

KERALA CALLING

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2021 March 01



THE
UBIQUITOUS
PINK

DO NOT NEGLECT THEM!

When we assemble to battle the COVID-19 virus, we must remember the vulnerable amongst us. The needs of the elderly population should not be neglected when we raise our defences against the pandemic. All of us have the responsibility to support them as they are placed in reverse-quarantine.

Well-lit rooms with good ventilation should be selected for those entering reverse-quarantine.

- Necessary medicines should be stockpiled.
- Magazines and newspapers should be provided for recreational purposes.
- They should be provided with a healthy, balanced diet.
- The elderly should be assisted in availing of telemedicine and Sanjeevani services for continuing any treatment they are undergoing.
- Family members should also try to do daily exercises with them.
- If possible, make sure they have access to a TV, mobile phone, laptop and other devices for communication.
- Anyone with a cough, cold, fever and those who are at risk of infection should NOT come in contact with those undergoing reverse-quarantine.
- It is very important to provide the elderly with love, care and unconditional support as they go through this period.

Don't forget to follow



Social distancing, Mask, Soap!

NO LONGER IN PATRIARCHAL SHACKLES

When the world celebrates Women's Day amidst the Covid 19 induced issues, the women in Kerala have many reasons to be proud of.

Although much is there still to achieve, many rights have been attained and her stupendous journey is thriving on. From being the outdated stereotype, she blazed up to the world of opportunities and conquered male bastions, which were once thought to be impregnable.

The State can be proud of its women in a wide spectrum of scenarios including social, political, arts and literature. Many are at the helm of affairs even internationally. No introduction is needed to the name Priyanca Radhakrishnan, who made all Malayalis proud by becoming the first-ever Indian-born minister in the New Zealand cabinet.

The presence of women in the Kerala literary scenario 50 years back was 'a few', though there was an astounding rendition in writing from those 'a few'. The literary scene in the past could have been studded with lustrous contributions from more women writers, had they been given much freedom and opportunities. There must have been undiscovered women 'gems' in literature in that era.

The contemporary Malayalam literature showcases many women luminaries in its wide horizon. Today in Malayalam literature, the presence of women is spell-binding. They are breaking the centuries-old

shells imposed upon them, and speaking about their real life, sexuality, interests and dreams. Kerala Calling features an informative article on the contemporary women writers of prominence, which will surely promise an interesting read. An array of articles and features on subjects relating to women and general ones, penned by leading women writers is the hallmark of this edition.

Malayalam poetry lost one of its endearing poets, Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri last month. An obituary, written by noted critic P.N. Gopikrishnan opens a wide window to the ever-shining personality and poetry of the departed poet.

The State is heading towards the Assembly polls next month. We are slowly recovering from the pandemic Covid 19 and much vigil is needed from our part at the polling booths. The Election Commission has issued guidelines on how to cast votes in these circumstances. An informative article on this is included.

Apart from these, the magazine offers a wide range of articles on general subjects as well. March is the harbinger of the summer season with a looming drought is in the offing. Articles on water conservation and heat waves are, to be sure, enlightening to the readers.

S. Harikishore IAS

Editor-in-Chief

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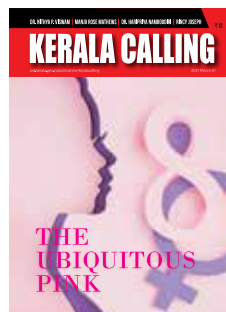
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*Associate Professor, Department of Politics,
University of Kerala*

ALL SET FOR A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION

Kerala has had an enviable history of conducting fair and free elections. The state of Kerala, formed on 1 November 1956, has been in the forefront of a variety of democratic experiments. Despite the existence of political parties with divergent ideologies, an orderly and rule-bound politics prevails in the state.

Election to the 15th Kerala Legislative Assembly is scheduled to hold on April 6, 2021. The number of polling booths in Kerala has been increased from 21,498 to 40,771 for Assembly elections 2021 primarily to limit the number of electors in a booth to 1000 to comply with COVID-19 guidelines.

The Election Commission of India, taking into consideration the specific situations, issues necessary guidelines for the conduct of election from time to time. It is challenging to conduct the 15th Assembly election in Kerala as per the COVID-19 guidelines. The Commission has issued an elaborate set of general guidelines to be followed during the entire election processes for all persons. It is stipulated that every person shall wear face

masks and social distancing shall be maintained as per the extant COVID-19 guidelines of the State Government and Ministry of Home Affairs.

The number of electors in a polling station is limited to 1000 instead of 1500

Flawless arrangements

The Commission has made arrangements to conduct as many election activities such as nomination forms, affidavits, submission of security deposit etc. through online mode. The Commission restricts the number of persons accompanying candidates for submission of nomination and the number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination to two. There are special directions to conduct all the election activities in sufficiently spacious premises so that social distancing is maintained. Large gathering of people, in relation to election activities

Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceeded against as per the provisions of the law.

are discouraged by the Commission. The number of electors in a polling station is limited to 1000 instead of 1500. The Commission has issued detailed instructions for assured minimum facilities at each polling station which include mandatory sanitization of Polling Station, provision for sanitizer and thermal scanner at the entry and exit point of every polling station, thermal checking of voters every polling station location, and marker to demonstrate social distancing for queue. Arrangements are also made for COVID-19 patients and those who are quarantined to cast their vote between 6 PM and 7 PM in Kerala. All political parties and candidates are to follow all extant COVID-19 guidelines in election



campaign. Accordingly door to door campaigning is limited to a group of five people including the candidates and onroad shows the convoy of vehicles should be broken after every five vehicles instead of 10 vehicles.

Grounds earmarked for public gathering should have clearly marked entry and exit points, there should be markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees in such grounds, the number of attendees in meetings shall not exceed the limit prescribed by the State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings, the political parties and candidates concerned should ensure that all COVID-19 related requirement like face masks,

Braving the Covid pandemic, all arrangements are made by the Election Commission for the successful conduct of the 15th Assembly election in Kerala

sanitizers, thermal scanning etc., and all health related regulations are to be followed in such activities. Regarding counting of votes not more than 7 counting tables should be allowed in a counting hall, should avoid accommodation of large number of counting agents, counting centers shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting and postal ballots may also be counted in a separate hall. Strong room should be sanitized before the storage of polled EVMs and social distancing to be followed in such arrangements. In the context of covid -19, postal vote is extended to covid patients, those in quarantine, differently-abled and voters above the age of 80. Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceeded against as per the provisions of the law. Thus, braving the covid pandemic, all arrangements are made by the Election Commission for the successful conduct of the 15th Assembly election in Kerala. This is a pointer to the importance and seriousness we attach to the conduct of free and fair elections in our country. ■



Dr. Nithya P. Viswam
Assistant Prof. of Malayalam, SN College, Varkala.

FEMINIST EMBERS IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYALAM LITERATURE

The works of women in the field of contemporary Malayalam literature present a plethora of styles that are as strong and diverse as the range of knowledge and creativity they exhibit. Our women writers are able to keep up with changing trends in imaginative writing, thanks to meticulous homework and preparation.

Women's Day of 2021 provides an excellent opportunity to take stock of both women's writing and writings about women. What is gratifying to note is that even during these times, when the fear of the pandemic and the challenge posed by social distancing loom large over the horizon, the creative Malayali woman has not wilted. Rather, she has surged forward in the

artistic field. The ability to convert even the most unfavourable set of circumstances to her advantage and to virtually customize it with the help of her will power is truly a mark of feminine ingenuity.

The first name that comes to mind on this occasion is that of the recently deceased writer, Sugathakumari who exuded the pious fragrance of sandalwood in the field of Malayalam poetry. By taking a very firm stand on women and environment, speaking as well as writing strongly about them, and intervening on their behalf, she created ripples in society and became a force to be reckoned with. This was how she portrayed womanhood:

For you to kick, and sometimes to worship,
To generally scorn, and to abandon,
To walk with, interlocking hands for support,
To feed children against the trembling breast -
Hers alone, this fate!

A drop of vermilion on her forehead,
Moonlight-smile on her pale lips,
Eternal lighthouse in her heart.

All the poems written by Vijayalakshmi, the author of "Thachante Makal" are of excellent quality. Though not with regular frequency, she



Vijayalakshmi

nevertheless makes her poetic presence known through her uniquely grand and sweet style. As a poet she is powerful enough to distil the oceans of woman-experiences into her inkpot, as her major works like "Mrigashikshakan," "Ubhayalingam," "Bhaagavatham," "Kaala," "Kausalya" and others attest. "Sleep not, at dawn it's your turn" - this is spirit of eternal vigil that forms the pith of Vijayalakshmi's poetry.

Savithri Rajeevan is a poet who has portrayed the different dimensions of femininity through her much-discussed works like "Prathista," "Ammaye Kulippikkumbol" and others. It has been observed that her poems show how the woman thinks and survives in a male-dominated society.



Savithri Rajeevan

The poems of V. M. Girija caught the attention of people for her unique presentation of the woman and the environment as separate entities.



Sugathakumari

"Pranayam Oru Album," "Paavayoonu" and "Pennungal Kaanaatha Paathiraanerangal" are some of her much-acclaimed works.

There have been many substantial women writers in Malayalam in the fields of literary studies, memoirs and criticism

The attractive hallmarks of Rosemary's poetry are extraordinary simplicity and innate radiance. Her works titled "Vaakkukal Chekerunnidam,"



Rosemary

"Chaanjupeyyunna Mazha" and "Venalil Oru Puzha" are assets to Malayalam poetry. She has also penned memoirs and published translations.

Poems like Girija Pathekkara's "Penkondan", Arya Gopi's "Uriyaadum Kaalathe Pennungal", Ashwathy M. P.'s "Padachol" and Bindu Krishnan's "Mailaanchiyamma" are works that carry the badge of a modern sensibility.

Vijayarajamallika is the first transgender woman poet in Malayalam. Her poetic anthologies include "Aan nadi" and "Pennaayavalude Kavithakal". Her autobiography titled Mallikaavasantham has the potential to reorient the average Malayali's thoughts about identity.



Girija Pathekkara

Sushama Bindu, Indulekha, Indira Ashokan, Nafeesath Beevi and Rosy Thampi are writers who have carved out separate niches for themselves



in the contemporary literary scene by recording the different dimensions and resistances of feminism in their poems. Intermixing subjects like womanhood, Nature, freedom and resistance, Sindhu K. V. has made a mark in the cyber world also.

The other prominent poetic voices are Roshni Swapna, Anitha Thampi, E. M. Suraja, Lopa, Aryambika, Srilatha Varma, Kala Sajeevan, Ragila Saji, Ashalatha, Kanimol, Sandhya E., Vijila Chirapad, Neetu C. Subramanian, Nithya S. and Anjali Violet. Sandhya E. and Suraja have won the Edassery Award, and Neetu C. Subramanian, the Vyloppilli Award for poetry. Most of these writers are very actively present in mainstream media, parallel publications and the cyber world as well. Roshni Swapna's skill effortlessly ranges over various artistic fields like poetry, short story, novel, criticism and painting. And what sets Sandhya E. apart is not merely that she has won prizes for her poetry and short stories. More importantly, her works have a magnetic quality that comes from a combination of casual beauty and profound thought.



Sandhya E.

There is a strong female presence among the Sahitya Akademi awardees too this year - Sajitha Madhathil for her performance in the play titled "Arangile Matsyagandhikal" and Jisha Abhinaya in "Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani?" Sreeja K. V. belongs to the same league as she is a scintillating presence in theatre, adept at acting, directing and writing plays. The G. N. Pillai Endowment Award for scientific literature was bagged by C. S. Meenakshi for her book titled "Indian Bhoopada Nirmaanathinte Vismaya Chithram". This year's Thunchan Memorial Essay Award was given to E. M. Suraja.



E. M. Suraja.

In the field of short story, K. Rekha, Jisa Jose, Shahina E. K. and Priya A. S. have ploughed new and



K.Rekha

different furrows. Their works show originality and inventiveness in both form and treatment. K. Rekha seems to have virtually established monopoly over the genre of short story with her Angamaliyile Maangakkariyum Villuvandiyum Mattu Kathakalum. Jissa Jose's latest stories are "Irupathaam Nilayil Oru Puzha," "Sarva Manushyarudeyum Rakshakkuvendiyulla Kripa," "Maranathinte Thaakol" and others. Yama's "Paalam Kadakkumbol" and Priya A. S.'s "Mrinmayam" also captured the attention of short story lovers.



