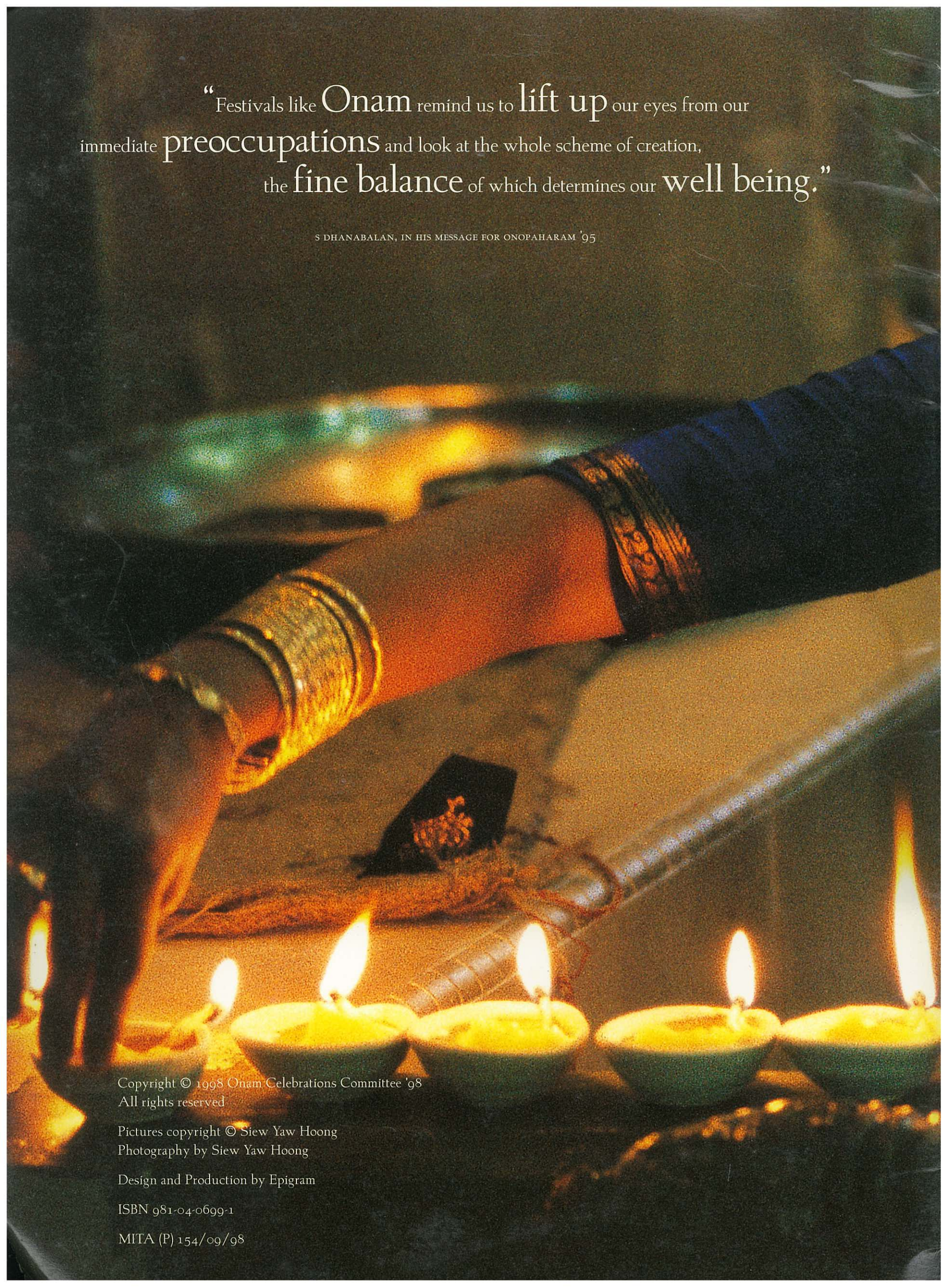




onopaharam 98



“Festivals like Onam remind us to lift up our eyes from our immediate preoccupations and look at the whole scheme of creation, the fine balance of which determines our well being.”

S DHANABALAN, IN HIS MESSAGE FOR ONOPAHARAM '95

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Photography by Siew Yaw Hoong

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A close-up photograph of a woman in traditional Kerala attire, including a dark blue sari with gold borders and a gold necklace. She is looking down at a lit diya (oil lamp) in the foreground. The background is dark, and the lighting is warm, highlighting the woman's face and the flame of the diya.

onopaharam 98

ONAM, THE HARVEST FESTIVAL OF KERALA, CELEBRATED TO WELCOME BACK THE
SPIRIT OF THE PIOUS KING MAHABALI

Message from our committee chairman

I AM DELIGHTED THAT TEN Malayalee organisations have come together to organise this year's Onam celebrations. When I was asked by S Iswaran, Member of Parliament for West Coast GRC, to chair the organising committee, I was more than happy to accept. This is the first time that more than 2,000 Malayalees have gathered to celebrate Onam.

This year is also a special occasion for the Singapore Malayalee community: the Singapore Kerala Association (SKA) is celebrating its 80th anniversary. This makes us one of the oldest cultural organisations, an achievement we can all be truly proud of. The SKA and all the Malayalee cultural and religious groups here are thriving and run active programmes.

I am particularly proud that the Malayalee community has used this year's Onam celebrations to launch a new venture — a cooperative aimed at equipping each Indian household in Singapore with a personal computer. The new cooperative's main target group is the lower-income bracket in the Indian community and we will be working within the ambit of the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA).

On behalf of the community, I must offer our heartfelt thanks to our Deputy Prime Minister, Brig-Gen Lee Hsien Loong, for gracing our celebrations as guest of honour.

May I also extend Onam greetings to all Malayalees.



GOPINATH PILLAI

CHAIRMAN, ONAM CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEE '98

“Not many Singaporeans know much about the Malayalees.
But in a quiet, low-key way, you have made a significant
contribution to Singapore's development.”

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG

“മലയാളികളെപ്പറ്റി അധികം സിംഗപ്പൂർക്കാർക്കും വളരെയൊന്നും അറിയില്ലായിരിക്കാം, എങ്കിലും ഏറെക്കുറെ നിശ്ശബ്ദരായി നിങ്ങൾ സിംഗപ്പൂരിന്റെ വളർച്ചക്ക് ഗണ്യമായ സംഭാവനകൾ ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്.”

ഡെപ്യൂട്ടി പ്രൈം മിനിസ്റ്റർ ലീ ഹ്സിയൻ ലൂംഗ്

Message from our guest of Honour

I AM HAPPY TO BE part of this year's Onam celebrations among the Singapore Malayalee community. This is also the 80th anniversary of the Singapore Kerala Association; this makes your association one of the oldest cultural organisations in Singapore.

Malayalees are the second-largest sub-group within Singapore's Indian community. Not many Singaporeans know much about the Malayalees. But in a quiet, low-key way, you have made a significant contribution to Singapore's development.

The first Malayalees arrived here from Kerala in the early 19th century. There was an influx later this century, when many came as clerks and shopkeepers in or around the British military installations here, particularly in the Naval Base. You brought with you a hard-working spirit and a passion for education. This has been the main reason for the success of the Singapore Malayalees, who are now well-represented in the professions, in government, in the unions, in the media and in the private sector.

But I want to highlight in particular your community's ability to manage your own cultural and religious diversity. You are a rich blend of Hindus, Muslims, Syrian Christians and Catholics. While there have been ethnic or religious flare-ups in other parts of India, I'm told they rarely happen in Kerala. Here in Singapore, you have been a model of tolerance and understanding. The fact that all groups have joined in the Onam celebrations is a sign of this strong unity in the community. Other Singaporeans can learn from your example.

I wish all Malayalees a Happy Onam.

Lee Hsien Loong

BS-GEN LEE HSIEN LOONG
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

DPM Lee at the May 1996 ceremony to re-sanctify the renovated Sri Mariamman temple, with him is Gopinath Pillai, who is chairman of the Onam Celebrations Committee '98.

whence we call The Land of K

“They like to call Kerala ‘God’s own land’. That’s stretching it a bit. But it’s one of the greenest and most beautiful states in India.”

PROMINENT SINGAPORE MALAYALEE, K T SAMUEL

KERALA’S GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AND PECULIAR physical features have invested it with a distinct individuality. The land of Kerala, in the south-western part of the Indian Peninsula, comprises a narrow coastal strip (a coastline nearly 360 miles long) bounded by the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats (the highlands, with the Anamudi peak at 8,841 ft).

This geographical position ensured, to some extent, Kerala’s political and cultural isolation from the rest of the country, and also facilitated its extensive and active contacts with the countries of the outside world.

But the geographical barrier did not stand in the way of the great Advaita philosopher Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) propagating the Vedanta philosophy from North India. Kerala also came within the scheme of conquests of the various powers in neighbouring Tamil and Kannada areas. Kerala was invaded several times in the ancient period.

“One of the finest cities in
Malabar with magnificent
markets and wealthy merchants.”

DESCRIPTION OF QUILON BY IBN BATUTA, AN ARAB GLOBE-TROTTER WHO VISITED
THE KERALA COAST SIX TIMES BETWEEN 1342 AND 1347

The sea has been a decisive factor in Kerala’s history, investing the state with a maritime tradition of its own. Ancient Kerala’s fame as the land of spices brought foreign peoples and cultures to her shores even from the 3rd millennium B.C. The Assyrians and the Babylonians carried on an extensive trade in Kerala’s cardamom and cinnamon. The ancient Egyptians also used spices from Kerala to make perfumes and holy oils.

The sea ports of ancient Kerala included Muziris (which scholars identify with modern Cranganore), which enjoyed phenomenal prosperity in the days of Roman trade. The Greek writer Pliny (1st Century A.D.) refers to Muziris as the most important port of India (*primum emporium Indiae*).

Such ports as Quilon, Calicut and Cochin came into prominence in later periods. The Chinese and the Arabs were among the most important of the foreign nationals who traded with Calicut under the Zamorins in the 13th Century. The Chinese even established a small colony of their own in a part of the city that came to be known as *Chinakotta* or Chinese fort.

