulating the most suitable strategy for coastal

conservation - suitably integrates modern technology along with the financial support of KIIFB for coastal conservation. Eco-friendly Wayside Amenity Centres will be established along with coastal highway project. It is expected that the development package comprising coastal conservation project, coastal highway project and wayside amenity project will provide a huge economic stimulus to the coastal sector. Stakeholder participation and the linking of their livelihood in the coastal development processes, fisheries management, coastal infrastructure, etc are very important for solving the persisting problems of coastal areas.

Tourism constitutes about 10% of GSDP and 24% of the total employment of the State. Covid's second transmission and subsequent restrictions, have wiped out the livelihoods of those in the tourism sector, which is the mainstay of Kerala economy. Government will encourage a responsible tourism approach based on environmental reconstruction, taking the crisis as an opportunity for further progress. Kerala Financial Corporation will provide loan for mobilising more working capital in this sector. A rejuvenation package will be introduced with the help of the government share

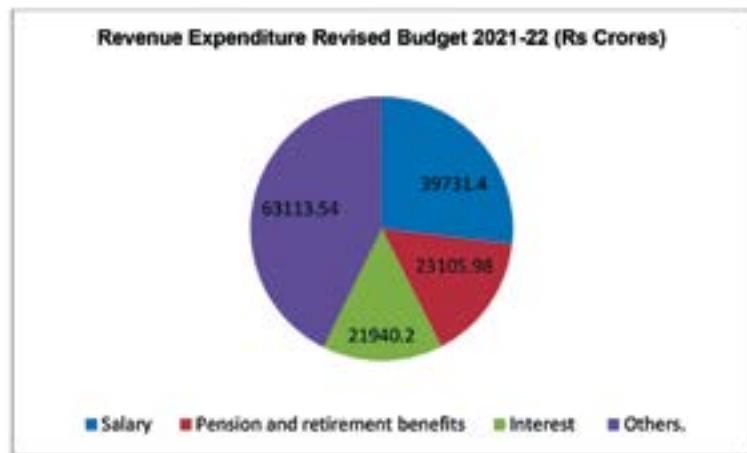
of Rs 30 crore. The priority of the government is to rebuild domestic tourism sector for attracting more international and domestic tourists by the next tourism season. The budget has earmarked Rs 50 crores for introducing Malabar Literary Circuit and Bio-Diversity Circuit.

Education and Knowledge Economy

The revised budget of Kerala has proposed to launch a Knowledge Economy Mission to develop the capacity for knowledge creation in the ongoing knowledge explosion and fourth industrial revolution at the international level. The government aims to rebuild the higher education system to create a new environment in Kerala society with the necessary skills to generate impact in the local and global job sectors. The budget has proposed to constitute a high-power commission to examine the education system and suggest steps to rebuild the education sector to develop capacity for knowledge creation. Kerala Digital Work Force Management System (DWMS) will be expanded by including Kudumbasree as a Sub Mission. K-Disc with the help of global recruitment portals will connect trained job seekers with employers and facilitate their subsequent engagement thereby ensuring the development of the digital platform and the potential for new opportunities. The allocation for 'knowledge economy fund' has increased to Rs 300 crore.

The Government is intended to construct a new Kerala Model of Development by transforming the economy into a knowledge economy through the power of knowledge capital. This will address the twin problem of educated unemployment and slow pace of economic growth. The greatest challenge is to create the necessary skill set for transforming the youth into

Revenue Expenditure of Govt of Kerala (Revised Budget 2021-22)



