

ഓണോപഹാരം

ONOPAHARAM 2020-2021





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Sujith Sivaram

EDITORS' NOTE



Ullas Kumar

The publication committee is pleased to bring you this digital Onopaharam as our Onam gift to our members. Packed with messages, reports, updates on our activities and wonderful contributions from our members and community at large, we hope that you will enjoy this digital experience.

We would first like to honour and recognise the contributions of the past Publication Committee Members for their dedication, commitment and hard work in compiling and publishing the previous editions of Onopaharam. Deserving special mention is the contribution of Sri Krishna Kumar, who has served as the editor of the magazine for many years. Sri Krishna Kumar, has worked extensively, over the years, to enhance the quality of the magazine and ensure its timely publication. We take this opportunity to thank him wholeheartedly on behalf of the management committee of SMA. We shall strive to maintain the high standards he has set for us.

As we were not able to coordinate the publication last year due to the unique circumstances related to the pandemic, this edition covers our activities across the last two years. In addition to our regular features, we proudly present a feature on “Sembawang- A Novel ”, the novel written by Madam Kamaladevi Aravindan and translated by her daughter Dr Anitha Devi Pillai that traces the roots of our community in Singapore to “Kochu Keralam”. A wide range of literary contributions from members of the community, both in English and Malayalam have also been included in this edition akin to a grand Onam Sadhya for your reading pleasure.

Onopaharam serves as a testimonial to the progress of the association, its contributions to the Malayalee community and the community at large in Singapore. The association is currently embarking on a project to digitize all the editions of the magazine and make it available to our members and our progeny. While we have initiated more regular communication with our members through our newsletters, this annual publication will continue to be the one that adds chapters to the history of Malayalees in Singapore.

We value your feedback on the publication and encouragement to the various contributors. Please email us at info@malayalee.org.sg with your feedback. SMA and the Publication committee thank all those who have contributed to this edition wholeheartedly. Enjoy your Onopaharam.





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സ്നേഹ സന്ദേശങ്ങൾ

സിംഗപ്പൂർ മലയാളി അസോസിയേഷൻ ഇറക്കുന്ന ഓണോപഹാരത്തിന് എല്ലാ ഭാവുകങ്ങളും നേരുന്നു. അകന്നിരിയ്ക്കാൻ വിധിക്കപ്പെട്ട ഈ കാലത്ത്, വർഷം തോറും പതിവുള്ള സിംഗപ്പൂർ സന്ദർശനം വിലക്കപ്പെട്ട ഈ കാലത്ത് സങ്കല്പത്തിലെങ്കിലും അടുത്ത് ഇരിക്കാൻ ഈ ഓണോപഹാരം ഉതകുമെന്നതിൽ സംശയമില്ല. ആശംസകൾ



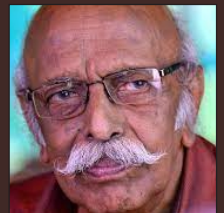
Ashtamoorthi K. V.

ഓണം കൂട്ടായ്മയുടെയും ഒത്തുകൂടലിന്റെയും കാലമാണ്. ഇരുട്ടു കൂടിയ ഈ കെട്ട കാലത്തു പാതിയും മറച്ചു മുഖവുമായി അകലം കാത്തു ജീവിക്കേണ്ടി വരുമ്പോൾ നീണ്ട തുരങ്കത്തിന്റെ അറ്റത്തു ലേശം പ്രകാശം കാണാതിരിക്കില്ലെന്ന വിശ്വാസമാണ് നമ്മെ മുന്നോട്ട് നയിക്കുന്നത്. എല്ലാ സിങ്കപ്പൂർ മലയാളികൾക്കും എന്റെ ഹൃദയം നിറഞ്ഞ ഓണാശംസകൾ.



A. Sethumadhavan

ഓണം നമ്മൾ മലയാളികളുടെ ദേശീയോത്സവമാണല്ലോ. സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെയും സാഹോദര്യത്തിന്റെയും ഒത്തുചേരലിന്റെയും ഉത്സവമാണത്. വിപണിയുടെയും വസ്തുക്കളുടെയും ഉത്സവമായിരിക്കരുത് ഓണം. മനസ്സുകളുടെ ഉത്സവമായിരിക്കണം. ചിങ്ങനിലാവു പൂക്കളും പഴങ്ങളും കൊണ്ടു നമ്മളെ പ്രകൃതിയും അനുഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന സന്ദർഭം. സിംഗപ്പൂർ മലയാളികൾക്ക് ഈ ഓണം സന്തോഷഭരിതവും ഐശ്വര്യ പൂർണ്ണവുമായിരിക്കട്ടെ എന്ന് ആശംസിക്കുന്നു.



Vaisakhan

സിംഗപ്പൂർ മലയാളി അസോസിയേഷനിലെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട സുഹൃത്തുക്കളേ, കോവിഡ് മഹാമാരിയുടെ കെട്ട കാലത്ത് വീണ്ടുമൊരു ഓണം കൂടി വരികയാണ്. ഓണമെപ്പോഴും പ്രതീക്ഷയുടെ പ്രകാശമായിട്ടാണ് നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതത്തിലേക്ക് വരുന്നത്. കർക്കടകം മിഥുനം എന്നൊക്കെയുള്ള കഷ്ട മാസങ്ങൾക്ക് ശേഷം ചിങ്ങത്തിൽ സന്തോഷത്തിന്റെയും സമൃദ്ധിയുടെയും ഒരു കാലത്തിലേക്ക് നമ്മളെ കൂട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടു പോകുന്ന ആഘോഷമാണ് ഓണം. നിർഭാഗ്യവശാൽ കഴിഞ്ഞ കൊല്ലവും ഇക്കൊല്ലവുമൊക്കെ വലിയ സന്തോഷത്തോടെ നമുക്ക് ഓണമാഘോഷിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നില്ല. വളരെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ടവർ നമുക്ക് നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ലോകമാകെത്തന്നെ ഈ മഹാമാരിയുടെ മുൻപിൽ വലിയ പ്രതിസന്ധിയിലായിരിക്കുകയാണ്. നമ്മൾ ഇതിനെ അതിജീവിച്ചു മുന്നോട്ടു പോകുമെന്നുള്ള കാര്യത്തിൽ ഒരു സംശയവുമില്ല. ആ പ്രതീക്ഷ തന്നെയാണ് നമ്മളെ മുന്നോട്ട് നയിക്കുന്നത്. ആ സംശയം കൊണ്ടല്ല ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞത്. മറിച്ച് നമ്മളെ കൂടുതൽ ജാഗരൂകരാക്കേണ്ട ഒരു കാലത്തിൽക്കൂടിയാണ് കടന്നു പോകുന്നത്. നമ്മൾ കൂടുതൽ ജാഗ്രത പാലിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഏതൊരു പ്രതിസന്ധിയെയും ഒരു സാധ്യതയാക്കി മാറ്റാൻ കഴിവുള്ള ജന്തുവിഭാഗമാണ് മനുഷ്യർ. ഈയൊരു സാഹചര്യത്തെയും നമ്മൾ അങ്ങനെ കണക്കാക്കണം. സർഗ്ഗാത്മകമായി ഈ പ്രതിസന്ധിയെ പ്രതിരോധിക്കാനും മറികടക്കാനും നമ്മൾക്ക് കഴിയും. ഒരു എഴുത്തുകാരനെന്നുള്ള നിലയിൽ ഈയൊരു കാലത്തെ വായനയുടെ ഉത്സവകാലമാക്കി മാറ്റണമെന്നാണ് എനിക്ക് പറയാനുള്ളത്. നമ്മൾ പുസ്തകം വായിക്കുമ്പോൾ വീട്ടിലിരുന്നുകൊണ്ടു തന്നെ ലോകത്തിലെവിടെ വേണമെങ്കിലും സഞ്ചരിക്കാൻ പറ്റും. കോവിഡ് കാലത്ത് നമ്മൾ വീട്ടിനകത്ത് അടച്ചിരിക്കാൻ നിർബന്ധിതരാകുന്ന ഒരു കാലമാണ്. ഇത്തരമൊരു സമയത്ത് പുസ്തകങ്ങളിലൂടെ നമുക്ക് ലോകത്തിലെവിടെ വേണമെങ്കിലും സഞ്ചരിക്കാൻ പറ്റും. ആരെയും കാണാതിരിക്കേണ്ട ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടിനെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ കണ്ടുകൊണ്ടു നമുക്ക് മറികടക്കാം. മുകുന്ദന്റെ മയ്യഴിപ്പുഴയുടെ തീരങ്ങളിൽ വായിക്കുമ്പോൾ നമുക്ക് മയ്യഴിയിലേക്കും ദാസൻ എന്ന പ്രധാന കഥാപാത്രത്തിലേക്കും മറ്റൊരുപാട് കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളിലേക്കുമൊക്കെ സഞ്ചരിക്കാം. വീട്ടിനകത്തു ഇരുന്നുകൊണ്ട് തന്നെ ലോകത്തിലേതൊരിടത്തേക്കുമെത്താനും നിരവധി ആളുകളെ നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാക്കാനും കഴിയുന്ന ഒരു കാര്യമാണ് വായന. വായനയ്ക്ക് കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധമെന്ന ഒരു സാധ്യത കൂടിയുണ്ട്. എന്നാലത് വായന മാത്രമല്ല, എല്ലാത്തരത്തിലുള്ള സർഗ്ഗാത്മക പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും ഇതിനെ പ്രതിരോധിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു

Cont.

ഉപാധിയായിട്ടുകൂടി മാറേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. എഴുതാൻ കഴിയുന്നവർക്ക് എഴുതാം, പാട്ടു പാടാൻ കഴിയുന്നവർക്ക് പാട്ടു പാടാം, പുതിയ ടെക്നോളജിയുടെ സാധ്യത ഉപയോഗിച്ച് നമ്മൾക്ക് ഒരുപാട് കാര്യങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യാൻ കഴിയുന്ന ഒരു കാലമാണ്. അത് നമ്മൾ ഓരോരുത്തരും തിരിച്ചറിയുക. ഈ ഓണക്കാലത്തെ എഴുത്തു കൊണ്ട്, വായന കൊണ്ട്, കവിത കൊണ്ട്, സംഗീതം കൊണ്ട്, അതുപോലെയുള്ള എല്ലാത്തരം കലാപ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ടും കൂടുതൽ സർഗ്ഗാത്മകമാക്കുക. അതോടൊപ്പം തന്നെ ഈ അവസരത്തിൽ പല രീതിയിൽ പ്രതിസന്ധിയിലായിപ്പോയ നമ്മുടെ സഹജീവികൾക്ക് ഒരു കൈത്താങ്ങായിട്ട് നിൽക്കുക.



നിങ്ങൾക്കെല്ലാവർക്കും ഒരിക്കൽക്കൂടി എന്റെ ഓണാംശസകൾ നേരുന്നു. സ്നേഹം, സന്തോഷം, നമസ്കാരം.

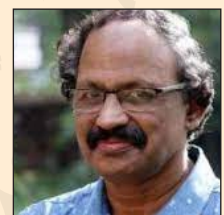
T. D. Ramakrishnan

ഓണം മലയാളിയുടെ ഏറ്റവും മഹത്തായ സങ്കല്പമാണ്, പ്രതീക്ഷയുമാണ്. കേരളത്തിലെമ്പലം, ലോകത്തിൽത്തന്നെ ഇത്രയും മധുരോദാരമായ ഒരു സങ്കല്പം നിലനിൽക്കുന്നുണ്ടോയെന്ന് എനിക്ക് സംശയമുണ്ട്. കാരണം, പോയ കാലത്ത് എന്നോ ഒരിക്കൽ മഹാബലിയെപ്പോലെ ഒരു രാജാവ് നാടുവാണിരുന്നു എന്നും അന്ന് മനുഷ്യരെല്ലാം സമ്പത്സമൃദ്ധിയിൽ ആറാടിയിരുന്നു, എല്ലാവരും തുല്യരായിരുന്നു, കള്ളത്തരങ്ങളും ചതികളും ഇല്ലായിരുന്നു, ആധികളും വ്യാധികളും ഇല്ലായിരുന്നു എന്നും, അങ്ങനെയൊരു കാലം ഇനിയും വരാനിരിക്കുന്ന കാലത്ത് എങ്ങോ ഉണ്ട് എന്നും ഉള്ള പ്രതീക്ഷയും..സങ്കല്പവും പ്രതീക്ഷയും, അതാണ് ഈ ഓണം എന്ന് പറയുന്ന മനുഷ്യന്റെ ഏറ്റവും മനോഹരമായ ഒരു ഭാവന. ആ ഒരു പ്രതീക്ഷയാണ് നമ്മളെ വീണ്ടും വീണ്ടും ഓണം ആഘോഷിക്കാൻ വേണ്ടി പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. പക്ഷേ നിർഭാഗ്യവശാൽ കൊറോണക്കാലം വന്നതോടുകൂടി നമ്മുടെ യഥാർത്ഥമായ ഓണക്കാലം ഇല്ലാതായി. കൂടിച്ചേരാൻ അസാധ്യമായ വിധത്തിൽ, ആഘോഷങ്ങളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ പറ്റാത്ത വിധത്തിൽ നമ്മെ ഏകാകികളും വിഷാദവാന്മാരും ആക്കി മാറ്റി വീടുകൾക്കകത്തു അടച്ചിടുന്ന ഒരവസ്ഥയിൽ, വഴി നടക്കാനുള്ള സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തിയ അവസ്ഥയിൽ കൊറോണ വൈറസുകൾ വിജയഗാഥകൾ

Cont.

പാടുന്നുണ്ട്. കൊറോണ വൈറസാണ് രാജ്യം അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ലോകം ഭരിക്കുന്നത്. പണ്ട് മഹാബലി ഭരിച്ചിരുന്ന കാലത്ത് ഇത്തിരി മാത്രം, ഇത്തിരി വട്ടം മാത്രം കാണുകയും ഇത്തിരി വട്ടം മാത്രം ചിന്തിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന അധോമുഖ വാമനൻമാർ പെരുകുന്നതിനെക്കുറിച്ച് വൈലോപ്പിള്ളി ഓണപ്പാട്ടുകാർ എന്ന കവിതയിൽ, ഓണത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് യാിട്ടുള്ള ആയിരക്കണക്കിന് കവിതകളിൽ ഏറ്റവും മനോഹരമായ കവിതയിൽ, വൈലോപ്പിള്ളി പാടിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇത്തിരി വട്ടം മാത്രം കാണുകയും ഇത്തിരി വട്ടം മാത്രം ചിന്തിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന അധോമുഖ വാമനൻമാരാനോ ഈ വൈറസുകൾ? ആലോചിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ആ വൈറസുകളാണ് ഇന്ന് ലോകം ഭരിക്കുന്നത്. ആ വൈറസുകളെ പേടിച്ചിട്ടാണ് മനുഷ്യർ ഒതുങ്ങിക്കഴിയുന്നത്, പരസ്പരം തൊട്ടുകൂടാതെ, തീണ്ടിക്കൂടാതെ ഭയന്ന് വിഹവലരായി കഴിയുന്നത്. മാസ്ക് ധരിച്ച് എല്ലാ മനുഷ്യരും ഒന്ന് പോലെ ആയിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിലും ജാതിമത ഭേദമില്ലാതെ രാജ്യ ഭേദമില്ലാതെ ഭൂഖണ്ഡഭേദമില്ലാതെ മനുഷ്യരെല്ലാവരും മാസ്ക് ധരിച്ച് മുഖം മറച്ചൊരുപോലെയായിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിലും ആധികളും വ്യാധികളും പെരുകുകയും ഇത്തിരി വട്ടം മാത്രം കാണുന്ന അധോമുഖ വാമനന്മാർ പെരുകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു കാലം ഇപ്പോഴും നിലനിൽക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. എന്തായാലും നമുക്ക് ഓണത്തെ വരവേറ്റേ പറ്റൂ. അതിജീവനത്തിനുള്ള ഒരു ശ്രമമാണ് ഈ ഓൺലൈൻ ഡിജിറ്റൽ മാഗസിനുകളും അല്ലാത്ത ശ്രമങ്ങളുമൊക്കെത്തന്നെ. എന്തായാലും നമുക്ക്, മനുഷ്യന്, വൈറസുകളെ അതിജീവിക്കേണ്ട പറ്റൂ. അതിജീവനത്തിനുള്ള വാക്സിൻ കൂടിയാണ് ഈ മാഗസിൻ എന്ന് ഞാൻ കരുതുന്നു. നിങ്ങളുടെ മലയാളി അസ്സോസിയേഷന്റെ ഓണാഘോഷ പരിപാടികൾ ഈ വൈറസ് യുഗത്തെ അതിജീവിക്കാനുള്ള ഏറ്റവും ഫലപ്രദമായ വാക്സിനാണെന്നു ഞാൻ വിചാരിക്കുന്നു. ശരീരത്തിന് കൊടുക്കാൻ നമുക്കൊരുപാട് വാക്സിനുകൾ രാജ്യങ്ങളിലെല്ലാം ലഭ്യമാണല്ലോ. പക്ഷേ വിഷാദത്തിലും ഏകാന്തതയിലും പെട്ടുപോയ, സാമ്പത്തികമായ പ്രയാസങ്ങളിലകപ്പെട്ടുപോയ, ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ടുപോയ, പ്രിയപ്പെട്ടവർ മരിച്ചുപോയ മനുഷ്യർക്ക് എന്ത് വാക്സിനാണ് നിങ്ങൾ മാനസികമായി തകർന്നുപോയ മനുഷ്യർക്ക് കൊടുക്കുക? അതിനു കൊടുക്കാൻ പറ്റുന്ന ഏറ്റവും നല്ല മരുന്ന്, വാക്സിൻ, ഇതുപോലെയുള്ള കൂട്ടായ്മകളും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും ആണ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ വിചാരിക്കുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ട് മലയാളി അസ്സോസിയേഷന്റെ എല്ലാ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും കൂടുതൽ ഉചിതമായും, സമുചിതമായി തന്നെ ഏറ്റവും ഉജ്ജ്വലമായിത്തന്നെ മുന്നോട്ടു പോകട്ടെ, പൂർവ്വ കാലത്തേതുപോലെ ഇനിയും നല്ല നല്ല പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ കാഴ്ച വയ്ക്കാൻ സാധിക്കട്ടെ എന്നാശംസിക്കുന്നു. നന്ദി, നമസ്കാരം.

Ambikasuthan Mangad



Messages from Our Well Wishers

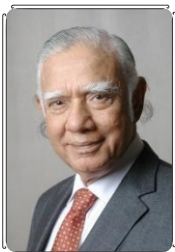
Message from Adviser, SMA

At the outset, let me wish all of you a Happy Onam. Onam is a festival that has come to be celebrated by all Malayalees regardless of religion. I am delighted to note that Onam is now celebrated at various community centres in Singapore as well.

I watch with keen interest the various activities SMA has been undertaking to engage with the members and serve the larger Singapore community even during these difficult times. Noteworthy are the programmes being held for the elderly at the Carelight Wellness Centre. I have been receiving regular updates through SMA's quarterly newsletters and read with keen interest the activities of the various groups like the welfare committee, the Youth Wing, the tech forums and the children's group Mayilpeeli.

We must continue to make significant contributions to our society through our hard work and dedication to building a harmonious and peaceful society for all Singaporeans. With our unique culture and deep-rooted values that uphold education and communal welfare we should strive to blend into Singapore's fabric, enriching its texture and being a worthy example for all to emulate.

My Best Wishes to SMA and all Malayalees.



Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, BBM(L)
Chief Advisor

Namaskaram,

Wish you all a Happy Onam and a very happy, prosperous, and safe Malayalam New Year!!!

Let me start by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Management Committee and volunteers for their hard work during these unprecedented times that has helped the association stay active and engaged with the members and community. Thank you all...

While we were not able to organize our traditional flagship events like the Onam Night, Onam Village, Our Sports Events, thanks to the digital proficiency of our team, we were able to leverage the digital platforms like Zoom and conduct most of our programs online, to the extent that we organized a record number of online events over the last year and a half.

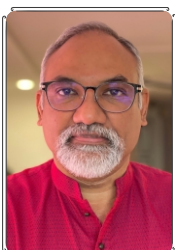
We led the way for other associations by conducting our Annual General Meeting online. Our tryst with technology continues as we continue to modernize our internal processes, accounting systems and database management systems. These changes have helped us function seamlessly even while we have not been able to convene physically as a team.

Expanding our outreach into the communities, we initiated “SMA Health and Wellness Talk Series” in collaboration with 14 other associations aiming to impart useful information to the community with their wellness in mind. We launched the “SMA Tech Forum”; an interest group for technology enthusiasts seeking to engage them through talks, workshops and Hackathons. We have also involved the budding Malayalees, bringing them together through “Changathies- SMA Teen Club”.

Most importantly, we are so happy to have been able to provide food, medical, accommodation and repatriation support to around 300 people during the circuit breaker and after the period. Help was offered to people of all races, religions and nationalities and many Filipinos and Indonesians were also recipients of the aid.

We have a new management committee this year who are continuing with all these initiatives in right earnest. We also aspire to kick start a ‘Malayalee Business Forum’ for the benefit of Malayalee entrepreneurs and professionals. Another project we are embarking on is the ‘SMA Heritage Gallery’ to showcase the legacy and traditions of Singapore Malayalees. As an archive for our combined literary resources and a way of sharing them, a ‘Malayalam Library’, is also being planned. I hope to bring you updates on these initiatives in due course.

This year’s Onopaharam is being released digitally too. We have included detailed updates on all our activities, and we are happy to also present this literary Sadhya to all of you, thanks to the wonderful contributions from our community. Hope all of you enjoy reading it.



P S Prem
President (2019-Current)

Happy Onam! Onam, the foremost of all Malayalee festivals, is a time when we reminisce and rejoice together as one community. SMA has been a catalyst for Malayalees to connect, while integrating seamlessly with other Indian communities, and our nation as a whole. We have been collaborating with organisations like SINDA and Project Providence, in providing financial, physical and medical support to several hundred people during this challenging COVID period, irrespective of nationality, race or creed.

Having lived in Singapore all my life, it is heartening to see early and recent migrants working earnestly to preserve our own cultural heritage, and at the same time doing our part for the society at large. It has indeed been a privilege to be able to serve in SMA since 2019 as its Vice-President. We in SMA will continue to serve the community and be a role model in fostering the spirit of harmony, love and respect.



Mrs. Sunu Sivadasan Ghani
Vice President

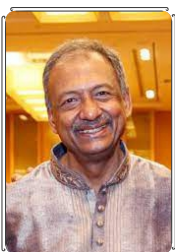
സിംഗപ്പൂരിലെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട മലയാളികൾക്ക് എന്റെ നമസ്കാരം!

ഏറെ വെല്ലുവിളികൾ നിറഞ്ഞ സാഹചര്യമാണെങ്കിലും മുടക്കം വരാതെ ഓണോപഹാരം അണിയിച്ചൊരുക്കിയ ഇതിന്റെ അണിയറപ്രവർത്തകരെ ആദ്യം തന്നെ അഭിനന്ദിക്കട്ടെ. കെട്ടിലും മട്ടിലും പുതുമയോടെയാണ് സിംഗപ്പൂർ മലയാളി അസോസിയേഷന്റെ ഈ വാർഷിക പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണം ഇത്തവണ പുറത്തിറങ്ങുന്നത്.

കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒന്നര വർഷത്തോളമായി കോവിഡ്-19 വെല്ലുവിളിയും അതേസമയം അവസരവുമായി നമ്മോടൊപ്പമുണ്ട്. ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തെ പ്രയോജനപ്രദമായി വിനിയോഗിക്കുവാൻ സിംഗപ്പൂർ മലയാളി അസോസിയേഷൻ സാധിച്ചു എന്നത് എടുത്തുപറയേണ്ടതാണ്. വാർഷിക പൊതുയോഗമുൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള പരിപാടികൾ ഓൺലൈൻ ആക്കിയതുമൂലം പതിവിലും കൂടുതൽ അംഗങ്ങൾക്ക് പങ്കെടുക്കാനായി. അസോസിയേഷന്റെ എല്ലാ പരിപാടികളിലും, പങ്കാളിത്തത്തിലെ ഈ വർദ്ധന പ്രകടമാണ്.

യുവജനങ്ങൾ കൂടുതലായി അസോസിയേഷന്റെ പരിപാടികളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുകയും അവയ്ക്ക് നേതൃത്വം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്നത് വിശേഷ പരാമർശമർഹിക്കുന്നു. മുൻപ് പലപ്പോഴും സൂചിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളപോലെ, നമ്മെ ഒരുമിപ്പിക്കുന്നു പ്രധാന ഘടകം ഭാഷയാണ്. മലയാളഭാഷയുടെയും സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെയും പ്രചാരണത്തിനും സംരക്ഷണത്തിനും സിംഗപ്പൂർ മലയാളി അസോസിയേഷൻ തുടർന്നും പരിശ്രമിക്കും എന്ന പ്രതീക്ഷയോടെ എല്ലാവർക്കും ഒരിക്കൽക്കൂടി ആശംസകൾ, അഭിനന്ദനങ്ങൾ!

നന്ദി!



N Jayakumar, BBM
Past President (2017-2019) and Advisor

It gives me great pleasure and privilege to be able to continue my service to SMA as an ADVISER.

COVID 19, a global disaster has made it difficult for all ASSOCIATIONS to CONTINUE the traditional activities

SMA, under the current leadership of a team of dedicated and hardworking committee members headed by P.S.PREM has continued to carry out all SMA activities with devotion and dedication.. CONGRATULATIONS !

WE the SMA members are grateful to the dedicated team of officials who made it possible to fulfill the aims and objectives of the Association under great difficulties,

We hope and pray that there is a relief from the difficulties faced during the period of Covid 19.

May I also suggest that we continue to work with more vigour and generosity the good work done by SMA to look into the needs and welfare of our members who have been affected badly as a result of COVID 19.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK !



Mr. P K Koshy
Past President (2009-2015) and Advisor

Glad to note that Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) was active and engaged in several activities despite the constraints created by COVID-19 Circuit Breaker that plagued the entire world. That should be the spirit of SMA.

SMA provided financial, physical and medical support to several hundred people who sought help during the Circuit Breaker. This helping hand was extended not only to Singaporeans but also to the entire international community irrespective of race or creed. This is the right step forward in making SMA a world class organization.

Being the oldest registered organization outside India, SMA should strive at all time to be a role model to others. We should not only be confined to Onam celebrations, concerts and dramas. Our activities should be beneficial to all members of the broader Singapore community. Then only we can be seen as a relevant organization serving the interest of all Singaporeans. Articles from writers of other races can be included in our annual publication, Onopaharam. Similarly, items from other racial organizations can be included in our Onam Show. We used to have multi racial Onam shows in the past. The present committee is capable of achieving this objective.

SMA should not be seen as a seasonal organization that becomes active only during the Onam season, perform some acts and go back to its refuge. It has to be active throughout and adopt an extrovert and global approach. Only then, the association will be recognized as a credible force by the global Malayalee community. Let us work towards achieving this goal.