The extensive sea coast later exposed Kerala to the onslaughts of the maritime powers of Europe — the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English — ever since the landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498. (The Portuguese navigator was buried with pomp and pageantry in St Francis Church in Fort Cochin). It is significant that such religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam came to Kerala by sea.

me: erala

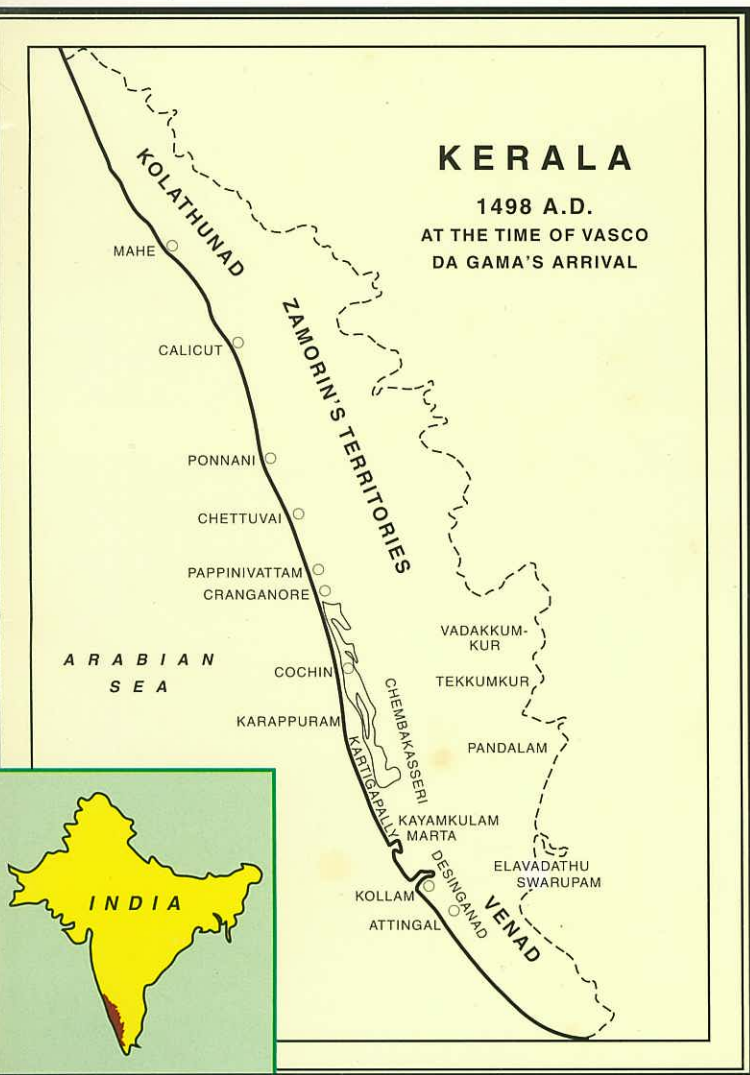
black pepper for gold



IN THE CLOSING CENTURIES OF the era before Christ, Kerala's trade in spices like ginger, tumeric, pepper, cardamom and cinnamon assumed great prominence. The Greeks and the Romans of those days carried on extensive trade with Kerala.

With the Roman conquest of Egypt in the middle of the 1st Century B.C. the Romans actively entered the spice trade and the Arab monopoly broke up. In 45 A.D. the discovery by Hippalus of the monsoon winds blowing across the Indian Ocean gave an impetus to trade between Kerala and the west. An oceanic voyage from Ocelis near Aden to Muziris (Cranganore) was a trip of 40 days. Roman gold and silver steadily drained into South India in exchange not only for spices but also muslin, silk and other luxuries.

Pepper formed the bulk of the west-bound cargo from Kerala. When military anarchy reigned in Rome from the 3rd Century A.D. and Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire in 330 A.D., that city developed into a centre of trade in oriental spices. Early in the 5th Century A.D. when Rome was besieged by Alaric, king of the Goths, a part of the ransom demanded for sparing the imperial city from destruction was 3,000 pounds of black pepper from Kerala.

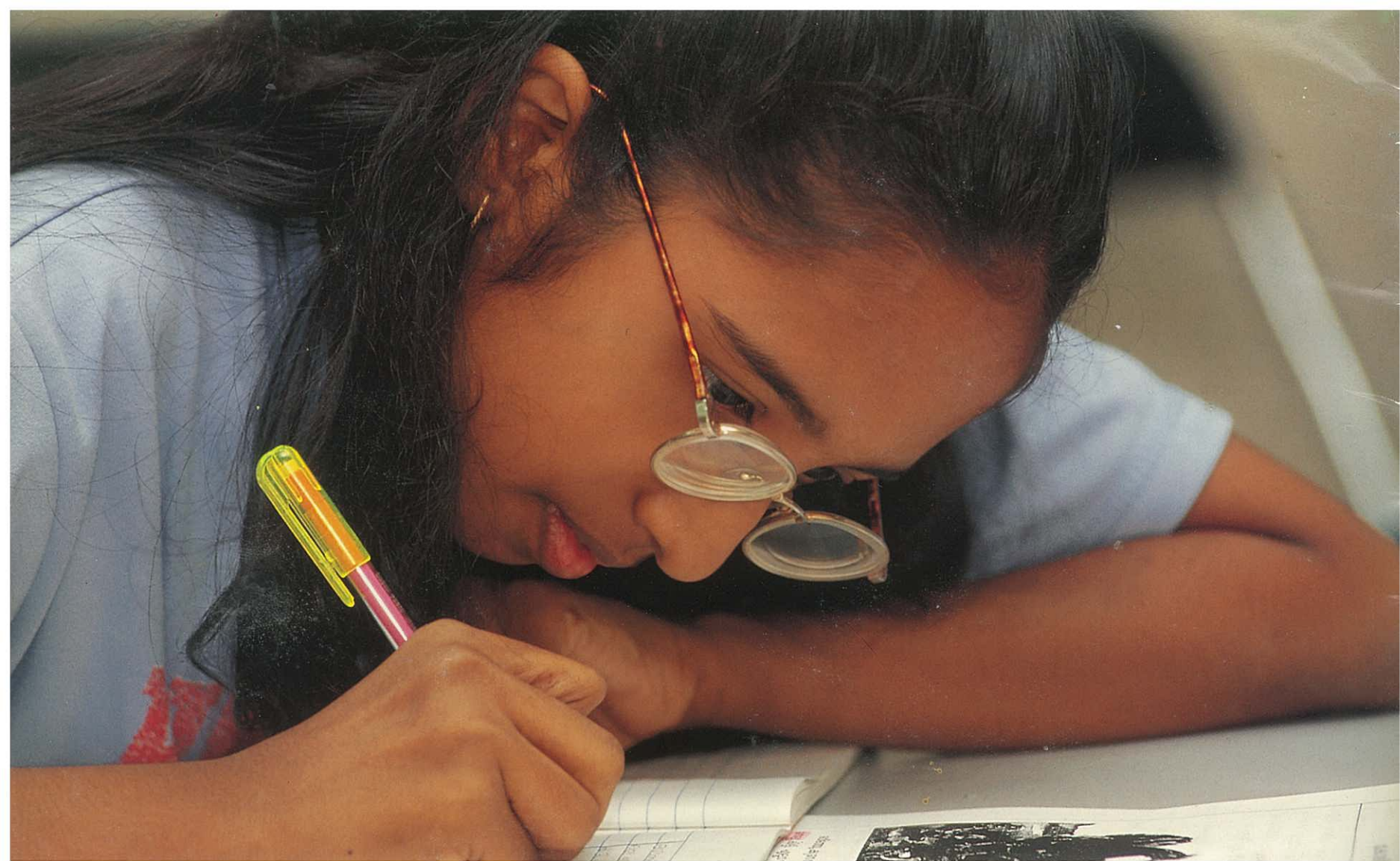


Fríar Jordanus of Severic, who came to Quilon in 1324 for missionary work among the St Thomas Christians and was later appointed by the Pope as the Bishop of Caulam (Quilon), alludes to the prosperous Christian community in his *Mirabila Descriptia*. He also pays tribute to the rulers of Malabar for their spirit of religious toleration, and speaks highly of the astrologers and physicians of the land. Incidentally, he is the first foreign writer who gives an account of *Marumakkathayam* or the matrilineal system of inheritance.

Edited from A. Sreedhara Menon's *A Survey of Kerala History*

“ഗംഭീരമായ വാണിഭരണവും ധനികരായ കച്ചവടക്കാരും ഉള്ള മലബാറിനെ ഒരു സുന്ദരമായ പട്ടണം.”

പതിനാലാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ കൊല്ലം സന്ദർശിച്ച അറബ് യാത്രികൻ ഇബ്ൻ ബത്തൂത്ത



staying a community



ON 25 SEP 1917, THE SINGAPORE FREE PRESS carried a report headlined "A meeting of the Malayalees". As George Netto, the community's historian, has noted, the headline reveals that Malayalees must have had a high profile in Singapore in those days.

That meeting decided that a social and cultural organisation of Malayalees be formed. Soon after, an organisation called Keraleeya Mahajana Sangham was formed, with V.R. Menon as president.

"It was the fourth year of World War I," Mr Netto wrote in an article in Onopaharam '95. "A donation list was opened in aid of the War Fund, and raised the then princely sum of \$79.50 on the spot by the members present."

The organisation survived World War II, and in 1947 was renamed the Singapore Kerala Samajam, with 1,354 members out of a 1947 census count of 9,712 Malayalees. Another milestone was reached in 1952 when the Samajam purchased — for \$34,000 — the two-storey premises at 44, Race Course Road which has been its home to this day.

“മലയാള ഭാഷയുടേയും സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റേയും, ഈ അസ്സോസിയേഷന്റെ തന്നെയും, ഭാവി നില്പായകൾ ഇന്നത്തെ സിംഗപ്പൂരിലെ മലയാളി യുവാക്കളാണ്.”