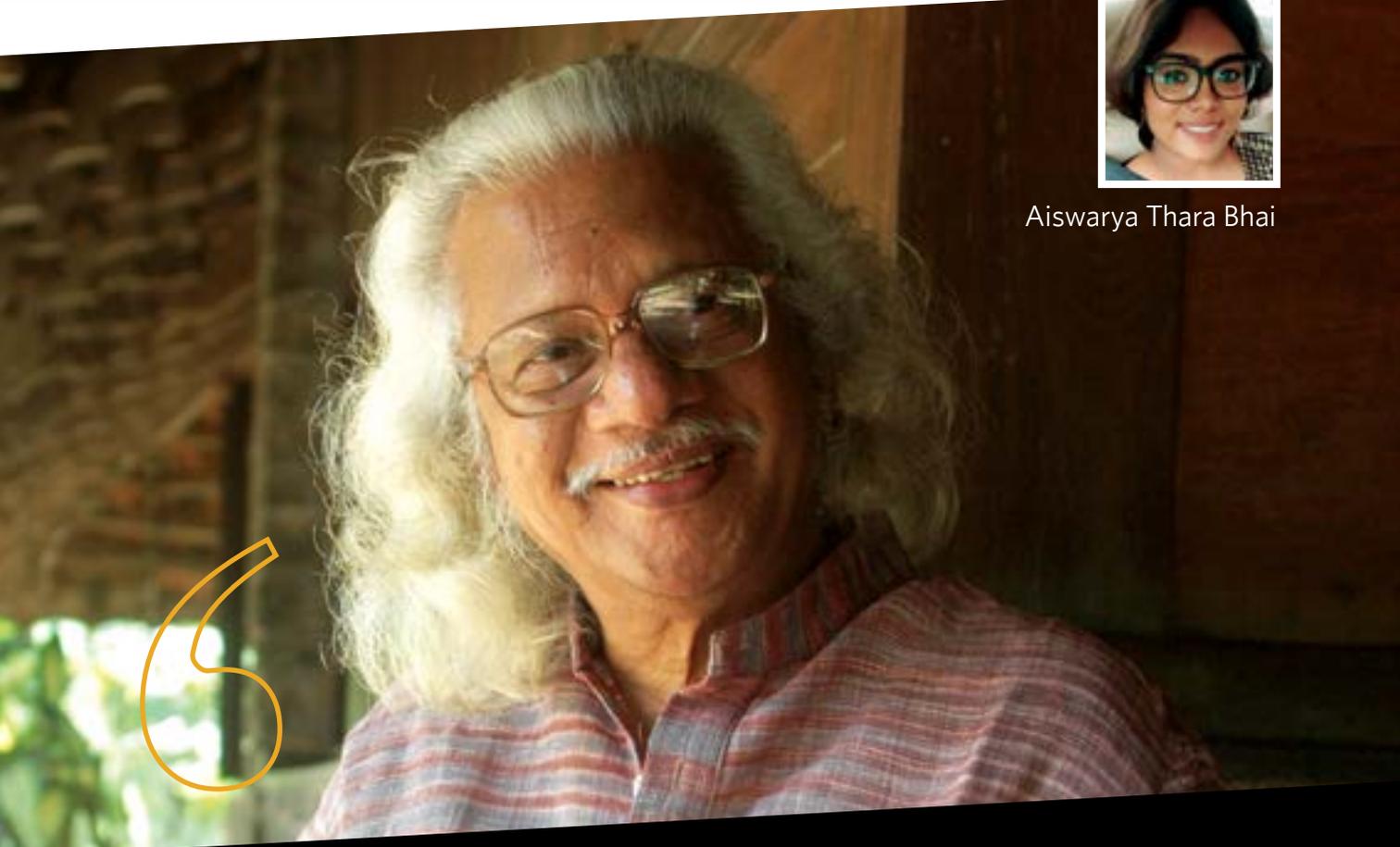
global human resource. Existing governance and institutional structure has to be massively restructured for establishing a knowledge economy in tune to the requirements of global markets. The budget has announced various programs in this direction to create more e-governance and e-filing facilities. Civil supplies department has started increasingly using the e-governance platforms for effectively intervening in the open market. Even though the announcement of tax-free budget is a massive challenge, the government aims to relook its financial position by constructive engagements once the covid emergency situation gets over. Government will formulate the most comprehensive plan for revenue enhancement and expenditure reduction. It is expected that the fourteenth five year plan (2022-23 to 2026-27) of the State will include a detailed action plan in this regard. A well structured and effective Local Self Government system is the distinguishing feature of Kerala for tiding over any exigencies faced by the State including Covid-19. Most of the programs announced in the budget focus LSGs as the key implementing agency. This will help the government to quickly transfer the policies and program for the

benefit of people of all walks of life. They are also having the largest potential for augmenting revenue for the State.

The Revised Budget presented by the finance minister, Shri. K N Balagopal has effectively addressed the changes in dimensions of challenges facing by the Kerala Model of Development due to Covid 19 medical emergency. Along with the challenges, he has realised that this also an opportunity for Kerala economy for addressing the post-Covid requirements of Indian and world economy like, medical tourism, exporting of medical equipments and medicines vaccines, adoption of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, Data Analytics, quantum computing etc. Along with the huge expansion of public expenditure, the government has expressed the vision of creating favourable eco-system for more private investments in the major areas of the economy. In this Budget, the focus of creation of ecosystem means not only the creation of investment friendly environment and support mechanism, but also to transform the education and skill base of the economy along with adequate emphasis of production sectors like agriculture and industry. ■