Shahina E. K.

Shahina E. K. the short story writer came to the limelight last year with an anthology titled Godardum Yakshikathakalum and a short story titled "Ullaalalooa Vayya". Linga Samathwam,

Touch Screen and others are wonderful anthologies of short stories authored by Sheeba E. K. Last year also saw Sandhya E. establish herself in the world of short stories with her "Anantharam Charulatha". As the author of many collections like Ammayullathinaal, Kaikudannayile Buddhan, Ee Mazhayude Oru Karyam Padikal Kayarunna Penkutti, 4 D, Perillavandikal, Sandhya has won several awards and honours. Stories like "Kanakadurga" by Mini P. C. and "Kumarankaattu" by Sudha Thekkemadathil are also meaty stories.

However, the women writers' contribution to the genre of the novel last year was rather meagre. The most discussed work was R. Rajashree's Kalyaanivyudeyum Daakshaayankiyudeyum Katha.



R. Rajashree

It lends itself to discussions on the concepts of nation, identity, language, survival, etc. The other notable novels published last year were Sreelatha K. S.'s Manalmozhi, Vineetha Anil's Avalilekkulla Yaatravil, Ramani Venugopal's Aavaniyile Athithikal, Indubala's Madhyakaanthaaram, Roshni Swapna's Kaami, Shabna Maria's Pigment and Geetha's Ammakallu. Jisa Jose also garnered a lot of



Jisa Jose

attention in this genre for the presentation of the lives of many women in her novel Mudritha. Shyna Kunjan came to be known as the author of Jalanayani. Divya M. is the first writer to exploit the resources of digital technology by bringing out "status" novels.

The novels written for children - Nunayathi by K. Rekha and Misoisan by Sheeba E. K. - are markedly different from the rest. Two other excellent works of children's literature are Shyna's Jigsaw and Major Nalini Janardanan's Vishwa Prasadha Nadodi Natakangal.



Saradakutty

There have been many substantial women writers in Malayalam in the fields of literary studies, memoirs and criticism. Saradakutty is one among them, and in *Ethrayethra Preranakal* and *Ivide njaan enne kaanunnu*, she acknowledges some of the books that have influenced and shaped her sensibilities. These works are excellent examples of how the world of letters and thoughts impact a woman and cause her to mature. P. A. Radha's *Aadhunika*

Malayala Kavithayile Bimbakalpana, Aishwarya Madhavan's *Samakaala Malayala Novel Padhanangal*, Swapna C. Kombath's *M. T.yum Malayala Jeevithavum*, Ashwathi A. V.'s *Sahithya Padhanam Nava Sameepanangal*, Nithya P. Vishwam's *Parody Malayala Kavithayil*, Rashmi Binoy's *Charithrathile Pennidangal*, P. Remadevi's *Sthree Aathmakatha: Jeevitham, Ezhuthu, Charithram* and Tissy Mariam Thomas's *Lingapadavi* are works of deep critical investigation that reveal how these women perceive the world around them and the literature that reflects it. *Chidagnikunda Sambhootha*, which is an exploration into Bhakti women poets of the Middle Age, was written by Sujathadevi.

Like in any age, the contemporary times too have thrown up many women writers in Malayalam who have sought to mark their feminist identities through the medium of memoirs and autobiographies.

The well known fashion designer Sameera Sanish's autobiography *Alankaarangallillaathe*, Echumukutty's memoirs *Pudavathumbil Othukkivacha Viplavangal*, Sheeba E. K.'s autobiographical *Azhichu Kalayaanaavaatha Chilangagal*, Noora Noorjahan's biography of M. Haleema Beevi titled *Pathraadhipa* are some of the titles that came out recently.

Sri Parvathy has made a mark in the field of crime fiction through works like *Mystic Mountain*, *Poetry Killer Athu Njaan Thanne*. Eminent works of translation that came out recently were Kabani's *Archer*, Rashmi Kittappa's *Poorna* and Gitanjali's *Ikigai*.



Sri Parvathy

These feminist literary waters of contemporary times, fed by deep and perennial wellsprings, are capable of taking forward and lending strength to the legacy of the great rivers of K. Saraswati Amma, Lalithambika Antharjanam, Rajalakshmi, Madhavikutty, P. Valsala, Sara Joseph, M. Leelavathy, Ashitha, Gracy, Gita Hiranyan, Chandramathi, Muse Mary, K. P. Sudheera, B. M. Zuhara, Khadija Mumtaz, Manasi, K. R. Meera, C. S. Chandrika and others. Further, they are flowing deeper and spreader wider as they proceed. These works proudly bear the insignia of feminism in their form, language and tone. And the beauty as well as power that this quality infuses into each work is what marks out contemporary Malayalam women's literature. ■



Manju Rose Mathews
HOD- Media Studies, Christ Nagar College,
Thiruvananthapuram

RISING TO LEAD THE WORLD

The Malayali woman is celebrating her powerful new image across the world. An image, which embodies a spectrum of her unique qualities-hardworking, kind, loving, generous, compassionate, vulnerable, authentic, honest and many more. We can't define her in a single word. Her freedom is the result of the relentless pursuit of her life. She overcomes every hardship confidently with a smile.

*Never afraid of the world
Speaks truth to the world
Nothing can bring her down
She is a winner!*

We have women politicians, entrepreneurs, policymakers, business women, doctors, teachers, nurses, journalists, homemakers - in every role she excels, the efficient Kerala women contribute to making our society stronger

despite the challenging health and economic scenario due to an unforeseen pandemic. Nurses of Kerala have always brought laurels to the nation. The pandemic again proved their magnanimity and dedication in a year declared by the United Nation as the year of Nurses. Around the country and in far of nations the services of Kerala nurses were appreciated for their brave effort in fighting the pandemic.

The immense strength, courage, confidence, determination and empathy of women from Kerala enable them to design the destiny of our state in trying times. We need to be always indebted to the

The immense strength, courage, confidence, determination and empathy of women from Kerala enable them to design the destiny of our state in trying times.

selfless sacrifice and achievement of the women of Kerala during the pandemic. It is important to give her greater support to conquer her dreams, to have a career that is the catalyst for her self-esteem.

Being economically independent will increase her confidence and will help to achieve greater success, which is a necessity for a woman and also for nurturing a good society. Let us give her wings while she focuses on growing stronger to lead. The mental strength of women has a ripple effect that inspires others to lead.

Kamala Harris spoke to the world after getting elected as the first woman Vice President of the United States, "every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities". It is essential to inspire every girl in our country as well. They have the talent and skillset to excel globally. New Zealand Member of Parliament from Auckland, Priyanka Radhakrishnan created history to become the first Indian-Kiwi woman minister in New Zealand. She is the minister for diversity, inclusion and ethnic communities and is leading an ambitious programme on bridging communities through social cohesion.

Meticulously planned skill-building and holistic training will make Kerala women more empowered, forward-thinking and easily adaptable. They will be motivated to acquire skills to become the future



Meticulously planned skill-building and holistic training will make Kerala women more empowered, forward-thinking and easily adaptable.

leaders of the world. Our girls need to be trained in 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills from an early age. Let us inspire her to achieve more and excel in every walk of life. UN Women, the United Nation's organization that works for gender equality and women empowerment lauded Kerala as the 'lighthouse of the Global South' in women empowerment. A world of opportunities awaits Malayali women. She needs to get inspired and lead. ■



Dr. Hari Priya Namboodiri
Kathakali Exponent

‘GRACEFUL’ TRANSITION..

A debate on ‘equality’ is at the crossroads, since the women-invasion into all genres of life and art has been making strides like never before. Gender divide is dying out for the simple reason that another male bastion succumbs to the inevitable ingress of women-artistes.

Industrial revolution brought forth a lot of changes in society. One clearly visible change happened in the roles of women who had been forced to hide their innate talents and confide them within the four walls of kitchens. The inevitable transition from a homemaker to bread - winner, working shoulder to shoulder with men has been historic. This change in the ‘status’ made her confident in exploring other areas of life as well. And art is not an exception

Kathakali, an art form considered a male bastion was also not left unaccompanied and many women have taken up the art in groups as well as individually. Though there have been women performers right through the history of Kathakali, a notable person from last century was Chavara Parukutty who dared not only to learn and perform but even to make it her profession and livelihood as well . She exuded

confidence and her achievements being an artiste have become an eternal inspiration to many women to take up the art. Sreemathi Namboodiri is a woman who learned Kathakali in the Gurukula system along with men counterparts. She used to perform characters like Ravana, Hanuman etc other than the usual hero characters.

Regular performances of some women artistes of Tripunithura Kathakali Kendram started giving regular performances across Kerala were a real feat to watch. The energy and gracefulness they exhibited conquered the aesthetic eyes of many a kathakali connoisseur in the State. This background

This change in the 'status' made her confident in exploring other areas of life... art being one

has helped women explore further into the art and several women have successfully enacted highly demanding characters like Narakasura and Ravana which are considered the epitome of stamina and strength.

Since then, Women have not left any stones unturned by bringing on to stage minukku characters like Parasurama. Arya Parappoor and Priya Namboodiri are among the two women who have performed Parasurama on stage. Renjini Suresh from Tripunithura has started her own Kathakali school where she trains students in Kathakali and a few students have already made their arangettam .

A Kathakali village is being established at Kallekulangara in Palakkad where a good number of women from all age groups including mothers and grandmothers are getting trained in the art under Kalamandalam Venkitaraman. The students come up with wonderful performances and they have shifted online in the time the pandemic.

Women have forayed into Kathakali music as well.

Several women have successfully enacted highly demanding characters like Narakasura and Ravana



The vibrant youth, especially girls are getting trained in Kathakali these days abundantly

Sadanam Padmini and Nalini were the two women in the 20 th century who made their footprints as Kathakali songstresses. They could grip the stage with their songs par excellence and leave the audience spellbound. It is expected from a Kathakali musician to sing flawlessly with a tinge of mellifluousness and to administer and regulate the show. Kumari Varma is such an artiste who has carried out the role of a singer superbly.

The vibrant youth, especially girls are getting mastered in Kathakali these days in abundance. Women have made their mark in this art form and they are here to stay. What was an aberration once is becoming a 'new-normal' nowadays. It is better if the upcoming young generation could equip themselves to carry out their own makeup since the same is expected from a dedicated Kathakali artiste. Then the artiste will be considered a 'real' artiste or a performer par excellence. ■



Rincy Joseph
Director, ALAN T21 Welfare Trust

WITH YOU, ALWAYS.

March 21 is observed as World Down Syndrome Day. The story of Rincy Joseph is an inspiring one for all parents. She has dedicated her whole life for her son Alan, who was born with Down Syndrome.

Being a special mother is totally different from the typical motherhood. Parenting a special boy having Trisomy 21 is filled with various challenges. Every age is associated with new problems. Alan was born in 2nd April 2003 in Dubai. Working as a graduate nursing with the Dubai Health Authority, receiving the news of my son's genetic disorder still remains my dark days as 17 years ago, the medical attitude and management was not what is offered in today's society. We received a very negative counselling from the pediatric department. There was not even a ray of hope given to us in parenting Alan. To the concerns and queries of Alan's father, the doctor was helpless but only to respond telling us to watch some videos of mentally retarded individuals so that we can understand better on how our son is going to grow. Our unconditional parenthood never regretted on any of our decisions as we see our son growing with the normal kids of his age. I was his voice and his strength to overcome all his developmental delays. Days beside him in school and nights preparing his



simplified lessons to teach him in the evenings back from school. Apart from education, developing his self-help skills and activities of daily life was also not easy. Yet we never gave up. Kept teaching and encourage him on areas where he was not able to excel and finally Alan reached this day where he is the first boy of his kind to clear his class 10 and 12 board exams without a scribe and to enter a professional carrier. He is a proud college student in hotel industry under the Kerala university filled with self-esteem and an enthusiastic youth. He is also a very hardworking and determined boy who never wants to give up on his obstacles. He is now a role model for any other children and families of his kind and the inspiration behind the establishment of ALAN T21 Welfare Trust in 2015, promoting inclusive living. ALAN is the abbreviation of Aspire Life and Nurture which is rightly apt for individuals with disabilities.

Giving up my nursing profession for my son, opened my mind to excel in the field of disabilities and to dedicate myself for the voiceless, marginalized individuals in my country.