Congratulations team SMA. Wishing all Malayalees a Happy and Prosperous Onam.



M M Dollah
Past President (1995-2009) and Advisor

Onam is a time when we celebrate reaping what we sowed. It is a reminder of the fabulous circle of life. What goes around does come around.

The simplicity of Onam is poignant. A wonderful vegetarian meal consumed by hand from a luxuriant banana leaf. Dressed in plain elegance – saree, mundu and jubba – we radiate joy.

Onam has always been a reminder of the many things we have that we should be grateful for – our family ties, good health and how the simplest things can give us the greatest joy. It's this – at its purest level – that allows both the prince and pauper to rejoice as comrades and kin.

It is a time for us to forgive even if we can't forget and be poised to travel light in life's journey ahead.

Let us allow the radiance of the day to fill our hearts and lift our spirit. Let the gentle flame from the oil lamp brighten the day and pave the way, casting aside what's negative. Let the light shine on the positive in people.

We are living in a time of strife and pain; disease and death. We must shine this light on each other – with affection and care; compassion and trust. We need to be there – each for the other.

Onam is a time for us to sow what we wish to reap. Onam is a time for us – each one of us – to strive to be the best version of ourselves. It is a time for us to smile at the person we see in the mirror.

Happy Onam.



Viswa Sadasivan
Past President and Advisor

The Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) with various other names such as Kerala Bandhu, Singapore Kerala Association (SKA) etc. was born in 1917. I served as President from 1970 to 1972 and as trustee from 2012 to date.

Language and culture are intertwined. A particular language usually points out to a specific group of people. When you interact with another language, such as English, Malay, Mandarin or Tamil, it means that you are also interacting with the culture of the people who speak the language. When you learn a language, it not only involves learning its alphabet, the word arrangement and the rules of grammar, but also learning about the specific society's customs and behavior. Fortunately, Malayalees are good at learning and assimilating other languages fluently. Moreover, Malayalees are present all over the world.

Often the spoken Malayalam and familiar names identifies the Malayalees instantly. For example at the Moscow airport in 1999 on my way to the center for interventional cardiology at Moscow University, a group of Indians unknown to me before approached me and spoke to me in Malayalam. They identified me because of my name tag where my name was displayed. They said that they are doing a flourishing tea business in Russia with Kannan Devan tea from Munnar, Kerala. Similarly, while at San Francisco heart institute USA, a young American lady who was a social worker in the hospital spoke to me in Malayalam fluently. She learned Malayalam and stayed in Kerala to do social work and to know the culture including the philosophy of Aadi Shankaracharya and the delicious cuisines of Kerala like "Kari-Meen" also known as Pearl Spot or Black Pomfret.

In olden days, all Malayalees in Singapore could speak and write Malayalam well. But this capacity declined progressively particularly among the younger generation. Fortunately, there is a resurrection of the language due to the arrival of many young expatriate Malayalee professionals and their families in Singapore over the past few decades. Further resuscitation can be achieved if we could get the green light to have Malayalam recognized as an official language in the Cambridge curriculum. Work is going on through the Malayalam Language Education Society (MLES) in Singapore and hopefully we will succeed soon. I wish you all a Happy, prosperous, healthy and pleasant Onam.



Dr V P Nair, PBM
Past President and Advisor

Happy Onam.

On this joyous occasion of Onam, it brings us great pleasure to congratulate Singapore Malayalee Association for its exemplary work in preserving the Malayalee heritage and culture in Singapore.

Over the years, Sree Narayana Mission (Singapore) has had the privilege of working closely with SMA in its efforts to good for the community at large and we cherish the longstanding and close relations built together.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Board of Trustees and Management of SNM, I would like to extend our deepest appreciation to SMA and wish them every success in all their future endeavours.

With Best Wishes,



Mr Jayadev Unnithan
President, Sree Narayana Mission (Singapore)

**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE BY MR ANBARASU RAJENDRAN, CEO, SINDA,
FOR THE SINGAPORE MALAYALEE ASSOCIATION'S ONOPAHARAM MAGAZINE
2021**

Greetings and ellavarkkum hridayam niranja Onam aashamsakal!

My heartiest wishes to all brothers and sisters and to Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) on this blessed occasion of Onam. Traditionally associated with the harvest festival, it is my wish that this Onam fills us all with a spirit of newness and optimism, and brings us closer together as a community and as a nation.

I also offer my commendations for this beautiful edition of Onopaharam, for chronicling the Malayalee community's vibrant culture and traditions, and for enriching all of us with a greater understanding of its illustrious heritage.

SMA has been one of SINDA's closest stakeholders in our pursuit to uplift the Singaporean Indian Community for many years and this partnership has yielded many wonderful outcomes.

On behalf of all of us at SINDA, my best wishes for a joyous Onam celebration and to SMA for continuing its good work for our nation.



Anbarasu Rajendran
Chief Executive Officer, SINDA



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HAPPY ONAM

Happy Onam to all in our loved multicultural Singapore. The Malayalee Association of Singapore, over 100 years old, has a cherished history of preserving the culture, customs and age-old traditions of the rich Malayalee heritage.

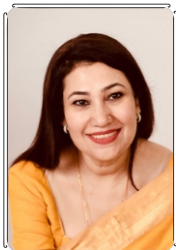
Onam, celebrates the return of the kind-hearted and much-loved demon King Mahabali, every year to his kingdom, during this period with pact with Lord Vishnu. We get to witness, all the festivities of colour, arts, dances, boat races, martial arts, etc with the highlight of an Onam Sadya – the festive meal.

SIFAS, is pleased to associate with the Malayalee Association to promote the varied Indian ethnic cultures in Singapore.



K V Rao
President

Happy Onam, as we celebrate the homecoming of King Mahabali and the harvest festival in all its splendor, we wish your homes be filled with joy, peace and happiness! Have a wonderful and blessed Onam!



Selmé Singh
President, Indian Women's Association

SMA has been a valuable partner of LISHA . They have contributed immensely to the Indian New Year Events organised by LISHA . Wishing SMA all success and a Happy Onam to all .

Thank you



C Sankaranathan
Chairman, Lisha

“To all our Malayalee friends in Singapore, wishing you a very happy and joyous Onam! Ende hridhayum nirannja Onashamsagal!”



Mr Alex Yeo Sheng Chye
Adviser to Aljunied GRC Grassroots Organisations (GROs)

"To all our Malayalees friends in Singapore, may this auspicious festival bring you and your loved ones continued good health, joy and prosperity. Happy Onam!"



Ms. Chan Hui Yuh, PBM
Adviser to Aljunied GRC Grassroots Organisations

"Happy Onam. On this joyous occasion of Onam, I wish you joy and good health and may you always enjoy the bounty of nature!" "May King Mahabali bless you with good health and happiness. May all your hopes, dreams and wishes come true".

SMA over the years doing great job in line with their mission of bringing Singapore Malayalees together under one umbrella and very active to preserve, nourish & cherish the Malayalees heritage & culture



S.V. Padmanabhan (Venkat) ,
Treasurer, Singapore Indian Fine arts association (SIFAS),
Sangamam Anchor & Director - SIFAS Production limited.

"Wishing SMA a grand success in all their endeavours "



Ruthirapathy
Honorary Secretary, LISHA

Namaskar!

My name is Smita Wargantiwar and I am the President of Kamala Club Singapore. On behalf of all our members we extend our heartiest wishes to the SMA on the occasion of Onam!

The air is filled with joy and zeal and I am sure your homes are decorated with colourful pookalam, lively songs are playing and delicious feast are being planned. I sincerely hope that the spirit of Onam fills each heart with happiness and fulfillment.

It has always been a pleasure to associate with SMA and all that it stands for. Its attempts at integration and cohesiveness is admirable and its mission to promote the Malayalee culture and heritage is so inspiring.

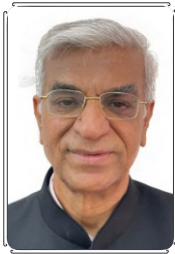
Hope this Onam too you have the most wonderful celebrations with family and friends.



Smita Wargantiwar
President, Kamala Club Singapore

On behalf of Singapore Sindhi Association I am delighted to wish Singapore Malayalee Association members a very Happy Onam.

Sincerely



Vashdev A Khialani
President, Singapore Sindhi Association

Dear friends at the Singapore Malayalee Association

We are very proud to be associated with you as a partner association here in Singapore. We share the energy with you in reaching out to our communities for several activities together.

Your executive committee has been quite instrumental in bringing us together.

On behalf of all the members and families of Maharashtra Mandal (Singapore), I wish you a very happy and joyful Onam.

Regards



Ashish Pujari
President, Maharashtra Mandal (Singapore)

On the joyous occasion of Onam I extend my warm wishes to you and your family. Happy Onam to all Malayalees across the globe. Wish you good health and prosperity. Celebration plans might have to be scaled down because of the pandemic, but spirits should be high. Stay safe stay happy.



Swagata Chakraborty
President, Bengali Association Singapore

Kannada Sangha (Singapore) wishes SMA and its members, a very Happy Onam 2021. It's been our pleasure to be associated with SMA in several of their programs. SMA's initiative of arranging quality webinars every month is very thoughtful. SMA's camaraderie of bringing many community organizations to collaborate in their programs is a wonderful gesture of community integration. Kannada Sangha (Singapore) would always look forward to associate with SMA in their journey in taking the community forward.

Always wishing the best,



Venkata Rathnaiah
President, Kannada Sangha (Singapore)

I got involved with SMA mainly with its various social online activities. And in this short span, I got amazed with the pivotal roles SMA plays in developing its culture and sense of community, through various intellectual, cultural, and educational engagements. I'm happy to be associated with such a vibrant society.

May the lovely festival of Onam bring much happiness and prosperity to you all!



Sohel Arnool,
Hon. General Secretary, Assam Association

Greetings from 'The Singapore Telugu Cultural Society'!

My heartiest congratulations to the Singapore Malayalee Association for celebrating 104th Anniversary and also my best wishes to new President Mr P S Prem and new management committee for 2021-2023.

Being oldest registered Indian associations in Singapore, SMA has witnessed several milestones pre and post-independence. It has played a great role to preserve and propagate Malayalee heritage and rich culture to the next generations in Singapore . Over the years, SMA has provided very good platform for fellow Malayalees to integrate into a cohesive community, promote vibrant culture of Kerala through various activities, programs and welfare activities. I am sure, SMA will keep up the good work, grow and prosper as a community while it continues to make significant contributions to the nation and larger Singapore multi-cultural society.

On behalf of 'The Singapore Telugu Cultural Society', I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all at SMA , a very Happy Onam. May the colours and brightness of Onam fill your home and life with new energies and eternal happiness.



K RamaKoti Reddy
President, Singapore Telugu Samajam

10 days long Harvest Festival of Onam holds special place in the lives of Malayalees across the globe. On this happy occasion of Onam I am sending all in SMA my heartfelt wishes. May the spirit of Onam fill the homes of each and may every member of Singapore Malayalee Association be filled with happiness, good health and prosperity. May the good work SMA is rendering for the extended community continue to flourish and make meaningful contribution in bringing communities together in Singapore.



Manisha Sarkar
Community Partner

On this happy occasion of Onam, I would like to extend my warm wishes to all the Singapore Malayalees. Also would like to congratulate SMA for the significant contributions to our nation. All the very best SMA.



Kalimuthu, BBM
Chairman to Serangoon CC, IAEC

SMA Activities Aug 2019 to Aug 2021

Major Activities of the Association for the year 2019-2021

Over the last one and half years, SMA has been actively engaging members through a wide range of online activities. Leveraging on technology, SMA conducted its debut online AGM and OnamNite in 2020.

SMA initiated two new interest groups - Tech Forum and Teen Club Changathis during this time. Tech Forum conducts monthly talks on various technology-related topics of interest. Teen Club organized Teen Debate and an online concert titled Onnayi Onam this year. The Welfare Committee organized a talk series on Health and Wellness and collaborated with 15 other community partners. The vibrant Youth Wing was busy creating interesting videos, Onam Contests, Food trails, Basic Conversational Malayalam Course, while simultaneously helping the needy people during the festive times. SMLF actively conducts many online literary talks inviting both Indian and Singapore speakers. The Varnam Team conducted an online Art Exhibition in 2020. Mayilpeeli Club conducted the SMArtest quiz contest online in 2020 and 2021 successfully. Ladies Wing organized an online pookalam contest, mother's day photo contest, and few online talks in these two years. Pioneer Wing organized many interesting activities like clapping therapy, laughing therapy, cooking, exercise, art and craftwork, online chit-chat sessions, etc. SMA also embarked on a digitalisation journey which proved to be helpful during these pandemic times. More details can be found in the sub-committee reports.

SMA is proud to have its name imprinted in the Singapore Book of Records in 2019 and 2020. One was for "Largest Variety of Curries Served At One Location" organized by LISHA Women's Wing while the other for "Largest Display Of Deepavali Cards" organized by SingaRangoli Mrs, Vijaya Mohan. In conjunction with this, SMA was featured on Alaigal Oivathillai and Thaalam Indian Beat, local programmes aired on Vasantham.

Amidst all the other activities, SMA channelled its efforts to focus on Covid Support Measures for the needy in both Singapore and Kerala. Fund-raising was carried out in support of those affected and many generous individuals willing came forward to contribute to this noble

cause. SMA would like to place on record its sincere appreciation to those who contributed and supported wholeheartedly. A detailed report of this initiative has been made available.

During this time, SMA experienced the loss of a few prominent members like Mrs. Padma Vikraman Nair and Past Presidents - Mr. G. Raman, and Mr. K O George. Online memorial services were conducted in honour of the departed souls along with SNM. SMA would like to express its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members.

Extensive networking and collaboration with organizations like PA, SINDA, LISHA, IHC, NAC, NLB, HCI, SNM, SIFAS, Vasantham TV, and other Indian and Malayalee Associations reached new heights during this year through several joint initiatives.

Youth Wing Report

Since its conception in 2018, the Youth Wing has come a long way. SMA Youth Wing (SMAYW) would not have been able to achieve this without the sheer dedication of its team and support from family, friends and the Singapore community. Thank you. SMAYW proudly presents herewith the report of its activities to-date.

2019

‘Sugar, Spice & Everything Nice’

‘Sugar, Spice & Everything Nice’, certainly a befitting title of how the Youth Wing had drawn 2019 to a close with a lip-smackingly delicious Deepavali-special afternoon of cooking demonstrations, food tasting and sweet memories of 2019. An afternoon of intergenerational bonding over good food and amazing company. The recipes demonstrated by three very capable and deft culinarians, Mrs Jalaja Menon, Ms Dherhini Winodan and Ms Suhara spanned the taste horizons of Europe to Kerala, from a seafood pasta, tangy fish curry to an indulgent neyyappam.

2020

‘Covid-19 Series: Life in the Time of Covid-19’

2020 the year where the world slowed down to battle COVID-19. Singapore too had its fair share of fight in this pandemic and the youth wing wanted to help the community in whatever way that was possible. SMA had started a COVID-19 support fund to which the Youth Wing readily lent its support.

Tik Tok Challenge

Tik Tok is a popular platform that gained greater traction during the Circuit Breaker period. Capitalizing on current trends, the Youth Wing formulated a ‘Tik Tok Challenge’ that ran from the end of April to mid May 2020. A total of 19 entries were received and the winning entry that had the greatest number of likes on both the Youth Wing Facebook and Instagram pages was submitted by Pooja Haridas.

Onam 2020 - ‘Onashamsagal’

The Youth Wing organized a series called ‘Onashamsagal 2020’ in conjunction with Onam. The series was featured on the Youth Wing Facebook and Instagram pages.

The series had a video demonstration on how to tie a Kerala sari, set mundu for ladies and

mundu for men. It also featured a short film written and directed by members, Basil and Vinayak. It showcased the significance of Onam and how Singaporean Malayalees of different religions celebrate Onam in Singapore.

Festival Food Distribution Initiative

The Festival Food Distribution Initiative started for Onam 2020 has been continuing successfully till date. Funds collected from close family and friends were used to support this initiative.

For Onam 2020, the Youth Wing catered sadhya from Curry Magic and distributed it to families identified by the Kebun Bahru FSC. In the same year, food was distributed to the residents of Sunlove Home in conjunction with Deepavali.

In 2021, food was distributed to the Lee Ah Moi Home for Chinese New Year, to Pertapis Senior Citizen Fellowship Home and to migrant workers for Hari Raya Puasa. For Onam 2021, sadhya was catered from Kayaloram restaurant and distributed to seniors identified by Montfort, Good Life Yishun.

2021

In April 2021, the new Youth Wing committee took office.

The global pandemic has caused Singapore to be quick and adaptable in lifestyle, especially with the fluctuating social restrictions. The Youth Wing's core values have always stemmed towards promoting the Malayalee culture and giving back to society. The new committee took over with the drive of wanting to continue enforcing these values.

'Yathra-A Journey Back in Time'

The first event organized by the new committee was a music series called 'Yathra - A Journey Back in Time' that was dedicated to frontline workers for their hard work throughout the pandemic. Songs from yesteryear were chosen in dedication to legendary singers. The series was broadcast on Facebook and Instagram every Friday over a period of three weeks and was performed by Youth Wing members, Vinayak and Basil. The series was received well and had very good viewership.

SMA Membership Drive Promotional Video

The SMA promotional video that was an instant hit with many was conceptualized and directed by the Youth Wing as part of the SMA membership drive. The idea of this video was to provide a refreshing outlook to the association given the latest social trends and pop culture.

The video had received an overwhelming number of likes and outreach locally and globally.

Basic Conversational Malayalam Course

The Youth Wing also organized an eight-week Basic Conversational Malayalam course with MLES, which saw a sign up of 20 participants. It was an enjoyable course and the feedback received was very positive. The Youth Wing has plans to organize the Basic and Intermediate Conversational Malayalam classes with MLES at least twice a year to encourage more people to learn and speak the language.

Onam 2021

In conjunction with Onam, 'Oh My Onam' photo collage competition garnered a total of 22 entries from participants from various age groups. The entry submitted by Ms Gayathri Gopakumar had clinched the most cumulative likes on both the Youth Wing's Facebook and Instagram pages.

'Kerala Cuisine: A Singapore Story'

A series called 'Kerala Cuisine: A Singapore Story' has been started in August 2021. This series showcases restaurants in Singapore serving Kerala cuisine. The aim of this series is to showcase these restaurants so that the public will be aware of them and be able to support them. The Covid-19 pandemic affected many industries and the F&B industry is one of them. Through the publicity gained, the Youth Wing hopes it would encourage more patronage while providing an opportunity for the Youth Wing to spread an awareness of the Kerala cuisine to the non-Malayalee community in Singapore.

Wing seized the opportunity to aid in fund-raising through organising online activities which included a four-week online series that started on 25th May 2020.

Featuring mainly homegrown talent, the series was called 'Life in the Time of Covid-19'. Youth Wing members participated in the segments as well with Shafiq leading Mollywood Exercise sessions. Praseetha, Viknesh and Vidhya helmed the Covid-19 related segment on frontliners. Sangeetha carried out cooking demonstrations with Vinayak and Basil taking audiences on Sundays with a music and dance segment before closing the series with a performance finale. The Youth Wing is grateful to have boosted viewership on both its Facebook and Instagram pages and as well as contribute to the influx of donations for a worthy cause.



Festival Food Distribution- Hari Raya Aidilfitri at Pertapis Senior Citizen Fellowship Home 28 May 2021



Festival Food Distribution for Chinese New Year at Lee Ah Mooi Old Age Home. 18 February 2021



Kerala Cuisine A Singapore Story Season 1. 2 August 2021



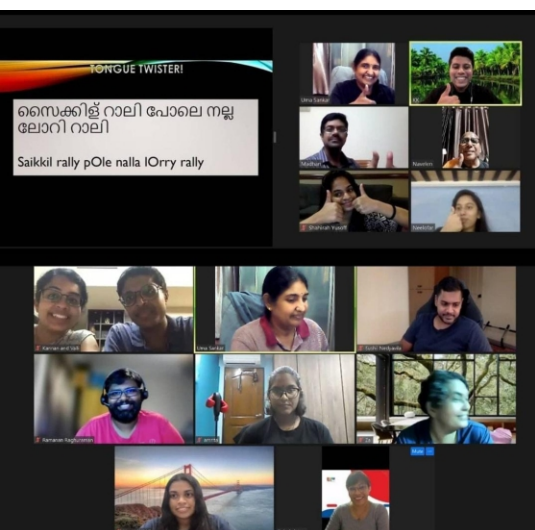
Onashamsagal 2020 Series 16-22 August 2020



Life in the Time of Covid-19 Series. A Four week series featuring our very own homegrown talent



Salt Sugar Spice & Everything Nice 9 Nov 2019



Weeks Basic Conversational Malayalam Class in Collaboration with Malayalam Language Education Society (MLES) 13 July 2021



Tik Tok Challenge 15 May 2020



Year-end Quarterly Bonding at Universal Studio, 28-10-2019

SMLF Report

Gabriel Garcia Marquez Festival

SMLF celebrated the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the renowned Columbian author who has written what is probably the best novel in the history of mankind, “One hundred years of solitude.” The first of the series of sessions was presented by Smitha Augustine - “Strange Pilgrims” with Hema Sivaramakrishnan taking the lead on “The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and her Heartless Grandmother”. The more complex themes in the second session, “Dealing in Dualities - The Marquezian way” was presented by Dr. Thara Ravindran and “No one writes to the Colonel: A review “ By EK Mohan Raj.

The third session had two parts, the first one “The Chronicles of a death foretold: A review by Mr. Ashok Kumar followed by “Solitude in one hundred years of solitude” by Mr. Ullas The final session of GGM festival was held on 20 Oct and led by Mr. T. Suresh Kumar on the topic of സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തെ നിസ്സാരമാക്കിയ എഴുത്തുകാരൻ (മാർക്കേസും മാജിക്കൽ റിയലിസവും). This was a golden opportunity to review and reflect on his life and work and enter an inexplicably wonderful world of magical realism.

The 7th Anniversary of SMLF held on 10 Nov 2019 featured prominent short story writer Mr. Ashtamoorthy as special guest. ‘സീത’ - നൂറുവർഷങ്ങൾ highlighted the century after Kumaran Assan completed his “Chintavishtayaaya Seetha”. Mrs Pia Jayakumar’s Malayalam translation of Rabindranath Tagore’s “Gitanjali” was also released at this platform.

Pramod RB led the session on Seetha, with speakers Mr. M K Bhasi, Ms. Divya Arun, Mr. Ashok and Mr. Suresh Kumar T presenting sessions. Mr. Ashtamoorthy delivered the keynote speech, emphasizing the need to document the history of Malayalee literature in Singapore. Mr. Prem, President of SMA gave the vote of thanks.

MT literary festival on MT Vasudevan Nair’s creations was celebrated on 9th May 2019. Over 60 people attended the whole day event which included speeches, presentations and stage performance. 11 local writers and artists presented at the event.

The literary interest group investigated, assessed and extensively reviewed some of his works from various perspectives. Mr. Sreekanth Menon brilliantly enacted the mentally challenged character of Velayudhan from the famous story Iruttintee Athmavu (Soul of Darkness). The story exposes the irony, how insane and vain society is, and how quick and devious they are to label him as insane, the only innocent soul. Mrs. Uma Shankar released her book of poems.

Mr. Ashok analytically proved that cinema as a medium deserves equal or more praise as novels and short stories. Mr. Mohan Raj, not only covered the travelogues, but many other vibrant topics.

Mr. Suresh Kumar T was instrumental in selecting the topics, his guidance and mentoring is invaluable. He chaired the session with Mr. Alankode Leelakrishnan, noted poet from India, who was our guest speaker, and was all praise for the literary group for maintaining a high standard of discussions.

SMLF SESSION 1, 2020

Mr. Pramod RB started off this poetry session by mesmerizing the audience with his enchanting delivery of poems, as a continuation session of Seetha from the anniversary event. Though attended by a small group of 15, the session was thoroughly enjoyed for its depth of analysis and charm of presentation. The session marked a good start to the SMLF events; a year-long calendar of events was presented at the session.

50 YEARS OF KHASAK, 1ST FEBRUARY 2020

Singapore Malayalee Literary Forum (SMLF), the literary wing of SMA, organised this event on the 50th anniversary of the most read Malayalam book "Khasakinte Ithihasam" (The legends of Khasak) by OV Vijayan, the renowned Malayalam Novelist. The OV Vijayan Memorial Forum members from Kerala and award-winning novelist Mr. Sethu were the key speakers on this occasion.

Forum, explained the relevance of the 50 year old creation even today. Mr. OV Vijayan was a philosopher and thinker who introduced the art of modernism to Malayalam literature, and marked a new era in it. He also introduced the background of the memorial that was built after Mr. Vijayan.

Mr. Sethu, renowned writer and contemporary of Mr. Vijayan, delivered the keynote speech. He expounded the deep thoughts and sharp writing skills of Mr. Vijayan, and reminisced about their many interactions while the two were living in New Delhi about 50 years ago. He shared the conflicts and fears which Mr. Vijayan faced as a writer of publishing such an astonishing work. The talk gave the audience a real insight into the author's mind through one of his associates.

Dr. Chithra Bhanu, a member of the Forum and an avid researcher of OV Vijayan's literature, presented a wonderful overview of the overall contributions of Mr. Vijayan. While being the most successful novelist at that time, he was also an accomplished cartoonist, short story writer and journalist. Ms. Bhanu inspected critically the creations of Mr. Vijayan as a writer of short but poetic stories, the only six novels and how they transcend time and outlive the author, and how the creations find new dimensions and interpretations over time.

Mr. T Suresh Kumar presented the topic "The sense of death in OV Vijayan's Novels."

THE EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGES AND TREASURE OF SANSKRIT – 2ND FEBRUARY 2020

An informational lecture by Dr. P Nandakumar from Thrissur [M A Sanskrit literature (Rank Holder of Calicut University) PhD(Vachaspati) in Sanskrit & Ancient Botany (Effect of Plants on human beings) from Baroda University] was conducted at SMA on 2nd February 2020. Dr. Nandakumar presented the history of evolution of languages in the history of human beings and in India. He also presented the breadth of knowledge that Sanskrit presents in various domains of human experience.

During the circuit breaker period SMLF organised its programs through social media platforms. It was a pleasant surprise that we managed to get more participation online than we

used to have earlier.

The first program in the online series was Kadha Kavyangal by Sri R. B. Pramod held on the 1st of May. We had approximately 70 enthusiasts joining this program on Zoom.

On 23 May we organised “Kaviyodoppam”, an interactive session with renowned poet Sri V. Madhusudhanan Nair. It was an invigorating session where the poet spoke about different levels of poetry and its appreciation. The icing on the cake was the rendition of the poem Naranathu Branthan by none other than the poet himself.

Almost 70 people attended the seminar entitled “Vakkinte Kala” by Sri Suresh Kumar. It was an enlightening session where Sri Suresh took the audience on a journey right from the inception of the first word, its evolution as humanity evolved, the birth of poetry all the way to modern poetry.

SMLF organised a training session for literature enthusiasts by Sri R.B. Pramod, who trained members on Vrithams through an eight session course held in May/June. These sessions provided them with an in-depth understanding of Vrithams. The sessions were made even more interesting by the trainer by providing interesting challenges to participants like translations of some foreign poems, to unleash their creativity with their newly acquired knowledge. This turned out to be an interesting novel experience for the members and many of them presented their creations too.