Aiswarya Thara Bhai

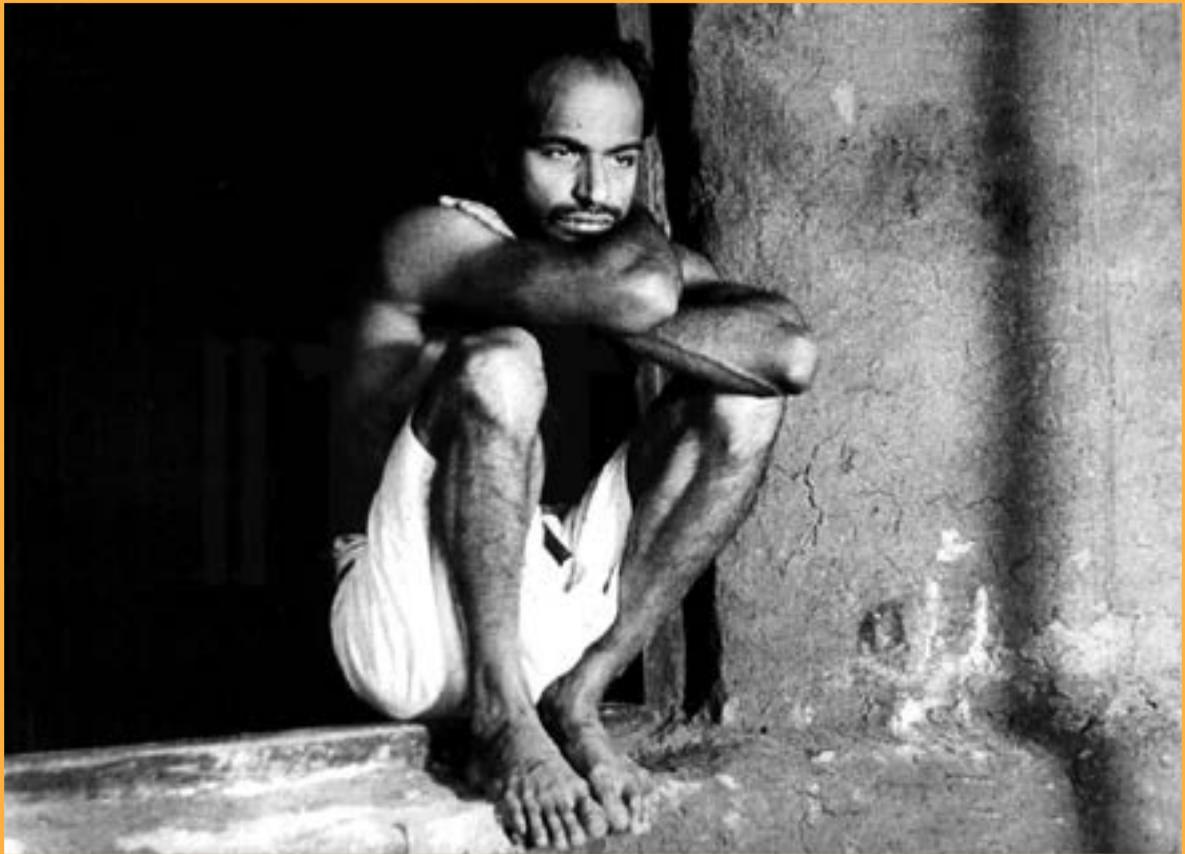


**I don't make 'art' films.
I make films.**

- Adoor Gopalakrishnan

**"Do not try to stop me, O world,
You will not be able to catch me!"**

An eight-year-old Sidhartha proclaimed to the world as he bid adieu to worldly pleasures and exited the stage to thundering applause. It has been 72 years since that fateful evening which gave the world the first hint of the creative genius the boy of eight would grow up to become. Looking back at five decades of his prolific filmmaking career, Adoor Gopalakrishnan shares with us memories and milestones as he celebrates his eightieth birthday.



A scene from Kodiyettam

You played Sidhartha in a school play, aged only eight. What sparked your interest in filmmaking?

I started acting on stage at the age of eight and wrote and directed plays throughout my school and college days. It may look like a natural evolution into filmmaking. It was by sheer chance that I went and joined the film institute. Since I was very interested in theatre, I thought the course in screenplay writing and direction would help me in theatre. I never thought that cinema was going to be my life. It was an accident. The background of theatre helped me. Even today, when an artist asks me for help, I am able to demonstrate it because of my background in theatre.

Your movie, Swayamvaram is still talked about, fifty years after it was made. What makes a filmmaker stand apart from others?

That would be perception. A filmmaker differs from others because of the way he perceives things, even those that escape the ordinary man. I don't illustrate anything. You get things by inference, by suggestion. What popular cinema thinks is that the audience are idiots, that they cannot think for themselves, so they have to show everything, and have to speak about everything. We see a character who will say he's going to do something, then he does it, and then tell the audience that he has done it. When somebody watches my kind of cinema, it makes them think about it. Some people think that the audience don't want to think. I respect my audience. I see them as intelligent beings capable of going beyond what is on the surface. It is also important to me that the audience takes the experience home. My films are not

about a sensational story in the newspaper. Popular cinema sensationalizes things. I want my movies to live beyond the times that it was made. I am very happy when somebody comes and talks about Swayamvaram today, even though it was made fifty years ago. The audience remembers it because it is not the run of the mill that they are used to watching. It is not just storytelling, although it is one level at which it operates. It goes beyond that. It makes you think, experience and participate in it. The whole point is that the film does not end on the screen, it comes home with you.

Why do you think modern filmmakers feel they have to feed the audience everything?

They are not modern. They are commercial filmmakers who are very old fashioned. Just because they are young does not mean



A scene from *Elippathayam*

I don't think there's anything called 'art' films. It is a term wrongly used by many journalists. I don't make art films or commercial films, I make films.

they are modern. They refuse to move beyond the restricted view of their understanding. Whatever they think will bring the audience to the box office, they will do, be it sensational news or crime. They address a non-thinking audience and will tell themselves the audience will never find out. They will show nothing but scenes of violence such as rape and torture. You see so much blood on screen. First, the hero is defeated, he is overwhelmed by the rowdy group. Then he rises up and punishes them. The audience enjoys the villain being tortured, for instance. If you look at it closely, it is a very anti-social act. Torture is anti-social; watching and enjoying it is also anti-social. Slowly, you lose your sensitivity to these things. In both ways, it works. The hero being tortured and returning victorious.

Could it be that the audience wants an escape from their redundant lives to something more exciting?

I think it makes the audience even more tired. What you watch should empower you to face a reality, not to run away from it. You regularly read about girls running away. These are prompted by serials and other media that glorify these things rather than teaching them to face reality. Recently, an educated

girl took her own life due to the dowry incident. Why should she go and stay with her in-laws who were torturing her? Why would parents send her back? A false idea of prestige tells them that if a girl comes back rejecting a marriage, they will be looked at with contempt. Only the girl will be blamed. I would ask every parent, the moment they find the girl is being ill-treated, the relationship should be cut. Young women should finish their education, know what they want to be in life, before thinking about marriage. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness of the importance of this is enhanced by the kind of media we watch, which builds up a sense of false prestige, be it for dowry, be it against rejecting an unhappy relationship for the sake of society.

How receptive is the film industry to change, when it comes to uncompromising art films?

I don't think there's anything called 'art' films. It is a term wrongly used by many journalists. I don't make art films or commercial films, I make films. If you want to qualify the films, then you may call them uncompromising. As for change, it is inevitable. The industry which refuses to change will eventually perish.

An article once wrote about someone who completely dictates every fine detail in your films.