Giving up my nursing profession for my son, opened my mind to excel in the field of disabilities and to dedicate myself for the voiceless, marginalized individuals in my country. Settling back to my motherland was a great challenge. Every single person recommended that this was not a wise decision. Reaching Kerala in 2014, I too restarted my formal education and secured my double Masters in Counselling psychology and in Disability-Rehabilitation Sciences. At this stage reaching a state of content special motherhood, it is now my profound urge to find ways to gain a doctorate in Disabilities and be a guiding light to serve

DOWN SYNDROME

Life is the right of every child. Not a special privilege for the fortunate, the planned nor the perfect. One among the most common genetic disorder is Trisomy 21. Generally known after the name of the scientist John Langdon Down as Down Syndrome and formally known as Mongolism, this disorder is grouped in the Intellectual Disability category under the Right for Persons with Disability (RPWD) Act 2016. Unlike all other human beings having 46 chromosomes, this condition carries an extra chromosome in the 21st pair which makes them unique from others with a total of 47 chromosomes. According to literature, Trisomy 21 or Down Syndrome is categorized by intellectual and developmental problems which may be mild, moderate or severe. Some people are healthy while others have significant health problems such as serious heart defects. Children and adults with Trisomy 21 have distinct facial features and most of these individuals have some common features which includes flattened face, small head, short neck, protruding tongue, upward slanting eye lids (palpebral fissures), unusually shaped or small ears, poor muscle tone, broad and short hands with a single crease in the palm, relatively short fingers and small hands and feet, excessive flexibility, short height compared to other children of the same age. This condition is commonly seen 1 in every 700 babies. Early intervention services early in life will often help babies and children with Down syndrome to improve their physical and intellectual abilities. Most of these services focus on helping children with Trisomy 21, develop to their full potential. These services include speech, occupational, and physical therapy, and these are typically offered through early intervention programs in each country.

these voiceless communities and create a social transformation along with my son's professional opportunities and life success. Transformation should begin from families where parents accept their child and determine to work for their best. Change is an inevitable need in educational and societal levels too.

The Pandemic outbreak has given us several insights. We have learnt new ways to connect with each other and overcome our barriers. In this World Down Syndrome Day, March 21st 2021 when the world propagates on the theme 'Advocating for the rights of people with Down syndrome', I invite the citizens of India to be advocates of Individuals having Trisomy 21 and to focus on improving connections to ensure that all people with Down syndrome can connect and participate on an equal basis with others.

Together Let's Strive for an Inclusive Tomorrow. ■



Anita Vincent
UK

A SYMPHONY IN TIME

Though the pandemic Covid 19 hit harshly on the dreams of many women across the world, the writer, being a woman brimming with optimism, sees that the present adversities can be turned favourable if we care for one another in these times of difficulties.

*Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
sermons in stone, and good in everything.*

- Shakespeare, As You Like It

2020 surreptitiously essayed an impromptu script into the fabric of our lives, the genre of the tragedy generally being dictated by a minuscule virus. The drama that ensued hit us somewhere

viscerally and we were left reeling, on the plane of a some what peripheral existence!

Despite great advances in the past decades, the COVID-19 pandemic has rocked the boat for equality and women's rights. It has left women behind once again, with increased job insecurity and a rise in domestic violence against women. It could be said that the pandemic has simply exposed once again the deep inherent systemic flaws and pre-existing inequalities, exposing socio economic vulnerabilities. Women still earn less, save less and are more likely to be employed in the informal sector.

Despite great advances in the past decades, the COVID-19 pandemic has rocked the boat for equality and women's rights

Piecemeal, we have picked up, the tapestry of lost grandeur, and tenaciously pitched tent in the newfoundland of changed reality. Surfing each new wave, we re-established safe-places , and boundaries, negotiating the parameters of freedom and imprisonment at regular paces, with deft valour. Women are uniquely poised to face the challenges this pandemic has thrown at us as a human race.

Poised tenaciously at the dawn of a 'new world order' what can we gift ourselves as we re-emerge from the womb of this trauma?

It is, sans any doubt, an era of enlightenment. With deep reverence we gathered the preciousness of Life into our very depths. We caressed the truths that life afforded us.

That we are all links, in the endless march of compassion, towards the end of time. And, therefore, we bless ourselves and the myriad bonds we share with the people and with the planet.

Simple truths were again laid bare.

That we are healed and nourished, and made more potent when we let beauty, truth, music caress the depths of our being. Joy resides in finding good in everything. We have everything we need to make us truly blessed all around us and it is free... all we need



Women are uniquely poised to face the challenges this pandemic has thrown at us as a human race.

is to throw a new blanket of understanding around it. That when the tide turns again, "knowing" that we are a link in the chain , we live wondrously , for others. When everything ephemeral is taken out of our lives, we will not place ourselves within self-wrought circles of avarice and greed and careless pandering. Rather we will brace our souls with the valour of self-giving and touch the earth and our people with the grace and the beauty of the truth that pain and loss have taught us.

That in our essential oneness is our strength, that our hearts sing with inexplicable joy when it is empty of the self, and since we do not take anything away - we can leave behind the indelible legacy of a life, well-lived. ■



N V Ravindranathan Nair
Senior journalist

THE PANDEMIC AND THE YOUTH

“When the going gets tough, the tough gets going” is a familiar phrase most often used to remind those who catch cold feet on the face of adversities and challenges. The same can be said seeing the multifarious challenges being posed before the youngsters in the post covid pandemic scenario.

The pandemic Covid 19 has had its share on the dreams of many Indian talents as well. Many are forced to work from home which eventually shut their doors for social interaction. Even the institutes imparting management education are finding a tough time at this extremely disruptive phase of time in the post covid scenario. Still, the management professionals claim that the possibilities are endless and the job seekers need to be more proactive.

Against this backdrop, the management institutes have to find a balance between teachings and mentoring.

According to Sreehari from Kollam who had his post-graduation in a premier institute in the country says, “campus placements and internships pose

a challenge as industrial houses and academic institutions remain either closed or functioning with skeleton strengths.”

“The International corporates which recruit youngsters are asking their newly inducted workforce also to work from home as their corporate offices and main workstations continue to remain closed,” he says. Sanjay N R who has recently left Amazon after finding the going tough working at home told me that without the social connections and a proper office ambience one would find it difficult to motivate oneself. “Of course we are getting trained online and we work from home for

The management institutes have to find a balance between teachings and mentoring.

regular hours. But the sad part of it is that we lose the social connections and proper environment required for learning and fine-tuning our skills “ he said.

Arun Kumar U, a project manager with a US-based IT company in Mumbai hailing from Alapuzha said he was working from home at Alapuzha ever since the breakout of the pandemic and his company had allowed him to continue working from home till September this year.

“There has been a perceptible change in philosophy and practice of the corporates. They have found that they had been spending lakhs of rupees on power and housekeeping. Now on, they will start thinking about getting rid of all unwanted luxuries. But socialising will be a great casualty “Arun Kumar said.

The US President Joe Biden has lifted the ban on migration. But the US-based companies would no more encourage their employees from countries like India where connectivity is by and large sufficiently

With the flooding of the social media platforms, the space of the fourth estate is getting diminished.

available as even without migration, they could avail their services.

“HR consultants are facing all kinds of problems in tracking people, hiring and motivating them to help

them come out with desired output. Investing in skills that would enable one to perform better online is the need of the hour, Arun Kumar says.

Queuing up for migration

The majority of the outstanding students in the premier institutes in the country wish to move out of the country to pursue higher education and research in some European countries or to migrate to Australia, New Zealand or Canada. “The administrative apparatus here has failed to catch up with the imagination of talented youngsters. Naturally, they look for better pastures “according to Aparna Latha, a Postgraduate student at the Pondicherry university hailing from Pathanamthitta. She points out that many of the youngsters want to try their hands in unconventional callings and build careers of their choice.

Impact of Online education

The impact of online education is visible even in the field of art education. Even the State Government’s Diamond jubilee fellowship scheme, an on-going scheme to impart art education to budding artistes have shifted online. Ever since the pandemic hampered its smooth functioning, around 1000 artistes are imparting training online. Tens of thousands of students aged between 5 years to 70 years are attending these classes online.

There has been a perceptible change in philosophy and practice of the corporates

“In case a budding artist needs to be trained by a maestro, he or she could be trained by the maestro without having to physically move to the place of the maestro,” says Sarath V G the district coordinator of the scheme in Wayandu.

Waning impact of the fourth estate

With the flooding of the social media platforms, the space of the fourth estate is getting diminished. As the youths have shifted their interest to binge viewing of serials and cinemas on the OTT platforms it has started eating into the revenue of the Television channels and cinema houses. Game testers find a harvest these days as there has been enormous growth in youngsters watching video games in almost all part of the world.

There are also trends of youngsters who have worked with major corporates returning to their native places and starting their initiatives in farming, aquaculture, tourism and several service sectors. ■



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THE SUN IS UP; PROTECT YOURSELF

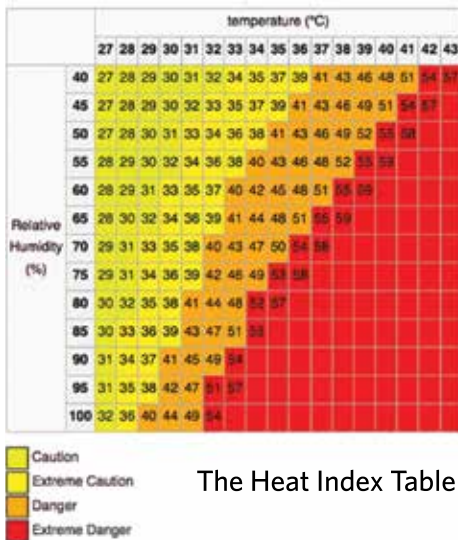
Heat is getting more and more scorching and stifling in Kerala with the setting in of every summer. Here is an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon and tips for preventing ourselves from the extreme conditions of heat

Kerala, being situated in the Southwestern part of the Indian sub continent often experience heat-waves and heatstroke conditions from March to May. Though seasonal episodes of severe heat wave conditions are more common in North India, scorching conditions are becoming a common affair over Kerala during recent decade.

This is mainly due to 3 major natural factors, the first and foremost is the northward progression of sun. As the season March from vernal equinox (around March 23rd) to northern hemispheric spring season, Kerala region encounters the overhead presence of the sun during mid March to mid April. Another major factor contributing to heatstroke situation is that the vast ocean water around Kerala makes the atmosphere around us more humid as compared other inland drier places. Increased sun -burn incidents during the season are mainly due to the presence of directly overhead sun. As Sun's vertical rays has to travel a smaller path through the atmosphere when overhead, there are chances of more intense Ultraviolet (UV) radiation

reaching the surface. Due to the high UV index, there are more chances of increased incidence of sunburn when exposed to direct sunlight during the peak sun hours. Human-induced global warming and increased urbanization can even worsen the incidence of a more severe heatwave and heatstroke conditions.

Heatwave conditions are generally defined as the number of consecutive days in which temperature exceeds a certain threshold and this temperature threshold can vary with location and time. In India, heatwave conditions are declared only if the maximum temperature exceeds 40°C for plain lands and by at least 30°C over hilly regions, if the maximum temperature departure from normal exceeds 4.50°C or the actual temperature exceeds 45°C at least for three consecutive days. However, over coastal locations like Kerala, maximum temperatures above 37°C can also be considered as heatwave situation if the maximum temperature departure from normal exceeds 4.50°C for three consecutive days.



The presence of high humidity affects the natural regulatory mechanism of controlling the human body temperature within safer limits by preventing the evaporative cooling mechanism of the body through sweating and transpiration/perspiration. Too much temperature itself is dangerous, but when combined with high humidity can make the human body harder to cool itself by sweating and that can lead to more serious health issues. Hence for assessing human discomfort for given temperature and humidity, scientists devised another index known as "Heat Index". This "apparent temperature" is widely accepted as a measure of human discomfort by combining temperature and humidity. For example, when the temperature is 32°C and humidity is 70%, the temperature we feel ("feels like temperature") is about 42°C.