ജോർജ്ജ് നെറ്റോ, സാമൂഹ്യ ചരിത്രകാരൻ

The main problem facing Singapore Malayalees, who now number 15,000, is how to remain a community. This is the challenge the Singapore Kerala Association is grappling with. Locally-born Malayalees are inevitably losing touch with their culture and language. More young Malayalees are marrying outside the community.

The SKA, as well as the other Malayalee groups here, have been active in organising a range of activities to bring Malayalees together — celebrating festivals like Onam, organising Malayalam classes, and promoting Malayalee dance and drama.

For a minority within a minority, the community has done well to stay united, though much more can, of course, be done. Who knows, we might yet see a Speak Malayalam Campaign.



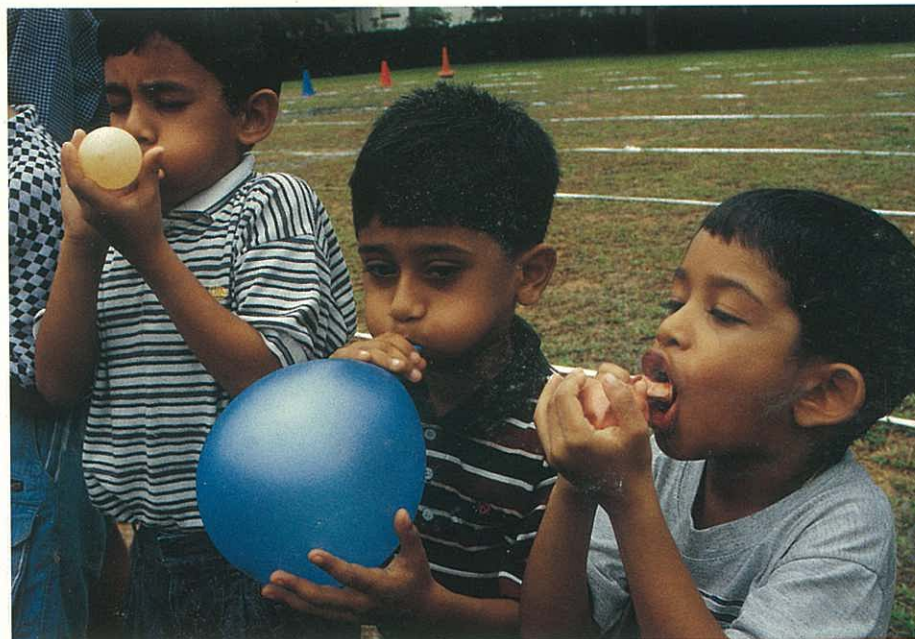
Opposite page, top: Shaheena Abu Bakar, 11, at a Malayalam class at the Singapore Kerala Association.

Opposite page, bottom: M Abdullah Mahoo, president of the Singapore Kerala Association, in front of its Race Course Road premises.

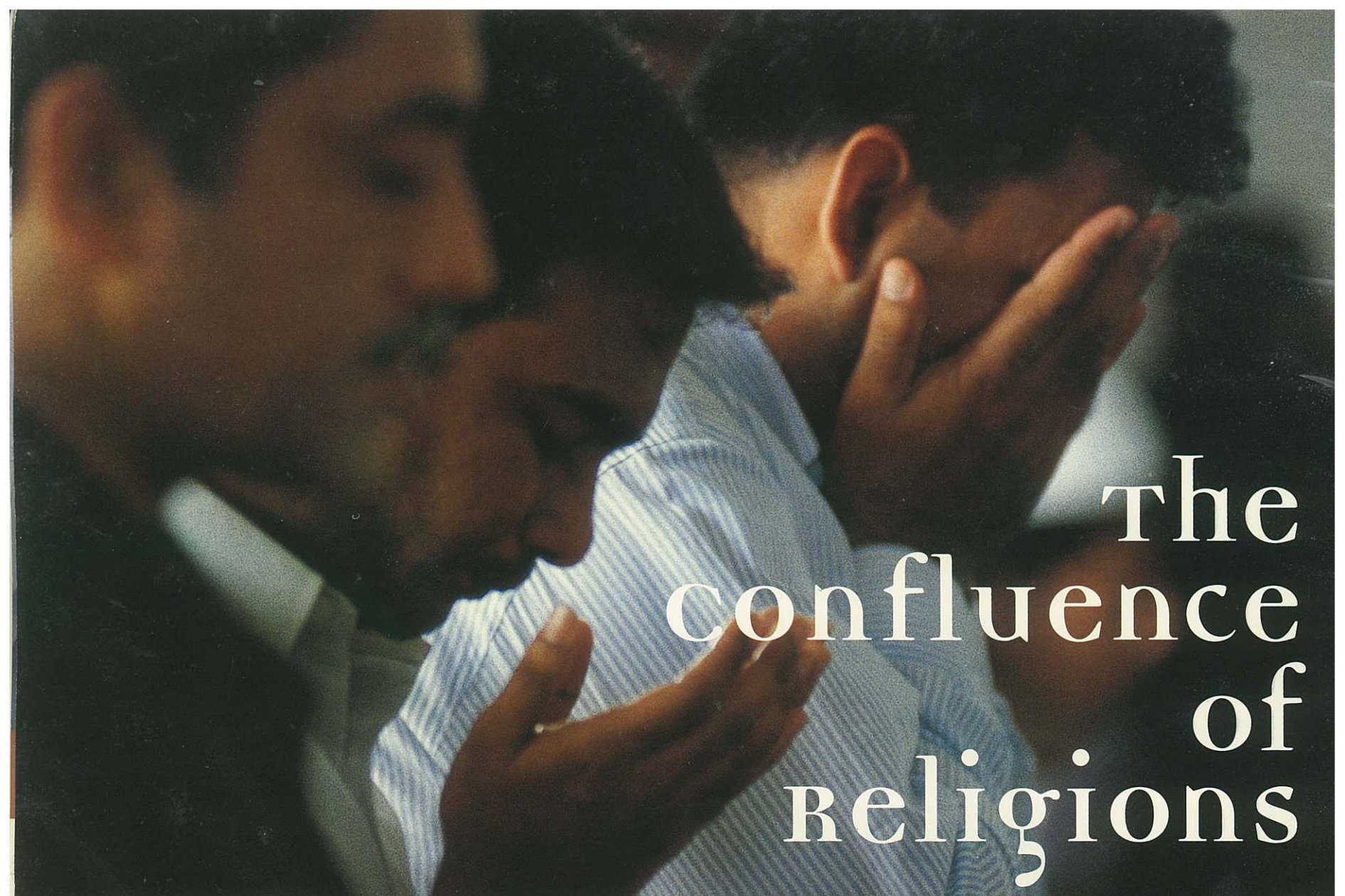
Left: Dancers practising the Kaikotti Kali, a traditional Malayalee dance, at the SKA's premises.

Below: Malayalee children at the Onam '98 Sports Day organised by the SKA.

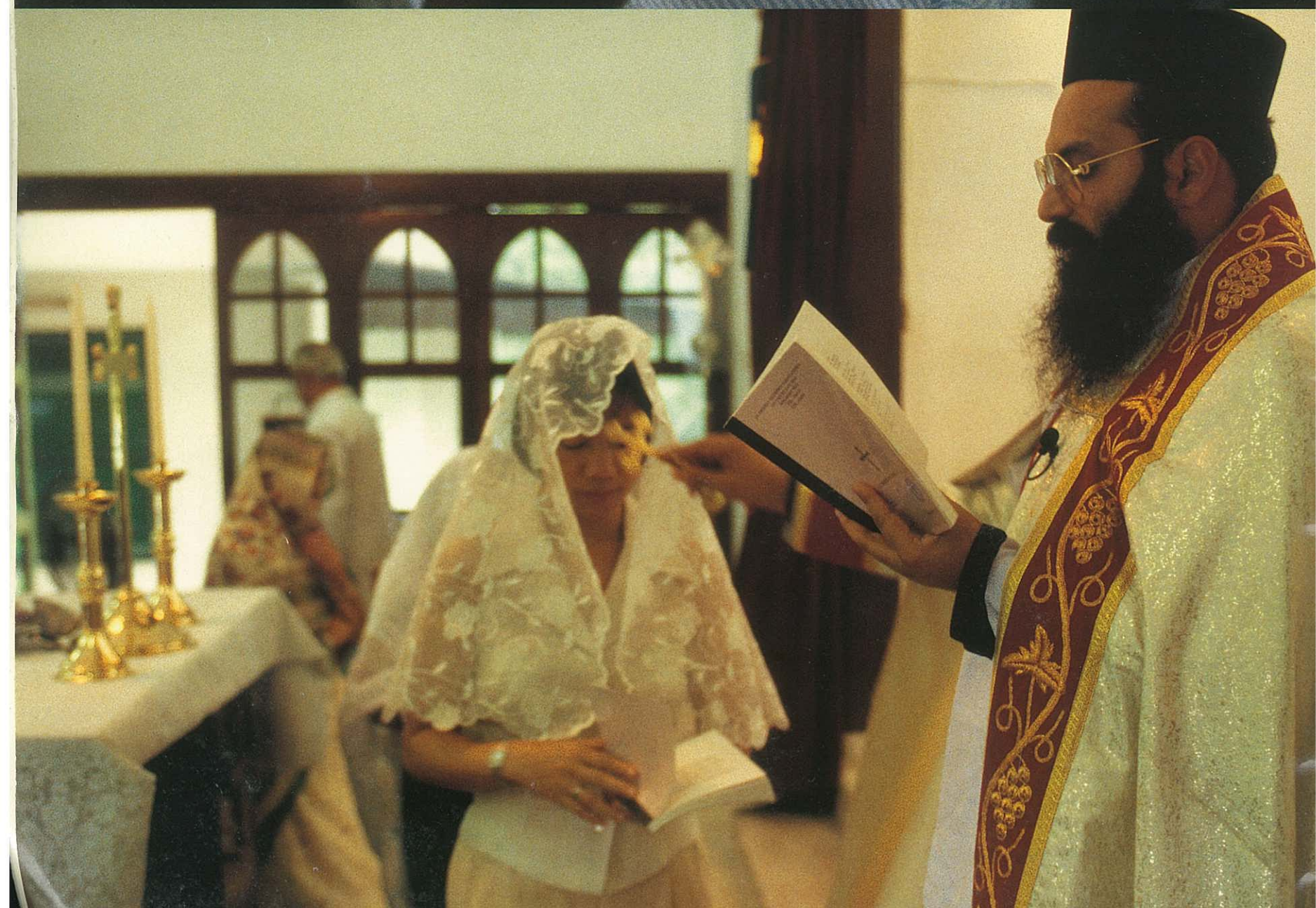
Bottom: S Iswaran, MP for West Coast GRC and guest of honour at the 1998 Onam Sadhya (feast). Having a meal with him are M Abdullah Mahoo (left), president of the Singapore Kerala Association, and Michael Fernandez, past president of the SKA.