I have worked with very well known actors as well as amateurs who had no experience in theatre or movies. When you are making a film, my casting is done based on the physiognomy of the person, because they have to look into the character. That is fifty per cent of the acting - how you stand,

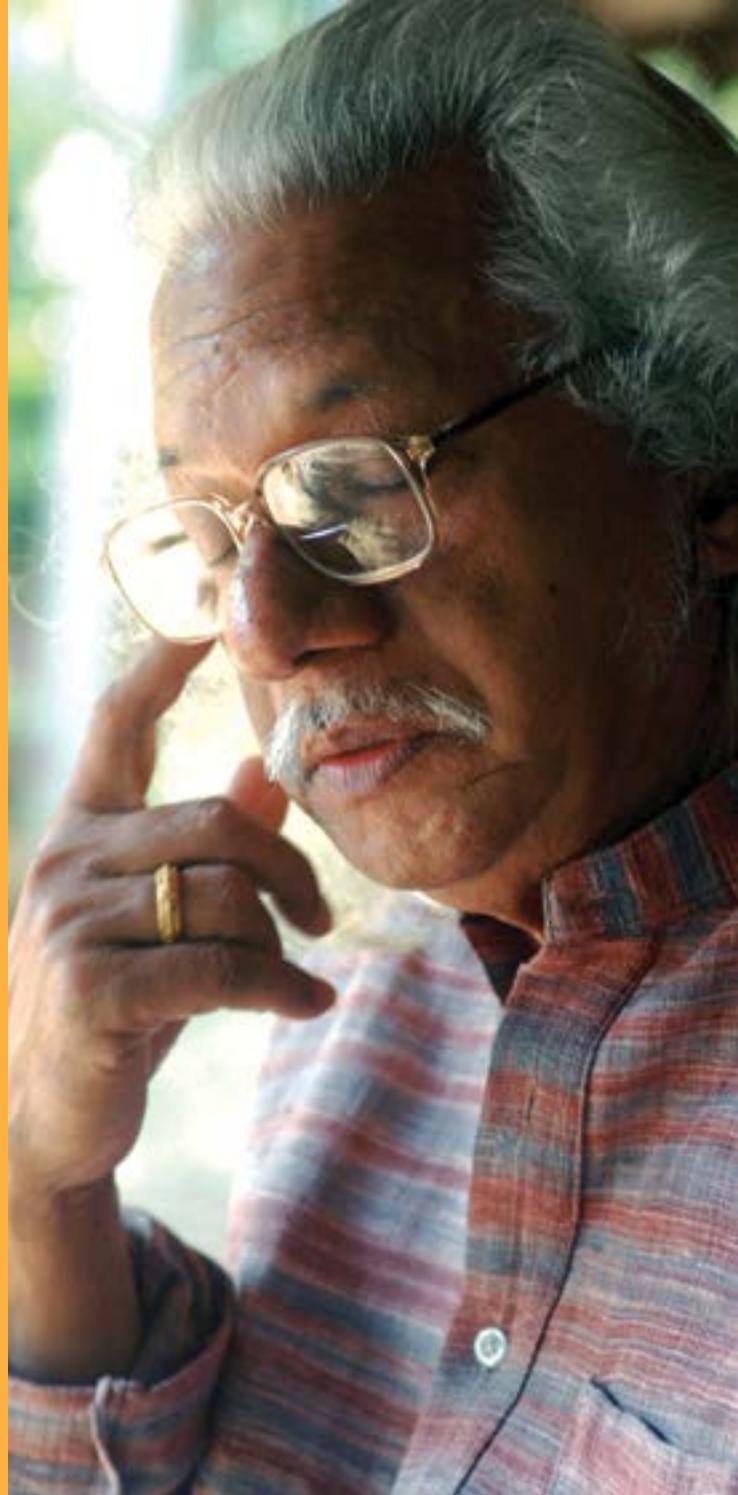
Young women should finish their education, know what they want to be in life, before thinking about marriage. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness of the importance of this is enhanced by the kind of media we watch, which builds up a sense of false prestige, be it for dowry, be it against rejecting an unhappy relationship for the sake of society.

walk, behave and speak. Cinema is not made in chronological order. It is not like theatre, where the actor will emote continuously on the stage according to scenes and sequences. Emotional continuity is not possible in filmmaking because the scenes are shot at different times in different locations. If I have a school in my script, it will appear twice or thrice. During the shooting, I will club all these sequences together, even if they appear at different times in the film. The artist may not be able to make that out. He has no emotional or intellectual continuity on his part. All that is in the filmmaker's mind.

I am not a dictator, rather I work with them. I have excellent relationships with all my artists. I coach the artists myself. If I ask my assistants, they will do it differently. I don't want that. The whole thing is like a symphony and can't have a wrong note go into it. If I allow the actor to do it his own way, it will go against the structure. My actors are not required to do any homework before they come, in fact, I don't even give them the script. Their interpretation can be different from what I have in my mind. You cannot write everything down in the script.

You said that the physiognomy of the actor is very important for you when it comes to casting. Armando Iannucci's The Personal History of David Copperfield and Channel 5's Anne Boleyn have ventured into colour-blind casting. What is your take on it?

I wouldn't do it. Peter Brook's Mahabharata had an international cast. It was okay for a change and novelty. I was in Paris when it first premiered and the production was in French. These are novelties, I believe, and it was a spectacle to watch. Like I said,



for me, the physiognomy is important when casting my characters and I wouldn't do anything different.

How has COVID affected your life? How do you spend your time during these difficult times?

I am confined to the house most of the time. I rarely go out, but I've had the opportunity to catch up on reading and writing. However, I have never felt that I'm trapped inside because even before the pandemic, I've never felt the urge to venture out more than I need to. I've been writing a series on my filmmaking career for Bhasha Poshini, and I spend a considerable amount of time on it each week. ■



Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

Kerala's very own Goddess of Music

Parassala B. Ponnammal was a singer who imparted a unique glow to the history of music in Kerala. She led a noiseless but blessed life for eight decades, at once unseen and ubiquitous.