Adverse effects on the human body

Rapid rise in temperature and heat stress conditions compromise the body's ability to regulate the temperature that can lead to a cascade of illness including heat cramps, heat exhaustion, sunburn when

Due to high UV index, there are more chances of increased incidence of sunburn when exposed to direct sunlight during the peak sun hours

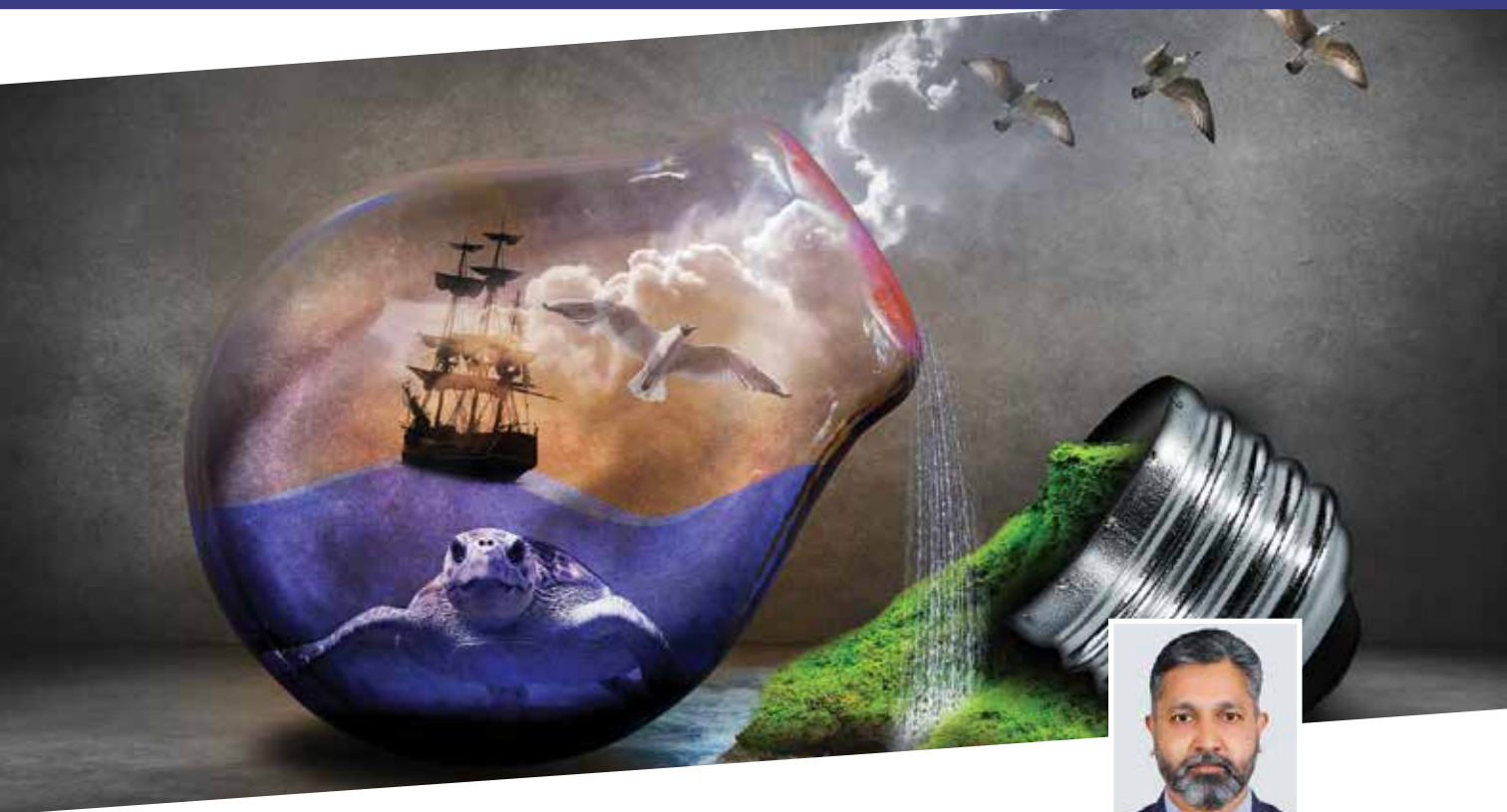
exposed, heatstroke, hyperthermia and also worsen chronic conditions including cardiovascular and respiratory complications, kidney disease, etc. It is important to describe the difference between heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Knowing the symptoms of these two conditions can save our lives. Heat exhaustion symptoms include general weakness, increased heavy sweating, variations in pulse rate, nausea or vomiting, muscle cramps, headache, pale or cold skin, dizziness and dark coloured urine, which indicates dehydration. Heatstroke is much more serious than heat exhaustion. It can cause shock, organ failure, or brain damage. In extreme cases, heatstroke can lead to death. If we don't treat or attend to heat exhaustion at the right time, it can lead to heatstroke. Indirectly, extreme heat conditions can alter human behaviour, the transmission of diseases, health service delivery, air quality, critical social infrastructures such as energy, transport, water quality, agricultural productivity, animal husbandry and low-income households.

The risk groups

Depending on the ability to regulate the body temperature, Infants and children under the age of 4 and adults aged 65 and older are at increased risk for heat-related illnesses. Other vulnerable groups include people having chronic diseases and are under medication. People involved in outdoor activities like construction workers, athletes and those who are more exposed to direct sunlight are at high risk. Physical exertion increases the risk for dehydration and heat-related illnesses, especially when doing strenuous physical activity in extreme heat.

Preventive measures

There are many things we can do to prevent heat-related illnesses. The main tips for staying safe from heat-related illness are to keep cool and stay hydrated. Don't go outside when the temperature and heat index are high. Escape the direct exposure to sunlight by staying indoors and pay attention to forecasts and warnings. When you go outside, wearing light coloured and light-weighted clothes, use of hats, umbrellas, spending time in shades during peak solar hours can reduce the risk of heat-related illness. Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Dehydration and lack of salt contribute to heat-related illnesses. Some sports drinks can help replenish the salt in our body lost through sweating. On such occasions, drink water or other fluids every 15 to 20 minutes, even if you don't feel thirsty. Don't drink alcoholic beverages and caffeinated drinks which cause dehydration. Plan outdoor activities during the cooler time of the day before 10 AM or after 4 PM. ■



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SAVING THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

March 22 is World Water Day. This year the theme is “Valuing Water”. According to available reports, Kerala gets plenty of water – roughly one-and-a-quarter crore litres of rainwater in one acre of land every year! Yet various places in the state face severe drought. The alternating cycles of drought and floods are not the result of climate change alone.

With the collapse of our rural ecosystem nourished by groves, ponds, forests, canals and fields, the flow of water into and from the earth has weakened. The levelling of hills and mountains and the increasing number of houses, roads and bridges also prevent water from sinking into the ground. Over-exploitation of rivers to ensure water supply all over the state has further compounded the problem.

- The quality of water in Kerala has also suffered due to various reasons – pollution, waste disposal, soil erosion, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, etc. The latest techniques of science

and technology, as well as traditional wisdom, have to be harnessed in order to ensure water conservation, in quantity and quality. Rainwater harvesting too has to be optimized in every strip of land. The following measures may be adopted by individuals and society:

- Prepare a list of all the water bodies, groves and fields in every panchayat, and find out how many disappeared over the last 10 years. Make efforts to create new ones, and preserve as well as rejuvenate existing ones.
- Prepare a land-use map for every region in all

The latest techniques of science and technology, as well as traditional wisdom, have to be harnessed in order to ensure water conservation, in quantity and quality.

panchayats to gather information about how each is utilized, farming cycles and techniques. Data about eco-sensitive zones, water sources, outflow routes, rivers and canals should also be included.

- Construct mud walls, grass mounds and small check dams at appropriate places to slow down the flow of water and allow seepage, for recharging groundwater. Rain pits may also be dug. Water channels should be cleaned before the onset of rains to permit smooth inflow and outflow.
- Demarcate flood-prone areas and clamp strict restrictions on construction activities there.
- Store rainwater through artificial means as well, by means of plastic-lined ponds and tanks. Consult experts before constructing recharge wells or check dams that obstruct water flowing towards underground reservoirs.
- Promote soil and water conservation activities near the source of rivers and catchment areas in order to increase the volume and flow of water, and to prevent rivers from silting. Shift to organic farming at least near the catchment areas. Impose restrictions on sand mining in order to preserve the sandy layer of rivers.
- Remove obstacles in the path of flowing water. Removing silt once a year will help maintain the

depth of rivers.

- Choose the crop type and soil conservation methods according to the incline of the earth. Steep slopes should not be used for farming but retained as forest land. Various conservation methods are mandatory for high-level catchment areas, especially if they are farmlands. Organic farming and a green building may be permitted.
- Organize Water Collectives at official and unofficial levels to coordinate water conservation activities. Awards may be instituted to encourage the best-performing groups.
- Protect traditional water conservation methods like tunnels, and collect folkloric information about them and identify their scientific foundation.
- Popularize “Mazhappolima” project that aims at collecting rainwater from rooftops, filtering, purifying and directing it to wells. Make it compulsory for buildings, or subsidize it.

Popularize “Mazhappolima” project that aims at collecting rainwater from rooftops, filtering, purifying and directing it to wells. Let us remember that rains and rivers are invaluable gifts of Nature

- Prevent plastic and other wastes from entering water bodies. Organic materials and fibre may be used to make filters at points where water enters public ponds and wells. Promote ‘Constructed wetlands’ made with vetiver and other plant species.
- Start water literacy activities from the lowest classes in schools. Institute special standing committees in panchayats to oversee the protection of natural resources, and monitoring committees at state-district-block levels to coordinate the activities of all institutions and departments concerned.

Let us remember that rains and rivers are invaluable gifts of Nature. Let us permit this wealth to collect in ponds and to penetrate the earth. Let us protect our public water tanks from pollution. Let us become partners in conserving water and replenishing natural resources. ■



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COVID-19 VACCINES; THE WAY AHEAD

Kerala has rolled out the Covid 19 vaccination drive to the public. To get vaccinated at the earliest is the need of the hour.

The seroprevalence rate of COVID-19 in Kerala is 11% as per the third round of sero-survey conducted by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and this is half the national average (21%). For a state like Kerala, which has a population older than the rest of India, high density of population and high prevalence of non-communicable diseases, the low sero-prevalence is a great achievement. However, the low seroprevalence rate tells us that a huge proportion of the population continues to be susceptible to COVID-19. Hence it becomes a top priority for the state to have a very fast COVID 19 vaccination campaign to protect its citizens and to maintain the low mortality rate in the state.

A vaccine has the power to generate herd immunity in the communities, which will reduce the incidence of disease, interrupt transmission, and reduce the social and economic burden of the disease. At present, globally, 12 vaccines are approved and licensed for general use, out of which 4 vaccines are being monitored in the wider population. The story does not end here, around the world, there are now 81 COVID-19 vaccine candidates undergoing clinical trials and more than 150 vaccines are being explored in lab experiments and animals. (COVID 19 vaccine race- weekly update by GAVI).

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine (AZD1222), was developed at the University of Oxford. It is a

A vaccine has the power to generate herd immunity in the communities, which will reduce the incidence of disease, interrupt transmission, and reduce the social and economic burden of the disease

non-replicating viral vector vaccine type, where the full length of SARS-CoV-2 structural surface glycoprotein antigen (spike protein) is inserted into replication-deficient chimpanzee adenoviral vector ChAdOx1. The Covishield vaccine prepared by Serum Institute of India, Pune has the same formulation as the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine (AZD1222) and has been approved in 19 countries, including India. Both the vaccines, the AstraZeneca and Covishield have been approved by the World Health Organisation for emergency use and are also endorsed by the Africa Regulatory task force. The AZD1222 vaccine has an overall vaccine efficacy of 66.7% after 14 days of the second dose, and vaccine efficacy was found to be as high as 81.3% if the interval between two doses is more than 3 months. The other vaccine approved in India is; Covaxin by Bharath Biotech, which is a whole virion inactivated COVID-19 vaccine candidate. The final results of the phase III trial involving 2, 58, 000 study participants, conducted in partnership with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), are yet to be published, but the interim vaccine efficacy was claimed as 81% as released as a statement by Bharath biotech.

Kerala started its vaccination drive against the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on January 16, 2021. On the first day of vaccination January 16, around 8,062 health care workers were inoculated. Since then, till February 27th nearly 6 lakh doses of vaccine have been administered to the health care



workers and front-line workers. We have started vaccinating elderly citizens (60 years and above) and those within 45-59 years with comorbidities by the 1st of March, 2021. The prioritized vaccination strategy will help in a greater reduction of death rate and vaccination along with non-pharmacological measures of disease control offers the best chance in curbing the duration of the epidemic. As of March 16th, 2021, Kerala has administered a total of 16,89,366 vaccine doses, that is 14,08,459 of 1st dose of vaccine and 2,80,907 of 2nd dose of vaccines. The health department of Kerala has prepared an action plan for Covid vaccination at the district level and the state has enabled public-private

The prioritized vaccination strategy will help in a greater reduction of death rate and vaccination along with non-pharmacological measures of disease control offers the best chance in curbing the duration of the epidemic.

partnership for the swift vaccine drive. Around 1310 public health facilities, starting from primary health centers to medical colleges and 256 private facilities, are involved in Kerala's COVID-19 vaccination drive.