The next program in October was on the topic Prarodanam- Ashante Vilapakavayam, Oru Avalokanam. Conducted by Sri Pradeep Nayathil, the program examined the Life and Works of Sri Kumaranashan covering the various realms of darkness, sadness, fulfilment, relief, perspective and thought.

In the next program on Oct 17, Smt Divya Arun presented an interesting analysis on the M. Mukundan’s novel, Kuda **Nannakkunna** Choyi. The session was blessed with the presence of Sri Bhahyanth, the artist who had worked on the illustrations for the book.

On Nov 7, Sri Ashok Kumar presented Sankeerthanangalude Anurananam, based on the

novel Oru Sankeerthanm Pole by Sri Perumbadavam Sridharan. The presentation examined the author's portrayal of the Great Story teller Dostovsky whose life and works holds immense possibilities for research and analysis in a way that does not diminish his greatness a wee bit

Following that on the 21 Nov, Smt Uma Shankar presented on Kumaranashante Karuna, examining the various nuances of the creation in a way that helped enhance the audience's appreciation of the poem and poet.

Smt Hema Sivaramakrishnan presented her experience of reading the DC Sahithya Award winning novel Ya Ilahi Times by Sri Anil Devassy. on Dec 12. In addition to this multi-layered novel's international flair that features the state of human affairs across different countries, she also reflected on how the novel breaks the chains of isolation that we sometimes force ourselves into and expands our horizons in terms of our love for humanity, by taking us through varied individual experiences of people in the midst of calamities.

SMLF's new year programs kicked off with a scientific evaluation of "Why do we enjoy Art" by Sri Sunil Sivadas, PHD. He examined the different ways and realms of appreciation & enjoyment of art that we experience, rationally.

SMLF proudly presented A Session with the Writer Anil Devessay, on Feb 19 . Sri Anil Devessay is the author of the award-winning novel YA Ilahi times. It was an interactive session and the members utilised the golden opportunity to communicate directly with the writer.

Cultural Committee

Onam Nite 2019

Malayalee megastar Dr. Mammooty's fans in Singapore were in for a treat when the actor visited the island nation to celebrate Onam Nite 2019 on 24 Aug 2019.

This event was presented by the Singapore Malayalee Association and produced by Asianet, in collaboration with Esplanade Theatres on the Bay. Padma Shri Mammooty made multiple brief appearances on the stage to wild cheers and whistles from the close to full-house audience. The evening was full of entertainment, song and dance as Onam was celebrated with great gusto.



Taking the audience on a musical journey through popular melodies were youth icons Karthik, Sithara, Kavya Ajit and Harishankar. There were also dance performances by Asha Sharath, Shamna Kasim and Archana, who danced to both cinematic numbers as well as semi-classical songs, ably supported by a team of passionate dancers from Singapore. The comic relief on the evening was provided by the likes of Suraj Venjaramoodu, Ramesh Pisharody, Dharmajan, Tini Tom, Nobi and Pashanam Shaji.

The annual affair organised by the Singapore Malayalee Association is always a gala event which has featured Malayalee stars such as Mohanlal, K. J. Yesudas and K.S. Chitra among others in the past.

Onam Village 2019

Singapore's Malayalee Carnival, Onam Village was held on 22 Sep 2019. It was in 2015 that all Malayalee associations in Singapore came together for the first time to celebrate the island

nation's 50th birthday and kick-started the Malayalee Carnival. The venue is known to most Malayalees in Singapore as it has a historical name as well as being host to many SMA events, the Naval Base Secondary School in Yishun.

Onam Village was a family-friendly event where adults, children and entire families had a fun-filled day. All categories saw tough competitors with winners walking away with prizes, bragging rights and of course pictures for social media by the many amazing volunteer photographers!

Onam Village was honoured by the presence of AP Dr. Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, MP for Nee Soon GRC and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the

Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Ministry of Education as the special guests. Past Presidents of SMA, dignitaries, VIPs and both Malayalees and non-Malayalees graced the occasion and added colour to the carnival atmosphere.

This year, a 'Pookkalam Malsaram' that brought out the best of floor-flower-design artists in Singapore was held. Festive stalls and lucky draws added to the excitement. Cultural programs, drawing/coloring competitions and a science exhibition entertained and educated all day long.

What is Onam without the traditional sadya, the Onam Sadya was a feast for all the senses! The day ended with energetic rounds of sports and family games and 'vadam vali' - the traditional tug-of-war.



Onam Nite 2020

SMA's plan to hold the annual celebratory Onam Nite at the prestigious Esplanade Theatres, Singapore had to be dropped – like most other shows across the island nation - due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A decision was then taken to celebrate it virtually, with some live interactions. SMA's FB channel was the de facto social media where the premiers as well as the live shows were showcased. YouTube relays of the same added a second layer through which the program could be watched by the audience in Singapore as well as across the globe.



Given the economic downturn and social upheaval caused by COVID it was decided to enable the maximum number of people to stay at home and enjoy the show, by making it a non-ticketed, free of charge event.



A highlight of this year's digital Onam Nite was that it was held over two evenings instead of the usual one.

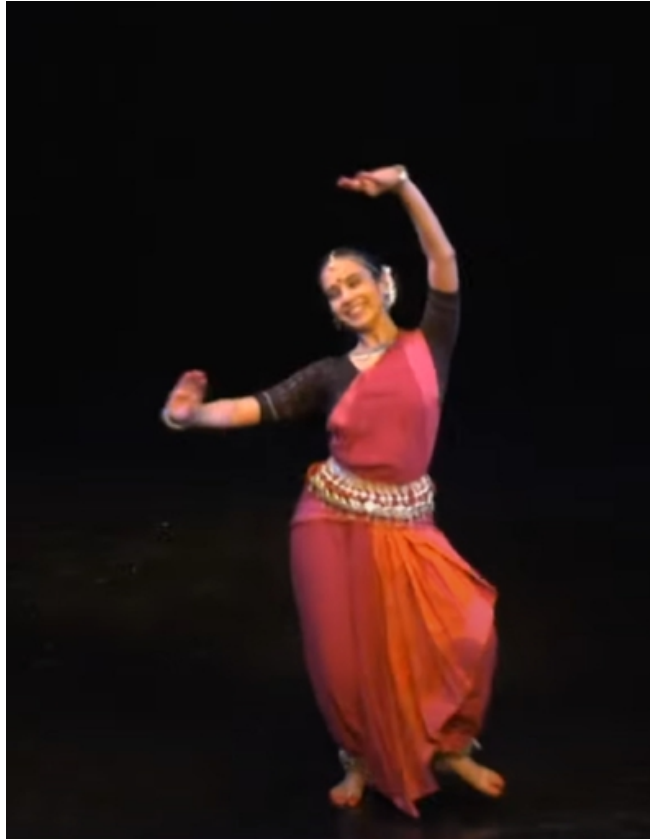
Celebrations started on the 6th of September and carried forward to the 12th of September 2020 - both in collaboration with Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

A colourful spectacle, Onam Nite 2020 had music, dance, fusion as well as comedy. Something for everyone.

Both international and accomplished local artists performed in the show. Singers Madhu Balakrishnan, Chithra Arun, Nithya Mamen, Niranj Suresh, Meenakshy Jyothish, Pavithra Nair, Swathi Suresh, Prakash and Preji CK added their voices to make it a memorable occasion.



Cine artist and dancer Vineeth as well as dancers Rachana Narayanankutty, Sarayu, Shantha Ratii and Maalika Panicker performed classical dances. Gayathri Gopal, Archana Pradeep and Aparna Pradeep delighted the viewers with their Odissi and folk dance performances respectively.



A much applauded musical fusion by flautist Rajesh Cherthala and violinist Abhijith PS added further musical notes to Onam Nite

Bhaskar's Arts Academy music group, comprising Kalaiselvam P on the flute, Preetashini N on the veena, Vismitha R on the violin, Arul K on the mridangam, and Ashwin R on the ghatam, enthralled the viewers with a beautiful musical performance.

A live tête-à-tête with leading Indian dancer and actress Asha Sharath was another highlight of the show.

Bringing the entire show together were talented comperes Gayathri Gopal, Swathi Suresh, Aparna Pradeep and Jibu. Sajin, Bimal Ram, Vinayan, Yadunand and Oxus International and



others played a huge role behind the scenes. SMA would like to extend our appreciation to all of them, without whom this show would not have been possible.

An audience of 35,000 viewers watched Onam Nite 2020 from Singapore as well as from all over the world.

NATTUVADHYANGALUM NATANKALAKALUM

Folk songs and the variety of instruments used in folk songs in Kerala are timeless assets. It is an art form that is slowly dying out, as there are few artistes passionate about this art form which the younger generations lack exposure to. With the intention of bringing dying traditional art forms from the villages of Kerala to the masses, SMA organised an event called നാട്ടുവാദ്യങ്ങളും നാടൻകലകളും performed by Sri Janardhanan Puthusseri, a famous folk singer from Kerala, on 27th Dec 2020. Sri Janardhanan is a winner of Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy award, Dr. Ambedkar National award and the Kerala Folklore Academy Award.

It was an entertaining and educational event, introducing more than 30 traditional percussion/musical instruments and the art form connected to the particular instrument. It was a unique event held for the first time for Singapore Malayalees, filled with various folk songs - pulluvan paattu, koith paattu, nagapattu, navvoru pattu, natodi paattu and chekavar paattu.



Pioneer Wing report

To address the interests and needs of our senior Malayalees, the Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) under the leadership of Sunu Sivadasan-Ghani decided to form a Pioneer Wing (Ladies) in May 2019. Activities were conducted for the seniors to come together and support each other, through fun and meaningful activities.

Events conducted in 2020 and 2021:

A tea- session with about 20 senior ladies was held on 1 February 2020, at SMA's CareLight Wellness Centre. Laughing Exercise conducted by the very popular Laughter Coach, Ms Suchi (Vice President of SEA Global Goodwill Ambassador) got everyone roaring in excitement. Our well-known 'chef', Mdm K.L.Prasanna Kumary demonstrated how to prepare a delicious Prawn Theeyal which everyone tucked in heartily. Seniors were awestruck by the amazing Yoga exercise demonstration by the 90 year old Mdm Vasanthi Sadasivan. These yoga exercises have been recorded and uploaded for seniors to follow, and be inspired.

After the World Health Organization officially classified COVID-19 as a pandemic, Pioneer Wing postponed all face-to-face meetings. Our first online meet-up which was held on 21st February 2021 saw seniors overjoyed to see each other after such a long break. Well-known chef and active member of the Pioneer Wing, Mdm K.L. Prasanna Kumary, conducted an



Tea session at CareLight Wellness Centre



Mdm Prasanna's cooking demo for an online meet



Laughing Therapy by Ms Suchi

online cooking demonstration on various chutneys to go with dosa. The session included pioneers clarifying queries and sharing their own cooking experiences.

On 27 March 2021, about 10 pioneer ladies came together at Carelight Wellness Centre, following strict Safe Management Measures. Clapping therapy by Rangoli expert Mrs. Vijaya Mohan got everyone moving and clapping to the vibrant music that was played. Mdm K.L. Prasanna Kumary demonstrated the cooking of Manchurian Gobi 65 while Mrs. Sunila guided the group in a short meditation session. It was indeed an energising and enjoyable session.

The heightened Covid-19 alert with further restrictions in May 2021 made it difficult for the Pioneer Wing ladies to get together once again for 'Chaaya and Rock' time. Seniors connected with each other through Whatsapp text messages and photos – sharing family

Yoga exercise by 90 year old Mdm Vasanthi



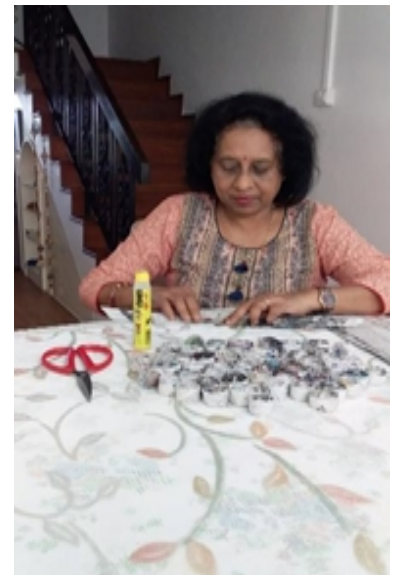


Cooking demonstration by Mdm Prasanna Kumary

photos, and delicacies created in their kitchens. Inspirational and informative videos and messages served to uplift the spirit of our seniors. One activity that kept some of them engaged in their own homes was the making of paper flowers using newspapers, which was demonstrated by Madam Vijaya Mohan, our renowned Rangoli artist. These flowers will be used to decorate Little India during Deepavali. While keeping seniors engaged and focused, this activity also helped in hand exercise and muscular coordination. A total of 800 paper flowers were made.

Pioneer Wing will organize more face-to-face activities, as Covid-19 restrictions get relaxed, to keep our seniors connected, engaged and excited through meaningful activities.

Senior gentlemen, who formed a Whatsapp chat group in 2020, will be getting together for karaoke sessions, card games and other interesting activities in the coming months, under the leadership of Mr Sivaraman.



Mdm Sushama making paper flowers for Deepavali decoration

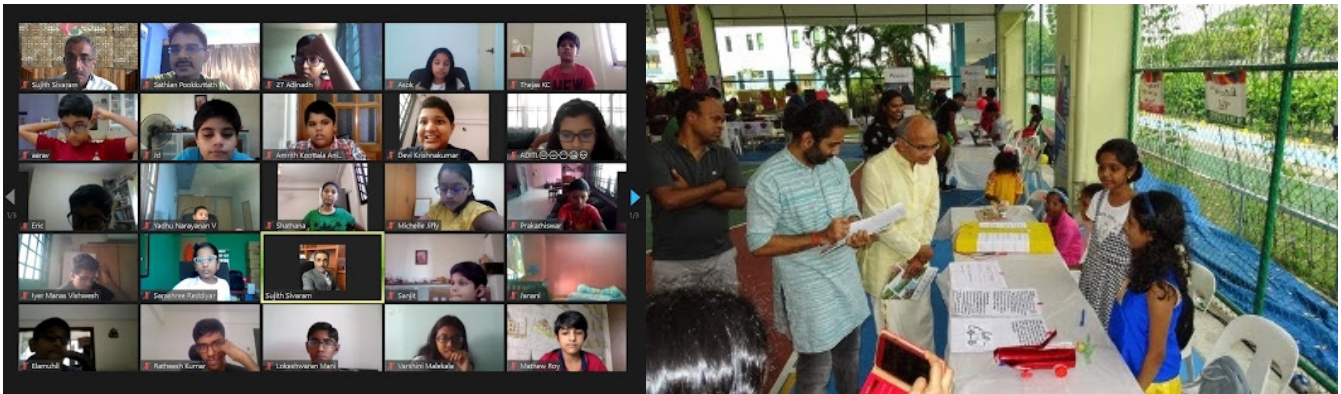


Clapping Therapy by Madam Vijaya

Mayilpeeli Club

Sciencespire 2019

Mayilpeeli organised a Science Exhibition Scienspire 2019 as part of Onam Village. This competition was an excellent platform for budding young scientists below 16 to showcase their passion. Topics included all areas of Science and Engineering. 9 teams presented their projects in the form of display boards, experiments and models. Mr. Madan Pushpakath and Mr. Sangit Sasidhar, experts from academics and the industry, were the judges; they were impressed by the innovative and original ideas showcased.



An art competition was also organised for children - colouring for 4 to 7 year olds, and pencil drawing for 8 to 11 year olds.

Smartest 2020

SMA children's club 'Mayilpeeli' conducted SMARtest 2020 - Spot the Mind Sport - a knowledge quest to kindle the spirit of enthusiastic learning in young minds, on 30th May 2020. This is the third consecutive year that Mayilpeeli has conducted this event.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, this event was conducted on an online platform. 55 children aged between 11 and 15 which included both Malayalees and non-Malayalees participated in this quiz competition. Mr. Sujith Sivaram, our resident quiz master, did an excellent job preparing an amazing set of questions spanning a variety of subjects from science, geography, to literature, media, entertainment and history. The quiz comprised approximately 60 questions over 4 highly stimulating, nail-biting rounds. SMA would like to express its gratitude to Mr. Sujith for his constant, invaluable support for this event.

Dhruv Manoj emerged first, Mathew Roy Varghese came in second with Ishaan Krishnan and Bandra Paavana sharing the third prize. Congratulations to all winners and all participants – keep learning!

Vismaya Sallapam



SMA conducted a motivational programme facilitated by renowned magician and motivational speaker, Sri Gopinath Muthukad, on 12 July 2020. The event was an interactive online session that saw both children and parents alike participate actively. He discussed many areas relevant to daily

life, including career, health, ethics and science, as well as magic. He also gave advice to children on how to make the best of their time. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the session which offered some respite from the current gloomy situation.

Prose and Poem 2020

Mayilpeeli Children's Club believes that nurturing children's interest in language is crucial for their development. With this goal in mind, a creative session was conducted on 27 Dec 2020, to expose children to literature and inculcate in them a love for words. Literature enhances development of language skills and other critical thinking skills that provide the foundation of learning in children.

The session led by Mrs. Uma Shankar was effective in demonstrating the importance of literature as communication as well as art.

The children were fascinated and demonstrated their skills in developing creative phrases, poems and stories. It was a lively, hands-on session where children spontaneously wrote poems on a given topic in a short time at the end of the session.



More than 15 children aged between 9 and 14 participated in this session. Parents gave

encouraging feedback and were appreciative of the efforts that went into conducting such an interesting session for children.

Smartest 2021

SMA children's club Mayilpeeli conducted SMARtest 2021 -Spot the Mind Sport, a knowledge quest to kindle the spirit of enthusiastic learning in young minds, on 26th Jun 2021, for the 4th consecutive year.

Due to Covid restrictions, the event was conducted online. Over 30 students from both Malayalee and non-Malayalee communities participated, reflecting the diversity of participants.

Dhruv Manoj, who has clinched the championship title for 3 consecutive years, joined Sujith Sivaram, as the co-host for the quiz this year. Together, they covered 75 questions across various topics including space & space missions, health and wellness, current affairs, living in Singapore, Indian states, culture and sports.

The organizing team shared teasers over a month before the quiz with the children and parents, ensuring that the learning happened not only during the quiz.

SMA congratulates all participants. This year's winner is Mathew Roy (in red below), with Ishan Krishnan in second place and Manas Iyer in third place.

Dhruv (above, in black) was thrilled to be able to contribute to the quiz differently this year - graduating from quiz winner to quiz master.



Mayilpeeli is always looking for ways to support the personal development of its members, and this is just one example. Mayilpeeli will be organising more creative and enriching events in the near future, please stay tuned!

SMA TEENS CLUB, Changathis

SMA's Teen Club, Changathis, kicked off their very first event in June 2021. The event was organized by 4 Malayalee teenagers; Nysa, Karthika, Krithika, and Devika. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the event took place on online platforms like Zoom.

The event was conducted with the aim of bringing together Malayalee teenagers in Singapore. Over 30 teenagers between 13 to 18 took part in this event.

The event started with an icebreaker where participants played 2 truths and 1 lie to know each other better. After that, we conducted a Kahoot game with questions ranging from general knowledge about Kerala, fun facts about SMA, and references to Malayalam pop culture. The top 3 winners of the Kahoot Quiz walked away with Starbucks gift cards worth \$30. The event ended off with a riddle sharing session where participants took turns sharing riddles and guessing their answers.

SMA Changathis will be organizing many more exciting events so teenagers interested in joining can send an email to chengathis@malayalee.org.sg

SMA TEENS DEBATE

The SMA Teens Club Chengathies organised its debut online debate on 19 and 26 July, which saw the participation of youths aged 12-18 from all over Singapore. This debate was conducted to promote a healthy culture of discussion and competition among the teenagers.

The Club had the privilege of having a distinguished panel of experienced and talented adjudicators, Dr. Anitha Pillai, Mrs. Deepa Madan and Mr. V Bimel Ram. Dr. Anitha Pillai is an applied linguist and a teacher educator at National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. She has served as an adjudicator for several years for the national secondary schools debates competition in Singapore. Mrs. Deepa Madan is an English Language & Literature Subject Head at a local secondary school. She was in charge of her school's debate team for years and was an adjudicator at the secondary schools debating championships on several occasions. Mr. V Bimel Ram is a media and events consultant. He has been an active debate participant since his student days, representing his school, college,

other institutions and organisations. He has served as adjudicator, judge, chairman and trainer over the years for private and televised national debates. All the three adjudicators were thoroughly supportive and gave constructive input that allowed all present to gain an insight into how a debate competition works.

Teen Debate Results

First Place

Manu Sabarinath
Josmin Cannisius Thadathil
Lasheeka Ramesh

Second Place

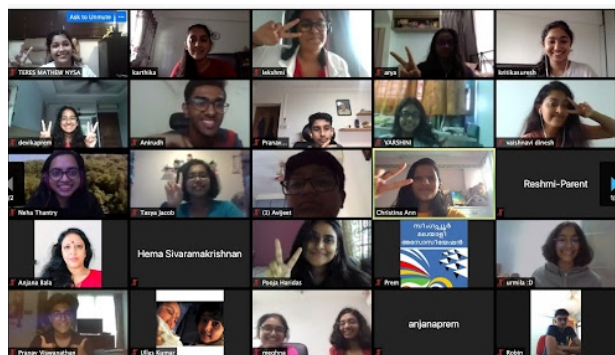
Thejas Kizhakke Chittadath
Amrith Koottala Anil
Aadithya Pillai

Best Speaker

Lasheeka Ramesh

Dr. Anitha Pillai said she was "truly delighted to have adjudicated the maiden teen debates organised by SMA Teen Club, where I felt that we were given a front row seat to witness some of our brightest minds come together to make their case. It was also gratifying to see the next generation work so well together. It reminded me of taking part in events organised by the Kerala Association as a teen myself."

Even though the debate took place online, all the participants were enthusiastic and gave it their best. The Club is thankful for all the support rendered in making the event a success and is looking forward to conducting similar sessions in person once the current Covid restrictions ease.



Varnam

VARNAM 2019

Annual exhibition “Varnam” has been serving as a platform to nurture artists from the Singapore Malayalee community since 2013. Varnam 2019 was staged under the theme of “fest beyond colours - unite community through innovative ways”, where the focus was on



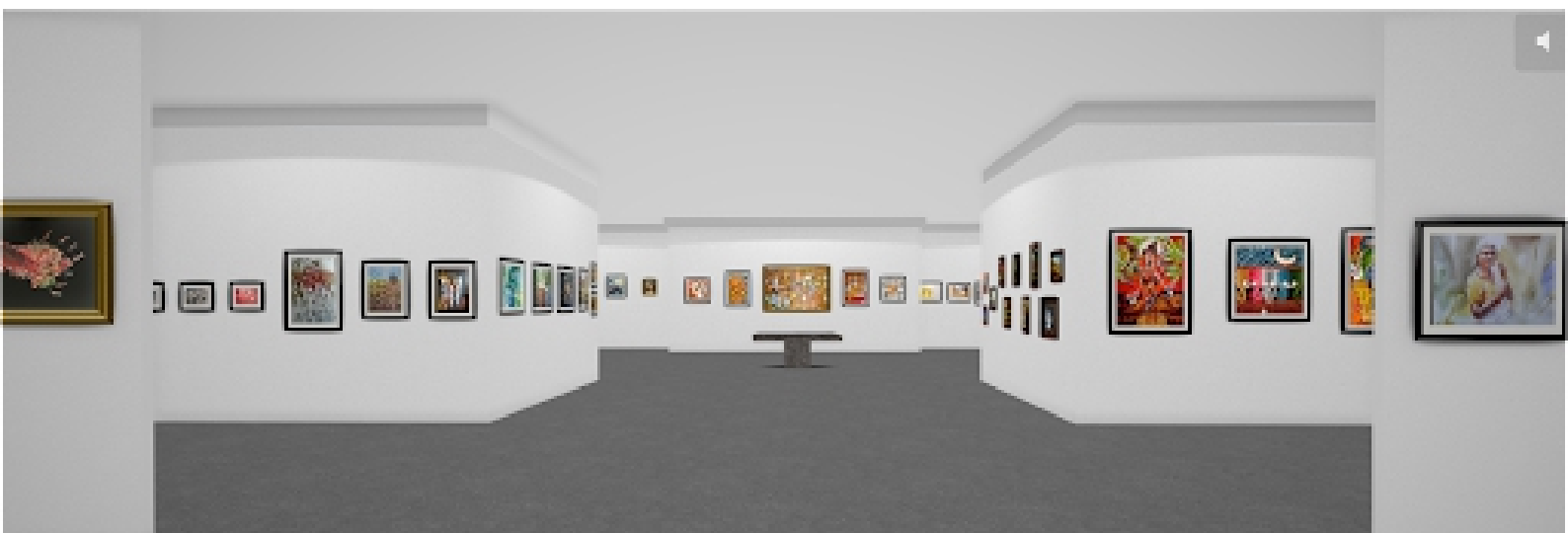
providing participants with real opportunities to showcase their talent. It featured around 130 paintings with various artistic styles by 17 dedicated artists.

Artists were selected based on their creativity, popularity and exposure to the Singapore art community. Exhibits included

contributions of traditional Kerala art, finger painting, still life, charcoal art, contemporary art, creative multimedia and inspirational moments of life.

Mrs. Rosa Daniel, the CEO of the National Arts Council (NAC) Singapore was the Guest-of-Honour. She was delighted to witness the congregation of different artists as a single community. Mrs. Rosa was presented with a portrait of herself that was drawn by Kalyani Anil.

All artists who participated are not full-time practitioners of their work and many have not been



formally trained. This interest group saw the debut of more than 100 art works created specifically for the Varnam 2019 exhibition which was well-received by art enthusiasts.

VARNAM 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world in a big way. It made it necessary to find new ways to conduct our annual art exhibition, thus Varnam 2020 was held virtually. 19 talented artists of the Singapore Malayalee community exhibited their works; a total of 165 art works are being displayed.

The official opening of Varnam 2020 was conducted on Zoom on 21st Nov 2020 in the presence of more than 50 attendees. It was graced by the presence and blessings of His Excellency Periasamy Kumaran, High Commissioner of India to Singapore.

The exhibition received more than 3500 visitors in the few weeks. Varnam 2020 can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/Varnam2020>

Art Workshop for Seniors

A traditional Kerala mural painting workshop was conducted on 28th Feb at CareLight Wellness Centre. Due to restrictions, only 8 participants were accepted. It was the very first activity conducted in the centre since March 2020.

Participating Artists – Varnam 2020

Participating Artists

1. Siviya Menon
2. Jismon Thomas
3. Rosni Bhanu
4. Radhika Murali
5. Jaleela Niaz
6. Anil Kariseril
7. Radhika Suresh
8. Sajeevkumar
9. Kalyani Anil
10. Rajaneesh Krishnan
11. Anila Ajilliath
12. Jayashankar
13. Deepa Madan
14. Lakshmy Iyer
15. Rajesh Paravoor
16. Venmony Bimalraj
17. Dr Aruna Shahani
18. Latha Menon Jayaram
19. Rahul Nair

102nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Singapore Malayalee Association

The 102nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA), was held on Sunday 26th April 2020 at 10:30 am. Due to COVID-19 Circuit-Breaker restrictions, the meeting was held as a Live meeting on the Google Meet platform.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30am with a quorum of 66 members. Besides the 66 members who signed in to the meeting, there were many other members who observed the proceedings on a YouTube livestream broadcast.