Parassala B. Ponnammal was a singer who imparted a unique glow to the history of music in Kerala. A quick look at Parassala B. Ponnammal's life is enough to reveal that at a very early age she realized hers was a birth meant exclusively for music. Music was the companion and the salve when she faced difficulties and challenges in her life journey. She was born on 24 November 1924 in Parassala village as the third of A. Bhagavathy Amma and R. Mahadeva Iyer's four daughters. She was trained under a music teacher Paramu Pillai Bhagavathar who lived three miles away. The training lasted two years. Within this time span, Ponnammal studied Sanskrit as well. Sometime during this period, the famous musician Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar happened to hear Ponnammal sing, and offered to take her under his wing. Thus Ponnammal continued her music lessons under his tutelage. At the age of 13, Ponnammal participated in a music competition in Thiruvananthapuram, conducted in connection with the celebration of the birthday of Maharaja Chitra Thirunal, and won the first prize. One of the judges,

Shemmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, appreciated her style hugely. Ponnammal completed her two-year "Gaayika" course at the Music Academy in 1942 with distinction. She was frequently invited to sing at the Akashvani unit at Thiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu, and rewarded with suitable grades from time to time. The favourable reviews her concerts received in Tamil magazines like Kalki and Naradar gradually began to make her famous. The fact that female singers were a rarity in those days also contributed to her renown. It also occasioned invitations to sing at Thanjavur, Chidambaram, Madurai, Mayiladudurai, Dindigul and other places. Besides, when she started appearing at the Navaratri music festival, Sri Rama Navami concert and Tyagaraja Aradhana in Thiruvananthapuram, her fame spread in Kerala as well. This led to more invitations to sing at the Devaswom temples at Sucheendram, Cherthala, Alappuzha, Vaikom and other places. In no time, she was invited to conduct concerts in various parts of India and abroad as well.

Even as Ponnammal's skill as a musician began to grow, a new course named "Ganabhooshanam" was started at the Music Academy. Shemmangudi was the Principal at the time. Ponnammal earned a stipend while attending the course as a member of the first batch of students, and earned the first rank.

When Ponnammal passed the Ganabhooshanam course, there was not a single lady teacher in the college. One day, she received orders appointing her as Assistant Professor at the Music Academy. She had not

The favourable reviews her concerts received in Tamil magazines like Kalki and Naradar gradually began to make her famous.



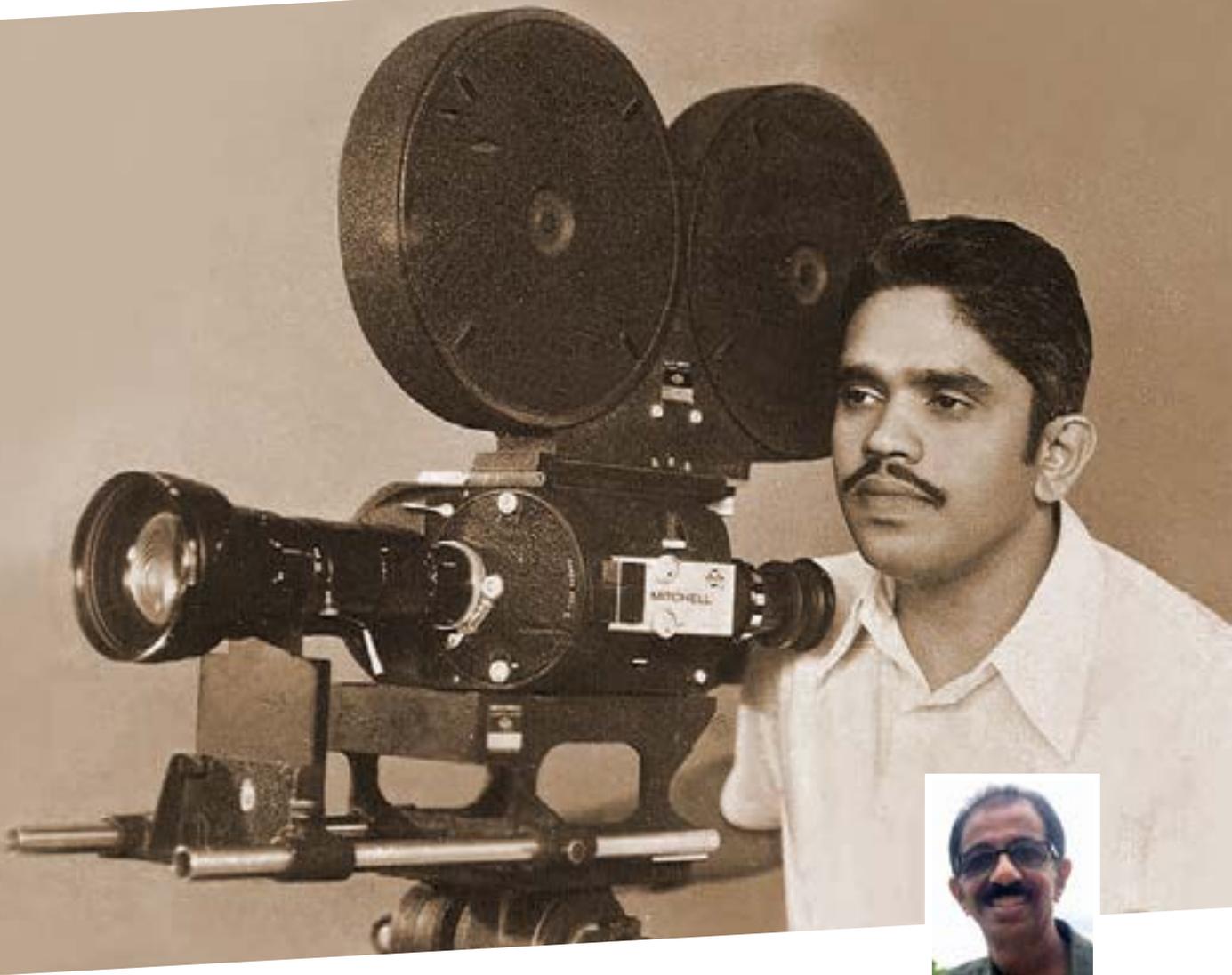
Pratibha Patil presenting the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award-2009 to Smt. Parassala B. Ponnammal for her outstanding contribution to Carnatic Vocal music

even applied for the post! In this manner, Parassala Ponnammal became the first lady teacher at the Music Academy. In 1970, Parassala Ponnammal took charge as the Principal of R. L. V. School of Music and Fine Arts at Thrippunithura, and retired from there a decade later.