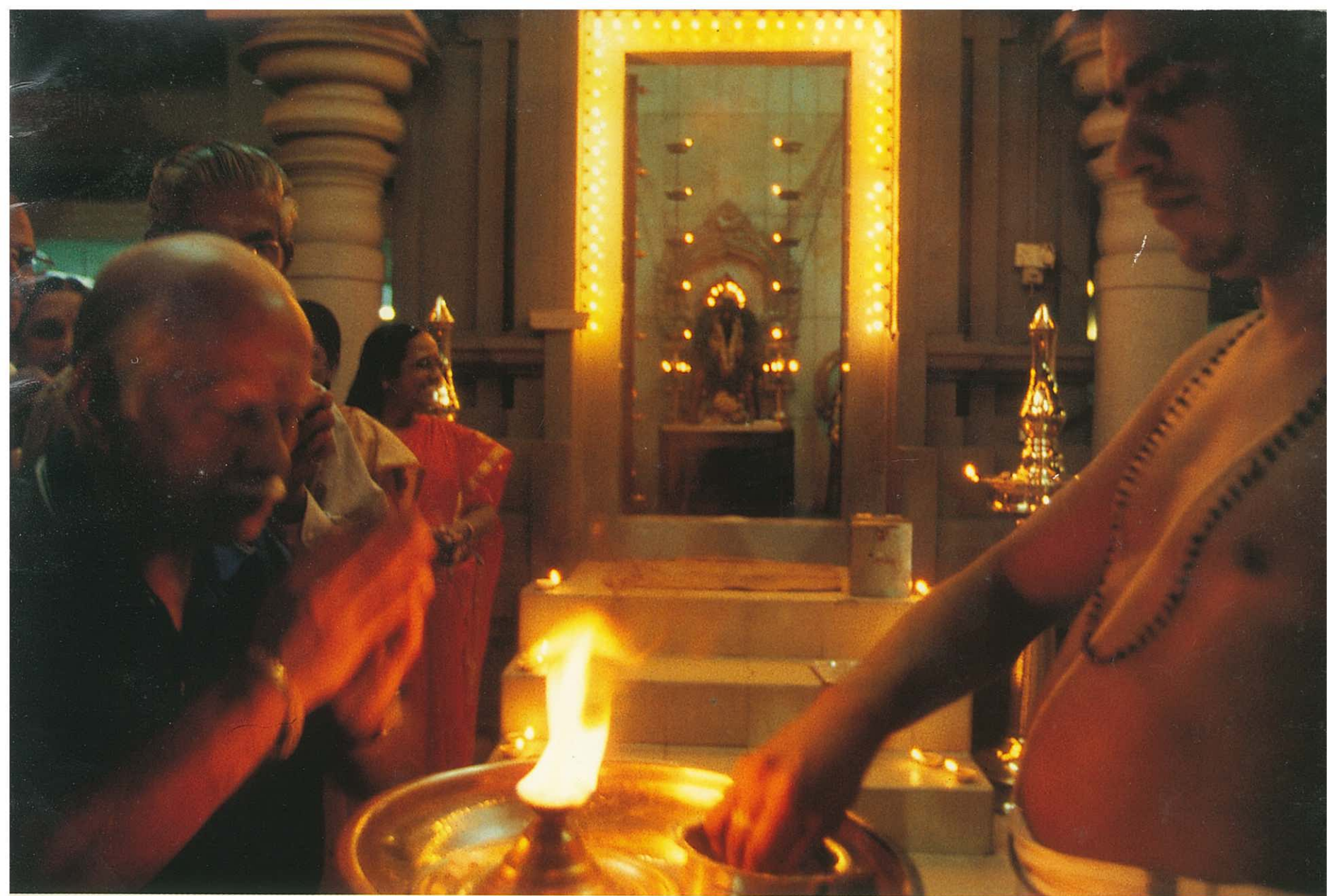


“The future of the Malayalam language and culture depends on what **young** Singapore Malayalees decide today.”



The confluence of Religions





A DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF THE Singapore Malayalee community is its multi-religious character. Religious tolerance among the Malayalees has a proud long history that goes back 2,000 years when Kerala became a remarkable meeting ground of Indian and world religions. Even in the ancient period, the native faiths — Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism — thrived alongside foreign religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Ancient Keralites followed Dravidian practices, worshipping gods and goddesses by offering food to the accompaniment of music and dancing. Buddhism and Brahminism entered

**“This tradition of religious tolerance
continues in the community in Singapore.”**

“മത സൗഹാർദ്ദത്തിന്റെ പാരമ്പര്യം സിംഗപ്പൂരിലെ സമൂഹത്തിൽ ഇന്നും തുടരുന്നു.”

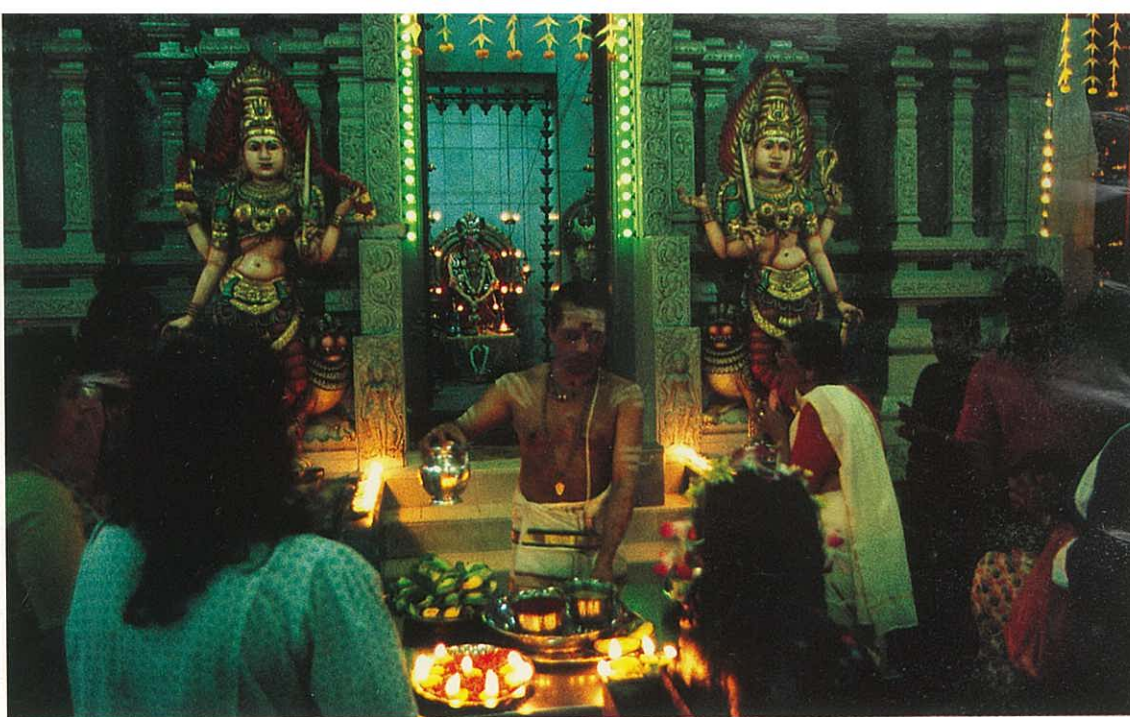
Kerala from the north before the Christian era. Buddhism is thought to have come during the reign of Asoka in the 3rd Century B.C, held sway in Kerala for many centuries, then declined from the 8th Century A.D after leaving a lasting impact. In the era of the Kulasekharas (9th to 11th Century), acknowledged as Kerala’s “Golden Age”, the people had an eclectic religious outlook, considering no religion as inferior to another.

This tradition of religious tolerance continues in the community in Singapore. The Singapore Malayalee Hindu Samajam, the Malabar Muslim Jama-ath and the Malayalee Christian communities form a tapestry of faiths held together firmly by a common heritage and mother tongue. The Singapore Kerala Association has been headed by Hindus, Christians and Muslims alike, not through any system of rotation but by free voting at annual general meetings.

Opposite page, top: Muslims deep in prayer at the Malabar Mosque in Victoria Street.

Opposite page, bottom: Reverend Father Abraham Oommen, vicar of the St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral in Yio Chu Kang, leading the offertory hymn at the end of Sunday worship.

Above: Ardent devotee K S P Menon receiving holy ash from the priest, Sreedharan Namboothiri, at the Lord Ayyappan sanctum in the Sree Vairavimada Kalliamman temple in Toa Payoh.



The Hindu synthesis

HINDUISM IN KERALA WAS THE result of a synthesis of Aryan ideas from the north and Dravidian practices from the south. The absorption of the Dravidians within the fold of the Hindu religion was a gradual process — through social and cultural assimilation, rather than by conquest.

The process had its beginnings early in the Sangam age (1st to 5th Century A.D) when Brahmins from the north came to Kerala in small numbers. In the 8th Century, Brahmin immigration reached a peak and eminent scholars founded a school for Vedantic studies. They enlisted disciples of whom the most illustrious was Prabhakara.