The Management Committee, represented by the President, presented SMA's activities for the year from April 2019 to April 2020. These include:

Activities to support the Malayalee community affected by COVID-19 Circuit Breaker
Attainment of "Charity Status" for "SMA Care Limited"
Transfer of Kerala Flood Relief Fund to the Singapore Red Cross
Launching of the new Membership Portal and Benefit Programs
And activities of all Sub-Committees

This was the SMA's first ever AGM conducted remotely in its 103-year history.

The Management Committee also presented the planned activities for the next year. Due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation, many of SMA's regular activities may have to be adapted to online platforms.

103rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Singapore Malayalee Association

The 103rd AGM of the Association was held virtually on 26th April 2021. More than 60 members attended this meeting. The president, Mr. Prem, addressed everyone and highlighted many events and initiatives completed in the last 2 years, including the Kerala Flood Relief Fund, various welfare activities during COVID, the founding of new clubs such as the SMA Tech Forum, Teens Club Chengathies and innovative activities such as SMA Hackathon. He also showcased the digital transformation efforts of SMA, in keeping up with the times.

The new Management Committee was elected. We thank the outgoing Management Committee for their dedication over the last 2 years.

Kerala flood relief fund

The 2018 Kerala floods were devastating, resulting in 483 people dead, 140 missing, estimated property damage of \$5.8 bn USD, with more than 1.2mn people across more than 3200 relief camps. 11 of 14 districts recorded excess rains.

Singapore's response included:

- Online Donation Portal – SMA collaborated with more than 30 Indian organizations to raise funds.
- Collection Drive - In collaboration with BLPL and X-Feeders, SMA sorted, packed and shipped more than 200 boxes that were then distributed in Idukki. ICA & Focus Malayalam played a key role in making this happen.
- Donation Booth - In collaboration with LiSHA, with sponsorship from Banana Leaf Apollo, SMA and our 140 volunteers ran this booth over 31 days.
- Art Exhibition - SMA Varnam Artists held an art exhibition at the Indian Heritage Centre. Proceeds from the sale of art pieces were donated to the Kerala Flood Relief Fund.

Handover of Funds to SRC

SMA officially handed over the funds (SMA Collection) to SRC on 10th September 2019. A total of more than \$400,000 was collected through the various initiatives.

SRC presented detailed plans of the projects on which these funds will be used, including the timelines, partners and expected number of beneficiaries.

How will the funds be utilized?

Phase 1 (Initial Relief):

Singapore Red Cross committed 50,000 SGD worth of relief items and response efforts for initial immediate relief in August 2018. SRC partnered with Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), in the distribution of relief items.

Relocation of the affected population was carried out in Alappuzha, Wayanad, Ernakulam, and Pathanamthitta districts.

SRC also supplied 3 Wateroam filtration Systems to be used in low-lying areas that were depending on well water.

Phase 2:

Based on needs analysis conducted by SRC, Phase 2 focuses on

1. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene. Water Purification and Storage Units for 10 Villages are planned. The identification of suitable places and obtaining of permits is going on. The installation will be completed around May 2020.

2. School Supplies for Children. This includes supplying stationery, library books, sports equipment and other miscellaneous items to affected schools.

All orders have been placed and purchased for the school kits. Beneficiary identification has begun. Distribution will be completed soon.

3. Digital and Financial Empowerment.

This promotes financial and digital literacy among the rural population, especially women and children, and senior citizens, to accelerate financial habits, and increase economic participation.

How will this be done? The mobile training centre will travel to different places, including interior villages, educational institutions and offices, and staff will conduct one-day training programmes.

Course materials are being prepared and suitable trainers are being identified for the programme.

There was some delay faced, due to the phasing out of currently available vehicles. Once the new vehicles are available, the training programmes will commence, from May 2021 to May 2022.

This is expected to reach 3000 beneficiaries in the first year.

Phase 3:

Mobile Medical Clinics will be regularly deployed to reach people who are otherwise cut-off from access to health services.

Phase 4:

This phase focuses on continuation of efforts from the last 2 phases, so as to provide long-term aid to the beneficiaries.

Once the projects are completed, SRC will release a detailed report.

SMA would like to thank all donors for their generous support.

SMA Welfare Wing

2020

Support and Assistance to the Community

In the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic, SMA extended its support to those who have been affected badly by the situation and rendered assistance to the best of its ability.

There were 5 major issues that were brought to SMA's attention during this period.

1. Urgent need to head back to Kerala or return to Singapore from Kerala

Indian tourists, work pass holders, tertiary students and some pregnant women all desperately wanted to return to Kerala. Through coordination with the Indian Ministry for External Affairs, Indian High Commission of India and NORKA Roots arrangements were made for repatriation flights. Salary issues with employers and the need to get release papers from MOM for migrant workers in dorms to return home were common. The matter was



brought to TADM (Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management), TWC2 (Transient Workers Count too) and Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and relevant documents were submitted showing their urgency to return (e.g. surgery, death in family) and managed to get the papers for them. SMA also paid the airfare for those who could not afford it.

2. Request for food/groceries from tertiary students (Polytechnics and Private Colleges)

SMA provided groceries to anyone who knocked at its door, in the form of cash and grocery kits. They included students in polytechnics and private colleges. For polytechnic students, arrangements were made for their respective institutions to help them. Some polytechnics subsequently provided some basic grocery items. SMA extended a helping hand to everyone who approached it, Malayalees and non-Malayalees alike.

The Hindu Endowments Board and well-known Rangoli expert Ms Vijaya Mohan helped SMA liaise with three temples to provide some packed food. Seven volunteers from other

organizations and our own Management Committee members helped deliver food and groceries. SMA is grateful to our sponsors House Brand, HindArab Restaurant and My Kitchen Restaurant for providing food and groceries. To prevent duplication of efforts and more efficient execution, SMA collaborated with other Malayalee organizations through weekly meetings.

3. Request for help with paying rent, mostly from students in polytechnic and private colleges

While SMA funds alone were insufficient to fulfil the many requests that were coming in, it liaised with Project Providence (PP), a temporary Covid-19 crisis response initiative. After exercising due diligence for deserving students. Project Providence and SMA worked together to pay their rent on a case by case basis.

In one case, 16 students were given 24 hours by their landlord to vacate the flat. Through Hindu Endowments Board's support, SMA sought the Indian High Commission's help to arrange for these students to be shifted to an alternative accommodation.

4. Assistance in Managing anxiety and stress

Many were undergoing tremendous stress during this period of great uncertainty. To assist, SMA set up a professional counselling service. A trained senior counsellor, Mrs Shobha Varghese, a member of the Singapore Association for Counsellors, volunteered to provide free tele-counselling. SMA also worked with the Trans Family Service Centre to look into some cases involving family problems/abuse.



5. Assistance with Medical Fees

SMA assisted cash strapped students with medical bills. In one case, SMA supported a tertiary student who was diagnosed with TB just before the Circuit Breaker. SMA members in the medical field also offered free medical advice.

6. Assistance with Legal Issues

For legal matters, SMA's legal advisor offered free legal counselling as well.

COVID-19 Support Fund

A Covid-19 support fund was set up and SMA is immensely thankful to everyone who donated so generously. This has enabled SMA to support those who turned to it for assistance and to continue its community work.

Those who wish to make a contribution, can do so at: member.malayalee.org.sg/donate

Health & Wellness Series



The 'Health & Wellness Series' was started in December 2020. In the midst of the global pandemic, many health and wellness issues have gotten a lot of attention. The team felt that it was important that everyone was well informed and could benefit to learn about various health issues and topics. An outreach to many professionals in this field to curate this series was made. These talks were open to everyone, for the young and old, and not just for Malayalees or Singaporeans, but one and all regardless of language, race or nationality. The talks are being held once a month and the series is supported by several community partners. From May 2021, the series is being jointly conducted with the Sree Narayana Mission

(Singapore). The series has been very well received thus far and each session has been very informative and enriching.

2021 Welfare Activities

The Welfare Wing set up its new committee in 2021.

The first event organized was a four week series in June 2021 called 'Covid-19 Series 2021 - Reflections'. The series was a platform created for Singaporeans from different walks of life to speak about their personal experiences, reflections and perspectives during this pandemic. Speakers included those from the social work sector, caregivers, students, teachers, doctors, and owners of food and small businesses. It was a very enlightening and insightful series that was well received.

A 'Standard First Aid with CPR and AED' course has been organized in partnership with Dynamic Safety Pte Ltd. Two rounds of the course are in the pipeline and have been scheduled to take place over a weekend in September and in November at the CareLight Wellness Centre. Participants will be trained in first aid, CPR and the use of an AED. They will be issued with certificates at the end of the course that are valid for two years. The Welfare Wing hopes to organize this course on a quarterly basis for SMA members and anyone who would be interested to participate and get trained.

The Welfare Wing has collaborated with IMDA to organize sessions for seniors to learn basic mobile applications on smartphones. These sessions will be held at the CareLight Wellness Centre.

The SMA Welfare Wing is happy to assist anybody who requires any assistance and invites volunteers to join as well. The Welfare Wing can be contacted at welfare@malayalee.org.sg



Singapore Malayalee Association
Welfare Wing



Standard First Aid (SFA) Course with CPR (HO) + AED

Register now for a two day course and get
certified in Standard First Aid, CPR and the
use of an AED.
The certification is valid for two years.

Dates:	Course Fee:
➔ First Round: Sep 4th and 5th (Sat & Sun)	➔ \$150 (excl. GST) for non-Singaporeans and non-PRs
➔ Second Round: Nov 20th and 21st (Sat & Sun)	➔ Subsidised price for Singaporeans and PRs on registration

Venue:
CareLight Wellness Centre, 141 Bedok Reservoir Road,
#01-1529, Singapore 470141

Register by August 22nd 2021
Registration (10 spaces for each round) is on a
first come first served basis.

For more details please contact:
Vidhya (96516593) or Viknesh (98171401)
Course conducted by Dynamic Safety Pte Ltd

LADIES' WING



SMA Ladies Wing has been active throughout the quarter.

On Aug 31st, SMA Ladies' Wing along with Breast Cancer Foundation Singapore, organised a Breast Cancer Awareness talk at Carelight Wellness Centre. Dr. Germaine Xu (Breast Surgeon, Mt. Alvernia Hospital), Ms. Mazuim Khamis (BCF Singapore) and Mrs. Anu Chia gave informative talks on the importance of breast self-examination and screening tests to detect breast cancer, which is the most prevalent cancer among women in Singapore. The speakers stressed the importance of regular check-ups, a healthy lifestyle and early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

LADIES' WING MOTHER'S DAY CELEBRATION & PHOTO CONTEST

In celebration of Mother's Day, SMA Ladies' Wing organised a Zoom call for all members. A photo contest was also held. The ladies had a fun-filled session with some songs, poem recitals and lots of laughter. The ladies shared their lock-down experience and brainstormed new ideas for virtual programmes until normal activities can be resumed.

The winning entries of the photo contest are:



LADIES' WING POOKKALAM CONTEST

SMA Ladies Wing organised a Pookkalam Competition 2020, as part of the SMA Onam 2020 celebrations. There were 31 entries out of which the top three winners were chosen by an eminent panel of judges. The winning entries of the contest are:

1st Prize: Megha Shyju

2nd Prize: Deepthy Tushar

3rd Prize: Sreeja Nair

SMA Ladies' Wing also conducted an online Q&A session on Ayurveda medicine, with guest Dr. Lakshmi Nair. Many members attended and found the session informative.



1st Prize: Megha Shyju



2nd Prize: Deepthy Tushar



3rd Prize: Sreeja Nair

New Year Gift Hampers

SMA Ladies Wing donated New Year Gift hampers to the residents of Sree Narayana Mission on 29th of December 2020.

An informative talk over Zoom on Hydroponics Gardening by Mr. Lim Han Hong on 22nd Jan, and a Yoga demonstration by Yoga Shiromani Chandran N.R. on 27th March were organised. He demonstrated each type of yoga with a brief explanation on its health benefits.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community Outreach is basically to reach out to other communities and organisations to spread our rich culture and ethnicity. And also to learn more about other cultures and their interests, which in turn helps us to create a strong bond and oneness among us.

Curry Fiesta 2019 organized by LISHA Women's Wing - A Singapore Book Of Records Achievement - 200 Stalls of Curries by 200 Organizations, Multiracial curry goodness!

In conjunction with our bicentennial year, LISHA WOMEN'S WING planned for a Curry Fiesta where 200 types of curries were served at Campbell Lane event marquee by 200 different organizations on Saturday 14th Sept 2019 from 11 am to 3 pm. Ms. Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State graced the event, enthusiastically interacting with the participants and the organizers. There were veg/nonveg/vegan/halal or non-halal curries which were served free to the public. Along with the Indian curries, there were Brazilian, Venezuelan, Japanese, Thai, Nonya, Chinese, Malay, and many more. The crowd was spoilt for choices and found it a feat to taste all the 200 curries.



For this multiracial event, SMA planned for our authentic Avial prepared using different kinds of vegetables.

Video on Documenting Covid-19 in Singapore along with other Associations

During the COVID-19 period, SMA took the initiative to compile videos on COVID-19 support measures undertaken by various Indian Associations in Singapore. The four Associations that agreed for it were the Singapore Bengali Association, Kannada Sangha Singapore, Singapore Sindhi Association, and the Singapore Kadayanallur Muslim League.

This COVID support video was compiled to showcase and archive the movement whereby the

community as a whole came up with various activities to motivate, support, and help the needy in the difficult times. SMA chose to highlight and celebrate this humanitarian spirit during this unprecedented situation so that it may serve as a lesson for future generations on how we overcame these difficult times together.

This compiled video was telecasted in the Vasantham channel, Thaalam Indian Beat series. SMA proudly shared the video with the National Museum of Singapore, the Indian Heritage Center, LISHA, and all the four associations.



SIFAS - Digital Deepavali - Raise The Light



SMA collaborated with SIFAS for the Digital Deepavali - Raise The Light by a beautiful Mohiniattam performance by Mrs. Nisha Manoj and the team. It also received 1.4K views.

SMA President Mr. Prem receiving the Memento from SIFAS representatives.

SMA received its fourth Singapore Book of Records certificate. 12000 'Thank you Singapore' hand painted Deepavali greeting cards were displayed at the launch of the event. Mrs. Vijaya Mohan's initiative aimed to support and thank the Singapore Government's leadership in the current pandemic situation. The main objective of these cards was to thank our Leaders, Ministers, Civil Servants, Grassroots, and Community Leaders, who managed to keep Singapore safe, strong and united in the face of a raging COVID-19 pandemic.

The event was inaugurated by Little India Shopkeepers & Heritage Association (LISHA) Chairman Mr. Raj Kumar Chandra. Organized by Mrs. Vijaya Mohan, Rotary Club of Novena Singapore, and supported by LISHA and Tekka Place.



More than 12,000 cards were distributed to over 75 organizations as well as individuals to be coloured and returned for display at Tekka Place. The largest Display of Deepavali cards entered the Singapore Book of Records on Tuesday, December 1st, 2020

SMA in the Media

Some of our SMA's key events were broadcast on Vasantham, the local Tamil television



channel in 2020.

The Malayalee culture was showcased in Episode 11 of Alaigal Oivathillai

EPs 11 - Malayalees and Brahmins

Tues Mar 24, 2020 @9.30pm

Vasantham Tamil Channel

Series on 200 years history of immigration to Singapore from the Indian-Subcontinent by the community. 12 episodes, Jan to Mar 2020.



Meetings with Indian High Commissioner

We had a few meetings with The Excellency Mr. Kumaran Periasamy, High Commissioner of India on our ongoing activities and future plans. We also discussed opportunities for cooperation between the HCI and SMA for promoting Indian culture and enhancing community welfare.

SIFAS Open House

From soulful musical performances in the morning to scintillating dances in the evening, a



visual arts exhibition, it was a feast to our eyes, and a wonderful opportunity to meet and greet our community partners, esteemed gurus, for an in-depth insight into 15 disciplines and three short-term courses.

Pookalam at Indian Heritage Centre by SMA April 2021 for Indian New Year Celebration.

SMA was invited to do a pookalam decoration at IHC entrance for the Indian New Year celebration. Mrs Indulekha and team did a wonderful job



by creating a vibrant decoration. Many people from other races appreciated the effort and took pictures too.

Indian New Year celebrations by LiSH 14th & 15th April 2021.

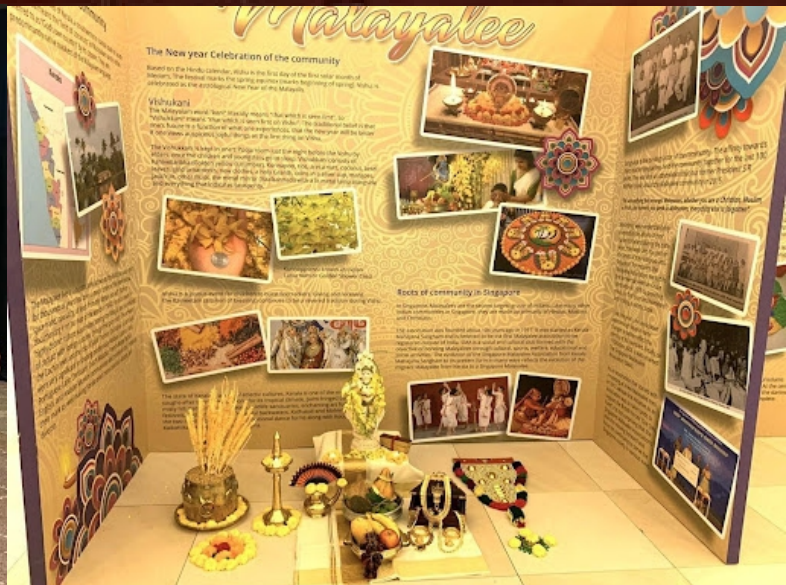
Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (LISHA) along with 16 Indian organizations presented an exhibition on the Indian New Year theme and cultural segments to celebrate the Indian New Year at the PGP hall of Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple.

Minister Indranee Rajah and Minister Alvin Tan were the guests of honor at the launch. As part of the President's Challenge initiative, Minister Indranee Rajah received the cheque on behalf

of President Halimah Yacob. SMA members donated wholeheartedly for the noble cause. The Varnam team did a fundraiser by auctioning their paintings.

SMA set up a booth showcasing its VishuKani based on the New Year theme. We also showcased our traditional Mohiniattam performance by Mrs. Haritha Haridas and the team.

India CoVid19 Relief Fund booth organized by LISHA and SICCI in May 2021.



SMA volunteers manned the booth following the roaster along with other community partners. We witnessed many benevolent people filling the donation box in no time.

Gratitude Cards Project - Initiative by Big At Heart

SMA members readily volunteered for this project and created their beautiful gratitude cards wishing our front liners. All young and old joined hands together to express love, gratitude, and support for all frontline workers by creating more than 150 cards.



SMA CareLight Wellness Center

SMA CareLight Wellness Center

To commemorate 100 years of the inception of the Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA), SMA decided to expand and enhance its welfare activities. “SMA Care Limited”, a Company Limited by Guarantee, was formed to spearhead these activities at the CareLight Wellness Centre. The company was formed by Mr Padma Shri Gopinath Pillai, Dr V Paremeswaran Nair PBM and Mr Jayakumar Narayanan BBM. They then appointed six Directors, namely, Mr Chandran s/o Urath Sankaran Nair, Mr Chellappan Pillai Sreedevi Ullas Kumar, Mrs Sunu d/o Sivadasan, Mr Parameswaran Sreedevi Prem, Mr Venugopalan Priyadarsan and Mr Jayakumar Narayanan BBM to run the company.

CareLight Wellness Centre, located at Block 141, Bedok Reservoir Road, is a drop-in activity centre for residents regardless of age, race or religion. After a soft launch on 7th May 2019 by Mr Chua Eng Leong, Adviser to Aljunied GRC Grassroots organisations, the centre started running various programmes to empower seniors, especially the isolated and lonely, to lead a healthy lifestyle, build strong bonds amongst themselves, and support each other.

Some of the activities organized by the various collaborators in 2019 were:

ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMMES	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS
HEALTH TALKS Health topics for Senior Citizens/ Free Health	Changi General Hospital
FIT+ Light exercise session	Health Promotion Board (HPB)
SHARE A POT Nutritious soup served after a light exercise to improve the health of seniors.	Khoo Teck Phuat Hospital/Volunteers SMA
ZUMBA Exercise	HPB
ART THERAPY Magic of Painting with beats of Music	Volunteer Divya (art therapist)

ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMMES	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS
Rangoli Workshop	Volunteer community artist and art therapist, Mrs. Vijaya Mohan
YOGA A relaxing and stretching session customized	Volunteer Yoga Trainer, Chandran
HAPPY KOPITIAM Light engagement session for seniors	Montfort Care
HEALTH TALKS Health topics focused on Senior Citizens	Hospice Council
Malay Seniors Programme	Montfort Care
Diabetic check and follow-up	Diabetic Society
Karaoke	Volunteers
Laughter Therapy/ Cooking demonstration and yoga exercises for Indian Seniors	Volunteers/SMA
Donation of free clothing's during Deepavali	Indian Women's Association
CNY Outing trip to Woodlands Shopping Centre	Volunteers



Zumba programme by Monfort Care (2019)



Health talk by Changi General Hospital(2019)



'Happy Kopitiam' session (2019)



Art session by Mdm Vijaya Mohan (2019)



SMA volunteers helping out with the 'Share A Pot' programme (2019)



Seniors from CareLight Wellness Centre volunteering at Onam Village 2019

CareLight also worked closely with the Heart Warmers, advisors and members of Eunós CC, Housing Development Board and Aljunied Hougang Town Council to reach out and serve the residents in Bedok. For the year 2019, about 125 senior citizens benefited from the different activities organised.

On 14 October 2019, CareLight had the honour of receiving the Singapore Book of Records achievement for having the most number of seniors painting plastic bottles together, to make a flower carpet rangoli. This event, held at Gardens by the Bay was an initiative of Mrs. Vijaya Mohan, a well-known local rangoli artist and volunteer.



In the Singapore Book of Records for making the largest Rangoli out of bottle caps (15 Aug 2021)

30 March 2020 was another proud day for 'SMA Care Ltd' as it obtained Charity Status (under Charities Act) from the Commissioner of Charities.

When the World Health Organization officially classified COVID-19 as a pandemic, all activities at CareLight Wellness Centre were suspended from February 2020. Activities were conducted online, though many seniors were initially uncomfortable with technology.

Keeping to Safe Management Measures, the centre once again opened its doors on 26 February 2021 to a Kerala Mural Painting workshop by Mr Anil. From 29 March 2021, SINDA commenced lessons under the Project Guide programme for primary school pupils three times a week, at the Centre premises.



Sinda's Project Guide Programme (2021)

Kerala Mural Painting session by Mr Anil (2021)



Exercise programme in 2021

Art session (2021)

500 National Day Gratitude card for frontliners (2021)

CareLight is proud of its seniors who got together to decorate 500 National Day gratitude cards for our frontline heroes. Another feather to its cap was when CareLight was recognized in the Singapore Book of Records for making the largest Rangoli out of bottle caps measuring 3.8m by 3.9m, on 15 Aug 2021. This was to commemorate Singapore's 56th National Day.

CareLight wishes to express its sincere thanks and appreciation to all its collaborators and volunteers for their support and contributions that have made the Centre a lovely 'home' for the many elderly residents. CareLight Wellness Centre endeavors to empower more seniors, and also support students in meaningful ways, in the coming years.



Making paper flowers out of recycled newspapers for Deepavali decoration in Little India (2021)

Publication Committee

SMA Quarterly Newsletter

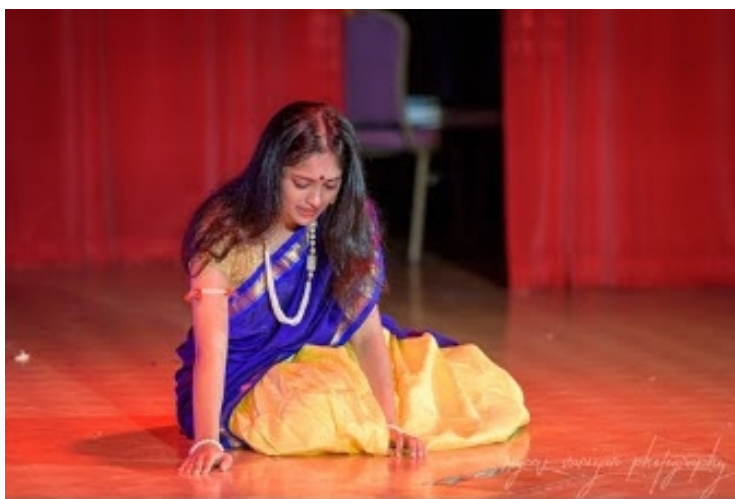
In an effort to continuously engage members and well-wishers, SMA started publishing regular updates through a quarterly newsletter. The first issue was published in April 2019, 8 issues have been published to date.

These updates include brief reports of past events with photographs and some descriptions, reports of SMA's numerous welfare activities, especially pertinent during COVID-19, and information about upcoming events. SMA continues to engage interested parties through email and various digital platforms, but the newsletter serves as an important tool to keep our seniors informed about SMA's activities. The quarterly newsletter has been very well-received, especially by seniors who appreciate the hard copy. Published issues can be found on the SMA website as well.

Drama Club

NATAKAMELA 2019

The 4th Edition of Natakamela was held at The Grassroots Club on 30th Spet 2019. Every year we tell new stories, draw colourful pictures and convey some message. As in previous years there were 3 different dramas - mythology, history and family comedy. New techniques were attempted, new actors were given the opportunity to



perform. The objective of this group is to attract new acting talent from the younger generation and present the sweetness of the Malayalam language. The drama working committee was formed to plan the 2020 drama event for the 5th milestone year. The team also planned to conduct Nataka kalari, a session to introduce drama to kids.

Natakamela 2020

Due to the COVID restrictions, on-stage performance and live rehearsal camps of Drama club activities were muted temporarily. But the teams were progressing with activities like web series and short films as a group activity. SMA Drama club wishes them all the best for the interest shown in these ventures.

SMA drama group conducted an online drama competition following strict guidelines of a stage play during Onam 2020. It was a 7min uncut/unedited performance by the participants.

Out of the qualifying entries, the first prize winner is Rashobh R.S. for his drama “Punarjani”, which will be performed on stage at the 2021 Natakamela.



Mr. Rashobh R S

SMA drama team is entering a milestone of its 6th year. On a positive note, we hope that the stage comes alive in 2021. All interested members are welcome to join the group by sending an email to drama@malayalee.org.sg All Singapore Malayalees are invited to Natakamela 2021 and are requested to extend their wholehearted support.