From the very beginning, Parassala Ponnammal was a votary and practitioner of the traditional style of Carnatic music. But even when she followed the Shemmangudi school, she nurtured her spirit of creative independence at the technical level. In 2006 when Parassala Ponnammal sang at the Navaratri Mandapam in Thiruvananthapuram, a 177-year-old edifice of patriarchal tradition was razed to the ground. This was for the first time that a female voice was being heard at the Navaratri concert. Accompanying her were S. R. Mahadeva Sharma on the violin, Nanchil Arul at the mridangam, and Udupi Shridhar at the ghatam. Her rendition of Swati Thirunal's composition "Devi Jagat Janani" in Shankarabharanam raga inaugurated the year's nine-day-long Navaratri concert festival. Among the numerous awards

In 2006 when Parassala Ponnammal sang at the Navaratri Mandapam in Thiruvananthapuram, a 177-year-old edifice of patriarchal tradition was razed to the ground. This was for the first time that a female voice was being heard at the Navaratri concert.

she received, the major ones are Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award, Kendra Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award and Padma Shri. Our culture reveres music as a goddess. Yet the kingdom of music is ruled by gods. It is certainly a relief to spot a couple of goddesses here and there, like Bangalore Nagaratnamma, Subbulakshmi, Pattammal, Vasanthakokilam, Vasanthakumari, Sreerangam Gopalaratnam and others, whom we admire. And among these luminaries, Kerala has installed her very own goddess of music - Parassala B. Ponnammal. ■



M.K.Vivekanandan Nair
Former I&PRD official

Chosen click

'Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby' – George Bernard Shaw

Sivan saw the subtle beauty of things he photographed. He saw it in the least unexpected time and place. And that made him unique

The life sketch of Sivasankaran Nair, who later became famous as Sivan, is an iconic representation of what Bernard Shaw said decades ago. He made a living by his hobby or passion, photography. Born in Harippad and was brought to Thiruvananthapuram when his mother got an opportunity to work as the music teacher of Kowdiar palace, the residence of the king of erstwhile Travancore. The rest of his life was fused with the cultural and political activities of Thiruvananthapuram. The passion for photography was latent in the dreams of Sivan when he reached Thiruvananthapuram. But he could not get an opening to flourish it. His search to learn photography ended at last when he could get an entry in Paramount Studio



He knew composition is everything in photography and also he was well aware of the importance of lighting, storytelling and emotion in a photograph

in Thiruvananthapuram, which was owned by the children of former Chief Secretary Mahadeva Iyer. What he accomplished later was achieved through hard work, dedication, discipline and foresight.

His passion for photography could not tie him up inside the four walls of the studio. He was keener on landscape and news photography. He got an opportunity to take a real-life photograph when he clicked the photograph of a group of nomads settled at Thampanoor. He sent the photograph to the



Mathrubhumi and the editor N.V.Krishna Warriar published it. That was his debut and since then he slowly became prominent as a photographer. The inherent qualities that allow a photographer to see beauty in the most unexpected places and capture that beauty in a photograph were inherent in his talents. He knew composition is everything in photography and also he was well aware of the importance of lighting, storytelling and emotion in a photograph. Even the tiniest detail can make or break a photograph. So having an eye for detail, and being meticulous when scrutinizing every single element to ensure cohesiveness, is very important in producing the perfect photograph. These qualities are reflected in his photographs. His black and white images portray nature in a unique and mesmerizing way. He is known for his realistic approach, which involves precise exposure, sharp focus and high contrast. Sivan knew the secret that due to man's visual acuity and the need to "see is to believe," photography acts as one of the most powerful tools in communication. Photography puts a direct and literal view on a certain topic that does not even need any explaining. Knowing well this theory is also relevant to moving pictures, such as films, he embarked on the film industry with a new vision and confidence.



Sivan drew attention in the film world as the still photographer for the 1965 classic Chemmeen, directed by Ramu Kariat based on the novel of the same name by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.

Sivan drew attention in the film world as the still photographer for the 1965 classic Chemmeen, directed by Ramu Kariat based on the novel of the same name by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. He directed the movies Abhayam, Kesu, Yagam, Kilivathil, Kochu Kochu Mohangal and Oru Yathra. He also produced the movie Swapnam in 1973, which holds a prominent position in Malayalam



Film history. Abhayam bagged National Award in 1991 in the Children’s film category. He had won the National Award thrice.

He was the first government press photographer in Travancore and Thiru-Kochi. At the time of the first President rule in the state, a group of pressmen were sent in a Double Decker bus across the state by the government to write reports. Sivan was sent along with them to take photographs for them. As a press photographer, he captured several historic moments, including the swearing-in ceremony of the first Ministry in Kerala led by E. M. S. Namboodiripad in 1957. As no photographer except Sivan was available in those bygone years, sometimes his availability decided the time of inauguration, flag hoisting etc.