Hinduism made big gains in Kerala in the 9th Century through the work of Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) and other reformers, and a great many temples were built. It was during this period that Dravidian practices were accommodated and their deities absorbed into the Hindu pantheon.

In Singapore, the Hindu community's growth has been ceaseless. The Singapore Malayalee Hindu Samajam, founded in 1926, widened its role in 1968 beyond just providing destitute Malayalees with a decent burial. In 1970, the Samajam's first *pooja* (worship) for Lord Ayyappan

“We must keep this fine tradition alive.”

DILEEP NAIR, CHAIRMAN OF THE MAKARA VILAKKU 1998, ON THE ANNUAL CELEBRATIONS FOR LORD AYYAPPAN

“ഈ മഹത്തായ പാരമ്പര്യം നാം നിലനിർത്തണം.”

മകരവിളക്ക് ആഘോഷം 98 ചെയർമാൻ ദിലീപ് നായർ സാമൂഹ്യബോധത്തെയും ആത്മീയതയെയും പറ്റി

Above: Priest offering holy ash to devotees at the main sanctum for Goddess Kalamman at the Sree Vairavimada Kalamman (SVK) temple.

Right: Priest Sreedharan Namboodhiri conducting *pooja* (worship) at the sanctum of Lord Guruvayur Appan, another deity of great importance to Malayalee Hindus. The sanctum is also in the SVK temple in Toa Payoh.

— the deity of great importance to Malayalee Hindus — was attended by only a handful of devotees. But this became an annual event and by 1983 the congregation had grown so large that a permanent home was sought. The Lord Ayyappan sanctum was opened in 1990 at the new Sree Vairavimada Kalamman Temple in Toa Payoh. Today, more than 5,000 devotees attend the annual celebrations there known as Makara Villaku.

Singaporeans also join the thousands of pilgrims in Kerala each year who trek up the mountains to the forest temple of Ayyappan in Sabarimala atop the Western Ghats. The Samajam members hope that one day their sanctum will grow into a separate Ayyappan temple, a Singapore version of Sabarimala.



“Hinduism is basically a way of life. Hindus worship different deities but in the ultimate the ‘trinity’ Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara prevail.”

I S MENON, PRESIDENT OF THE SINGAPORE MALAYALEE HINDU SAMAJAM



The st Thomas Tradition



LEGEND HAS IT THAT ST THOMAS, the Apostle who doubted Christ, landed in 52 A.D. at Maliankara, near Cranganore, and founded seven churches on the Malabar coast. Malayalee Christians, including the community in Singapore, believe in the Apostolic origin of their church. Although modern historians doubt the evidence, they acknowledge however that there is nothing intrinsically improbable about the St Thomas tradition.

The accounts preserved by the Jews who came to Cranganore in 68 A.D. contain a reference to a Christian community there. If this is accurate, Christianity came to Kerala in the 1st century A.D. — three centuries before it gained official recognition in Europe or became the established religion in Rome. Cited as further evidence is the account by Pantaenus, the head of the Alexandrian school who visited Kerala in the 2nd Century, who also came across a flourishing Christian community.

“It is remarkable that Christianity came to be accepted as an indigenous faith in Kerala.”

“ക്രിസ്തു മതം കേരളത്തിന്റെ തന്നതായ മതമായി അംഗീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ടത് വളരെ മഹനീയമായ ഒരു വസ്തുതയാണ്.”

It is remarkable that Christianity, though of alien origin, came to be accepted as an indigenous faith in Kerala and made steady progress. The Christians, who became prominent traders and received privileges from the rulers, were treated equally with the Hindus.

The early St Thomas Christians were called Syrian Christians because their liturgy was in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. But their liturgy and organisation came under diverse foreign influences. The Roman Catholic missionaries who visited Quilon introduced the Latin rite. After the Portuguese arrived in 1498, a large community of Roman Catholics sprang up and grew.

At the start of the 19th Century, some priests of the Syrian Church advocated reforms, including replacing Syriac with Malayalam as the language of worship. When their proposals were looked upon with disfavour, they formed a new church known as the Marthoma Syrian Church, as distinct from the Orthodox Syrian Church.

All three Christian communities — Malayalee Catholics, Orthodox Syrians and Marthoma Syrians — are thriving in Singapore.



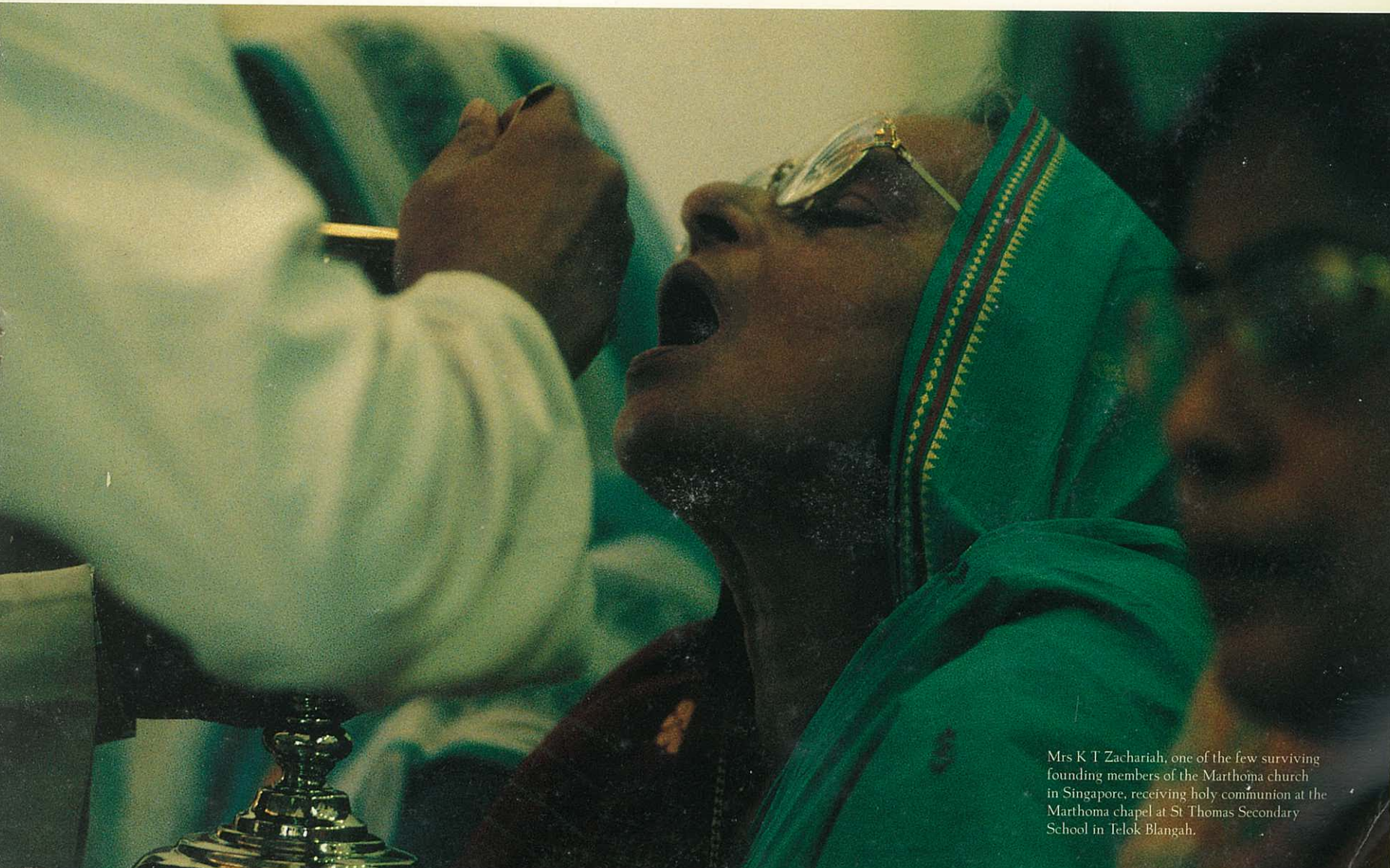


Opposite page, top: The St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral at Yio Chu Kang Road.