Though Kerala is fighting against COVID-19 with its new weapon, it is not free of challenges. Vaccine hesitancy is not a major problem in Kerala and public turnout is in large numbers in the COVID vaccination centres. Health care workers were the first segment to receive the vaccine and there is already a reduction in the number of cases among them. With a very fast vaccination drive and with taking precautions to wear masks and observe social distancing during the upcoming election campaign, Kerala can achieve good control of the COVID situation. We should also move ahead with investing more on public health and research enhancing our infrastructure and capabilities in virology and vaccine research. This is an important focus area for Kerala which has experienced several viral diseases such as dengue, chikungunya and Nipah. ■



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A PROLOGUE TO VACCINATION

Vaccination drives against deadly diseases such as smallpox, polio, rabies etc saved humans from succumbing to these deadly viruses. Any move against the vaccinations drives can be termed as 'inhuman'

The journey towards a Covid free world has reached a turning point with the sanctioning of 2 vaccines -Covishield and Covaxin and the nation going in for a massive vaccination drive. The expanded programme on immunisation initiated in 1978 in India andrenamedInternational Immunisation Programme in 1985, provides 12 different vaccines through the Public health system. The light at the end of the Covad pandemic tunnel now seems a reality.

Vaccines are the most cost-effective public intervention affecting the collective body of a community. But the history of vaccines has always been marked by controversies starting from Edward Jenner(1743-1823) who developed the vaccination for smallpox. The British Royal Society had rejected

Jenner's study report and America and Europe witnessed many anti-vaccine movements compelling Jenner to withdraw from the public domain. It is history that later on immunology developed based on his experiments and his findings relating to the protective effect of cowpox against smallpox. Smallpox had been around for over 1500 years approximately and had caused 300 million deaths in 20th century and left many others permanently scarred. Now popularly referred to as the founder of Modern Immunology, Jenner's work has saved more lives than the work of any other human. The oral Polio vaccine developed by Koprowski of Wistar

Vaccines are the most cost-effective public intervention affecting the collective body of a community.

Institute also ran into controversies when it was alleged as being the source of HIV - only to be refuted later through scientific research reports. But the Polio Vaccination programme in various countries was affected by the vaccine-scepticism - many countries either stopping or slowing down the vaccination drive during the period.

The development of vaccines in research laboratories is a cumbersome journey and face ethical and safety regulations in each step - starting from detailed scientific studies of the germs to a selection of the best candidate drugs and then experimentations on animals and their clinical trials on human beings in three phases across different categories on a cross-section of people.

In the post-Covid emergency, permissions that were otherwise possible in months or years were sanctioned in days. Researchers and scientists were also assisted by the avalanche of knowledge in peer-reviewed publications on Covid-19. The contemporary vaccine development programme can never be compared with the one which existed 40-50 years ago when science and technology had not developed as much. Cushioned by the achievements of research and technological advancement in a civilised society over the years, the Covid virus stands the only chance of its eradication through vaccination.

The fact is that India has the largest vaccine manufacturing capacity in the world. Indian pharmaceutical sector supplies over 50% of the global demand for various vaccines. 80% of the anti-retroviral drugs used globally to combat AIDS are supplied by Indian pharmaceutical firms. Many advanced countries like the UK, USA and Canada have initiated advance procurement of the vaccine much above the requirement of their population.

The challenge is that the Covid-19 vaccine will need to be administered to potentially a billion Indians requiring planning, personnel and logistical arrangements even in rural settings without health care infrastructure. Rural areas with nearly 71% of the population have only 36% of health workers and the doctor-patient ratio of 1:11082 for government doctors is much less than the 1:1000 prescribed by the WHO. The toughest part of the vaccination process is the actual inoculation, reactions and potential hospitalisations. The USA

Cushioned by the achievements of research and technological advancement in a civilised society over the years, the Covid virus stands the only chance of its eradication through vaccination.

which implemented Pfizer and Moderna vaccines had expected to vaccinate 20 million people in a month but barely progressed to a 2.8million by the beginning of this year.

If India, the world's second-most populous nation can show the way and vaccinate its people, other countries can learn from India. Growing incidence of Cancer [125.4 as compared to a national average of 89.4/ 1 lakh population], co-morbidities and a growing geriatric population are challenges facing us. If the past is a prologue and there are still people outside the "herd immunity", vaccination seems the appropriate way ahead. Being the most life-saving public intervention in history, vaccination is a human right and is still central to saving the vulnerable ■



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WOMEN & THE PANDEMIC

It is commendable that the Kerala women managed to survive all the trappings of the pandemic, with ample support from the system coupled with their inherent, indefatigable spirit.

48-year-old Sreedevi, hailing from a fishing hamlet in Kochi and working as a domestic helper found herself wondering 'what next?' two weeks after Kerala guardedly celebrated International Womens' Day, 2020. Guarded because, though Kerala's excellent demographic indicators concerning women gave us every reason to celebrate, March 8 of 2020 had dawned with the news of 5 new cases of Covid 19 in Kerala. 15 days later, the nationwide lockdown left women like Sreedevi jobless. She could not commute to her workplace in the city and all the residential apartments had closed their gates to domestic helpers. Her worries, like those of many others

**At the end of the day,
while looking back,
our women seem to have
fared fairly well.**

who lived in little villages surrounding the city, were justified. The other end of the spectrum had women like Chitra (both names changed for anonymity), who had no other go but to send her 5-month-old baby to her in-laws', so that she and her husband, both doctors in a Family Health Centre, could rise to the occasion and continue working, keeping the baby safe. The agony she went through as a mother was tremendous.

With a year of the pandemic-ravaged life behind us, yet another Women's Day is a time to mull on how much more our women were affected. "Though men have their fair share of health issues, triggered by the pandemic, women bear the brunt of it all", is Kochi physician Dr Renji Jose's take on it.

It makes sense because, when their family members go into quarantine or isolation or when the men incur financial losses, the women tend to be at the receiving end. "Adding to their woes is the fact that the vaccine, for now, excludes a cohort of very active, young women because they are pregnant or lactating", he adds. Dr Dhanya, a gynaecologist in W& C Mattanchery, a government institution in one of the worst-hit coastal suburbs of Kochi, admits to seeing quite a few young girls coming with weight gain and health issues related to it. That apart, she is relieved that the Government had ensured adequate Family Planning options all through the pandemic which prevented unwanted pregnancies. Tele-medicine facility in all institutions kept the channels of communication open to the beneficiaries. Woman health inspector Molly Mathew of W&C, Wadakkanchery, Thrissur, is smug in the knowledge that several women had managed to reach out and confide in their junior public health nurses. This health-seeking behaviour resulted in good counselling sessions when the women were in dire straits.

At a time when the long since lauded Kerala model is still better than the best, it is commendable that our women managed to survive all the trappings of the pandemic, with ample support from the system coupled with their inherent, indefatigable spirit.



Sreedevi found that she could earn by taking care of a bedridden patient, who stayed within walkable distance. Dr Chitra, survived by focussing on her work and staying hopeful, which paid off. "Knowing and accepting the fact that the pandemic is tougher on women considering the amount of multitasking they do is the first step to taking remedial

**Though men have their fair
share of health issues, triggered
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measures," says Dr Uma Praveen. "Just as a woman's contribution to her family is not quantifiable, so also her losses due to the pandemic," says Dr Vijayalakshmi, paediatrician, and a research scientist in the Epidemiology department of a UNDP initiated organization. She urges that women get into an adaptive mode and get their share in a different line.

At the end of the day, while looking back, our women seem to have fared fairly well. Barring status, women seem to be determined and able to overcome the adversities. It comes as no surprise that our women, in all strata of the society, continue to reinvent themselves and beat the covid- with panache. ■





Bindu Menon Mannil
Faculty in Media Studies, Azim Premji University

WHEN EPIDEMICS FORCED THEATRES CLOSED DOWN

There are incidents in history when the cinema halls were closed down for a long due to the outbreaks of epidemics and pandemics.

The first cinematograph exhibition in India, on July 7th 1896 at Watson Hotel in Bombay organised by the Lumiere brothers, also coincided with the largest epidemic the subcontinent that ravaged the subcontinent till then. Alongside the fear and anxieties of the bubonic plague, cinema grew in its popularity enchanting the masses and drawing them to the cinema halls. Cinema, the most important entertainment form to generate new kinds of sociability among the population in different parts of the world thus also coincided with an age of epidemics.

The spread of cinema across the small towns of erstwhile Travancore increasingly coincided with epidemic eruptions and the closing down of halls. In April 1928, the Alleppey Municipal administration served the Emden Cinema touring exhibition with an order to suspend its screenings on the grounds of it being a space posing threats to hygiene and sanitation, spreading epidemics. Large sections of the public, including eminent lawyers and civic groups, came forward to protest the town administration's ban. Increasingly, the cinema halls were correlated with epidemic spread among administrators and newspapers and strengthened contagionist views towards cinema.

Cinema, the most important entertainment form to generate new kinds of sociability among the population in different parts of the world thus also coincided with an age of epidemics.

Not surprisingly, cinema halls and the assemblage of subaltern bodies were seen as breeding grounds for diseases, violence, and lewd behaviour in public. Many newspapers, especially conservative ones like Nazrani Deepika, emphatically contributed to this discourse. Often parts of Travancore became gripped by epidemics like cholera, dysentery, and smallpox. and the spread of these epidemics only sharpened the feeling that public places like cinema halls and drama exhibitions were miasmatic spaces spawning germs. During the 1922 smallpox epidemic, there was an article in Nazrani Deepika from Kollam. 'After successfully spawning the smallpox germs in southern Travancore, the new film and drama company has reached Kollam town. Thanks to them we will soon have the epidemic among us' (Kollam Varthakal, 18 November 1928, p. 3). Similar reports are available for cholera and plague epidemic in 1928 in Thiruvithamkoor. As late as 1935, the Cochin legislative council discussed the suspension of cinema and drama licenses in Mattancheri island of Cochin due to the plague epidemic under Section 9 of the Regulation X of 1926. The Cochin legislative council discussed the suspension of cinema and drama licenses in the Mattancheri island of Cochin due to the plague epidemic. The Head Sarkar Vakil, in his explanation, said, '...[S]uch forms of entertainment may be suspended for the time being so that infection

may not spread.' Many newspapers emphatically contributed to this discourse by marking cinema exhibition sites as 'miasmatic spaces' of epidemics like the plague and as a potential threat to the social body'. The contagionist views started affecting the citizens' perception too as evident in the 1935 petition pioneered by, Anna Chandy, the first woman magistrate of Travancore, urban reformer, and an advocate of women's rights filed a petition as the first appellant against the construction of the new theatre' near the women and children's hospital in Thycaud.