SMA Tech Forum

SMA has started a new interest group, the SMA Tech Forum in May 2020. Its objectives are to introduce interesting subjects to the wider audience, to provide a platform for speakers to share their knowledge and research and to facilitate meaningful discussion.

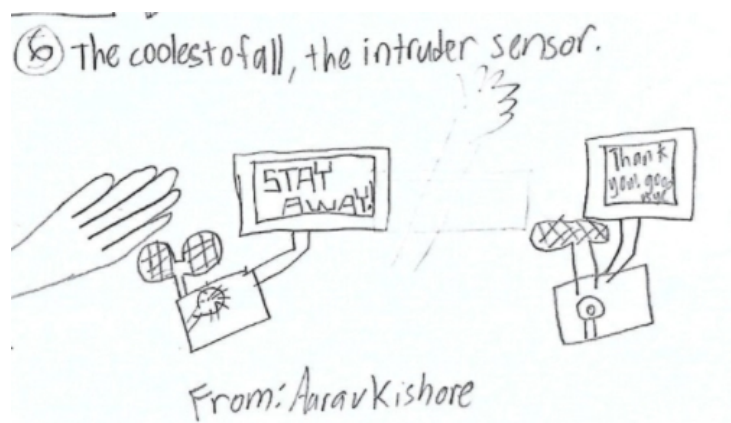
This will be done through an engaging and informative series of expository talks on a variety of subjects, with a focus on cutting edge technology and innovations.

Events held so far:

1. Demystifying Artificial Intelligence: How Intelligent machines will change the future by Mr. Robin Vinod (JC2 Student)
2. Tinkering with Arduino by Dr. Rajesh Panicker (Senior Lecturer at NUS)
3. Arduino Workshop by Ms. Malavika Menon (Data Scientist at GoJek)
4. The Magic Behind Google Search by Ms. Malavika Menon
5. Cybersecurity Fundamentals - by Mr. Anand Rajan (Data Scientist at a leading bank)
6. Technology in Public Safety & Security by Mr. Raja Sekaran (ex Senior Police Officer for 25 years with the Singapore Police Force)
7. AI in Healthcare by Mr. Balagopal Unnikrishnan (Research Engineer at I2R, A*STAR)
8. The Future of Fashion by Ms. Nikita Menon (fashion graduate & MSc candidate in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence for the Creative Industries)
9. Impact of Whatsapp Privacy Policy Changes by Mr. Rajesh Sreenivasan (Partner and Head of the Technology, Media and Telecom Law at Rajah & Tann LLP)
10. 5G – What to expect? by Mr. Ullas Kumar [MBA (NUS), MTech (IISc)] (Technology consultant and entrepreneur)
11. Towards Smarter Homes by Mr. Arun Sudhakaran
12. Automate Life with Code: Automation with Python programming: by Mr. Vinod Verghese (VP at Citibank)

13. Cloud Computing: by Mr. Jayachandran Maniyeri (Senior solutions architect at Blugraph Tech)
14. Ventilator Journey by Mr. Vishnu Vadakkepat (key innovator in this ventilator project)
15. Python workshop: by Tech Forum members Manju and Malavika. Due to Covid restrictions in place, the event was held online and offered only 20 slots which were fully taken up within a day.
16. Underwater Communication by Mr. Manu Ignatius (CEO of Subnero, a Singapore-based startup that specializes in providing underwater wireless communications and networking technology & solutions)
17. Cybercrime: What you need to know by Mr. Jairam Ramesh (Cybersecurity veteran)

Tech enthusiasts can look forward to more sessions in the near future. The encouragement and support have been heartening so far, and we look forward to delivering more quality content. If there is any tech topic that you would like to know more about, feel free to drop us a note at techforum@malayalee.org.sg



SMAK-ATHON 2020

“The thrill of learning and building something new is boundless. We wanted to pave a way to empower groups of friends and families to experience this joy together. The feedback from participants of the first Arduino workshop by SMA Tech forum encouraged us to think further on how to provide a larger avenue for this. We hope SMAK-athon would be an exciting journey for tech enthusiasts.” – Manju Venugopal, Tech Enthusiast, head of SMA-kathon organizing committee

The hackathon was held on 20 Dec 2020, where participants from the ages of 8 to 50+ identified problems and developed very interesting working devices to address these problems. This served as an introduction to the world of IoT for most of the participants who were new to using Arduino. They learnt the basics of Arduino programming, and went through the whole process from identifying a problem, to using design thinking to envision a solution, to implementing the solution using hardware and going through multiple iterations of debugging, to making the final presentation. Participants were appreciative of the opportunity to learn from experts through the workshop, to learn something new and to create something of value. The team is confident that this has sparked an interest in lifelong learning of IoT for many of our participants! The winners are:

Junior	1st	Nandita Harish, Nandita Raj, Niranjana Harish FeedPro - Smart Pet Feeder
	2nd	Aryan Arun, Gaurav Bhardwaj Automatic Window Closer
	Special Mention	Mrinalini Sivadas, Siddhi Bhangale Secure Home
	Special Mention	Abhinav R Nair, Darshil Agrawal, Aditya Baiyya Liquid Temperature Sensor & Heater
Senior	1st	Mohammed Razi, Merrill Manuel Jose Delivery Notifier
	2nd	S. Kishore, Ambili Nair, Aarav Kishore Smart Dustbin

Congratulations to all winners of the Hackathon.

The keynote speech was delivered by Mr. Prakash Bare, an engineer and entrepreneur by profession, who has held various technology and business positions in the electronics design industry.

Digital Transformation @ SMA

Over the last hundred years, the then management committees have implemented various administrative systems for the operation of SMA. The accounts were kept in printed books, supporting documents were kept in physical files, the application for membership was paper-based, and the members' database was kept in a paper register. Financial transactions took place in cash or by cheque. They met the requirements of the time and served SMA very well.

15 years ago, the membership database was transferred from paper to Microsoft Excel and about 8 years ago SMA adopted a computerized accounting system on a free open-source software, GnuCash.

SMA's Digital Revolution in earnest started in 2019. The digital revolution that is taking place around us has forced the Management Committee to rethink the way SMA activities are conducted.

Today, SMA can proudly say that its operations are "paperless" and "cashless". The accounts and supporting documents of SMA are kept digitally on a Cloud platform. Almost all of our financial transactions are electronic – no cash or cheques. MC members can submit expense claims on the fly - just take a picture of the bill and submit using the mobile app. Claims will be posted automatically on the books. All the Treasurer has to do is approve or reject the claim. That made bookkeeping timely, more precise, and much easier. The payment is automatically posted in the bank. Gone are the days when the Treasurer has to carry the books of accounts and all heavy voucher files to the Auditors. Auditors can just access SMA's Accounting system and perform audits remotely.

Membership Management has also gone to a Cloud platform. A new membership application can be submitted and subscription fees paid online in minutes. Earlier the MC member responsible for membership management had to manually find out membership expiry and follow-up on membership renewals. This was time-consuming and error-prone. Now, this is fully automated. Emails are automatically sent to members to remind them to renew their membership.

SMA's primary communication was through the postal mail. Sending AGM documents was a labour-intensive process requiring about 10 man-day effort. Now about 80% of SMA's

communications are through electronic means. Emails, WhatsApp, newsletter, Facebook etc. are some of the channels we use today. Information is disseminated almost Instantaneously and it reaches a much wider audience. SMA's Facebook page has 12,000 followers today.

This journey has only begun. As technology evolves, more changes can be expected in this space. The table below lists some of the technologies SMA is using today.

Name	Type	Remarks
Xero	Accounting System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cloud-based multi-user accounting software Paperless Accounting, Auditing, eInvoicing Connected to Bank
AutoEntry	Expense Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paperless Expense Claims
Wild Apricot	Membership Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for Membership, Payments, Automatic Renewal, Self-Service Email blast Event Management
FreshDesk	Ticketing System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticketing, Omnichannel Messaging Live Chat Contact Form
Raisely	Donation Portal	
Stripe	Payment Gateway	
HitPay	Payment Gateway	
Sertifier	eCertificate	Issue Verifiable eCertificates
Office Telephone	VoIP Service	
WhatsApp Business	Business Communication	
AirMeet	Virtual Networking Platform	
Zoom	Virtual Networking Platform	
Zoho	Email Hosting	
Peatix	Online Ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

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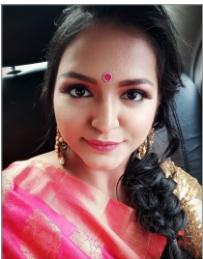
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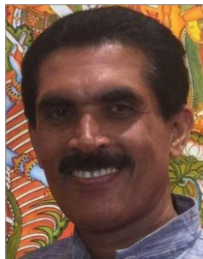
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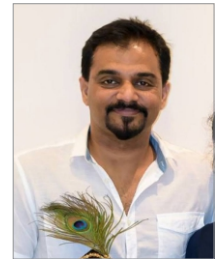
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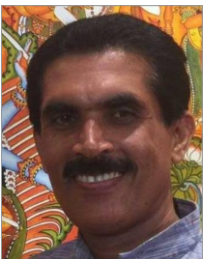
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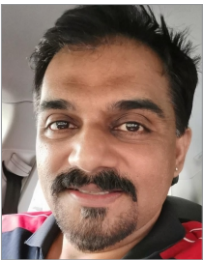
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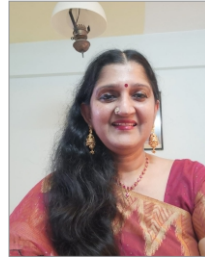
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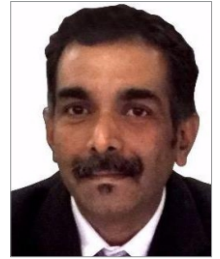
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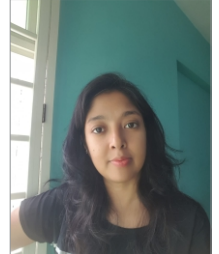
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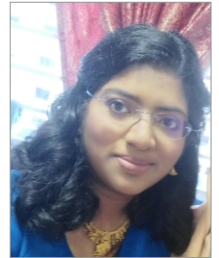
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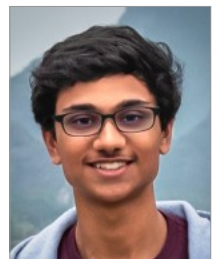
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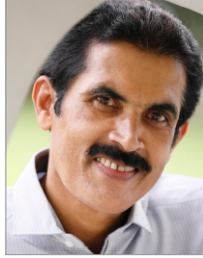


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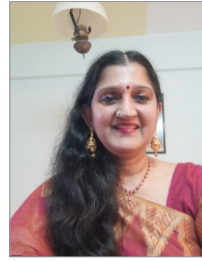
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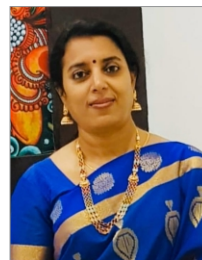
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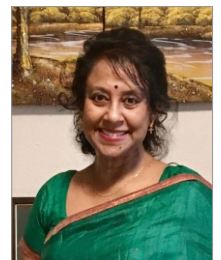
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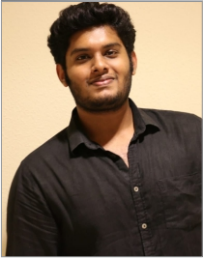


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Achievements

Keralites in Singapore whose achievements are highlighted in Onoparharam 2021 span from various fields.

Manu Ignatius

Manu Ignatius won the Gen.T x Credit Suisse Social Impact Awards, 2020 for deep diving into the area of underwater communication.

Awardees were selected from the Gen.T List for their constructive disruption and significant contributions to society in Asia.

The Gen.T List is an annual compendium of the 400 most promising young entrepreneurs who have had significant achievements in the last 18 months. Generation T is a subsidiary of luxury media group Tatler.



Hailing from Muvattupuzha in Kerala, Manu came to Singapore in 2009 to do his



Masters at NUS and is the CEO of Subnero Pte Ltd.

His company Subnero, founded by Mandar Chitre, one of his professors at the National University of Singapore, with Jay Nagarajan and Ben Fones,

provides reliable underwater communication.

In this still challenging area, the company provides high-performance, wireless underwater communication, navigation, monitoring and sensing solutions to environmental, defence and oil and gas companies.

Shilpa Krishnana Shukla

Shilpa Krishnan Shukla was chosen as the Global Winner for the Zee5 Global Content festival 2021 for her films "Dots", "Kathaah@8" and "Tashi" are available on the OTT platform worldwide.

This award-winning filmmaker born in Thrissur, moved to Singapore in 1998 and focuses on independent, micro-budget films that she writes, directs and produces.

Meanwhile she also pursues a full time career as a marketing director with a global healthcare company.



"Dots" was the world's first feature film to have been shot and screened during the lockdown period, featuring 10 artists from 6 film industries from Singapore and India. The film was an Official selection at the Cambria International Film Festival 2021 and Indian Panorama 2021 organized by the Indo Cine Foundation (organizers of Chennai International Film Festival).

"Kathaah@8" was the World's 1st anthology in 8 languages, and was an official selection at the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) 2019 and won the Jury Award at Singapore South Asian Film Festival 2019 & Best Film under Female Filmmaker category at 18th Third Eye Asian Film Festival 2019. Her latest Malayalam-English short film "Smrisha", premiered at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne in August 2021, being the only Malayalam short film at the festival.

Archana Pradeep

Archana is a Singapore based software engineer who is passionate about dancing and acting and won the best actress award at the New Jersey Indian International Film Festival.

Archana, who is from Thrissur and came to Singapore in 2005, debuted in Shilpa Krishnan Shukla's feature film Kathaah@8 in 2019.

Archana along with her co-actor, Sreyus Palliyani was a part of the Malayalam segment of the film, which is an anthology of 8 short films in 8 different regional languages.

In November 2020, the film was screened at the New Jersey Indian International Film Festival, each of the films being of 10 -12 minutes. She won the award for best actress competing against other entries which were some 2 hours long.

The juries for the festival which was held virtually were film journalist Bharathi K. Dubey and producer Vikram Razdan.



Samir Neji

Samir Neji (born 1970), is a Keralite-Singaporean entrepreneur with 4 successful global start ups.

He is the Founder and CEO of #dltledgers, the fast growing FINTECH and global trade digitization platform in blockchain globally with the leadership and support from Singapore Govt agencies like ESG/IMDA.

It raised a staggering 7 million dollars (USD) during its series A funding round in 2020.

Hailing from Trivandrum Samir came to Singapore in 1996 and has settled here with wife Sabeena Ahamed and two daughters.



Samir's company's key innovation in 2020 is the Tradedoc validation built with ESG, for Trade Fraud detection across 35+ Singapore banks later forming a Trade Finance Registry of 70+ banks in 2021.

The company grew by 200%+ YoY in 2020, digitized more than USD 3 billion trade finance transactions globally and has offices in Singapore, Japan, Australia, India, and MENA and is growing to European and North American Financial and trade centres.

It is predicted to grow by 300% in 2021, backed by strong recruitments of industry leaders and the expansion of the development team out of the Trivandrum development centre.

Pranav Krishna Prasad

Pranav is the Founder of BuyLeft - A Ground Up Initiative that provides a platform for B2B Asset Sharing for Social Enterprises & Small Businesses, allowing them to share existing community assets to reduce operational costs and expand their scale. Through the Youth Action Challenge 2020, he managed to win a \$5,000 grant for his startup.



Through the Youth Action Challenge (YAC), Pranav also co-founded the ASEAN Business Youth Association (ABYA) which is a community that supports youth across ASEAN and nurtures them into future business leaders. ABYA had achieved a podium finish in the YAC, being awarded a grant of \$50,000.

Grahanam Movie

Grahanam, the first malayalam full length commercial film made in Singapore is made by a group of working professionals.

A psychological thriller woven around real events, produced under the banner of Sreenandiya Productions, it is written, scripted and directed by Anand Paga.

Gibu George and Devika Sivan the lead characters hail from Kerala. As do Sudheer Karamana, Jayaram Nair, Vijay Menon, Binoop Nair and 'We are a Sambhavams' who have notable roles in the film.

Raj Vimal Dev is the cinematographer, Ajmal Sabu did the editing and music is by Anandhkumar. Among the singers are Vineeth Sreenivasan and KS Harishankar, whose songs were in the hit charts.

Nearly 80% of the film has been shot around Singapore. Grahanam had a theatrical release in Singapore early this year and world wide release in June through various OTT platforms like Nee-Stream, SimplySouth, FilMe, SainaPlay.

Among the actors Gibu who hails from Thiruvalla and came to Singapore in 2008, has been featured in Kerala's leading News papers 'Malayala Manorama' and 'Times Of India' for being the first Singapore Malayalee to be introduced as hero to Malayalam Film Industry and for showcasing a strong performance in his debut film.



KERALA COVID-19 RELIEF FUND



Sreekanth APV



Kerala reported the first positive cases of Covid on 30 January 2020 from three students in Kerala, travelling from the Wuhan province of China, which was the point of origin of the disease. Kerala's healthcare system, hardened by experience of dealing with Nipha outbreak in 2019, sprung into action and it's the immediate success in containing COVID-19 was widely praised both nationally and internationally. By mid-May, Kerala was exposed to a "second wave" of new cases, originating from the return of Keralites from other countries and other Indian states. Subsequently, a third surge followed in the post-Onam phase of 2020. Though the year ended with declining numbers, active cases peaked by May 2021 and continue to account for the second largest number of cases in India.

Despite these challenges, Kerala has the lowest case fatality rate in India of 0.48, compared to the national average of 1.33%. Around 900 Medical Professionals lost their lives in leading the fight against the virus across India. Kerala also lost 7 such heroes, the only comfort being that the loss

of life in Kerala could have been much more if not for the role played by Indian Medical Association (IMA) and other agencies.

About 70 percent of Kerala's healthcare is being provided by private hospitals, clinics and primary care physicians. I-Safe network was established by the Kerala State Branch of Indian Medical Association with small and medium institutions, totalling 769 healthcare facilities, mostly belonging to rural areas across Kerala. The project provided infection control training for 1080 doctors through virtual meeting platforms, and had distributed infection control kits comprising of sanitizer, disinfectant, soap solution, masks, face shields and gloves, thereby enabling reopening and safe and continued medical practice. Despite the daily increase in infection amongst health care workers, more than 96 percent of the institutions in the network did not have any employee diagnosed with SARS CoV-2 infection so far, emphasizing the effectiveness of infection control measures in clinical practice to prevent Hospital Acquired Infections.

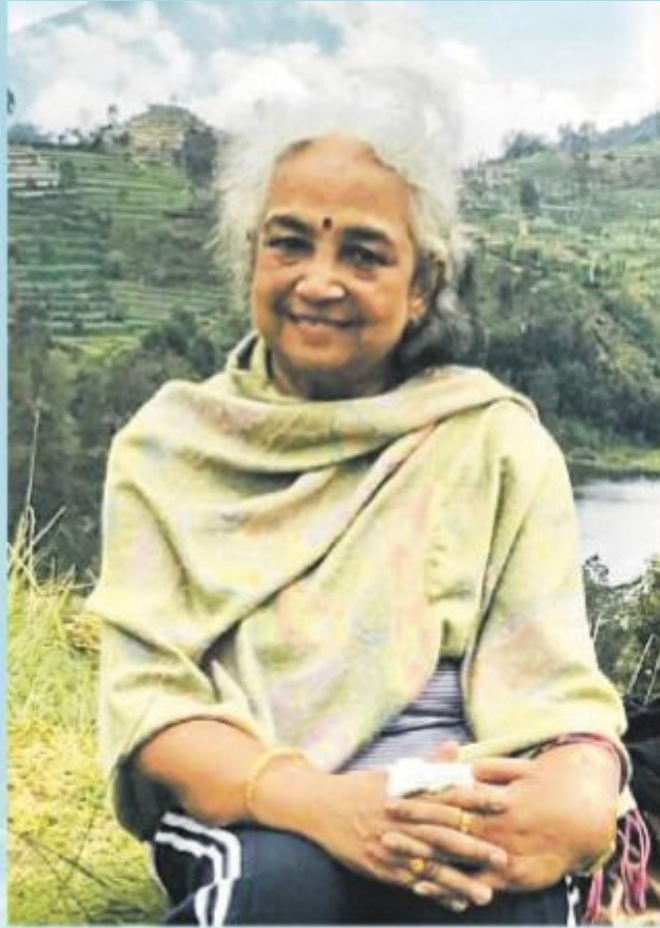
Singapore Malayalee Association identified collaborating with IMA on the ISafe programme as the best option to support the fight against Covid in an impactful and variable manner. Supported by other Malayalee organisations in Singapore, a fund raising for Kerala Covid Relief Fund was conducted resulting in a collection of \$16,150.

Protecting healthcare workers in Government Medical Colleges, Smaller Clinics and Ambulances were recommend by IMA as the key areas of focus to spend the funds raised by SMA. IMA also identified accredited vendors with competitive rates for procuring the supplies. This model of collaboration allowed the funds to be utilised without any wastage and managed directly by professionals in IMA. The supplies are estimated to be reaching the beneficiaries by September 2021.

During this crisis, Malayalee diaspora across the globe actively supported Kerala's fight against Covid donating medical equipment and supplies estimated at Rs.200 Crores. Singapore Malayalee Association is proud to be part of this initiative by the diaspora and thank IMA for offering to collaborate with SMA. Singapore Malayalee Association and Indian Medical Association takes this opportunity to thank all donors who generously contributed to the noble cause.

In closing, please join us to thank our medical heroes around the world in leading this battle, which is a challenge that has no parallels in a century.

A Tribute to MY MOTHER – Padma Vikraman Nayar



Padma Vikraman Nayar

Departed on 3 October 2019

Time and time again, we meet extraordinary people. My brother and I had the fortune to have lived with such extraordinary people, our mother and father. Today is about my mother. She made a difference in anything she put her mind to. She was a leader without a title. She never imposed but only gave. A few important lessons that I learnt from my mother :

Whatever you do; give it your best; else it's a waste of time.

Acceptance and Responsibility helps you make a difference in any situation.

Don't waste energy to prove anyone wrong; rather use your energy to help them be right.

In her 75 years, there was never a dull moment for mother. As the 10th child in a family of 16 children, she was my grandfather's favourite. She was always the glue and the energy of the family. She was held in high regard and every member always sought her opinion t before they embarked on any major decision.

Her marriage, at the tender age of 16, was a 48 hour event from decision to commitment. She hardly knew my father; and migrated to Singapore without a clue of what was in store. She grew to be a pillar of strength to my father and to my brother and I through the early years, in spite of several challenges and daunting responsibilities. She always wanted the best for brother and I; and encouraged us to aspire for the best always. She was a dear friend to both her daughters-in-law. She evolved from being a playmate to a teenage friend of her grandchildren who adored her. Instead of "Ammuma", they felt close enough to call her Pye, as Dad used to call her..

Mother's love, determination, patience, energy, sincerity, intent, creativity and consultative leadership, knew no bounds. She was fortunate that my father shared similar ideals with her too. Ever since I can remember my life with them, they both spent decades serving the community without any compromise to their commitment and time to their own family. She was always strategizing the next thing. She would have been an awesome CEO of a company, if life had taken her on a different path.

I remember being actively involved in helping her with organising Dramas, Shows, Sports days and several other activities in Hindu Samajam (then at Neil Road); Kerala Samajam; Shiva Family; Makara Villakku when it was in Govindasamy Kalyana Mandapam. There are many fond memories and stories of both our parents surrounding these activities. There was never a dull moment being with her.

Even when Father was needing help with palliative care during his last days; mother never compromised her obligations to SMA, doing an amazing balancing act, making sure he was also kept abreast of her activities every step of the way.

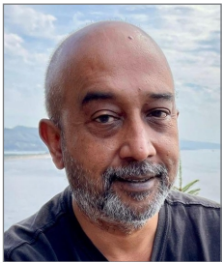
For Mother, Nothing was Impossible. She started her career at 47, that too at a Community Development Center helping the less fortunate. She got her driver's license at 65. She and Father lived in Perth for two years to be with my children when they were starting high school there, though my father was not in the best of health condition. She even rappelled 30m down

Jomblang Caves in Jogjakarta ,just to mention a few of her adventurous feats.

She always stood as the hope, the energy and the love that anyone could “lean on” to even unto her last days.

I was fortunate to take her to Sabari Mala a month before her demise. She was not in the best of health; but her determination and belief pulled her through. It was an eventful journey that we had, and it was truly amazing how several situations worked out right as we progressed with the trip, indicative of God's blessings for her..

I am sure all of you have fond memories of her too. Once again on behalf of my mother and my father and all of us in the Vikraman family, I thank you for this tribute and being part of my parents' lives. I only wish they are physically here to witness this.



Suresh Nair

Padma Vikraman Nair was a quiet and unassuming worker whose compassion and commitment to Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) was an exemplary feat. She was actively involved in all the activities of the Association. Her unflinching support and loyalty to SMA was commendable. A devoted Management Committee (MC) member, Padma’s role in promoting and projecting SMA to the outside world was exceptional. An excellent team player, Padma got along very well with all others.

Padma made valuable financial and moral support to SMA during its difficult times with her steadfastness. Her sudden demise was indeed a great loss to Singapore Malayalee Association.