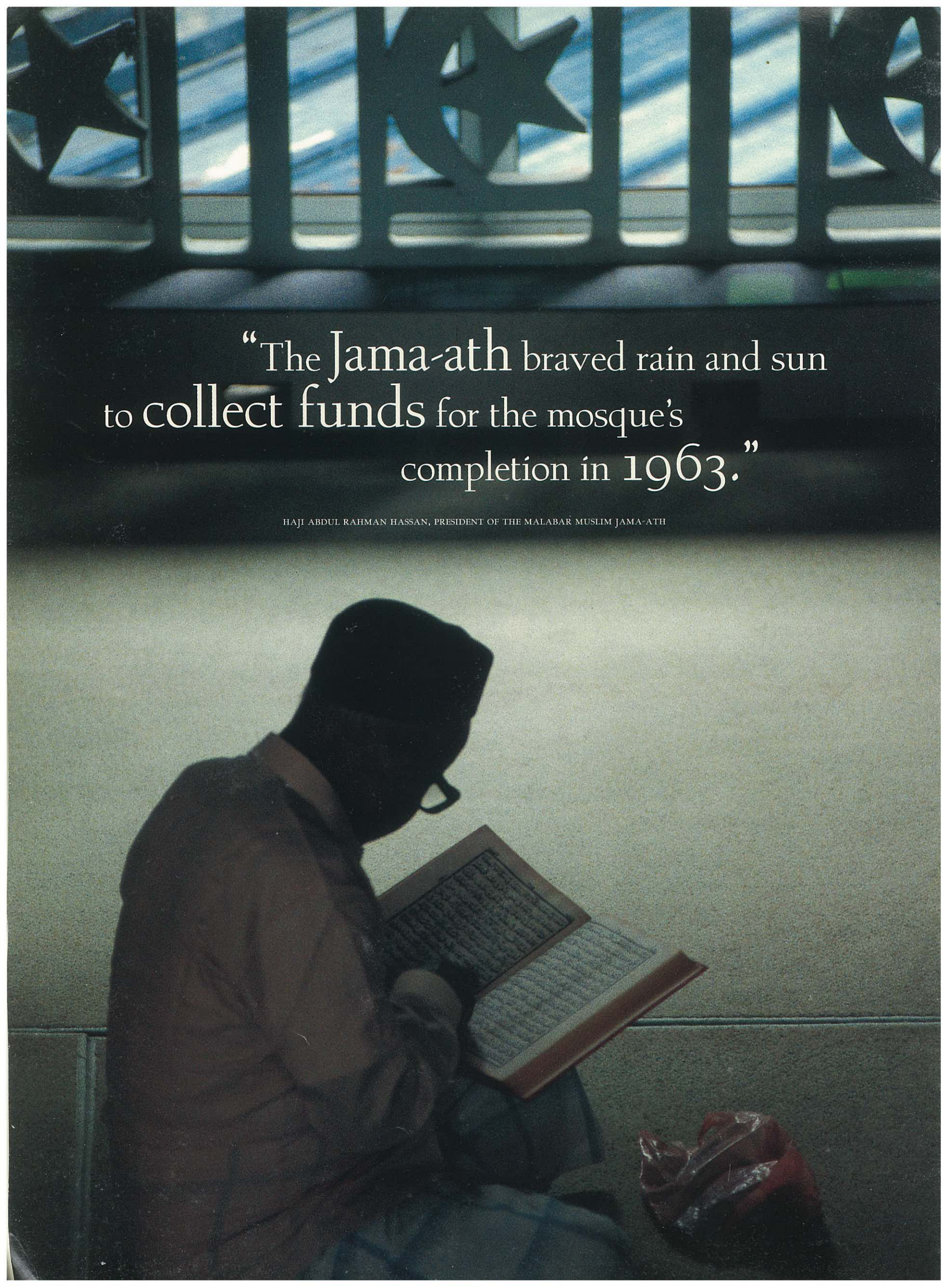
Opposite page, bottom: Retired teachers P V Thomas (seated right) and V A George, in their 80s, pioneers of the Marthoma (St Thomas) community in Singapore. Seated with them is Mrs George, whose late father is thought to be the first Marthoma member to arrive in Malaya. behind them Mrs K T Zachariah (left) and Mrs C T Thomas, among the few surviving founder members here.

Left: Reverend Father Thomas Mathew, spiritual director of the Singapore Malayalee Catholic Community (SMCC), saying Mass at the Church of the Holy Cross in Clementi. The SMCC is the parent body of 13 Malayalee prayer groups of various Catholic churches in Singapore.

Below: The prayer group of Our Lady of Good Health of Velankanny, from the Church of the Holy Cross, celebrating their 13th anniversary in August '98.

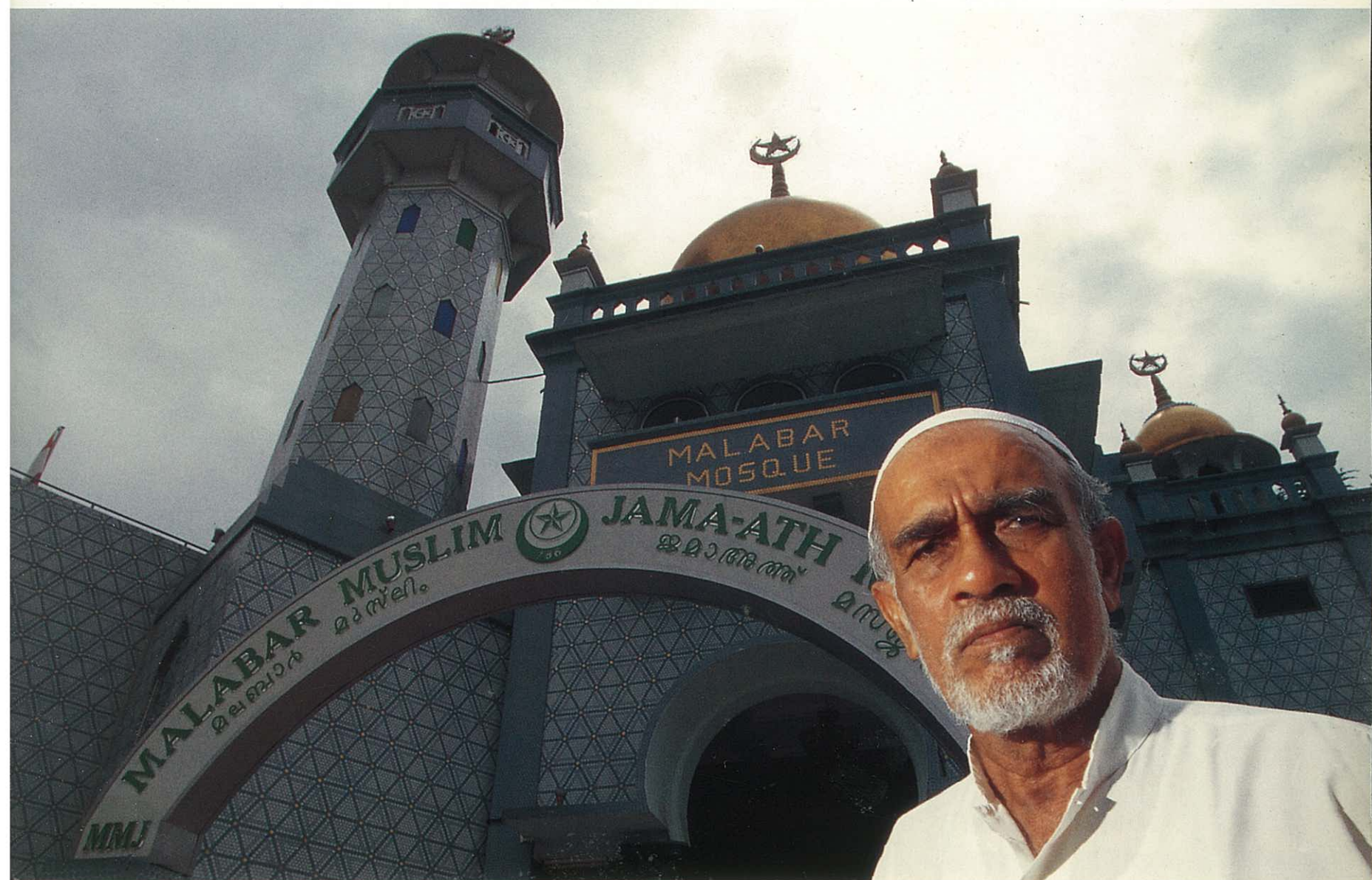


Mrs K T Zachariah, one of the few surviving founding members of the Marthoma church in Singapore, receiving holy communion at the Marthoma chapel at St Thomas Secondary School in Telok Blangah.



“The Jama-ath braved rain and sun
to collect funds for the mosque’s
completion in 1963.”

Haji Abdul Rahman Hassan, President of the Malabar Muslim Jama-ath



The muslims of malabar

THE MALABAR MUSLIM JAMA-ATH, THE community of Malabari Muslims in Singapore, was established some 70 years ago in 1927 as a welfare organisation for its members from Kerala's Malabar coast.

Their arrival in Singapore was part of a long history. With the considerable trade between Arabia and Kerala even before the time of Mohammed the Prophet, the Arabs had also settled in Cranganore and established a separate colony of their own.

The progress of the faith had much to do with the tolerant policy of the early rulers of Kerala. This was particularly so in the North Kerala area of Calicut (Kozhikode) under the Zamorins. Malabar muslims manned the Zamorin navy, and the heroic exploits of the Kunjali Marakkars, who were also known as the Admirals of the Zamorins, in their fight against Portuguese expansionism form an important chapter in Kerala's history.

It was not too long before Singapore's Malabar Muslims came up with plans to construct a mosque at Victoria Street. The stone-laying ceremony in 1956 was officiated by the mufti of Johor, representing the Sultan. The mosque was declared open in 1963 by Yang di-Pertuan Negara Enche Yusof bin Ishak.

The Jama-ath presently has a membership of 400, many of whom are Singaporeans who were born here.



Opposite page: A member of the Jama-ath reading the Koran at the Malabar Mosque.

Top: Haji Abdul Rahman Hassan, president of the Malabar Muslim Jama-ath, in front of the Malabar Mosque in Victoria Street.

Above: A Malabari Muslim deep in prayer at the mosque in Victoria Street.

service to all

WHEN A GROUP OF CIVIC-MINDED Singapore Malayalees founded the Sree Narayana Mission in 1948, they were guided by Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy of service to all regardless of caste or creed. The Guru, revered as a saint and reformer, dedicated himself to the abolition of caste and exhorted people to be free of prejudices.

The mission in Singapore initially offered indirect welfare services — food relief and financial help to needy Singaporeans of all races. In 1979, the mission established its Home for the Aged Sick. The home now has 210 residents, most of whom are non-Indians. With its relocation in 1994 to a new, purpose-built centre in Yishun, the home is now a mini-hospital with a team of dedicated nursing staff. The executive committee consists of volunteers, from all walks of life, who believe in the Guru's dream of social and community service to one and all.

Below: Ms Bhargavan Sujatha, president of the Sree Narayana Mission, at the activity centre of the Mission's Home for the Aged Sick, on the wall is a picture of Guru Narayana.

Opposite page, top: N C Senan, 80, a prominent Singapore Malayalee, who recently chose to become a resident at the Home of the Aged Sick at the Sree Narayana Mission.