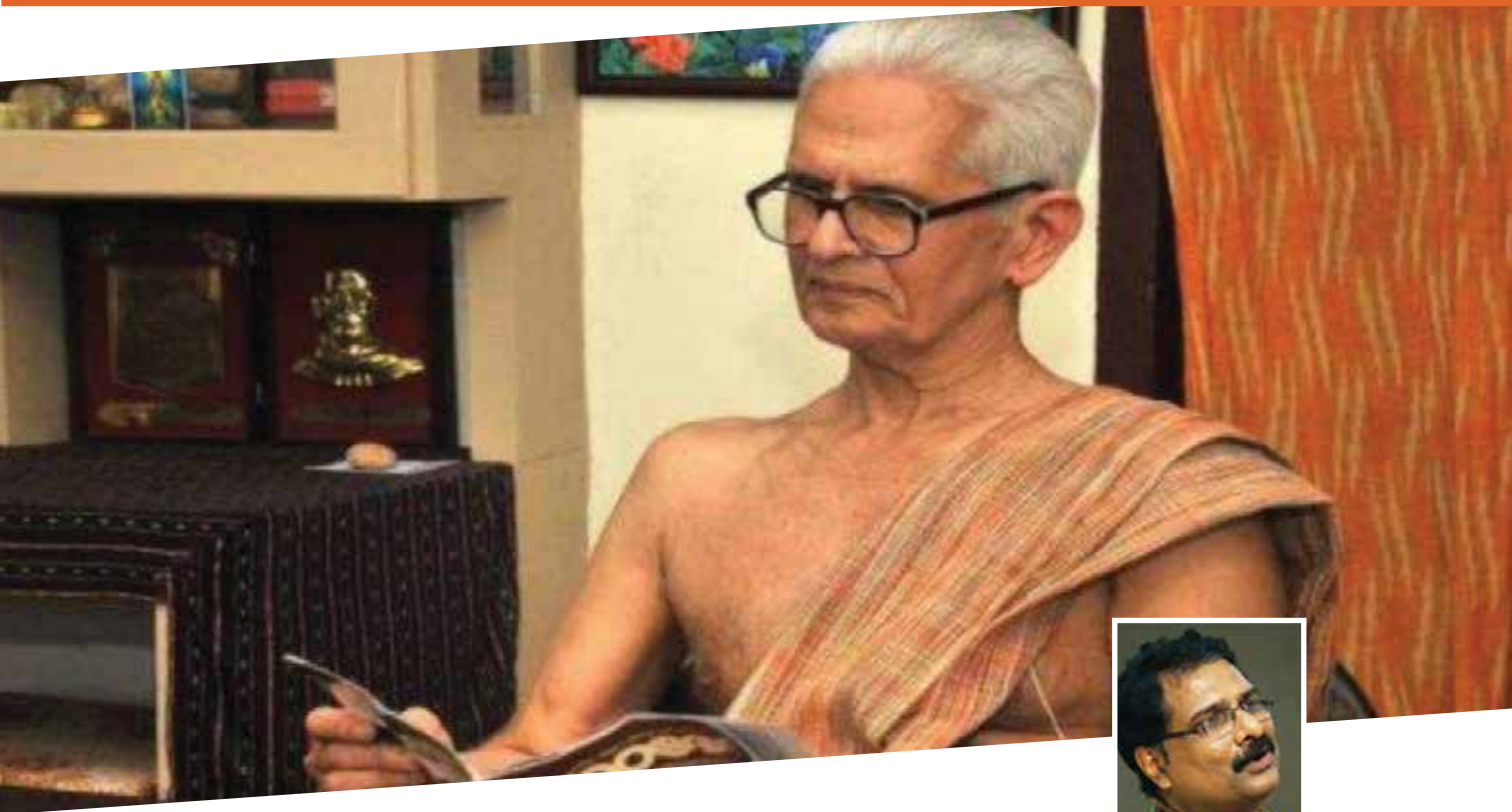
Films such as "The Hookworm" was screened in parts of Thiruvithamkoor as early as 1928 as reported in a Nazrani Deepika report. In accordance with the modernising Princely state, the missionary ideals have shifted from philanthropic initiatives to more developmental themes by the 1930s. Cinemas ability to communicate, its reproducibility and easy movement made it the chosen mode of communication. The use of mobile vans for film screening introduced by the state further made the "communicability" of the message faster. The propaganda vans as they were known, fitted with a loudspeaker, a portable cinema outfit, an adequate stock of health movies, a collection of musical and lecture gramophone records, magic lanterns and slides, and also numerous health posters and models. The vans travelled through the hinterlands of Thiruvithamkoor spreading messages about epidemics such as cholera and

The spread of cinema across the small towns of erstwhile Travancore increasingly coincided with epidemic eruptions and closing down of halls.

plague, communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and leprosy, health and sanitation and population control. As T.K.Velupillai writes in his Travancore State Manual, it drew a lot of audience across towns and villages.

In the midst of the pandemic and the crisis brought to cinema exhibition and the industry, remembering similar such crises in history and learning from their lessons will help us understand and chart a new course of action. ■

(An extended version of the article can be read at ala.keralascholars.org)



P. N. Gopikrishnan
Literary Critic

THE POETIC LAMP WITHIN

Renowned poet Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri left for his heavenly abode, leaving behind a great legacy in poetry. Here is a tribute on the ever-smiling personality and an analysis of his ever-shining poetic contributions to the Malayalam Literature

Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri has been described by many as a poet who was caught between modernism and tradition. To fit a poet into a pigeonhole like that just because he does not yield himself readily to known yardsticks seems to be an easy way out. The critic who paints the poet as a person who runs between two deeply entrenched structures called 'modernism' and 'tradition' may derive an element of satisfaction from such a portraiture but the readers are likely to experience some uneasiness. Didn't the poet have a definite stand? Or, was his stand Janus-faced? Are modernism and tradition monolithic edifices that have unchanging natures?

Perhaps there is another way of looking at him. We have heard Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri himself say that Kalidasa and Yeats were the poets he

enjoyed the most. And his poems bear testimony to the statement. To the question “Why Kalidasa?” the answer is that Kalidasa’s poetry was the powerful epicentre of ‘modernism’ in Sanskrit literature. He drew out certain dramatic moments from our ancient epics, and brought them into a modern space. The story of Abhinjana Shakuntalam did not enjoy a prominent position in the Mahabharata where it was only a subplot. Neither was it new. But, nurtured by Kalidasa, the blade of grass grew and spread out into a huge tree. In him, we came to understand the yawning gulf between royal justice and scriptural justice. In him, we came to see in embryonic form, the changes that would take place

To the question “Why Kalidasa?” the answer is that Kalidasa’s poetry was the powerful epicentre of ‘modernism’ in Sanskrit literature

in the future, like in the concepts of truth and proof in the modern times. Through Sarangathan and Sarangaravan’s words and actions, he brought to light the difference between the city and the forest. When they ask questions like “Why are people in such a hurry?” and “Did fire break out in this place?” the modern theme of urban life appears vividly before our eyes. Through Meghadootham, Kalidasa took the process of mutual communication to a locus that we are unfamiliar with. By making the cloud a messenger, he was not only technologizing a natural phenomenon but also bringing about a radical change in the way we view things. Looking upwards is the special motif of Meghadootham.

It was by bringing about such shifts in perspective and introducing new situations that Kalidasa modernized tradition. What Yeats did in his poem “The Second Coming” was to give us a closer look of a world that was fast dissipating in centrifugal fury because the centre could not keep it in place (“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”). He unequivocally declared that the world which could keep objects and facts intact has disappeared. The world that Yeats saw was one that could not be contained within the interpretative ambit of the Bible.

Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri’s Malayalam was broad enough to accommodate not only Sanskrit tradition but English tradition as well, which the colonial rule had brought in its wake. And as the amalgamation of opposites had already taken place, space more than time was his preferred theme.



This was one of the factors that marked him out from the fellow-poets of his time.

What Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri tried to invoke through his poetry were such special situations. Precisely for this reason, facelessness was more frightening than death. To him, a face symbolized identity, location and selfhood. It conveyed meaning and also had a suggestive power. That was why when he had to portray the time he lived in, he chose to give his poetic work the title “Mukhamevide?” [Where is the Face?] and drew the picture of a faceless crowd in it.

What Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri tried to invoke through his poetry were such special situations. Precisely for this reason, facelessness was more frightening than death.

If he were to be described using terms that are generally used in literary interpretation, the apt phrase would be “high-modernist poet”. He felt obliged to mark out his difference from the Romantic stream that had burst forth from Changampuzha. For that reason, although he wrote a lot of Romantic poems none of them were cast in the Changampuzha smithy. Nor did he subscribe to the other extreme – that of violence – found in Changampuzha. Rather, he used his poetry to build a world marked by moderation. In the future, Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri may become known as a poet who tried to present human relationships using soft emotions. It was not that he was untouched by philosophy. He chose instead to send his poems to the outside world only after they had been properly tempered in the smithy of humanism. Therefore, to him, poetry did not mean street lights. They were internal lamps. He believed that the most important aspect of writing poetry was the lighting of these internal lamps. ■



Anand Sai S. S.

MA Communication and Media Studies,
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INDUCING HOPE DURING TESTING TIMES

International Film Festival of Kerala has got prominent and wide acceptance among the enthusiastic cinephiles over the years. The delegates welcomed silver jubilee edition of IFFK conducted in four different regions of Kerala with true spirits and vigour.

The pandemic had radically changed our concept of social film viewing that one had earlier experienced at the cinemas. Many major film festivals worldwide are abandoned or choose to go hybrid as this unprecedented situation demands. The festival is a testament passion of the audience to cinema in Kerala society. For instance, cinephiles were in quandary about the conduct of the silver jubilee edition of International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK). Besides screening of good films, the festival is also a forum for reunion, discussions etc. Reposting all dilemma, the academy decided to organise the festival like the previous years, following all COVID-19 safety norms. Though it was a tough call,

The cynosure for the cinema crowd have always been the quality of curated package in the festival. This year festival screened 80 films.

deserves worthy of note. This year the festival was conducted in four venues, in order to limit the crowd and at the same time not compromising the festival ambience.

The main venue for the festival was Trivandrum as per the International Film Festival Association (FIAPF) ruling. At the same event the life time achievement award was received by legendary film maker Jean-Luc Godard for pioneering the transformation of world cinema. The function was followed by the screening of the opening film 'Quo Vadis, Aida?'. With a thick packed audience, the film received huge reception from the crowd. The film based upon the ethnic cleansing campaign by the Bosnian serb army showcases the journey of life and death, film takes the audience through the turmoils faced by the srebrenican refugees. Oscar contender had earlier been screened at Venice International Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival.

Films from the third world countries

The cynosure for the cinema crowd have always been the quality of curated package in the festival. This year festival screened 80 films. The festival has always existed for the oppressed and the marginalised people, proof of which is the prioritized selection of African, Asian and Latin American movies. This is a testament to the uncompromising political stance of IFFK. The international competition category of the festival included 14 films which has been shot during the pandemic and also they are contributions from the third world countries. This included the world premiere of Lijo Jose Pellisery's 'Churuli'. The film is a topsy-turvy ride through fantasy that depicts the uncivilised contemplation of civilised people. The festival also plays a significant role in the growth of numerous young independent filmmakers. Directorial sophomore 'Nasir' of Arun Karthick, 'Sthalpuran' by Akshayindikar, 'sethumaan' an impressive directorial debut by Thamizh, 'Kosa' by Mohit Priyadarshi are all paragon for this. All these film reiterate the stance of progressive film approach and the political stance of the festival and no wonder why its called the 'festival of cinephiles'. Foreign entries like 'wife of spy' directed by Kiyoshi Kurosawa which revolves around the internal conflict between a husband and

wife in the backdrop of world war I, palastinian film '200 meters', Iranian film 'Wasteland' won the audience hearts.

Homage paid to doyen filmmakers

The panegyric session was also organised as part of the festival to commemorate the contributions of 43 departed film personalities. The life and works of legendary filmmakers Fernando Solanas who received the lifetime achievement award in the past edition of the festival and Kim Ki Duk who has a massive fan frenzy among the Malayali audience were fondly remembered at the session. India's first Oscar winner Bhanu Athaiya, Rishi Kapoor, Soumitra Chatterjee, Arjunan master, Jameela Malik Shanavas Naranipuzha were also paid homage. Following the function,

The international competition category of the festival included 14 films which has been shot during the pandemic and also they are contributions from the third world countries.

'Agrahaarathil Kazhuthai', a sublime work by late veteran cinematographer K Ramachandra Babu was screened as a tribute to him. A series of movies, including Ayyappanum Koshiyum, Charulatha, Karie, Mulk, Nagarik, Qissa and Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring was screened as part of homage section in the festival.

Aravindan memorial Lecture

Festival won't be sated without remembering G Aravindan, legendary cartoonist and filmmaker whose works never cease to captivate the audience. His oeuvre cherialokavumvaliyamanushyarum still stands out to be a classical work that mirrors happenings in the society. This year the Aravindan memorial lecture was given by Indo-american director Mira Nair, who attained world recognition with her directorial debut Salaam Bombay, which was nominated for Oscar academy awards in the year 1998. Remembering him she said, the films of Aravindan were not political dramas but was made politically. Mira who always stood for the rights of marginalised welcomed the enthusiasm by the youth in India. She also said that in the contemporary world films should hold a mirror towards the people. The festival certainly enlivened cinephiles, spreading a message of reviving the theatre experience. The decision to organise the festival this time usher in hope to many looing to head for the normal. ■



Sanil P Thomas
Sports Journalist

CALLED BACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GAME

Football was everything for Fouzia. She fought with her terminal disease till her last breath just like the way she played vigorously against her rival teams.