Sivan’s Studio, which he established at the Thiruvananthapuram Statue junction in 1959 was

- very popular and a known hub for cultural affairs.
- The studio is known to have chronicled the history of Kerala. The photos displayed and kept there would tell us very exciting stories; sometimes even unheard ones. Sivan Studios was a hub for political giants and cultural stalwarts. Hot coffee welcomed the visitors, who gathered there, who discussed various subjects, renewed friendship and sometimes even new films had taken birth there.
- He had paved a path to be tracked by the posterity. His sons Santhosh Sivan (Cinematographer and filmmaker), Sangeeth Sivan(Director) and Sanjeev Sivan(Director) are renowned figures in the Indian film industry. He also has a daughter, Sarita Rajiv who is married to the son of playback singer K.P.Udayabhanu.
- Sivan - Whose life was an inspiration; whose contribution a pointer to success. ■



Swami Prakashananda

The torchbearer of Sree Narayana philosophy



Former president of the Sivagiri Mutt and one of the oldest spiritual leaders of the State, Swami Prakashananda passed away at the age of 99 at Thiruvananthapuram. As an eminent spiritual leader, he took efforts in popularising the noble thoughts of Sree Narayana Guru. He was one of the longest-serving presidents of the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.

Swami Prakashananda had significant role in transforming Sivagiri Mutt into a globally-acclaimed spiritual center. His enormous contributions to propagate the ideals and visions of the Guru are remarkable. He had been known for his simplicity, uncompromising devotion, selfless service and determination. Swami Prakashananda had come to Sivagiri at the age of 23 and had undergone studies in Vedic and Sree Narayana philosophy •

Baselios Marthoma Paulose II

Charismatic leader and saint



A great charismatic spiritual leader and Supreme Head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, passed away at the age of 74. He was a true and charming personality who always stood for his faith and beliefs throughout his life. Baselios Marthoma Paulose II was an epitome of patience and fortitude. His leadership quality and patience has given rays of hope and positivity to group of people who had firm beliefs in their own spirituality. He led the Malankara Orthodox Church through one of its most difficult times also. Because of these reasons Baselios Marthoma Paulose II has become a great spiritual leader among the believers and common people also. Born on August 30, 1946, in Mangad village near Kunnankulam in Thrissur district he was inducted as a priest in 1973. At the age of 36, Malankara Syrian Christian Association elevated Fr Paul as Bishop. On May 15, 1985, he was consecrated as Episcopa (bishop) with the name Paulose Mar Milithios. Afterwards, he was appointed as the first Metropolitan of the newly formed Kunnankulam Diocese on August 1, 1985. •

P.K. Warriar

The doyen of Ayurveda



P.K. Warriar, the most renowned personality in Ayurveda passed away at Kailasa Mandiram, the headquarters of Vaidyaratnam P.S. Warriar's Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal, Dr. Warriar played a pivotal role in making the fields of Ayurveda elevate to new heights and glory. He was internationally acclaimed physician in Kerala's ayurvedic history invites no parallel. His book titled Smrithiparvam won the Kerala Sahitya Academy award for the best autobiography in 2009. Its English translation titled The Canto of Memories was also received by the mass. Apart from Ayurveda, this book throws light to various aspects such as diplomacy, management, politics, arts and culture. He was elected president of the all India Ayurvedic congress twice. As chief physician of Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, Dr. Warriar treated a long array of VVIPs in the country, including Presidents and Prime Ministers. •



AMOJ JACOB
4 x 400 m Relay



ALEX ANTONY
4 x 400 m Relay



NIRMAL NOAH TOM
4 x 400 m Relay



MUHAMMED ANAS Y
4 x 400 m Relay



M SREESHANKAR
Long Jump



IRFAN K T
20 km Race Walk



M. P JABIR
400 m Hurdles



SREEJESH P R
Hockey



SAJAN PRAKASH
Swimming



Sanil P Thomas
Sports Journalist

The 'Nav Ratna's from Kerala

Nine athletes from Kerala have found their berths in the 120 Indian squad to the Tokyo Olympics. Just one fewer than the Rio Olympics in 2016

It's a triumph over adversity for any athlete who made it to Tokyo. And, nine Keralites got into the Indian squad of 120. Just one fewer than Rio 2016. But this time no Kerala woman could grab a berth. This was the first time since Moscow 1980 where P T Usha made her Olympic debut that the Indian Olympic squad took off without a Malayali woman athlete. Other than hockey goalkeeper P. R Sreejesh who has his third Olympics and swimmer Sajjan Prakash who



So once again most of our Olympians got a village background. It must add more courage as we notice it in athletes from Kenya, Nigeria etc.

takes part in his consecutive second Olympics the other seven are track and field stars. K.T Irfan for 20 km walk, M SriSankar for long jump, M. P Jabir for 400m Hurdles, Amoj Jacob, Alex Antony, Noah Nirmal Tom and Muhammed Anas all one lap runners got in to relay teams. Irfan who finished a surprise 10th in London though got qualified for Rio as well couldn't find a berth in the three slots. Mohammad Anas was there in Rio too.

Kerala's Olympic connection started with C. K Lakshmanan way back in 1924 where he took part in high hurdles. From 1972 onwards Keralite athletes

were among the elite class of Indian track and field. And, in between, we had a few Olympian footballers.

Other than Amoj Jacob who was brought up in Delhi and Sajan in Tamil Nadu all else are groomed in Kerala.

Sajan's mother Shantimol was a former national athlete, Sri Sankar's father Murali who himself has been coaching Sri, and mother K. S Bijimol are former athletes. Murali was a triple jumper and Bijimol a middle-distance runner.

Sajan hails from Thodupuzha, Sreejesh from Kizhakkambalam, Ernakulam.

SriSankar belongs to Palakkad, Muhammad Anas is from Nilamel, Kollam. Noah hails from Chakkittapara, Kozhikode, Jabir from Aanakkayam, Mudikkattu, Malappuram and Irfan from Areekode, Malappuram. Alex Antony comes from Pulluvila, Thiruvananthapuram. Amoj Jacob from New Delhi, got his family roots in Ramapuram Pala.

So once again most of our Olympians got a village

It's a triumph over adversity for any athlete who made it to Tokyo. And, nine Keralites got into the Indian squad of 120. Just one fewer than Rio 2016.

background. It must add more courage as we notice it in athletes from Kenya, Nigeria etc. The rural culture might have strengthened them physically and mentally. But the training and exposure are different. How much they got exposed in such a competitive world is the question. COVID-19 too did a lot of trouble and anxiety rather.