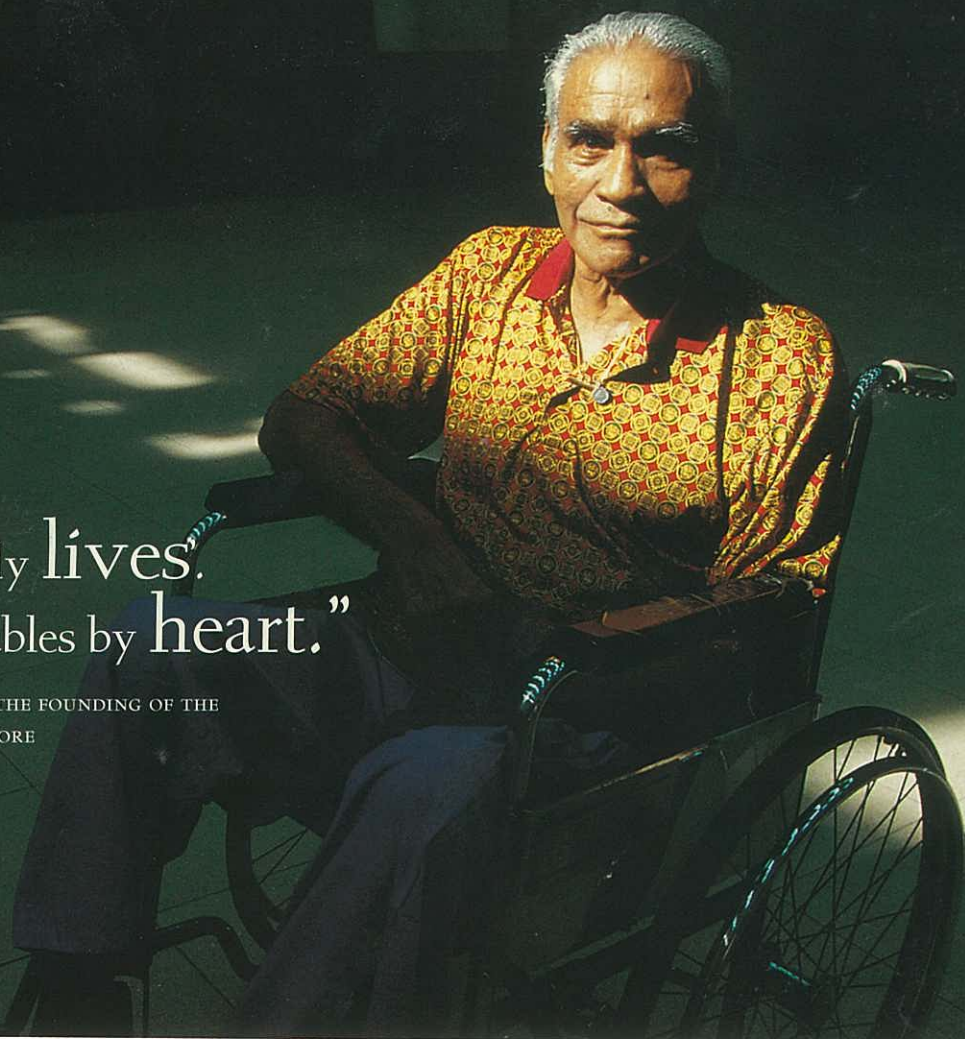


“ഈ മിഷൻ നല്ല ക്ഷേമവരിവാടികളിൽ ദേശീയ അംഗീകാരം നേടിയിരിക്കുന്നു.”

മിഷൻ പ്രസിഡണ്ട് മസ്റ്റർ ഭാഗവത് സുജാത

“He who loves is he who really lives.
Learn these syllables by heart.”

SREE NARAYANA GURU, WHOSE PHILOSOPHY INSPIRED THE FOUNDING OF THE
SREE NARAYANA MISSION IN SINGAPORE



Left: A Bhajan (devotional) group worshipping Guru Narayana at a *pooja* (worship) held on Sunday evenings at the Mission.

Above: Stroke patient Tan Ah Yeuk exercising her weakened arm, under the guidance of Rafizah Abdul Rashid, a therapist with the National Council of Social Services.

“The Mission has excelled in its welfare activities and gained national recognition.”

MISS B SUJATHA, PRESIDENT OF THE SREE NARAYANA MISSION



indigenous Arts

KERALA HAS ITS UNIQUE LITERATURE and performing arts. Malayalam, the language of Kerala, acquired a character of its own during Kerala's "Golden Age" in the 9th and 10th Century. Vedic schools, colleges and libraries attached to temples sprang up and were richly endowed by the rulers and philanthropists.

Among the indigenous classical dance styles is the Kathakali dance-drama which for four centuries brought gods and demons from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* to Kerala villages. While Kathakali is visually powerful and uses vivid *mudras* (hand signs), dance styles like Mohini Attam (literally "Dance of the Enchantress") are more sensuous and lyrical.

Malayalee theatre has a long tradition. The Singapore Kairalee Kala Nilayam has for four decades made drama its passion. This year it organised the 6th Annual Malayalam Drama competition with the support of the National Arts Council.

Singapore also has two Malayalee book libraries — the Naval Base Kerala Library, which for decades served "Little Kerala" in the Naval Base area, and the Udaya Library, founded in 1958 by a group of young Malayalee bachelors living in the Upper Bukit Timah area. Udaya (or "dawn") has moved to a new home at Hillview Avenue with a 4,000-book collection.

Unknown to many, Kerala has a long martial arts tradition, which took root in the 11th Century when the Chola-Chera war led to compulsory military training in *kalaris* (military academies). The Kalari Payattu (literally "battlefield training") is Kerala's indigenous martial arts, using both armed and unarmed combat techniques. Singapore has a Kalari Payat centre at Ang Mo Kio run by Master E. Edward.

Top left: Actors Saraswathy Pillai and Nathan rehearsing a play, *My Son*, written by local playwright Sarojini Chandran. The play was presented by the Singapore Kerala Association at the Sree Narayana Mission's chathayam '98 celebrations.

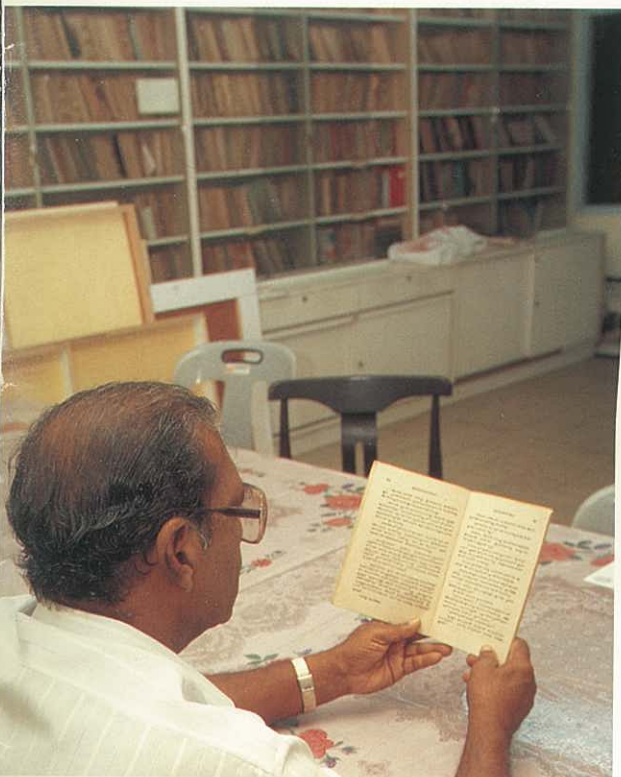
Above left: A scene from the dance Opana, choreographed by Girish Kumar Panicker.

Above right: Prabhavathi Nair as Girish performing the Mohiniattam.

Right: The Udaya Library, now located at Hillview Avenue.

Far right: Mark Gerard Netto (left) and Viknesh Ramanathan perform the Kalari Payattu, the martial arts form of Kerala.

Girish Kumar Panicker performing the Mohini Attam, the dance of the enchantress. Always performed by men, they also play the female roles wearing elaborate make-up and costumes. Mr Panicker is a dance teacher at the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society.



“The Singapore **Kairalee Kala Nilayam** has for four decades made **drama** its passion.”

“സിംഗപ്പൂർ കൈരളി കലാനിലയം കഴിഞ്ഞ നാല് ദശകങ്ങളായി നാടകോപാസനയിൽ എറപ്പുറ്റിരിക്കുന്നു.”

The community

THE SINGAPORE MALAYALEES ARE NOW well-represented in the professions, in the government, in the unions, in the media and in the private sector.

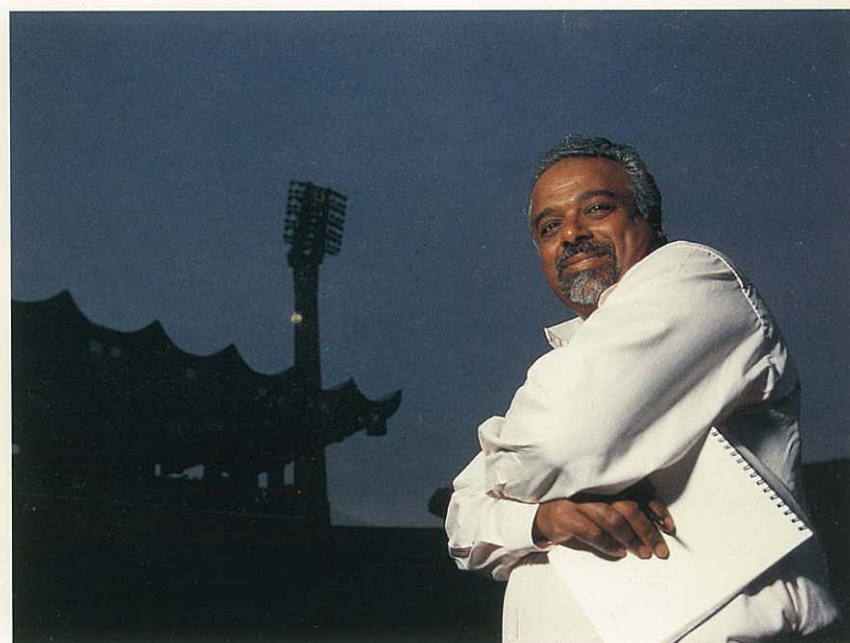
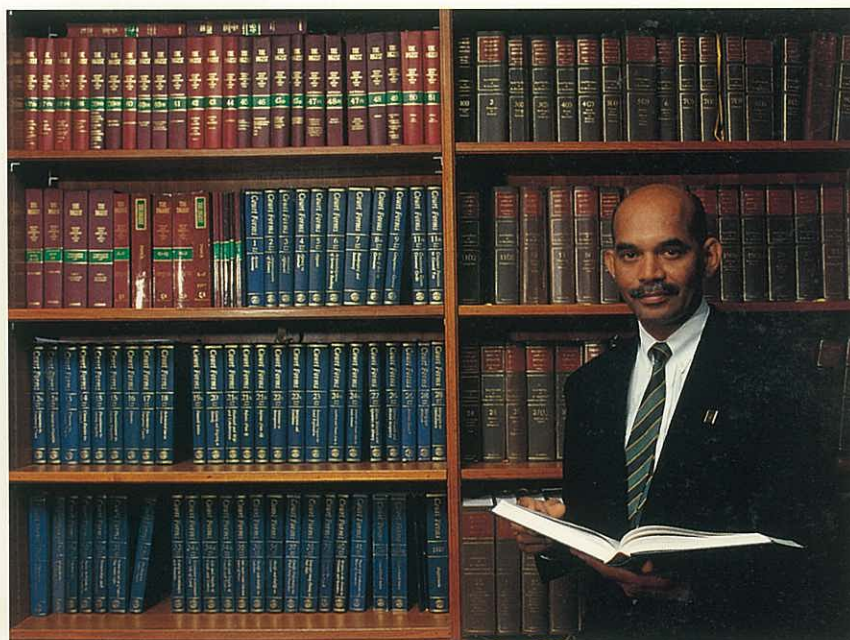
Right: Veteran unionist K T Samuel as guest of honour at the opening of the Indian Saree Emporium Pte Ltd at Selegie Centre in Aug '98. On his right is Suresh Karunan, one of the partners in the Saree Emporium.