M M Dollah



Ullas Kumar

പശ്ചാത്തപ്തം

നമ്രശീർഷനായഞ്ജലി കുപ്പു ഞാൻ
നന്മയാകുമൊരോർമ്മയ്ക്ക് മുന്നിലായ്
നഷ്ടമേറുന്നു വിങ്ങുന്നു നിഷ്ഫലം
നല്ലതേതുമേയസ്ഥിരം ഭൂവിതിൽ

സ്നേഹസാഗരപാനീയമേകിയും
മോഹവാത്സല്യ മാധുര്യമേകിയും
ദാഹമാറ്റുന്ന കാരുണ്യഭാവമായ്
ദേഹസീമകളില്ലാക്കരുതലായ്

ദീനതർക്കാവുമാശ്വാസഭാവമായ്
വീണവർക്കായിനീളുന്ന കൈയുമായ്
ക്ഷീണിതർക്കായണയുന്നത്താണിയായ്
മാനവീയതയ്ക്കുറയുന്ന രൂപമായ്

സജ്ജനത്തിന്നു പരമായിരിക്കയും
സദ്ഗുണങ്ങൾക്ക് പര്യയമാകയും
സർവഭാവമായ് മന്ദഹാസം പേറും
സർവദാ മുഖത്തെശ്വര്യ പൂർണ്ണത

മുത്തുപോലെ മനോജ്ഞമാ വാക്കുകൾ
ഹൃത്തിന്നുള്ളിൽ നിറച്ചങ്ങിരിക്കയാൽ
എത്തുമേതു വിരക്തനുമുള്ളിലായ്
സത്തയുള്ളൊരുബന്ധനമത്രമേൽ

വാനമേലാപ്പ് തള്ളിത്തുറന്നൊരു
മാനതാരകം പോലെയുറച്ചുനീ
ഹീനചിന്തകൾക്കില്ലിടമല്പവും
കാണാവാനൊ, തിശുഭചിന്തകൾ

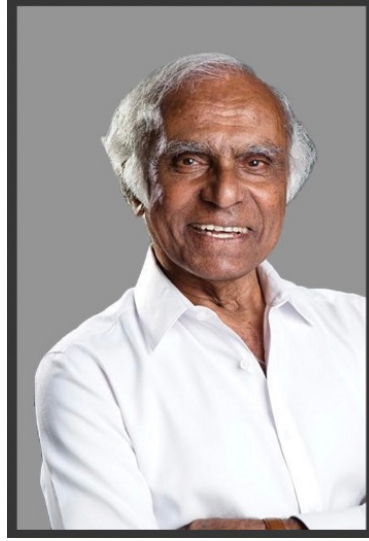
നയമേയൊന്നുതാൻപരമമാംസത്യമ-
തയവിട്ടില്ലാത്തനേരിൻ നിലകളും
ഭയമേതില്ല, ശുഭമേതിലും വരും
ഉയരുമുള്ളിലെ വിശ്വാസമാർക്കുമേ

മാനഭാരമില്ലഭിമാനമിഥ്യയും
ലോഭമേതുമില്ലനൂരാഗമെപ്പൊഴും
ദാനമേകം മതിയതു ദൈവമാം
താനരുളും കൃപാകരവീഥികൾ

അപരസൗഖ്യമതമേകമൊന്നുതാ
നവനവൻതൻസുഖമെന്നമാത്രയിൽ
അഖിലമാനവക്ഷേമത്തിനേകയാൽ
അമൃതഭാവമായരുളിയദേവതേ

അകലെയൊകിലുമരികിലായെത്തിനീ
അരുണിമയാർന്ന താരമായിടണേ
അനുദിനം നിന്റെയാനുരാഗവിചികൾ
അനുഭവിക്കുവാ, നറിയുവാനാകണേ

In Memory of our dear member and friend, Dr. Gopalan Raman (1938-2020)



Dr Gopalan Raman, a long time life member of the Singapore Malayalee Association ("SMA") (formerly known as Singapore Kerala Association) served in his unique and humble ways, the Singapore Community, SMA, the Malayalee community and the Singapore legal fraternity with great enthusiasm, sincerity, passion, compassion and good-heartedness for many decades. He served as the President of SMA in 1972 and was also the President of the Sree Narayana Mission in 2005.

Raman was a very popular Malayalee gentleman and he was deeply loved by members of SMA and by the Singapore legal profession. Sadly, he passed away on 9 December 2020.

The great Kahlil Gibran, Lebanese Poet and Philosopher reflected on death thus:

"The songs of the waves and the hymns of the streams are scattered, and the voices of the throngs reduced to silence; and I can hear naught but the music of Eternity. In exact harmony with the spirit's desires. I am cloaked in full whiteness; I am in comfort; I am in peace"

Raman was the eldest child, born in 1938 in Chenderoh, Perak, West Malaysia and lived a frugal, meaningful and passionately full life for 82 years. As a young boy he



കോളത്തിലെ അന്തർദ്ദേശീയ കോളം ബോർഡ് പാർട്ടിയും കേരളാ അസോസിയേഷന്റെ സ്വീകരണത്തിൽ

experienced the trials and tribulations of World War II, the cruelty and the poverty of Malaysians in his village. He arrived by train in Singapore in 1948 and had his education in English here till he was 16 years old. He lived humbly at Belilios Lane and Cuff Road in Little India, not far from Race Course Road, the home of SMA since the 1950s.

Raman studied at Raffles Institution and was a diligent student, who loved reading and excelled in sports, especially rugby and football. He was also active in the Sea Cadet Corps and the Literary and Debating Society. He yearned to do law in 1958 but was financially not able to and so he worked as a Court Interpreter in Malayalam and Tamil for several years from 1956 to 1966 but always hoping to become a lawyer one day. Raman married Sarala Devi Pillai in April 1971. They have a daughter, Rejini who married Dr Devanand Anantham and they have 2 sons.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Raman since 1977, being in the legal profession and having interacted with him in court work and legal functions and in the sports arena. We were in the Singapore Law Society soccer team in the late 1970s and early 1980s. My late wife, Goury Govin and Raman were colleagues in their law

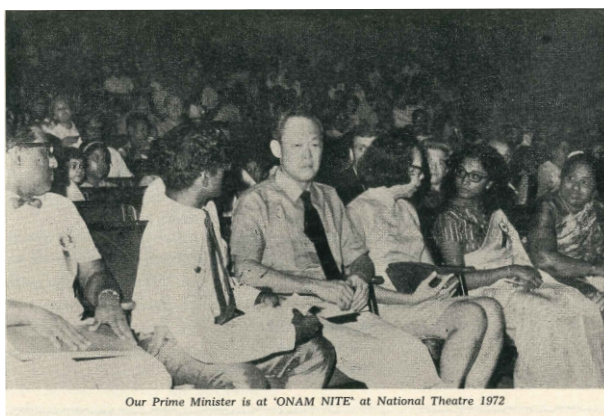


Sree E. M. Kovoov is seen here addressing the crowd at the Singapore Kerala Association on 17.6.1973.

firm, G Raman & Partners in the 1980s till late 1990s. Raman was a good and well respected civil and criminal lawyer, specializing in Probate law and practice and litigation in general. Over the years I have had lovely conversations with Raman. He

was well read and deeply involved in life's activities, with passion and love for humanity. He retired as a Consultant in Withers Khattar Wong LLP in February 2019, having more than fulfilled his ambition of being a good lawyer and serving fellow human beings with kindness and love.

Raman came from a poor family. Being street-wise he worked hard, and with his passion to be a lawyer made him study part time in the external LLB degree from London University in 1965. He went to England in the late 1960s to complete his law studies and became a Barrister-at-Law from Lincoln's Inn in 1968. He was admitted to the Singapore Bar on 13 August 1969. His passion for studies got him his Ph.D. in Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in 2003 when he was in his mid sixties.



Our Prime Minister is at 'ONAM NITE' at National Theatre 1972

Raman had a good and agile, philosophical and analytical mind. He had the command of the English language besides Malayalam, Tamil and Malay languages. He was versatile, a man with a mission to do good for his fellow human beings, and to impart fairness and justness, and promote the rule of law in Singapore. He had a knack to assist the poorer sector of society, to do pro bono work and bring about greater democracy in Singapore politics. He was the legal advisor to many organizations including the University of Singapore Students Union and non-governmental organisations. In many ways he succeeded in fulfilling his dreams. He could have done much more for his fellow citizens and for Singapore if given a chance to do so. But political leanings curtailed this. Raman was also the President of the Rotary Club of Orchard in 2000. He won high accolades and was awarded the very respected award called the CC Tan Award in 2014. This award was given by the Law Society of

Singapore annually to a member of the Bar for upholding the finest principles and values of the legal profession – honesty, fair play, gentlemanliness and personal integrity.

He was committed to the cause for greater freedom and a better and fairer democratic Singapore and its political institutions. He courageously represented clients from all walks of life, including those who were active in opposition politics; and he was himself involved in politics although not an active politician with any political party. For his political beliefs and activities, he and his family made personal sacrifices for he was detained by the Singapore Government for more than a year in February 1977 under the Internal Security Act, a controversial piece of Statute to detain political detainees without a fair and open court trial. Raman was active in political discourse through forums and articles which were critical of Singapore Government policies, encouraging freedom of speech and having a say, at least from the sidelines, in the running of Singapore.

Raman practised law and retired in 2019. He served in the Law Society of Singapore Council in 2004 and was its Vice President in 2005. He was very active in various law society subcommittees, including Probate Practice, Criminal Law and Civil Law Committees. His passion for life's activities is stated in his book "A Quest for Freedom" published in 2018:

"I salute all those who are standing up for justice and freedom. I salute all those who are persevering to establish a more equal society despite the constraints they face."

Raman's demise last year has been a great loss and deep sense of loss and sorrow to the legal profession and SMA. May his soul rest in peace, always.

Chandra Mohan K Nair

Legal Advisor, Singapore Malayalee Association

January 2021

Mr Viswa (Past President of SMA), CEO Strategic Moves Pte Ltd

“I can’t claim to have been a close friend of G Raman – we hardly met or spoke to each other. However, every time we met, we connected, beyond friendship, as comrades. He was a man of causes, with commitment and conviction unwavering. Yet the timbre in his voice and the no-nonsense demeanour disguised a caring soul always there to encourage the anxious spirit. In the 2-years I served as President of the Singapore Kerala Association - in my early 30s - Raman was a quiet source of wisdom, comfort and confidence.”

Dr V.P. Nair (Past President of SMA 1970-1972) Cardiologist.....

Dr G Raman has always been an inspiration to so many in Singapore, not only as one of Singapore’s most prominent citizens, but also as one of the leading thinkers of our generation. He was an intellectual, an outstanding lawyer, a dedicated family man and a man of strong principles. In fact, our family’s relationship with Raman and his family spans several generations, first our parents being good family friends forming strong bonds, and then Raman and I becoming close friends over several decades. Raman always wanted to give back what he could to society and made sure that he did so in as many ways as he could. He was very much involved in the Singapore Malayalee association and the Rotary Club of Orchard, Singapore where we both served as Presidents. Both of us were exercise enthusiasts and apart from regular walk a jog, Raman played tennis regularly while I took up Golf. We remained close over the years, bonding and complementing one another. Raman’s demise is a great personal loss to me and my family and the society as a whole. He will always be fondly remembered, and dearly missed.

Mr M M Dollah (Past President 1998-2008)

G Raman was a true lover of the Malayalam language, culture and the arts, especially Malayalam drama. He was a regular patron of drama performances and contributed generously towards drama and other forms of concerts. His unflinching support for Malayalee organisations is admirable and worth mentioning.

Mr P.K. Koshi (Past President 2009-2014)

I have known G Raman from 1972 when he was the President of Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA). It was only a casual acquaintance as first as a fellow member. When I became the Vice-President of SMA from 2004 to 2008 and then President from 2009 to 2014, I had the privilege of getting to know him and his wife. They actively participated in and contributed immensely to all SMA programmes. G Raman was pleasant, friendly and a great inspiration to me. G Raman and I were members of the Singapore Recreation Club where he participated actively in all their AGMs by providing useful suggestions that benefitted the Club. G Raman and I were also trustees of the Shree Narayana Mission(SNM), where he shared valuable ideas and suggestions for the betterment of SNM. Both my wife and I sadly miss a mentor and close associate in social activities.



Karuthanathu Oomen George (K.O. George)

**Former Principal / Teacher,
Singapore Institute of Science, Naval Base Secondary School,
St Andrew's Secondary School, Catholic High School**

Age: 94

Was called home to the Lord on 28 March 2021.

I had the privilege of knowing Mr KO George (KOG) for over 5 decades, having first met him in the early 70's at the Singapore Kerala Association (SKA) or what is today known as the Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA). KOG was a highly respected leader in the SKA and served as President of the SKA from 1987 to 1990. He had a reputation of being someone who was always looking to inject fresh ideas and younger talent into the organization.

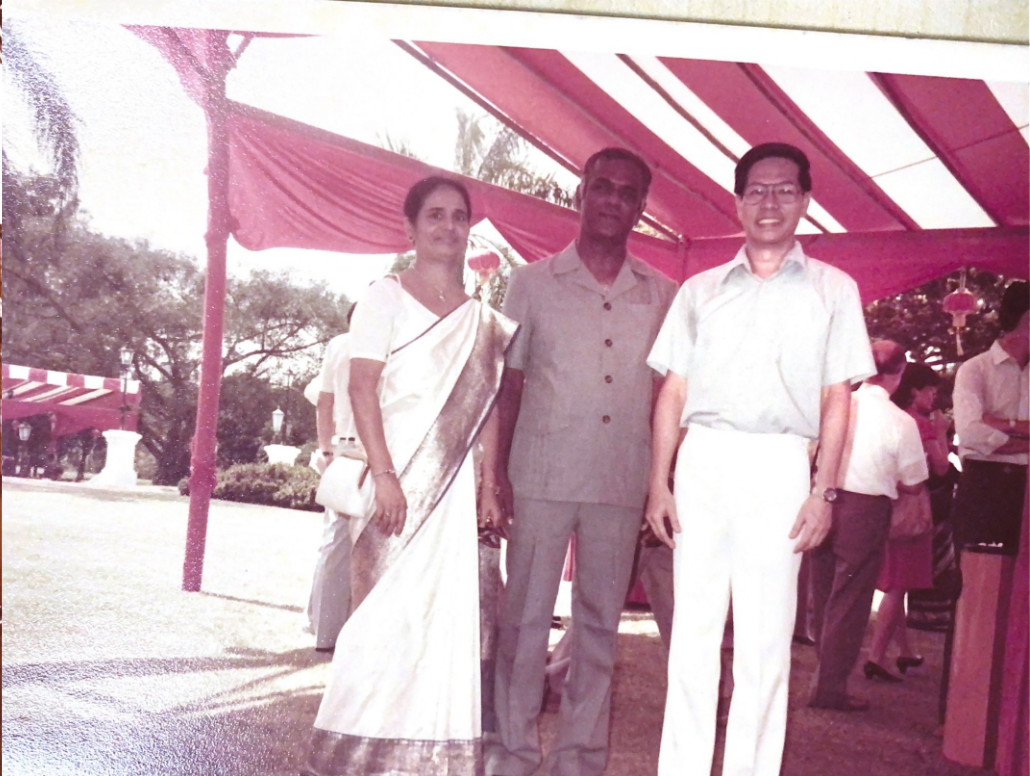
He taught Physics at my alma mater, St Andrews School, until 1986 and subsequently became a successful entrepreneur, buying over and operating the Singapore Institute of Science, itself an institution in the private education space in Singapore. He also started the first Ayurvedic treatment center in Singapore, bringing in the best and brightest ayurvedic practitioners from India.

KOG was a great lover of the Malayalam language and literature and was an invaluable member of the Singapore Malayalee community. I had the great honour of delivering a eulogy after his passing on the 28th of March 2021 at the age of 94 and he will be remembered because of his immense contributions to our society.

Dr V P Nair

Consultant Cardiologist, Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre

Past President, SMA 1970-1972



Mr. Karuthanathu Oomen George passed away on March 28, 2021 surrounded by his loving wife, children, and grandchildren. Mr. George led a long, honourable, and meaningful life, mainly focused on providing for his family's happiness and ensuring that his children had every chance to be successful in their lives. He was a lifelong educator and many successful adults in Singapore today continue to reach out and share their gratitude for having had Mr. George as their Physics teacher.

His larger Orthodox church community, as well as the Malayalee community were also very important to him and in his younger days, he never missed an opportunity to lead in good works for them including by being the church secretary and the President of the Kerala Association. When he got older, he persuaded younger members to take up that mantle of responsibility. His good works included less visible acts such as visiting the sick and less fortunate in his community, often dragging his small children along, who only later realized the significance of their parents' kind acts. Hebrew 13:2 reflected well his lifelong motto of hospitality – "Remember always to welcome strangers for by doing this, some people have entertained Angels without knowing it". We continue to miss his calm and thoughtful presence.

Susan George



In Loving Memory Of



Vasanthi Sadasivan

Age: 91

Passed away peacefully on 19 May 2020

Mdm Vasanthi was an active member of the SMA Pioneer Wing. Apart from giving tips on how to lead a healthy life, she also put together a video on the various yoga movements that she did every morning. She was really an inspiration to the ladies in the Pioneer Wing.

“My mother, Vasanthi, was my pride and joy.

What she could do at 91, few can do at 19!

Brilliantly uneducated, yet able to teach the best.

Quietly confident, sharply determined, wickedly funny!

She grew older, but never aged.

My mother is an undying flame.

She's my hero!”

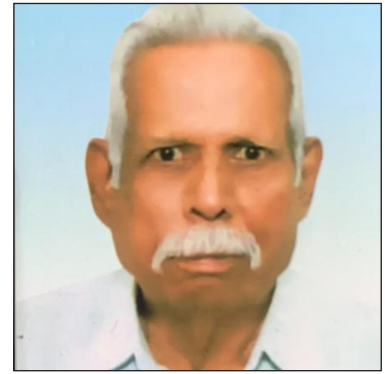
Obituaries



K.S.C Pillai
Kayickodath Sankaran Chellappan Pillai
Passed away on 2019



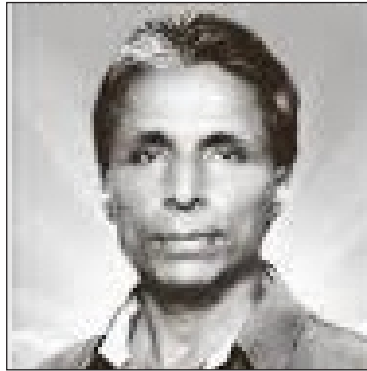
R Raveendran
Passed away on 03 03 2021



Sreedharan Nair (M S Nair)
Passed away on June 2020



A Bhaskaran Menon
Passed away on 20 09 2020.



George Abraham
Passed away on 08 03 2020.



Sahadevan M
Passed away on 14 12 2019



Sadasivan Dayanandan
Passed away on 20 03 2021



Kannadi Valloli Komalavalli (Mani)
Passed away on 12 02 2020.



Sugadha Anandan
Passed away on 03 08 2021



Sarala Nair
Passed away on 12 May 2021.

Chinmaya Mitra
Passed away on 13 11 2019

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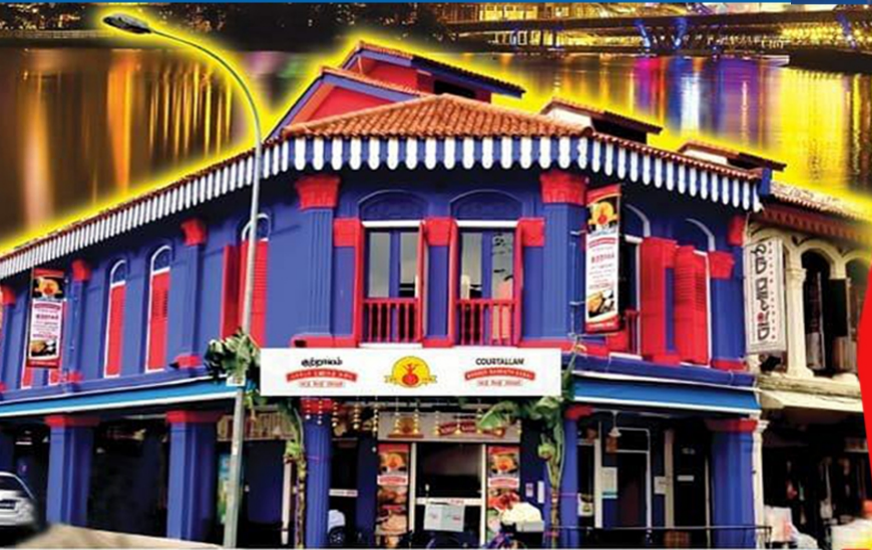
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ഓണം എന്ന ഒരുമ

ഓണമില്ലെങ്കിൽ മലയാളിയില്ല.

ചരിത്രാതീതകാലം മുതൽ മലയാളി സമൂഹത്തെ എല്ലാ വിഭാഗീയതകൾക്കുമതീതമായി ഒന്നിപ്പിച്ച സാംസ്കാരികമായ ഓർമ്മയും കിനാവുമാണ് ഓണം.

ഓണം പക്ഷേ മലയാളികളുടെ മാത്രം ആഘോഷമായിരുന്നില്ല. ലോകത്തിലെ ഒട്ടെല്ലാ സമൂഹങ്ങളിലും ചെറിയ ചെറിയ വ്യതിയാനങ്ങളോടെ ഓണം എന്ന സാമൂഹിക സമത്വ സങ്കല്പമുണ്ട്.

'പല വേഴ്ചരതിൽ, പല ദേശരതിൽ

പല പല ഭാഷയിൽ തെങ്ങൾ കുശിപ്പൂ

പാരിതിലാദിവില്വദൃഢം ചെഖ്തു-

പൊലിഞ്ഞൊരു പൊന്നോണരതിൻ ചരിതം'

എന്ന് വൈലോപ്പിള്ളി

ഓണത്തിന്റെ ശരിയായ ഉത്ഭവം അസ്സീറിയയിൽ നിന്നാണെന്നാണ് പല നരവംശശാസ്ത്ര ഗവേഷകരും എത്തിച്ചേർന്നിട്ടുള്ള നിഗമനം. അസ്സീറിയയിൽ ഏതോ കാലത്തു വാണ 'അസൂർബനിപാൽ' എന്ന രാജാവോ ആ വംശത്തിലെ 'ബെല' ശബ്ദത്തോടു കൂടിയ ഏതെങ്കിലും അസ്സീറിയൻ രാജാവോ ആയിരിക്കും മഹാബലി എന്ന് എൻ.വി. കൃഷ്ണവാരിയർ നിരീക്ഷിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. 'അസൂർ' വംശത്തിന്റെ തലസ്ഥാനമായിരുന്ന 'നിനേവ'യിൽ നടന്ന ഉദ്ഖനനങ്ങളിൽ ഇതു സംബന്ധിച്ചു ധാരാളം തെളിവുകൾ ലഭിച്ചതായി എൻ.വി. സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

'അസ്സീറിയ'യിൽ നിന്ന് ലോകത്തിന്റെ പല ഭാഗത്തേക്കും വ്യാപിച്ച നരവംശങ്ങളിൽ കേരളീയർ മാത്രമാണ് ഓണത്തെ ഇത്രയും കാലം വിടാതെ നെഞ്ചേറ്റി നിലനിർത്തിയത്. സംഘകാലത്ത് തമിഴകത്ത് ഓണമാഘോഷിച്ചിരുന്നതിന് 'തിരുപല്ലാണ്ട്' പോലുള്ള സംഘ കൃതികൾ തെളിവ് തരുന്നുണ്ട്. എന്നാൽ കാലാന്തരത്തിൽ തമിഴകവും ഓണത്തെ കയ്യാഴിഞ്ഞു. ഇന്ന് പക്ഷേ, ലോകത്തെല്ലായിടത്തും മലയാളികളുള്ളതുകൊണ്ട് ലോകം മുഴുവൻ ഓണമുണ്ടെന്നു പറയാം. പ്രവാസികൾക്കിടയിലാണ് നാട്ടിലുള്ളതിനേക്കാൾ ഗംഭീരമായ ഓണാഘോഷങ്ങൾ നടക്കുന്നത്. കേരളത്തിലെ ആദ്യത്തെ പ്രവാസിയാണല്ലോ മഹാബലി. ആണ്ടിലൊരിക്കൽ മാത്രം നാട്ടിലുറുവരെക്കണ്ടു മടങ്ങിപ്പോകാൻ വിധിക്കപ്പെട്ട മഹാബലി നിത്യപ്രവാസിയുടെ വർഗ്ഗക്കാരനാണ് ഓരോ പ്രവാസിയും.

ഒരു സങ്കല്പമെന്ന നിലയിൽ മാത്രമല്ല ജാതി, മത വർണ്ണ, ലിംഗ ഭേദമില്ലാത്ത സാമൂഹിക സമത്വത്തിന്റെ മാനവിക പാഠമെന്ന നിലയിലും ഓണം മലയാളികളുടെ സ്വത്വം രൂപീകരിച്ച അടിസ്ഥാന മൂല്യമാണ്. നമ്മുടെ എല്ലാ കാലങ്ങളിലെ നവോത്ഥാന ചലനങ്ങളിലും സമത്വത്തിന്റെ ഈ സാമൂഹ്യപാഠമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഏകത്വം, സമത്വം, സമഭാവന എന്നിവ കേരളീയ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന മൂല്യമായതും അങ്ങനെയാണ്. മലയാളികളുടെ വിളവെടുപ്പുത്സവമായിരുന്നു ഓണം. ഇരിപ്പുനിലങ്ങളിൽ ആദ്യത്തെ പുകിൽ ചിങ്ങത്തിൽ കൊയ്യും. കർക്കടക വരുതി കഴിഞ്ഞു പുനെല്ലു കൊയ്ത്ത് 'പുത്തരി' കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ ഇല്ലവും വല്ലവും പത്തായവും നിറയുന്ന കാർഷിക സമൃദ്ധിയുടെ ഉത്സവം. കർഷകൻ ജാതിയും മതവുമില്ല. അതിനാൽ ഓണത്തിനും വിഭാഗീയതകളേതുമില്ല. മാനുഷരെല്ലാവരും ആപത്തുകളൊന്നുമില്ലാതെ ആമോദത്തോടെ കഴിയുന്ന കാലം. വളം കളിയും പുലിക്കളിയും തുമ്പിതുള്ളലും തായം കളിയും ഓണത്തല്ലും ഓണപ്പടയും ഓണത്താരും ഓണത്തപ്പനും ഓണവില്ലും കൈകൊട്ടിക്കളിയും കോൽക്കളിയും കുമ്മിപാട്ടും തുമ്പപ്പാട്ടും പുപ്പൊലിപ്പാട്ടുമായി കർഷക കേരളം സമത്വമാഘോഷിച്ചത് ഓണക്കാലത്താണ്. നാനാ ജാതിമതസ്ഥരും അതിൽ ഒരുപോലെ പങ്കുചേർന്നിരുന്നു.

പ്രകൃതിയും മനുഷ്യരും ജീവജാലങ്ങളും കൂടി ഒന്നായി ആമോദിക്കുന്ന ഒരു കേരളീയ വസന്ത കാലാവസ്ഥയാണ് ഓണക്കാലം. ചിങ്ങം പിറക്കും മുൻപേ കാവായ

കാവൊക്കെ പൂത്തു നിറയും. എല്ലാ കാട്ടു ചെടികളും പൂഷ്പിക്കും. ഭൂമിയിൽ നിന്ന് സ്വർഗത്തിലേക്ക് ഒരോണ സുഗന്ധം ഊഞ്ഞാൽ കെട്ടും. വേലിയിറമ്പിൽ നിന്നും വയൽക്കര നിന്നും കുഞ്ഞുതുമ്പിയും മുക്കുറ്റിയും കണ്ണാത്തളിയും വിളിച്ചു പറയും.

‘ദാ, ഓണം വന്നു’

ഓണനിലാവും ഓണമഴയും ഓണത്തെന്നലും പ്രകൃതിയുടെ പ്രസന്നമധുരമായ അനുഭൂതികളായി ഓണക്കാലത്തിന്റെ അന്തരീക്ഷത്തെ സൗന്ദര്യപൂർണ്ണമാക്കും.

കൊറോണക്കാലത്തെ ഓണം പക്ഷെ സൂക്ഷിച്ചോണം എന്ന് നമ്മെ നിരന്തരം ഓർമ്മപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. മലയാളിയുടെ സംഘബോധം ഓണത്തെ ഒരു സംഘോത്സവമായി കൊണ്ടുനടന്നിരുന്നതാണ്. ഇന്ന് പക്ഷെ ഒറ്റയ്ക്കോണം, ഓൺലൈൻ ഓണം.

ഓണം എന്ന കാർഷികോത്സവം ഇന്ന് കേട്ട് മറന്ന ഒരു പഴങ്കഥയായിരിക്കുന്നു. കൊറോണക്കാലങ്ങൾക്കപ്പുറം ഓണം എന്ന ഒരുമ ഇനിയും സാക്ഷാത്കരിക്കപ്പെടുമെന്ന് പ്രത്യാശിക്കുക.