When worries shatter the people, usually they try to subdue their performance. But the story of Fouzia Mampatta is something different. She was a versatile sports star and football coach. She was diagnosed with cancer in 2016, and she came back to sports with added vigour. Unfortunately, the disease reappeared in mid-2020. But this time Fouzia couldn't make a come back as she passed away on February 19, 2021. Fouzia was just 52.

She took Kerala women's football to new heights, by making the state in indomitable opposition for any other side. When she worked with Kerala

Fouzia's better coaching methods and aggressive talent have put Kerala women's football in good stead. It was under Fouzia's coaching that Kerala won third place in the National women's football championship in 2005

Sports Council as a temporary coach for 18 years, the grassroots became finest by delivering the best. Fouzia's better coaching methods and aggressive talent have put Kerala women's football in good stead. It was under Fouzia's coaching that Kerala won third place in the National women's football championship in 2005 at Manipur She was the assistant coach. when Kerala became runner up in the very next year at Odisha. She made Nadakkavu Govt Girls Higher Secondary School a women's football nursery. She had been working with them since 2002. Indian players like T. Nikhila and Y.M. Ashley and T.Anjali were her trainees. Four from Nadakkavu government Higher secondary school



With Indian women's team coach Maymol Rocky and Kerala Sports Council coach Amrutha Aravind

were there in the list for coming Under 17 women's World Cup. M.S.Prasooda, Silpa, Sreedevi too made their mark in Kerala women's football through Fouzia. One among the 10 children of Mampatta Kunjumoidu and Kunjumariambi from Kozhikode Vellimadukunnu, Fouzia bought her first set of football jersey and shoes using the money gifted by her father during the

festival. She went on to become Kerala state women team's goalkeeper. She played for Kerala for almost a decade. Further she represented the state handball team and played hockey and judo. Along with that, she won a medal in powerlifting as well.

After her father's death financial problems forced her to give up sports She couldn't keep off the playing field for long and came back as a coach. Kamaladevi, Principal, Nadakkavu school paved the way for a coaching centre there. She initiated the formation of,



When she regained her health after the treatment, she forgot about the disease itself.

Women's football club Calicut. It was dream come true for Fouzia, when women's football was included in State School Games in 2013. Nadakkavu school has participated in Subrato Cup many times for which Fouzia played a stellar role in achieving this opportunity.

I met Fousiya for the first time in 2013. Her sheer courage motivated aspiring football talents.

When she regained her health after the treatment, she forgot about the disease itself. Even when uncertainty ruled, she was the optimist, never liked to talk about her illness, which she always talked about football. I salute her exemplary courage.

Kerala women's football has come a long way. Even though we have excellent women football coaches like P.V Priya, the pioneering effort by Fouzia must be remembered forever. ■





Dattareya Velankar
Hindustani Music Exponent

THE ETHEREAL VOICE

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was both a trendsetter and towering figure in the Indian Classical Music scenario. With his ethereal voice coupled with deep knowledge in every note of the classical music, he lifted millions of music lovers to a blissful state, they had never experienced.

One fine morning in November 1998, my preceptor Pt Vinayak Torvi came to my place and asked me to get ready and be packed for 2-3 days. As usual, I never asked where we were heading to. Little did I know then that the biggest surprise of my was in store for me. We both went to Hotel Woodlands, one of the famous hotels in Bangalore those days. On reaching the hotel, we were ushered into a room where we saw the one and only Pt Bhimsen Joshiji sitting right in front of us. I was awestruck with disbelief!

Even after 23 years, that meeting lingers fresh in my mind. I felt so humbled and was astonished by his treatment of me. I was nothing in front of him but still, he made me comfortable and gave some tips on how to play the Tal. Those 2 days, I had only one mission in front of me. Observe the legend!

A voice that enthralled millions

Bhimsen Joshi was born on 4 February 1922 in an orthodox family to Gururajrao Joshi and Godavaribai at Gadag in Dharwad district of Karnataka. As a child, Bhimsen was fascinated with music and musical instruments like the harmonium and the tanpura and would often follow processions accompanied by music bands. This exercise often tired him and he would curl up somewhere and sleep, forcing his parents to go to the police after efforts to trace him failed. Fed up, his father Gururajacharya Joshi came up with the solution, writing "son of teacher Joshi" on Bhimsen's shirts. This worked and those who found the boy sleeping would safely deposit him back to his house.

Pt Bhimsen Joshi was very famous for his robust voice and note accuracy. Classical Khayala singing, Thumri, Santavani (devotional songs) Natyageet, patriotic songs, film songs etc., he excelled in many genres of music.

Once Bhimsen listened to an extraordinary recording of Abdul Karim Khan's Thumri "Piya Bin Nahi Aavat Chain" in Raga Jhinjhoti. That recording inspired him to become a musician. 11-year-old Joshi left home in search of a preceptor. He reached Gwalior and got into Madhava Music School, a school run by Maharajas of Gwalior, with the help of famous Sarod player Hafiz Ali Khan. He travelled for three years around North India. Eventually, his father succeeded in tracking him down in Jalandhar and brought young Bhimsen back home.

In 1936, Sawai Gandharva, a native of Dharwad, agreed to be his preceptor. Joshi stayed at his house in the preceptor-disciple (teacher-student) tradition. Joshi continued his training with Sawai Gandharva. Pt. Bhimsen Joshi first performed live in 1941 at the age of 19. His debut album, containing a few devotional songs in Marathi and Hindi, was released by HMV the next year in 1942. Later, Joshi moved to Mumbai in 1943 and worked as a radio artiste. His performance, at a concert in 1946 to celebrate his preceptor Sawai Gandharva's 60th birthday, won him accolades both from the audience and his preceptor.

Pt Bhimsen Joshi was very famous for his robust voice and note accuracy. Classical Khayala singing, Thumri, Santavani (devotional songs) Natyageet, patriotic songs, film songs etc., he excelled in many genres of music. He became phenomena in Indian



Madhav Gudi, Vinayak Torvi, Prof Baldev Singh Bali, Narayan Deshpande, Shrikant Deshpande, Shrinivas Joshi, Anand Bhate and others are some of his more well-known disciples

Classical circles. He extensively travelled abroad and he truly became the Bharat Ratna by promoting and propagating Indian Classical music across the world.

Pt Joshi together with his friend Nanasaheb Deshpande organised the Sawai Gandharva Music Festival as homage to his guru, Sawai Gandharva, along with the Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal in 1953, marking Gandharva's first death anniversary. The festival has been held ever since, typically on the second weekend of December in Pune, Maharashtra. This stage became the Mecca of Classical music in India.

Madhav Gudi, Vinayak Torvi, Prof Baldev Singh Bali, Narayan Deshpande, Shrikant Deshpande, Shrinivas Joshi, Anand Bhate and others are some of his more well-known disciples.

Pt Bhimsen Joshi was a trendsetter in classical music. He left for his celestial abode on January 24th 2011 ■



Sajini Sahadevan
Senior Journalist

25 YEARS OF EMPOWERING WOMEN

The Kerala Women's Commission celebrates its Silver Jubilee this year

The Kerala Women's Commission (KWC) marked an important milestone this year with its silver jubilee celebrations on February 23, 2021. The celebration was marked with the inauguration of the KWC North Zone office in Kozhikode. The north zone office is for the districts comprising Kasargod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode and Malappuram. The silver jubilee logo was unveiled apart from the launch of a women's directory published by the commission, books on women protection laws, crimes against women and children and various brochures.



The Kerala Women's Commission was formed as a statutory organisation as per the Kerala Women's Commission Act Sec. 5. It was formed to raise the status of women in society and its main responsibilities include taking the necessary steps to bring an end to the injustices against them. Ever since its inception, the organisation has done exemplary work in its field, proving strength and succour to innumerable women across the state. It

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has improved livelihoods by empowering women and encouraging them to stand on their own feet, with initiatives like Kudumbashree inviting world appreciation.

Headquartered at PMG junction in Thiruvananthapuram, the Commission was formally established on March 14, 1996 with the late esteemed poet and social worker Sugatha Kumari as the first chairperson and Adv. Nafeesath Beevi, M. Kamalam, Adv. Rosamma Punoose, Adv. Noorbeena Rasheed, Adv. P. Rajani and T. Devi as members. Former DGP Alexander Jacob was the first director of the Women's Commission.

The KWC continues to attain new heights, taking into its stride the challenges and embracing the advancement of technology.

The KWC wasted no time, getting to the grassroot and making it their motive to reach as many women as possible. One of the many such activities was the organisation of seminars. Meant to spread awareness among women about their rights, seminars were held in 140 constituencies of the state. No medium was spared in its efforts to do so. All the seminar topics were recorded and made available to the public through the print media and video programmes. It was a definitive achievement for the Commission.

The formation of Jagratha Samithis was yet another feather in KWC's cap. The samithis were started at the panchayat level with 15 member committees comprising 10 women and 5 men. Complaints at the panchayat level were studied by the samithis. Necessary action was taken for resolving each case by the samithis. The Jagratha Samithi was a major programme. Soon there were Jagratha Samithis in every ward.

A large number of activities are being conducted by the KWC. It includes adalaths, research studies on various issues faced by women, women who have completed jail terms, work night duty, and ongoing studies for understanding the condition of families in debt after taking professional education loans, survivors of abuse, drug abuse among

KWC has the distinction of being the first to bring out a directory for women.

children, the influence of serials and advertisements among teenagers, gender awareness programmes called Kalalayajyothe for students at schools and universities across the state, pre-marital counselling for couples, financial aid to afford DNA tests for SC/ST and BPL women who are embroiled in paternity cases, legal awareness workshops and much more. When the Covid-19 pandemic restricted the full functioning of the KWC office in 2020, telecounseling facilities were made available by appointing counsellors in each district. The commission also has an active Facebook page for interacting with the public and responding to queries.

The KWC continues to attain new heights, taking into its stride the challenges and embracing the advancement of technology. The Commission has grown into a large tree offering all the support needed for women to grow and lead fulfilling lives.

MC Josephine is the present chairperson of the KWC. She is the sixth chairperson of KWC. Advocate M.S. Thara, E.M. Radha, advocate Shiji Shivaji and Dr. Shahid Kamal are the members. Member secretary P. Usha Rani, who is also an ex-officio member, is in charge of administration and implementation of KWC's welfare schemes. VU Kuriakose, SP of police is the director of investigation wing at present. ■



Sabin Iqbal
Senior Journalist, Author of *Cliffhangers*

THE LITERATURE OF ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Once the coronavirus is reined in, people will pick up their journeys—crossing borders, cultures and languages—and, these migrations and the enigma of arrivals and departures will continue to produce good literature.

Since the outbreak of Covid, travel, especially international travel, has been come to a stop. If there had not been any journey in the past, world literature would have been poorer.

In his Nobel acceptance speech VS Naipaul said that people were always on the move. It is true. Imagine the world before the coronavirus disruption. Millions of people were on the move every passing moment at airports, seaports, railways stations, bus stations, and on the streets.

One way or the other, all these journeys contribute to the making of modern literature.

Contemporary works of fiction—both novels and short stories—tells us compelling stories of the emotional predicaments and existential crises of the

people who are neither there nor here. Or, of those who are there but not quite 'there'.

Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer-winning *Interpreter of Maladies*, a debut collection of outstanding short stories about Indian, mostly Bengali, immigrants in the US, continues to be one of my favourites for a long time. Lahiri's eye for detail and subtlety is exceptional. I can still smell the whiff of the kitchens she has depicted in those stories. In one story after the other, she has profoundly portrayed the tensions, the dilemmas and the cultural in-betweens and indigestions of Bengali immigrants in the US, mostly in and around Boston. The way she has etched each character is so vivid that I still remember even their minute details.

Lahiri's second collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, too deals with the predicaments of Bengali immigrants in America. Though her novels, *The Namesake* and *Lowland*, too grabbed global attention, I find her short stories more magical, poignant and powerful.

Dislocation and home are two major themes of diaspora writing. Chimamanda Adichie is emerging as the 'voice of Africa' after the passing away of Chinua Achebe. In her third novel, *Americanah*, Adichie delves into the lives of Nigerian teenage sweethearts, Ifemelu and Obinze. They end up in America and Britain respectively. Adichie is at her best when she brings forth the sense of dislocation both of them experience in the countries they end up living.



Deepak Unnikrishnan

JJ Bola's *No Place to Call Home* is a compelling story of a Congolese family which has to flee home to escape political violence and dictatorship. Bola, who has come to the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters (MBIFL) in Thiruvananthapuram, gives us another take on the migrant life

through a tale of love, loss, identity and belonging, which are the texture of any work of diaspora life.