Below: Artist Dr Indira R Menon with her painting of Chinese fishing nets in Cochin, Kerala, which will be presented to Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, guest of honour at the Onam '98 dinner. The oil painting, titled *Symphony in Sunset*, captures the cantilevered fishing nets introduced to Kerala fishermen by Chinese traders. Dr Menon, a retired medical doctor born in Singapore, pursued her interest in art after her retirement eight years ago.



Below: Ravi Menon of the Monetary Authority of Singapore, where he is director of the Planning and Policy Coordination Unit.

Bottom: Associate Professor Roy Joseph, head of the Department of Neonatology at the National University Hospital.



Top: Chandra Mohan K Nair, past president of the Singapore Law Society and an active member of the Singapore Malayalee Community.

Above: Godfrey Robert, long-time Sports Editor of The Straits Times, at one of his favourite venues, the National Stadium.

The organising committee



ADVISOR: *S Iswaran*



CHAIRMAN: *Gopinath Pillai*



VICE-CHAIRMAN: *K T Samuel*



SECRETARY: *Venu Nair*



ASST SECRETARY: *Mohd Hafiz*



TREASURER: *Dileep Nair*



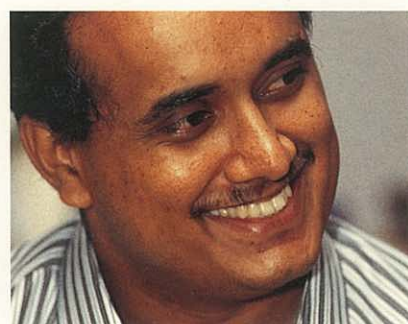
Patrick Daniel



Michael Fernandez



K O George



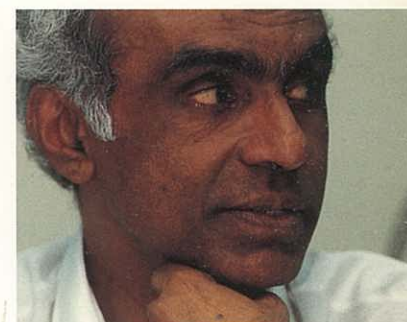
K N Ajaya Kumar



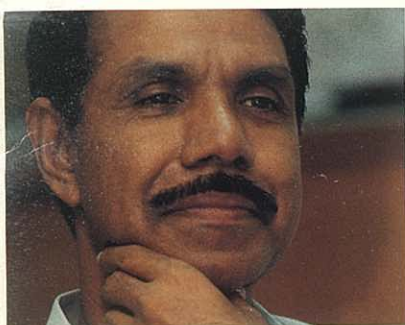
I S Menon



Rajan Menon



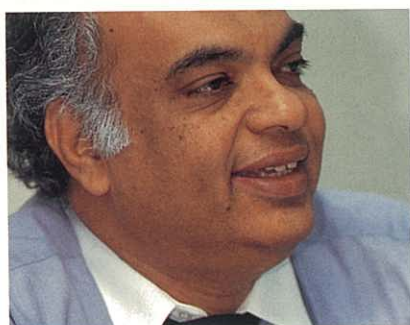
G Raman



VICE-CHAIRMAN: M M Dollah



ASST TREASURER: Mathew Samuel



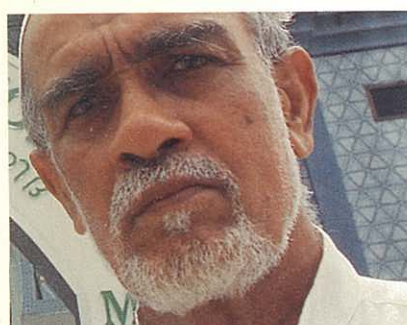
George Abraham



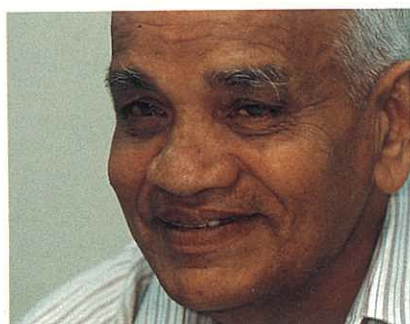
K A Abraham



Sarojini Chandran



Hj Abdul Rahman Hassan



G Karunakaran



Suresh Karunan



P K Koshy



Ravi Menon



Vanugopal Menon



Lucy Netto



Uma Rajan



Simon Rozario



Viswa Sadasivan



B Sujatha



Ravi Velloor

Acknowledgments

THE ONAM CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEE '98 and the Singapore Malayalee community would like to thank the following people and organisations:

- Deputy Prime Minister Brig-Gen Lee Hsien Loong, for gracing our Onam '98 dinner as guest of honour
- The People's Association, for the use of their grounds
- The Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, for coordinating the cultural programme
- Chancery Media Pte Ltd, for designing our logo

We would also like to thank the following who participated in the cultural programme:

- *Vamanavatharam*: Prabhavathi Nair, Girish Panicker, Sudha, Lavanya Nair, Omana Chandran
- *Mohiniattam*: Prabhavathi Nair, Girish Panicker, Sudha
- *Margam Kali*: Lavanya Nair, Omana Chandran, Renitha Nair, Chitra S, Premalata, Maheswari, Kartik Balachandran, Tulasi Das, Vignesh
- *Opana*: Gita Nair, Shalini H, Renuka Nair, Nitya Menon, Asmathi Menon, Gayatri Menon, Poorna Menon, Gayatri Chandran
- *Talam welcome and Kaikotti Kali*: Vanaja Menon, Chandrika Nair, Rema Harinath, Savithri Nambiar, Geetha Ramish, Namitha Mohan Babu, Beena Krishnakumar, Shiji Rajesh, Karthika Nair, Maala Nair, Meera Nair, Shailaja Suresh

We would like to thank the following for donating Lucky Draw prizes:

- Singapore Airlines (two return air tickets to Los Angeles)
- NTUC Income (two return air tickets to Adelaide)
- Tourmasters Pte Ltd (return air ticket to Madras)
- Premier Travel Co-op Ltd (return air ticket to Perth)
- Edmond Pereira and Partners (return air ticket to Bombay, Bangalore and Hongkong)
- Mr Choo Kok Jee, BBM (return air ticket to Bangkok)
- MBF Discount Card Pte Ltd (excursion package by air to Penang)
- NTUC Fairprice (\$1,000 shopping vouchers)
- Neptune Theatre Restaurant (travel voucher for \$500)

We would like to thank the following for their cash donations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Singapore Kairalee Kala Nilayam (\$5,250) | • Dr K A Abraham (\$500) |
| • Sun Microsystems Pte Ltd (\$1,000) | • Mr Rajan Menon (\$500) |
| • Thong Nam Construction Pte Ltd (\$1,000) | • Mr Teo Soon Thye PBM (\$300) |
| • Lotus Development (Asia Pacific) Pte Ltd (\$500) | • Mohamed Mustafa & Samsuddin Co Pte Ltd (\$300) |
| • ORACLE (\$500) | • Ong, Tan & Nair (\$250) |
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| Mr & Mrs T V George | Mr Vanugopal Menon | Mr & Mrs M V Samuel | |

Cover: Saraswathi Gopinathan at her wedding in August '98.

Inside front cover: A devotee lighting oil lamps at the Sree Vairavimada Kalliamman temple in Toa Payoh.

Back cover: The Kaikotti Kali dancers, presented by the Singapore Kerala Association.

small god and big god

“He was exasperated because he didn't know what that look meant. He put it somewhere between indifference and despair. He didn't know that in some places, like the country that Rahel came from, various kinds of despair competed for primacy. And that personal despair could never be desperate enough. That something happened when personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation. That Big God howled like a hot wind, and demanded obeisance. Then Small God (cosy and contained, private and limited) came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity. Inured by the confirmation of his own inconsequence, he became resilient and truly indifferent. Nothing mattered much. Nothing much mattered. And the less it mattered, the less it mattered. It was never important enough. Because Worse Things had happened. In the country that she came from, poised forever between the terror of war and the horror of peace, Worse Things kept happening.”

AN EXCERPT FROM THE WINNER OF THE 1997 BOOKER PRIZE, "THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS",
A QUINTESSENTIALLY MALAYALEE BOOK BY ARUNDHATI ROY