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Suresh Nair

NO ONAM LOCKDOWNS

You may not feel the faraway vibes from here but frustrating tears were silently shed as Onam, the harvest festival of Kerala - which is a grandest yearly affair in the southern Indian state with the 10-day-long festival - were almost thrown to a wrench in the celebratory plans of the state.

If you were in the “Land of the Coconuts”, it’s usually marked by the iconic Kerala sadya, with Malayalee communities coming together to watch the snake boat race known as Vallamkali, dance and music performances and days of get-togethers with friends and family. The jubilation to mark the return of Mahabali and the birth of the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Vamana. As it is a iconic harvest festival, grand feasts are prepared on the occasion. Traditionally, a minimum of 13 dishes are prepared on the occasion, known as 'onasadya'. ‘Payasam’, a sweet dish, is a must during Onam.

Nothing beats a traditional homecoming, too. Being a cultural festival, Malayalees from across the world usually come home to Kerala for Onam celebrations and to spend time with extended families. However, this year many peoples' plans were affected due to the travel restrictions owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. And inevitably, Onam ended close to a whimper at best this year, as the fight against the Covid-19 virus continues.

Never mind, lah, as Singaporeans may well say. In fact, Onam was affected in the Malayalee ancestral home since 2018 when the state witnessed the flood of the century in August that year. There were other natural disasters including landslide during the Onam season in 2019. This year, however, much like in 2020, the coronavirus pandemic mercilessly continued to rise unabated in "God's Own Country" and the Kerala government opted for muted celebrations and went the virtual route. Through this, millions of Malayalees across the world still took part in the celebrations, as Singaporeans similarly did during our recent 56th National Day birthday.



Much as the celebrations even here, from Serangoon Road to Siglap, Toa Payoh to Thomson were muted, but within closed doors, the Malayalee-styled festivities continued. Onam is the biggest festival in the southern state that spans religious boundaries and attracts a lot of the region's migrant workers back home. In many ways, Onam also marked the beginning of the festive season across India – it continues till the Christmas/New Year season. Festive demand has always been important for the economy, but it will be very crucial for pandemic-affected markets this year.

Observers did say in advance this year's Onam festivities could be a make-or-break moment for the southern state, which after being hailed as a model in the fight against the pandemic. It was around Onam last year that Covid-19 cases began rising in Kerala, putting an end to the state's claims of successfully containing the pandemic.

Even in urbanised Singapore, the beauty of Onam continues and it's been passed down orally

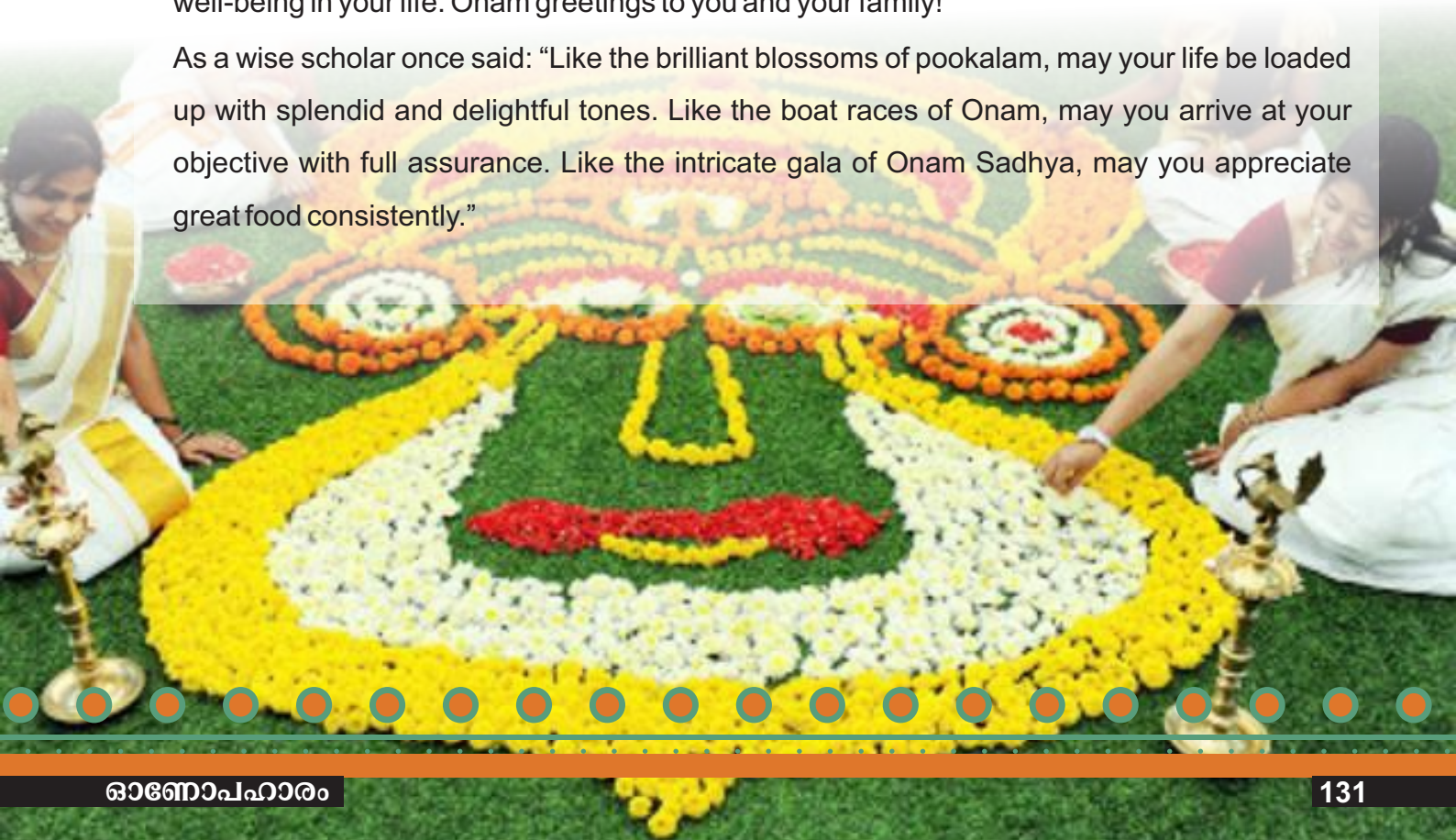
from generation to generation. The uniqueness of Onam is that everyone gathers for the sake of multi-harmonious caste and religion. But amidst the fear of Covid, we celebrated Onam by reducing the celebrations inside the house. Though there is a slight lack of celebration, Onam has not faded in the minds of the Malayalees, even the younger generation.

I believe that the epidemic will be defeated in front of the minds of the global Malayalees. Though there were no Kerala-styled art competitions or flower competitions, the homes even here were reportedly filled with the joy and prosperity of Thiruvonam.

Even though the celebrations have been limited this year, in the hearts of Malayalees Onam has not lost its glory. Malayalees never fail to enjoy Onam and if you ask me what I miss most about Onam, I'd say: "Onam is like emotion to me. It is filled with joy and happiness. Being with the family, when my late dad and mum were around, have always been overwhelming, especially in a family of nine at Opera Estate."

Yes, despite the very quiet feel of Onam, the Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) must be commended for keeping up the lively spirits in little ways and may I use this magazine to stretch out my warm wishes to you and your family. May all of you be honoured with bliss and well-being in your life. Onam greetings to you and your family!

As a wise scholar once said: "Like the brilliant blossoms of pookalam, may your life be loaded up with splendid and delightful tones. Like the boat races of Onam, may you arrive at your objective with full assurance. Like the intricate gala of Onam Sadhya, may you appreciate great food consistently."





M K Bhasi

നദി നീണ്ടൊഴുകുന്നു

നദി നീണ്ടൊഴുകുന്നു ;
പിന്നെയുമഗാധമാം
ചുഴിയിൽ, കയങ്ങളിൽ
നോക്കി ഞാനിരിക്കുന്നു.

വനജ്യോത്സനകൾ പൂത്ത
മുനിവാടത്തിൽ, ദർഭ -
ക്കതിർ ചുടിയ നീല
നർമ്മദാതടങ്ങളിൽ,

ഗിരിഗഹ്വരങ്ങളിൽ ,
കാനന മരച്ചില്ല
തണലേകിയ കാവി -
ലിരുളിൻ നിഴൽകളിൽ,

ചക്രവാളങ്ങൾ മിഴി -
ചിമ്മി നിൽക്കവേ, ചിതൽ
പ്ലറ്റുകൾ വളർന്നെന്നെ
മുടിയ യുഗങ്ങളിൽ,

ഇന്നലെ, മനോഹര
സന്ധ്യകൾ പൂജാപൂഷ്പ
തല്പവുമേന്തിക്കൊണ്ടു
നിന്നതാം വഴികളിൽ,

പ്രേമഗൌതമനായ് ഞാ-
നലഞ്ഞു; പൊള്ളുംമണൽ
ക്കാട്ടിലുമെൻകാലടി-
പ്ലാടുകൾ പതിഞ്ഞല്ലോ.

നിങ്ങൾ തൻ പാപത്തിൻറെ
മുൾക്കിരീടവും ചുടി-
ക്കണ്ണുകളടച്ചു ഞാൻ
ലയിച്ചു സമാധിയിൽ.

വേദമന്ത്രവും ചുണ്ടിൽ,
ക്കൈകളിൽത്തോക്കും ചുണ്ടി
വീണ്ടുമെൻ മുന്നിൽത്തൊഴു-
കെയുമായ് നില്പു നിങ്ങൾ.

നദി നീണ്ടൊഴുകുന്നു;
പിന്നെയുമഗാധമാം
ചുഴിയും, കയങ്ങളും
നോക്കി ഞാനിരിക്കുന്നു.



Cheruthuruthy
Unnikrishnan

ഓണം ഭരണവും മരണവും

ഓണത്തിനോമൽ സ്മൃതിയുമായി
ഓരോരോ സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾ നെയ്തു
ഞാനും
കാണം വിറ്റിട്ടോണം ഉണ്ട നമ്മൾ
കാണാതെ പോവുന്നിന്നോണക്കാലം

പാലൊളിച്ചന്ദ്രിക പായ് വിരിച്ചു
ശ്രാവണമാസത്തെ ആനയിക്കാൻ
ചിങ്ങനിലാ ശരറാന്തലേന്തി
മാവേലി മന്നനെ സ്വീകരിക്കാൻ!

നാണംകുണ്ടുങ്ങി നവോഢയെപ്പോൽ
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മഞ്ഞിൻകണത്തിൻ മൂക്കുത്തിയിട്ടു
ഭൂമിയിൽ പുൽക്കൊടി കാത്തിരിപ്പു

വൃക്ഷലതാദികൾ പുത്തുലഞ്ഞു
മത്തഭവ്യന്ദങ്ങൾ കാത്തിരുന്നു
പൂമ്പൊടി വീശി പൂങ്കാറ്റു വീശി
പൂക്കളെതിരേറ്റു മാവേലിയെ

അന്നിങ്ങു മാവേലി വാണകാലം
അന്നിവിടെല്ലാരുമൊന്നു പോലെ
ഇന്നു ജനങ്ങളുടേതൊക്കെ മാറി
ജാതിമതത്തിൻ മതിഭ്രമത്താൽ

ചോറും കറികളും ഓർഡർ ചെയ്താൽ
ഓൺലൈനിൽ വാതിൽപടിക്കലെത്തും
പിസ്സായും കോള രുചിച്ചു കൊണ്ട്
ടീവിയിൽ ഓണത്തെ കാണുന്നു നാം

ഭിന്നരായ് വാഴും പ്രജകളെല്ലാം
മാസ്ക്കിട്ട് നിൽക്കുന്ന നിൽപ്പുകളു
മാസ്ക് ധരിച്ചു മാവേലിമന്നൻ
കോവിഡ് രോഗത്തെ ചെറുത്തിടുവാൻ

മാവേലിത്തമ്പുരാൻ ടീവി തന്നിൽ
ഓരോരോ വേഷത്തിൽ വന്നിടുന്നു
ഓലക്കൂട പോയ് മെതിയടിയും
പാടേ വടിച്ചല്ലോ കൊമ്പൻമീശ

തന്റെ പ്രജകളെ കൺപാർക്കാനായ്
പൊലീസുകമ്പടി മാവേലിക്ക്
ഓണം മറന്ന പ്രജകളിപ്പോൾ
മാവേലിയെയും മറന്നു പോയോ?

CULINARY DUET

by Shanta Rathi



Out of the primal human need and experience was born dance and cooking. When early man returned home triumphant with food, it was met with jubilant dancing, and to this day food continues to fuel the expressions in movement. These parallels have always been a source of inspiration and delight to me. Watching Amma cook with her assistants (corp de ballet) in tow was one sensual theatrical presentation in the kitchen-stage. "Haute cuisine" emerging from the gourmet kitchen of a luxury hotel or a humble home kitchen, the preparation, technique and presentation are; like dance, a sensuous experience. They are both an "ephemeral art" with the "rasa" lingering, if only fleetingly, after much flurry of preparation (mise-en-plas) like the rigours and discipline of dance.

While assisting my mridangam guru in his culinary soirees, I have watched him extol the mathematical virtues of rhythmic patterns, amidst the demonstration of bols for every action of chopping, stirring, swirling - like a gripping tango!

Delve a little deeper and one would soon discover that many chefs are people with artistic

inclinations such as music, painting, dancing, decorating etc.

You didn't know that? Surprise may be in store if we were to explore the artistic sensibilities of Sanjeev Kapoor or Karen Anand or America's late food guru Julia Child. Why even our great performing badshahs and begums may be surreptitiously guarding their sumptuous secrets! Dancers go check out your culinary skills and cooking enthusiasts go explore your artistic inclination! An alternative world of expression.

With marketing, the process indeed begins; the luscious colours, the crisp feel of vegetables in your hands, like choosing fabric for costumes, allows for your imagination to get fired and your tactile senses to awaken. To uplift the spirits, the recipe can even be as simple - hot oil, a toss of garlic, ginger, green chillies, an assortment of vegetables of various colours and shapes, a dash of organic salt, one sprinkle of light sauce, a quick swirl (chakradar) of the wok with the right technique and timing (rhythm being of great consequence) and viola! You have food fit for a primadonna - no room for ample girth here, only a rhapsodic burst of flavours and moods.

The witchcraft of cooking can only be realised when one is willing to be daring and venture into novel ideas - discover the "tantric" or "mantric" powers of your own "nouvelle cuisine". Dispel the slavery of the trodden path and open the door to creativity, to new ways! I confess I went through a stage where I used five- spice powder for everything except the dessert! The people whose palates were subjected to this assault have forgiven me since as I have now graduated through trial and error and many a listless performance to tinkling their taste buds with "drop-dead-delicious-dishes"! Humility thy name is....

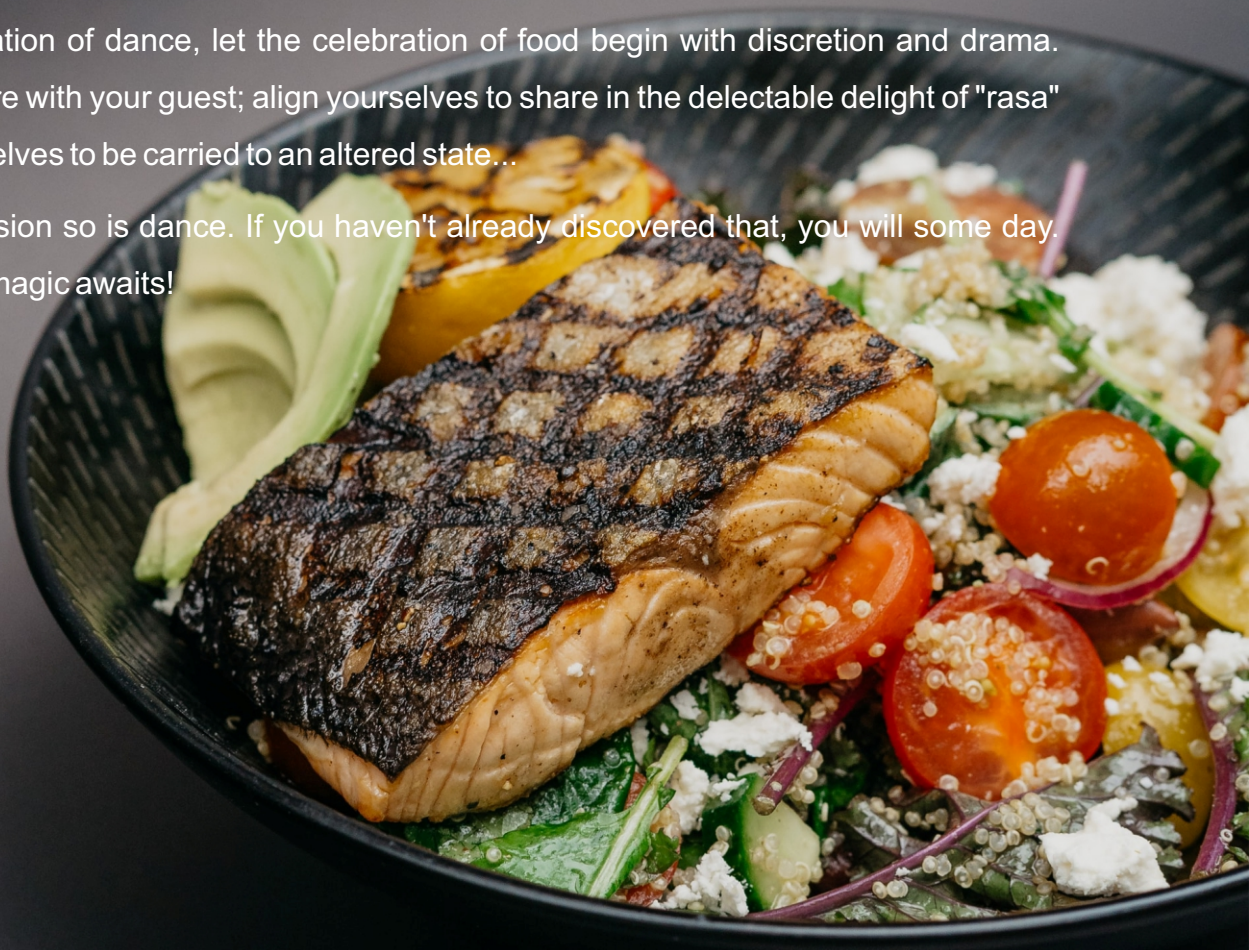
Every preparation of Biryani is like performing a Varnam - the layers of bhava and nritta (abstract dance) like the layering of rice and gravy, one after the other, taking turns, one enhancing the other, growing in intensity till you reach the top, the emotional high point, like a piece-de-resistance, with colour added to enhance the charm as the very word "varnam" suggests. The true test will be the capacity for "manodharma" (spontaneous improvisation) - break the very rules you learnt like a mantra and plunge into poetics and allow its effects to engulf you at the table or the theatre and carry the relish home with you, like a rare pashmina shawl wrapped gently around you. It is not for nothing that the oldest known text on dramaturgy, the Natya Shastra, describes the enjoyment of an audience as being akin to the tasting and relishing of good food, as "Rasa".

With some imagination and dexterity thrown in for good measure, you stand to benefit if you follow even some of the parameters laid down by Bharata's Natya Shastra or Larousse's Gastronomique - understand the "nature" or "stayi bhava" of the piece; realise the occasion or "avasta"; ponder over the character of the dance/ meal... and take pains to know the taste of your audience/ guest. And then go for it!

Now remove your apron and wipe the toil off your brow. If you are in the mood for some adventure and mystery, whip out the right wine for the occasion. A friendly white, chilled just right or a bawdy red - allow them to strut their stuff and complement the food! "Set the stage", create the ambience - crisp table-cloth and napkins, fresh flowers, candles, elegant crockery, the right lighting, suitable music, inspiring fragrances; like the right props, makeup, costumes, orchestra and dancer in place; and let the curtain rise!

Like the celebration of dance, let the celebration of food begin with discretion and drama. Together, venture with your guest; align yourselves to share in the delectable delight of "rasa" and allow yourselves to be carried to an altered state...

If cooking is illusion so is dance. If you haven't already discovered that, you will some day. Take heart, the magic awaits!

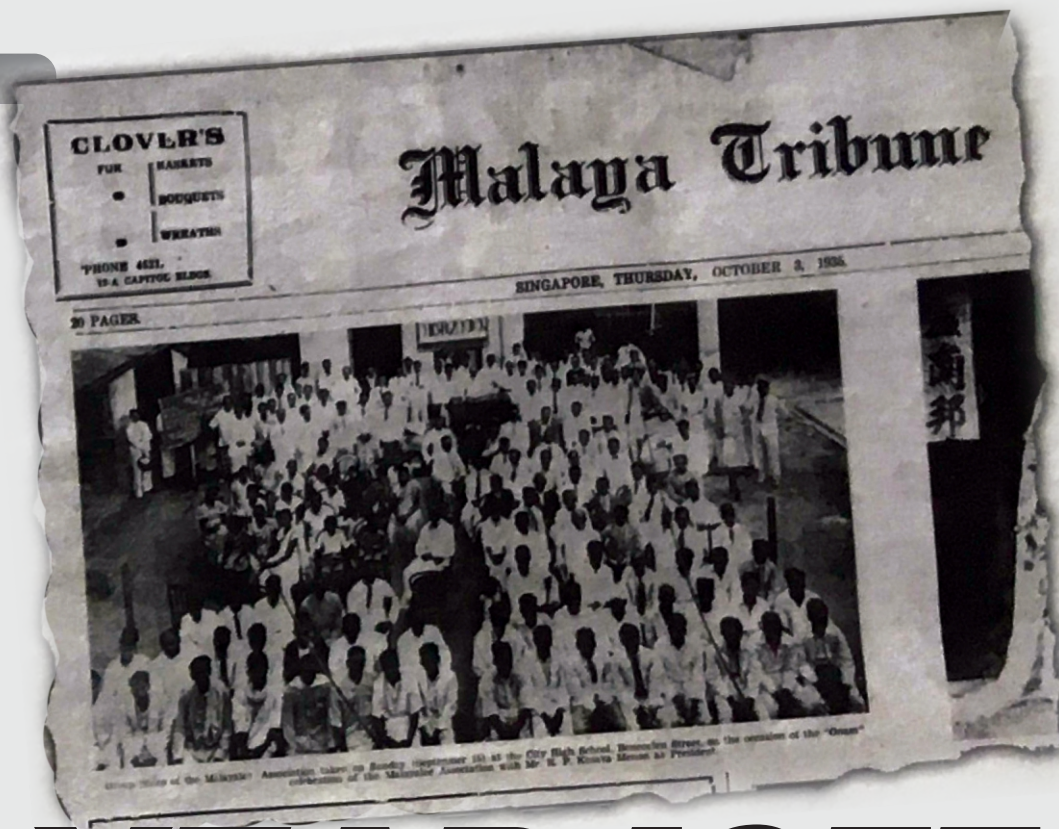


ഞാൻ അനശ്വരൻ



ഡി. സുധീരൻ

ബാല്യത്തിൽ ബന്ധു മരണങ്ങൾ തമ്മിൽ
കാലാന്തരം ഏറെയായിരുന്നു.
ഓർമ്മയിലുള്ളതാമാദ്യ വേർപാടന്റെ
ഏഴാം വയസ്സിലെ മുത്തച്ഛനിര്യാണം,
വെറ്റില തിന്നു ചുവപ്പിച്ചു തുപ്പുന്ന
വെള്ളക്കുറിയിട്ട ചാരു കസാലയ്ക്കും,
പൊട്ടിച്ചിരിക്കും മെതിയടിക്കും, ആദ്യ -
നൊമ്പരം കാത്തിരിപ്പായ ദിവസം.
പിന്നെ പതിനഞ്ചു വർഷങ്ങൾ പിന്നിട്ട്
വന്നതാണമ്മമ്മ തന്റെ വിരാമം,
വെറ്റിലച്ചെല്ലം, ഇടികല്ലു, കോളാമ്പി -
യെല്ലാം ചിണ്ണുങ്ങാതനാഥരായ്ത്തീർന്ന നാൾ.
മൃത്യു രചിച്ചയപൂർവ്വ ചിത്രങ്ങൾക്ക്
ശേഷമായി വന്നപ്പനമ്മമാർ തന്നുഴം.
അച്ഛന്റെ ശ്രാദ്ധനാളമ്മയും യാത്രയായ്
സ്നേഹവും പഴമയും താളിച്ച രുചിയുമായ്.
കാലത്തുണർത്തും കവിതയും, സന്ധ്യാ -
നാമവും ചിതയിലമർന്ന ദിനങ്ങൾ.
പ്രായവും ബന്ധുമിത്രാദികളും ഏറി
യപ്പോൾ മരണത്തിനെണ്ണവും കൂടി.
അറുപതായപ്പോൾ ശ്മശാനത്തിലേയ്ക്ക്
യാത്രകളാണ്ടിൽ രണ്ടെങ്കിലുമായി.
സപ്തതി പിന്നിടെ സന്ദർശനത്തിൻറെ -
യിടവേള ഏറെക്കുറഞ്ഞു വന്നു.
വീണ്ടും കുറഞ്ഞു കുറഞ്ഞന്തരം ശൂന്യ -
മാകുവാനനിവാര്യം ഇനിയൊരു യാത്ര.
പ്രജ്ഞയിഴന്നു പ്രതികാര ശേഷിയും
നഷ്ടമായ് തീർന്നെന്റെ സ്ഥൂലശരീരം,
സൂക്ഷ്മ രേണുക്കാളായ് പലരിൽ, പലതിലു -
ടനുസ്യുതഗമനം തുടർന്നിടും വീണ്ടും.
യോഗ, വിയോഗ, വിഘടനമണ്ണുഭാവം
വിസൃതമീ യാത്രയനശ്വരമാക്കിടും.



YEAR 1977

NOSTALGIC THOUGHTS



R Asokan

I served as a member of the Singapore Malayalee Association (then known as Singapore Kerala Association) Executive Committee in 1977, 1978, 1981 and 1987. When I first joined the committee in 1977, the President of the Association was S M Haneefa and the General Secretary, G Thankappan Nair. I was the youngest member in the Committee and probably the only Singapore born Malayalee. I have a sentimental attachment to the Association, and am hence sharing my thoughts of what being a Committee member in 1977 was like.

We used to have committee meetings once or twice a month. The minutes of the meeting were taken in Malayalam, and the General Secretary recorded matters discussed in a log book. He would read out from the log book at the following meeting to members for their approval.

There was a library at the ground floor of the building and members used to frequent the library to peruse reading materials found there. They also indulged in their favorite pastimes like card games and carom. Malayalam classes were conducted throughout the year and so too were Bharatanatyam classes. The Association used to host many different types of visitors from Kerala, such as musicians, writers, and politicians. In 1977, the first secretary of the Indian

High Commission- one B M C Nayar- was a Malayalee. He was very supportive of the Association's activities.

That year, on 16 April 1977 the Singapore Malayalee Association celebrated its Diamond Jubilee at Prince Room Restaurant at Selegie Road. The Guest of Honour was Mr. Lim Kim San, then Minister of National Development.