If we come to Sunjeev Sahota's *The Year of the Runaways*, we see the struggle of young Indian migrant workers in the UK, and their endless 'migrant woes' in search of permanence and identity. These young men even get into marriages in order

to secure a 'visa' to stay on and become a citizen. The award-winning novel reflects the desperation and willingness to take any risks to remain in the country. Like Lahiri, Sahota has an eye for the minute, and his turn of phrases gives the diction a newness of spirit.



Benjamin

Catastrophes, both natural and man-made, impact the half-baked lives of the immigrants in a tragic way, often throwing them off to a realm of yet-another uncertainty. Talking about youngsters caught up in an unforeseen disaster in a Western metro, one cannot ignore *Home Boy* by Pakistani writer, HM Naqvi. The winner of inaugural DSC Prize, *Home Boy* tells the story of three Pakistani youngsters in New York in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. While probing what the many-layered lives of Asian immigrants, especially those from Pakistan, face in America in the aftermath of such a gruesome terror attack, Naqvi treats us with a powerful, energetic diction in contemporary prose.

The most unique expatriate community in the world are those of Malayalis in the Arabian Gulf. The sad thing is, they are neither there nor here, in their own home country. I pick two novels that best represent the plight of these people. Benjamin's *Goat Days* (*AaduJeevitham*) and Deepak Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People*. What *Goat Days* shows us is one hapless man's extraordinary suffering in the desert where his life becomes similar to that of the goats he tends. But Najeeb, the protagonist, is not the everyday Malayali expat. He represents a minority who get cheated and stranded in these cruel conditions. On the other hand, *Temporary People* is the story of the whole expatriate community since the '60s. Unnikrishnan's award-winning debut novel is experimental in form and linguistic expressions—a merging of Rushdie and George Sanders, critics say. I call it a 'multi-experience' novel.

Once the coronavirus is reined in, people will continue their journeys—crossing borders, cultures and languages—and, these migrations and the enigma of arrivals and departures, and those years in between will produce good literature, which would be a rich repository of stories of 'strange victims of a common tragedy'. ■



Jayadeep M.V.
Freelance Writer

MEMORIES LAST FOREVER...!

With the progression of age, people, though not many tend to be lacking proper memory. Memory techniques, if we take them seriously, can make one's life more qualitative.

Tanmathra, the Blessy written and directed Malayalam melodrama movie (2005) features the affect of Alzheimer's disease in a person's life- the continuous decline in thinking, behavioral and social skills that disrupts a person's ability to function independently is portrayed at its best in the movie with a melancholic touch. No matter how the state of affairs would look like then, the effect is progressive memory loss and leaving the person at a loss.

The aforesaid mentioned film discloses a memory technique when the hero of the movie reveals a method to memorise ten quick words in the order he mentioned to the public at large attending a function at his son's school. The trick lies in reproducing the entire words in the same order he mentioned.

The technique suggests visualising or a linking method wherein you could visualise or frame funny stories to link the incident, objects or action in an order, so as to memorise them with ease. The linking and visualising actions are framed in a way, whereby the person will be able to remember word, incidents or objects even in the reverse order as it's linked with a story. Stories as we all know framed on our interest can't get misplaced either and thus the word objects or incidents attached to it can fade away.

Based on your interests, taste and preference you could well judge where you belong to. In fact, the more use of right brain-the creative brain in a day

Based on your interests, taste and preference you could well judge where you belong to.

to day affair would help you to memorise things in a better way. The right side of the brain controls left side of the body and vice-versa. So if you are ambidextrous - (those able to use both the hands equally well) it's very evident that either part of your brain is in "use".

Another important practice to memorise things is association technique. For that a certain set of objects, names which are so familiar to you and those that are within your reach could well be utilised. For example I have the 1999 Indian world cup cricket team still intact with me in my memory, unharmed. The sequence in which the batters would play through, in that order are listed-starting with Sachin Tendulkar, Saurav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Mohamed Azaruddin, Ajay Jadeja, Robin Singh, Nayan Mongia, Ajith Agarkar, Anil Kumble, Javagal Srinath and Venketesh Prasad. For a matter of interest even after 21 years the names get struck to your thoughts so deeply that you never tend to forget these names. Now associating any tasks, points, incidents with these names in a funny manner, so as to remember would do a trick -As mentioned earlier the stories, peculiarities and depictions last forever and are easy to remember. How well and easily could you associate a point of interest to "Sachin Tendulkar" could be your headache, but your point of interest gets deeply rooted with the very name "Sachin Tendulkar" and tend to stay intact. In a way these memories stay forever...!



Though not all memory techniques have been broadly discussed here, a few that would be helpful in your day to day affair is put up to take a note of. Creating an Acronym could be one of those-An acronym of different things you wish to remember. Acronyms are generally difficult to forget. So you

Creating an Acronym could be one of those-An acronym of different things you wish to remember.

could frame your own acronym for any matter and could remember it at once. VIBGYOR will have a universal acceptance to remember the colours of a rainbow. You could well frame your own versions to remember things. Mastering a new language could be another positive thing to do. The process of remembering vocabulary, phrases and grammar rules all exercise your brain cells. Mental exercise like this leads to overall memory improvement. Studies have indicated that bilingual people are at less risk of Alzheimer's. Positively engaging yourself in any form of art, engaging in activities and being lively make you happy and would also trigger your memory to certain desired levels. Positive visualization and meditation would generally improve your memory at large. Meditation would be helpful to focus on finer details and further would help to memorise things more accurately. While visualization would help you to create a mental image in your mind that have a lasting effect. And finally the 'memories' as they say, will last forever...!



Dr. B. Sasikumar
Agri-Writer

ALL PEPPERS ARE NOT PEPPER!

In the guise of ‘pepper’, there exists more than one pepper in papers, all traded as spice or medicinal herbs! The word ‘pepper’ instantly brings to mind the perfect black or white pepper berries plus the green berries of the vine Piper nigrum ,the spice with the moniker ‘black gold’. However ,there are some other species of spices or medicinal plants with the suffix ‘pepper’

Sichuan pepper

Geographically identified with the Sichuan cuisines of China, it is scientifically *Zanthoxylum piperitum* / *Z. Simulans* (Rutaceae), also known as Japanese pepper and Korean pepper. A deciduous aromatic spiny shrub or small tree, it is more common in Japan and Korea besides China and other parts of Asia. Related species are found in India, Nepal, Tibet etc .



Pink pepper

Pink pepper (*Schinus molle*, *Schinus terebinthifolius*) is an invasive evergreen tree of about 1 meter height, of the family Anacardiaceae, found in many countries including India. Native to Peru and Chile, pink pepper is also known by the names Peruvian pepper and Brazilian pepper. The dried berries used as culinary spice have a lighter pepper-like taste.



Tailed pepper

It is the whole dried berries of *Piper cubeba* (Java pepper or cubeb pepper; Valmulaku (Mal.)), a vine, grown mostly in Java and Sumatra in Indonesia and other adjoining countries. Though tailed pepper berries (as a spice) is available in India, it is not known to be cultivated in the country.



Ashanti pepper

A close relative of the tailed pepper, Ashanti pepper (*Piper guineense*, distinct from Guinea pepper), a.k.a Benin pepper, False cubeb, Guinea cubeb etc., is of west African origin now grown in central and western Africa mainly for its, black pepper like berries. Unlike the tailed pepper berries, Ashanti pepper corns are prolate spheroids, smaller and smoother with distinctly curved stalks. Dried and crushed berries of Ashanti pepper are used as precious spice for flavouring soups and other recipes besides as an antioxidant.



Jamaica pepper

Allspice, also called pimento, Jamaica pimento, Jamaica pepper, Pimenta, Myrtle pepper, or Sarvasugandhi (Mal.), is the dried nearly ripe fruits of *Pimenta dioica* (Myrtaceae), a medium sized tree found in many parts of the tropical world especially in South and central America. Jamaica is the major producer of allspice.



False black pepper

A valued herb in Ayurvedic system of medicine, false black pepper (*Embelia ribes*), Vizhal & Vizhalari (Mal.); Vayuvilangam (Tam.); Vayuvidangam (Kannada), family Myrsinaceae, is the dried berries of a semi-evergreen and deciduous straggling shrub native to India, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. False black pepper is an adulterant of traded black pepper.



Monk pepper

Monk pepper (*Vitex agnus-castus*), or Chaste tree /

Chaste berry, Family Lamiaceae, a native of the Mediterranean region, is widely cultivated in warm temperate and subtropical regions for its delicate-textured aromatic foliage and spikes of lavender flowers plus the ripening fruits. Monk pepper grows to a height of 1-5 m.



Selim pepper

An ever green aromatic tree of timber value, Selim pepper (*Xylopi aethiopia*), Family Annonaceae, is native to the lowland rainforest and moist fringe forests in the savanna zones of Africa. It is otherwise known as Kani pepper, Senegal pepper, Ethiopian pepper, and Moor pepper and Negro pepper. The tree grows up to 20m high.



Dried and crushed berries of Ashanti pepper are used as precious spice for flavouring soups and other recipes besides as an antioxidant

Guinea pepper

Aframomum melegueta, (Zingiberaceae), aliases Grains of paradise, Melegueta pepper, Alligator pepper, Guinea grains and Guinea pepper. The seeds produced in capsules, akin to cardamom, are used as a spice; it imparts a pungent, black-pepper-like flavor with hints of citrus. The spice grows wild in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Liberia.



Wild pepper of Madagascar

Wild pepper of Madagascar (*Piper borbonense*), well known as Voatsiperifery or Tsiperifery, is a rare and new species of *Piper* endemic to Madagascar. The vine reaches a height of 60 feet on support trees. Berries look like that of tailed pepper with a distinct tail (stalk). Dried and crushed berries are used in meat dishes and other recipes, like black pepper.



Adi pepper

Adi pepper (*Piper relictum*) is commercially grown in some parts of Coorg District, Karnataka, for its black pepper like berries, used as a spice. Berries, though bold, resemble black pepper in appearance and taste. ■





FOCUS ON LONG TIME GOALS



Shruti Shibulal

CEO and Director of Tamara Leisure Experiences

My message to young women and young people is to focus very much on their long term goals. Think about whether your choices, even the small ones are contributing to the life that you want in the future. We can only make decisions with the information available to us in the present moment and sometimes we may choose. A path that is our step towards something greater. I was a Chemistry major in my undergraduate study,

I worked in finance later on and eventually realized - thanks to all those experiences - that I actually wanted to work with people and, specifically, in hospitality. The road to what fulfils you is rarely linear. But I would advise you to be dedicated to the things that interest you most. This will allow you to be both discerning of the opportunities that come your way and, more importantly, to create opportunities of your own.

NEWS SCAN

Kerala Sahithya academy Award for Poetry

P. Raman and M .R Renukumar won the Kerala Sahithya Academy awards for the best poetry in 2019, which was announced in 2021. Both of them represents the new generation of poetry in the contemporary society. P Raman's Rathri Pandradarakkoru Tharattu and Renukumar's Kothiyan bagged the prestigious poetry award declared by the academy. Their poems put forward a new politics of elegance by taking ground on the historical and poetic nature of language. Renukumar's collection of poems titled Kothiyan summarised 41 poems. He writes poetry for socio- political rather than personal reasons. He is trying to deviate the conventional Malayalam Literature with a different vocabulary, images, and experiences and identical descends. Raman openly opposed the centuries of expressive theories through his poetry; He has created



a new area in the world of Malayalam poetry through his writings in prose poetry.

Talent unlimited

Legendary Kathakali exponent Guru Chemancheri Kunhiraman Nair is no more, he died at the age of 105 at cheliya house, koyilandy in Kozhikode. Chemanchery played a vital role in teaching and propagating classical dance and kathakali. Guru Chemancheri, who had been on the stage for 90 years, played the role of Lord Krishna, which became the favourite of Kathakali connoisseurs. He had staged kathakali even at around 100 years old. He promoted the Kalladikodan Chitta of Kathakali, popular in the northern districts of the State. As in Kathakali, he was a genius in Kerala Nadanam and Bharatanatyam. Chemencheri was conferred the Padma Shri in 2017 in recognition for his role in promoting classical dance forms. He was the founder of Bharathiya Natya Kalalayam in Kaanur and Thalassery and also Kathakali schools at Cheliya and Pookkad .He received numerous accolades, including the Kalamandalam Award and the Kerala Sangeeta Nataka Akademi award.



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