In a changed sporting world, where uncertainty is the rule, we must adjust to the new normal. And how much our athletes could, will be answered in Tokyo. Don't keep much expectation. Let them do their life best. All the best. ■

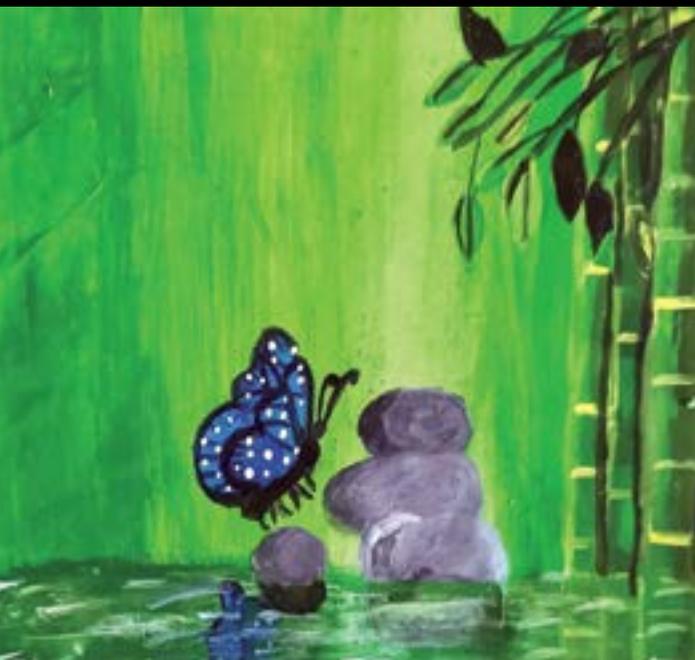
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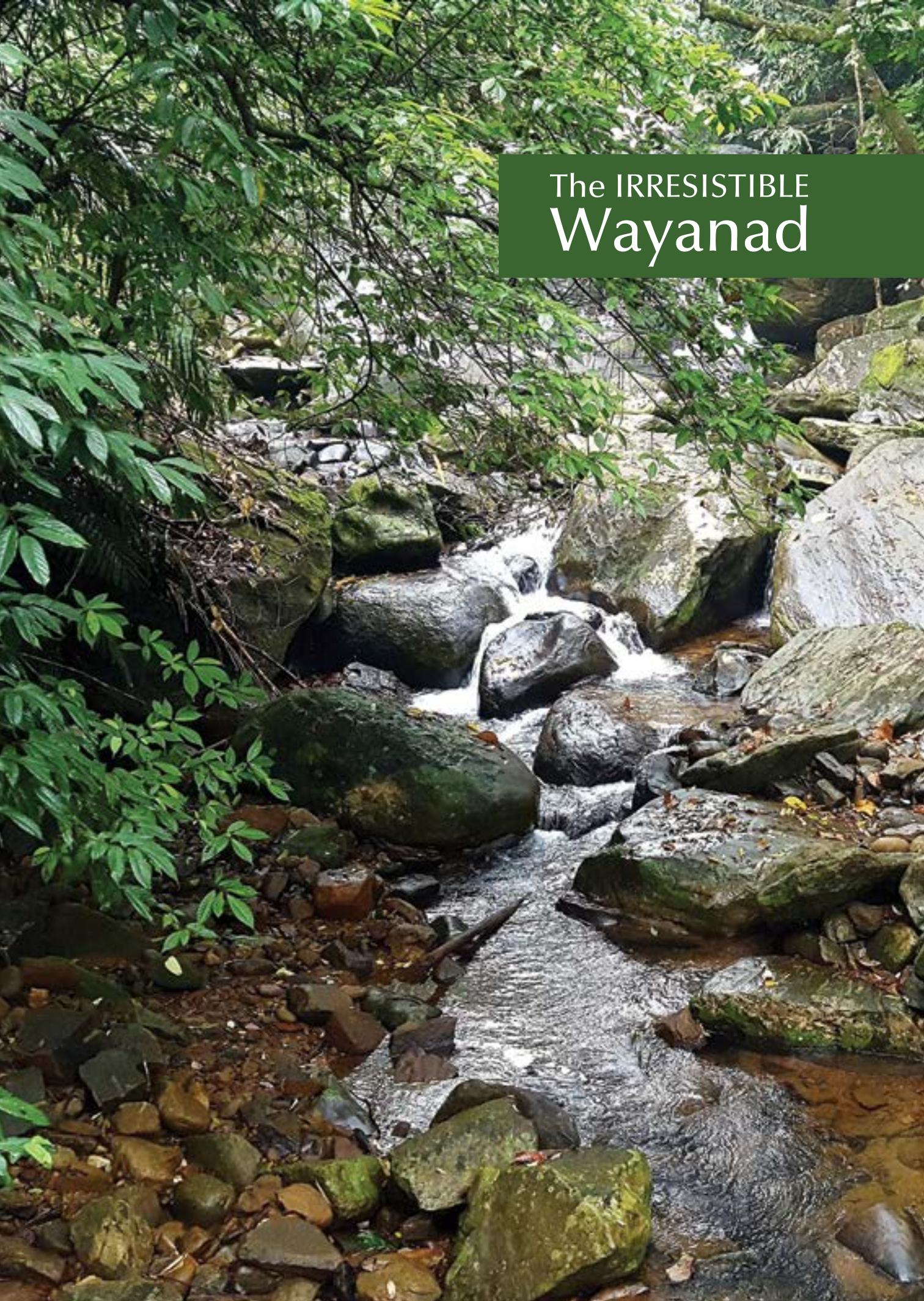
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