There used to be an annual Onam Nite, which was normally held after Onam at the now defunct National Theatre. During those days the Association's main source of income came from donations collected in relation to Onam Nite. A few months before this event, members of the Committee would visit residents of Malayalees in Singapore with invitation cards to attend Onam Nite, and also solicit donations for the Association. The Onam Nite in 1977 was held on the 3rd of September. There were songs, dances and skits, mostly performed by local artists. There was a huge crowd of Malayalees present. It was an evening well spent.

In 1977 the Association also held a Malayalam-language talent time for the first time in its history. The idea of talent time in Malayalam was mooted by T V Sukumar, one of the members of the Association's Executive Committee. Rehearsals for the event were held in the Association's premises. Tickets were sold to people who wanted to attend the event. The finals were held in DBS Hall at Shenton Way on 5 December that year. It was well attended. The top prize was won by a Tamil man singing a Malayalam song from the 1965 Malayalam movie "Chemmeen".

I benefited from being in the Executive Committee. I met many people, whom otherwise I would not have known. I have a better understanding of Malayalee culture and had the opportunity to organise events. The challenges or failures I encountered then were learning experiences for me.

Quote:-

"Years passed. The seasons came and went, the short animal lives fled by. A time came when there was no one who remember the old days before the Rebellion except Clover, Benjamin, Moses the raven, and a number of pigs"

George Orwell, Novelist, Animal Farm

One night, on the last TRAIN TO JURONG



G.P. Sasidharan

Hurrying through an unusually quiet Raffles Place,
I descended the steep and silent escalator,
to the cavernous belly of the station;
knowing that the last train to Jurong,
would soon be approaching.

I looked up and murmured in relief.

"Ah! Three more minutes."

Settling on a concrete bench,

I looked around. Two metres away,
stood an old man, fidgeting,
seemingly impatient to get home.

Nearby, two 'executives', brief cases in hand,
engaged in an animated, but whispered chat.

As the train arrived and doors slid open,
we hurried into the last coach.

The doors began to slide shut,
as a young couple rushed in,
giggling and hugging each other.

Settling on the vacant seats opposite

and ignoring all else,

they whispered, kissed and cuddled,
as the old man promptly dozed off.

The train sped on,
stopping at stations,
disgorging and picking up weary commuters.

The speeding train kept the couple busy,
as the 'busy executives' gazed at them,
grinning, nodding and shaking their heads.

Arriving at Braddell, the old man woke, on cue,
and shuffled out, as the doors opened.

As the train slowed and stopped at Bishan,
the 'executives' alighted, albeit reluctantly.

The young man smiled at me.

Returning the gesture, I nodded
as the train sped on.

On reaching Canberra, I stood up,
muttered, "Good night!" and
began the short stroll home.

15ാം നിലയിലെ ബാൽക്കണി

അവൾ പതിനഞ്ചാം നിലയിലെ ബാൽക്കണിയിലായിരുന്നു. അഴികളും തറയും പായൽ പിടിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു, ഒരു മാസമായി നിലയ്ക്കാത്ത മഴയാണ്. ഇന്ന് കുറേക്കൂടെ വെയിൽ വന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. അടുത്തയാഴ്ച ക്രിസ്തുമസ് ആണ്.

തറയാകെ ഒരുമാതിരി വഴുവഴുപ്പ്, പായൽ പോകാൻ സോപ്പും ബ്ലീച്ചും ചേർത്തിട്ടാൽ മതിയത്രേ - അടുത്ത വീട്ടിലെ അന്നയല്ലേ പറഞ്ഞത്? കുളിമുറിയിൽ പുതുതായി വാങ്ങിയ സോപ്പുപൊടി ഇരിപ്പുണ്ട്, ബ്ലീച്ചുമുണ്ട്.

അവൾ കുളിമുറിയിൽ നിന്ന് ബക്കറ്റ്, മഗ്ഗ്, സോപ്പ്, ബ്ലീച്ച് ഇത്യാദികളുമായി വന്നു. ഉടുത്തിരുന്ന നിശാവസ്ത്രം എടുത്തു കുത്തി, കുക്കറിന്റെ വിസിൽ കേൾക്കുന്നുവോ? ചോറ് വേവാൻ സമയമുണ്ട്, അതിനുള്ളിൽ അടിച്ചു കഴുകി വൃത്തിയാക്കാം!

അവൾ സോപ്പും ബ്ലീച്ചും തറയിൽ വിതറി, ബ്രഷ് എടുത്തു തറയിൽ ഉരച്ചു കഴുകി. കൈവരികളിലും പായൽ പിടിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. അതും വൃത്തിയാക്കണം.



Uma Sankar

പതുകെ നിവർന്നു, ഈയിടെയായി പുറംവേദനയുണ്ട്, കൈവരികളിൽ ബലമായി പിടിച്ചു പതുകെ നിവർന്നു. പെട്ടെന്നാണ് കാൽ വഴുതിയത്, കൈവരികൾ ഇളക്കി.

അവൾ പറക്കുകയായിരുന്നു, തുവൽ പോലെ.. താഴോട്ട്, താഴോട്ട് ... എത്ര നേരമായിക്കുന്നു? ബാൽക്കണികളിൽ ഉണങ്ങാനിട്ട തുണികൾ നിശ്ചലമായി നിൽക്കുന്നു, മരങ്ങളിലെ ഇലകൾക്കും അനക്കമില്ല. ആരോ പ്രകൃതിയെ പിടിച്ചു നിർത്തിയ പോലെ! അടുപ്പിൽ ചോറ് വെന്തു കാണുമോ? ഭർത്താവ് കമ്പ്യൂട്ടറിൽ മെയിൽ നോക്കുകയായിരുന്നു, മകൻ ഫോണിൽ ഗെയിം കളിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു. അവരെ വിളിക്കണോ? ഒച്ച പൊങ്ങുന്നില്ല. പത്താം നിലയിലെ സാറയും തോമസുമായി വഴക്കു നടക്കുന്നു, അവാർഡ് സിനിമയിലെ സ്റ്റോ മോഷൻ പോലെ, എന്തൊക്കെയോ എടുത്തൊറിയുന്ന ശബ്ദം. മൂന്നാം നിലയിലെ കുഞ്ഞുമറിയ കരച്ചിലാണ്, എന്നത്തേയും പോലെ.

അവൾ ഇപ്പോൾ താഴെയുള്ള പുൽത്തകിടിയിൽ കിടക്കുകയാണ്, പ്രഭാതസൂര്യന്റെ രശ്മികൾക്കു സുഖകരമായ ഒരു ഊഷ്മളത. അവൾക്ക് പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട വിധത്തിലാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ കിടപ്പ് - കമിഴ്ന്ന് ഇടതുകാൽ ലേശം പൊക്കി, ഇടതു മുഷ്ടി ചുരുട്ടി, തല ഇടതു വശത്തേക്ക് ചരിച്ച്.

ആ കിടപ്പിൽ അവൾക്കു കുട്ടികളുടെ കളിസ്ഥലം കാണാം, എത്രയോ തവണ മകനെയും കുട്ടി ഇവിടെ വന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്! എന്തൊക്കെയോ ശബ്ദം കേൾക്കുന്നു, കാൽപാദങ്ങളുടെ ശബ്ദമാണ്, ഒരുപാട് ചെരിപ്പുകളും ഷൂസുകളും. തലപൊക്കണമെന്നുണ്ട്, പക്ഷെ ഉറക്കം വരുന്നു. ഈ പുൽത്തകിടിയിൽ കിടന്ന് ഇരുണ്ട ആകാശത്തിലെ ചന്ദ്രികയെയും നക്ഷത്രങ്ങളെയും നോക്കി ഉറങ്ങണം എന്ന് എത്രയോ നാൾ സ്വപ്നം കണ്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്! പുൽത്തകിടിക്ക് ഇപ്പോഴും ഇന്നലെ പെയ്ത മഴയുടെ നനവുണ്ട്.

താൻ ബാൽക്കണി കഴുകുകയായിരുന്നോ? എത്രയോ തവണ ഇതിനു മുൻപ് കഴുകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ആ കൈവരി ഇളകിയിരുന്നത് തനിക്കറിയാമായിരുന്ന കാര്യമല്ലേ? ഇതൊരു സ്വപ്നമാണോ എന്നവൾ സംശയിച്ചു. ഉച്ചയ്ക്ക് ഭർത്താവിനും മകനും ഊണു വിളമ്പേണ്ട താൻ പുൽത്തകിടിയിൽ എങ്ങനെയെത്തി? ഉറക്കത്തിലാവും, ഇന്നലെ വൈകി കിടന്നതിനാൽ കാണുന്ന പേക്കിനാവ്? (ദുഃസ്വപ്നമായി തോന്നുന്നില്ലല്ലോ!)

ശബ്ദങ്ങളൊക്കെ അകന്നു പോകുന്ന പോലെ അവൾക്കു തോന്നി, ഇരുട്ട് പടരുന്നു. അപ്പോഴേയ്ക്കും രാത്രിയായോ? വെളിച്ചം തീരെയില്ലല്ലോ, നക്ഷത്രങ്ങളില്ലാത്ത അമാവാസിയോ ഇന്ന്?

'ഇത് പതിനഞ്ചാം നിലയിലെ എലീനയല്ലേ?'

'എങ്ങനെ വീണു? ആത്മഹത്യയോ? പാവം!'

'ഒന്ന് നോക്കൂ, ശ്വാസം ഉണ്ടോ എന്ന്!'

'ആരെങ്കിലും ആംബുലൻസ് വിളിക്കൂ!' 'കാര്യമില്ല. കഴിഞ്ഞു. ഹൃദയമിടിപ്പില്ല....'



വെൺമണി
ബിമൽ രാജ്

ഓരോർമ്മ ചിത്രം

ഇതളുകൾ പൊഴിഞ്ഞ കാലങ്ങൾക്കു പിറകിൽ
ഓർമ്മകളുടെ നരച്ച ചലനങ്ങളിൽ കുടുങ്ങി,
മനസ്സിന്റെ നേർത്ത തുടിപ്പുകളിൽ പിടയുന്ന,
മരിച്ച പ്രണയത്തിൻ ഓർമ്മ മാത്രം നീ..

ഇനിയും പുനർജനികളില്ലാത്ത നിന്നിനദം,
വിതുമ്പുമായധരങ്ങളിൽ വീണു മറയുമ്പോൾ,
ഏകനായോരോ നിമിഷാർദ്ധങ്ങളിൽ സ്വയമുരുകി
വിസ്മൃതിയുടെ നരച്ച ചിത്രമായി ഞാൻ ...

അനുകൂലമായ ഒരു മിഴിയാട്ടമിളകും സമയമതിൽ
പിരിഞ്ഞകലും ഇടനെഞ്ചിന്നപ്രേമമിരുളുന്നു, എന്നേക്കുമായ്,
ഒന്നുമുരിയാടാതെ പോകുന്ന കാറ്റിന്റെ വിരൽത്തുമ്പ്,
ഒരു മിഴിമഴത്തുള്ളിക്കു യാത്രാമൊഴിചൊല്ലുന്നു.

നിന്നൊരു വാക്കുമൊരു നോക്കുമെന്നിൽ, കനൽച്ചിന്തകളാൽ
പ്രേമാവൃതഹൃത്തിലൊരു നെടുമുറിവ് കോറുമ്പോൾ,
പിരിഞ്ഞു പോകും നാമിരുവരും ഈ വിധമെന്നു,
നിനച്ചതില്ല ഒരു സ്വപ്നാർദ്ധ നിമിഷത്തിലും.

ഇനിയൊരു ദിനമതിലൊന്നിച്ചിരിക്കാൻ, സ്വയം
മറന്നൊരു ചുമലിൽ തലചായ്ച്ചു വയ്ക്കാൻ
കളരവമിമുനങ്ങളായ് , കുറുകും ചൂടിൽ
ശ്വാസത്താള വേഗമത് ശ്രവിക്കാൻ ആകുമോ

നാമിരുവരും വർണ്ണങ്ങളാണ് , രൂപങ്ങളില്ലാത്ത
ഏതോ കഥയിലെ പേരുമാത്രമുള്ള ബിംബങ്ങളായ്
ജീവനും സ്വപ്നവും യാഥാർഥ്യമാവാത്ത പ്രതലത്തിൽ
നരച്ചു തുടങ്ങിയ , ചില്ലുകൾ പൊട്ടിയ ചിത്രം പോലെ

Life is Complicated...



Date: Saturday, 20th June 2020

Me and my thoughts

It was quite early in the morning. I was jauntily taking a walk under the trees around my block. For a while I sat under the trees to breathe in some fresh air. I loved trees. It was refreshing. A song humming in my head I got up and started to walk home.

As I walked on I thought of my life. The song vanished. I contemplated, was it worth, my existence? Will I be ever be missed by anyone especially my family if I were to die now. Maybe, and I felt a quick pang of sorrow. Anyway I had lived because I was born over which I had no choice. But the way I lived I had a choice. But again did I do well? Did I make the right choices?

Hinduism talks about rebirth. The scriptures say your present existence your karma (actions/deeds) will decide into which family or as what you will be born into next. Did I really care about that? If I couldn't set my present right and it is in shambles why would I care of rebirth? Or were the scriptures subtly telling you to take control of your life and make it more meaningful?

All around people insisted that we should surround ourselves with positive thoughts and positive people. Maybe I should think of positive thoughts and stuff that made me happy. I

thought of my mother. Of myself running to her as a young child every time I felt sad and flinging my arms around her and she holding me in a tight hug. Warmth spread over me and I felt a sense of relief and happiness. I thought of the trees and hugged one on the way. They give you everything they have but with scant regard we axe them for the slightest of reasons. I trudged on under my block lost in thought. Suddenly I was jolted. Something came crashing onto to me. I couldn't make out what struck me. I felt a searing pain and I passed out.

Madam Xīnyi and her troubles.

Madam Xīnyi was tired. She was scared. She was worried. She was fretful. She was nervous. She felt helpless. She was getting on in years. Occasionally ringing sounds sounded in her ears which prevented her from going about her chores.

She feared loud noises. She found them unbearable. Often a male voice kept taunting her and a female voice kept screaming at her. She felt sad and dejected. She couldn't figure out what it was about nor could she focus clearly. She often thought of her little girl and her little boys. She remembered the glee on their faces as she cooked their favourite food for them. She remembered walking them to the school and back. Every little memory about them cheered her up. But the thought of her husband made her feel uncomfortable and worried. He had always been abusive in words and deed.

Sometimes she felt breathless like she was under water. Sometimes things were clearer. She couldn't understand why people were shouting at her. Everything confused her. But there were two little children in the house whom she liked. They clung to her sometimes calling her grandma and she loved that.

Madam Xīnyi's daughter found her mother sad and tiring. Just when she was somehow managing to juggle her life, her job, her children, her mother had been diagnosed with dementia. Though it pained her she found it hard to cope with her mother's bouts of forgetfulness. She herself had her hands full and now this. Her father though weak with age related health concerns continued to have anger management issues which she had seen since childhood. Recently she had walked out on her husband with her children when he had started showing abusive behaviour and she didn't want her children hurt.

Back here she found it tiring to cope with her forgetful mother and her distraught father. Caregiver stress was slowly eating into her. Financially too it was burdening. It was getting difficult for her to cope with.

Date: Saturday, 20th June 2020

That fateful day

Madam Xīnyi had the habit of feeling extremely insecure the days her husband shouted at her and the young woman in the house who seemed familiar to her and who was nice to her sometimes also seemed unhappy with her.

It had been her habit out of necessity to stay sane during her life that whenever she felt terribly low and felt she wanted to end her life then she would call up a SOS Helpline number which her friend had given her and she would tell her worries to someone who answered her call. She would feel a sense of relief and less tensed after talking. This she would do when her family members were not around. Her children would be in school and husband at his work place.

Then when her daughter moved in with her children she would wait for the first opportunity when there was no one in the house and she could call that number and somebody would talk to her and listen to her worries.

But suddenly things were so different now. The last few months were strange to her. The house was full of people nobody was going out. She did not understand about the pandemic. People were shouting at her all the time. She couldn't talk to anyone. She couldn't use the phone. People were listening in on her. She was not allowed to go out too. There was no quiet time that she could have for herself at home. She felt scared and intimidated.

It was the morning of Saturday, 20th June 2020. The day had started with everyone staying in the house. Then suddenly it started. People were now shouting at her. They accused her of giving away money to a poor man who had approached her at the hawker centre. She didn't remember but she did love helping people in need. Her husband came closer and threatened her. He pointed his fingers and kept threatening her. She flinched as he raised his hand. Her daughter was saying something in the background. The noise around her was growing louder. Children were standing in the corner crying.

Then her husband pointed at the open windows and kept shouting instigating her. He kept repeating: "Why don't you just jump out and die, life would be so much better for us".

She had been hearing this all her life but this time she felt she had to do something. She was tired of all the shouting, tired of her life, tired of the insults always heaped on her and she had nobody to talk to. She wanted some peace some sanctity in her life. She quickly moved to the

window and jumped.

Police and Investigation

There were two bodies lying under the block. The Police team had arrived and were looking around for answers. They knocked on doors questioned some neighbours.

After investigation they declared one death was by suicide and the other was accidental, wrong place wrong time.

May both souls rest in peace.

Me and my Rebirth

I could hear voices around me, a lot of cacophony. There seemed to be lots of people spread on a patch of arid land. It looked like some tree planting session was in progress.

Someone was speaking and a child was planting some seeds. There was applause. There was some commotion a little away where a lady seemed to be going into labour pains.

Where was I? I was being reborn? Scriptures also say that you might be reborn as per your last thoughts when you die. I had been thinking of trees when I had died. Was I going to be reborn as a tree or a human? Of course, I had no choice over that. Yet, if I had, I would have definitely liked to be a tree that spends its entire life being useful to all and not a human that hurts a tree.

Also we need to be more understanding with the worries and insecurities of the elderly and treat them with greater dignity and compassion. We need to give a listening ear to our friends and family.

Afterword

The story is a work of fiction of the author. Any resemblance to a person living or dead is purely coincidental. The author was moved by the suicide statistics in the year 2020 which was 252 in Singapore of which a sizable number were the elderly. Also there were lesser calls from the elderly to the SOS Hotline in 2020.

The report in The Straits Times (Jul 8, 2021) mentioned.. 'the number of suicide deaths among the elderly - aged 60 and above - hit 154, the highest recorded figure among this age group since 1991 and a 26 per cent increase from 2019.

The report also mentioned ... While there was an increase in suicide deaths among the elderly in 2020 compared with 2019, SOS said its 24-hour hotline received fewer calls from them.

The Straits Times Report read here : <https://tinyurl.com/5b3vz8s>

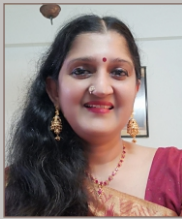
Helplines

Samaritans of Singapore: 1-767 (24 hours)

Institute of Mental Health: 6389-2222 (24 hours)

Dementia Singapore: 6377 0700 (Monday –Friday 9am - 6pm)

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DAD & I



Dad and I is a feel great book that will lift you, and take you to a world that is open, inclusive and at peace. It's an opportunity to follow the passage of young immigrants like my dad, who fearless at fifteen, left his hometown, in a small village in Kerela for Singapore, in search of a better life. This memoir regales the human spirit and celebrates the extraordinary in the ordinary. It's a personal story framed within a historical and cultural context, spanning three generations. It chronicles my quest to understand my dad as he lay unconscious in a hospital bed for what seemed to be an eternity at that time.

"In the silence of the moments with my dad, in Tan Tock Seng Hospital, I couldn't help but see beyond and within his frail body. He was once a fifteen year old boy with an invincible spirit. He had the courage and audacity, at that age, to leave home for the biggest adventure of his life. What, I wondered, made a fifteen-year old boy leave home and cross the seas for a land unknown to him? Was it aspiration for a better life or desperation to leave what he may have perceived as a stultifying existence in a remote village?

My dad, Damodaran, named after Lord Krishna, incarnation of Maha Vishnu, the Creator, left Puthuval Veedu* in Anathalavattom, Kadaikavur District, Chirayankil, as a budding adolescent. Puthuval Veedu was the name of his ancestral home in the state of Kerala close to the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. You needed to take a boat from the city of



Trivandrum and cross a rivulet to reach the village. In other words, Puthuval Veedu was tucked away in lush coconut plantations and padi fields far away from what we would call civilization today. Puthuval Veedu was unknown to others as was the little known tiny island of Singapore.”

Writing this memoir helped me in many ways discover more about myself and my relationship with my dad. The writing journey took me not only to familiar places in my mind but it provided me with fresh lenses to see my own life through my dad’s. Following his early immigrant life closely opened my heart in unusual ways. By the end of the writing process, I found myself having a profound admiration for a man who had given so much of himself for others to grow and thrive.

In Chapter 11, Where are our roots?, I also lament and question the loss of spoken Malayalam in my own household. Today, my children hardly speak Malayalam though we still celebrate Onam and Vishu every year, with new clothes and a feast of sambar, paruppu, pulisherry, pachadi, thoran, inji pulli, kadumanga, kaya varthathu and adaprathamam. What happened? How did it happen? Why did it happen?

“While we were all equally culpable for the gradual erosion of our mother tongue language, I am wondering... Was it the circumstances that dictated the mastery of English, at the expense of the mother tongue? Did we think we needed to be fluent in the English Language in order to be successful? Did we perceive English as the language of the affluent? Were all of us, including my dad, subconsciously subscribing to these perceptions? Whatever the reason, we all became victims of convenience. We paid a price. We could have had richer conversations with my dad, and a deeper understanding of our heritage and identity.” Dad and I, Ch. 11

Today, we have a second shot at bringing Malayalam to life at home. With the arrival of my precious granddaughter Esmé Airi, we have decided that my mother will speak to her only in Malayalam. My three month old granddaughter is all ears and wide-eyed when my mum coos into her ears: “Entha mole vesakanna? Molenda pare entha?...” and she breaks into a warm smile.






Review of 'Dad and I' in Good reads by Maha Sripathy

If there is one book you would like to enjoy over a cup of coffee, that will be Dad and I. The storytelling speaks to your heart and mind effortlessly. The vivid descriptions and daily lived experiences of Shalini will draw you into the persona of Mr Damodaran, and you will come to know him in an intimate way. Dad and I is absolutely Indian- the benevolent, provider father whose quiet, loving and unassuming focus is to provide for firstly, the family he is born into and secondly, the family he creates. He does not talk much to his children but he is there all the time, all the way, nurturing them through his actions and quietly watching them grow, giving them the space and time to live out their childhood and youth, demanding nothing in return for himself at any point. Damodaran's quiet satisfaction in being driven by the conscious and willing need to always provide for his family and friends is gradually delivered by Shalini's detailed anecdotes which colour the narrative throughout. Her admiration for her father (and perhaps her regret in not having conveyed this directly to him when he was alive), and her sense of loss forces the reader to be cognizant of the need to make time for their parents and family and treasure their presence and experiences, not by deifying them, but simply by talking with them.

The value of relationships and the importance of nurturing them, particularly relationships that can easily be taken for granted, strike home subtly but unflinchingly. It is also a heartfelt story of the sad distance that language loss creates- a loss that stirs and disturbs our innermost being. Damodaran's experiences and success are not replicable in today's Singapore but it's a story that's told with such sincerity and love, making it an excellent read and will set you on a reflective path thereafter. A great read.

Dr Maha is the principal consultant of The Teaching Circle. She has been a lecturer at the National Institute of Education (Singapore), and Edith Cowan University (Australia) between 1989 and 2007. Pursuing her passion for teacher education, Dr Maha has worked as a language curriculum consultant in Sri Lanka, training in-service secondary English Language teachers and teaching pre-service teachers in India.

“This engaging memoir spans the early years of Singapore’s history with many vivid details about the



socio-cultural life then. Shalini has captured many tender and loving moments between father and daughter, despite a restrained relationship. Her experiences during her growing up years and later as a working mother will resonate with many readers. In this way, this is not just the journey of one Malayalee family but it's truly a Singaporean journey and story, one that all of us can identify with."

Dr. Cheah Yin Mee ...Principal Consultant at Learning Ventures

"It's one of those books that I couldn't put down once I started reading it. Shalini definitively has a gift with words and right from the start I felt transported into her father's life. As a silent witness, I learned about his courage to follow his dreams, the love for his family, his way of facing adversity, his strength, values, and of course, life in Singapore at a time when I wasn't yet born. "Dad and I" is a beautiful invitation to seek out a more profound reconnection with parents and others for that matter before it's too late. Rather than taking everyone in our life for granted, there is so much more to discover about each other when we genuinely want to know more about who they are, their dreams, concerns, values and joys.

There are so many gems to be discovered in this book, many times I sat there, parts touched within myself that were hidden before, often I paused to reflect and find inspiration. Thank you, Shalini, for sharing this journey with the world."

Ms Antoinette Biehlmeier...Founder of TheraSmart, Owner of InnerDynamics Map Pte Ltd, and Co-Founder of TimeWaver SEA and Soul-Inspired Leadership

"Shalini and Damodaran had me spellbound for a few hours. I laughed at the adventures of 'little Shalini' and her father's customers. She had me in tears too at poignant moments. Dad and I will take you to familiar places within you."

Dr. Anitha Devi Pillai...Teacher Educator, National Institute of Education, Singapore

Dad and I

SHALINI DAMODARAN

DESCRIPTION

Dad and I is a personal story framed within a historical and cultural context, spanning three generations. Follow a daughter's quest to understand her dad as he lies unconscious in a hospital bed. From his stories about his early immigrant life, he provides her with the inspiration and impetus to take a leap into the unknown and discover her creative side. *Dad and I* pauses and ponders on the meaning of life, death, consciousness and unconsciousness. It takes us into a world of dreams, ghosts and spirits, presented as extensions of unresolved issues, embedded deep in our psyche.

KEY SELLING POINTS

- Author is well-known in educational circles in Singapore
- Deals with bereavement in an enlightening perspective
- Talks about family relationships
- Inspiring and thought-provoking critique on family relationships

MARKETING

The author plans to use her involvement and connections in educational circles to promote and network her book.

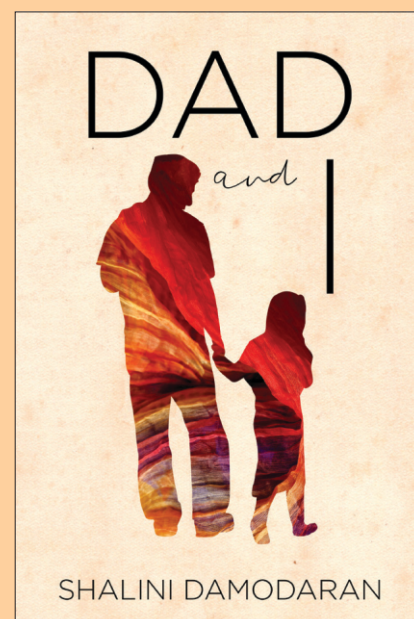
The author co-hosted and co-facilitated a Mindful Writing Retreat in California. She plans to promote her book when conducted writing marathons and workshops.

As a member of Sree Narayana Mission, Ananda Sangha, Singapore Cricket Club, British Club and Club 1880, she has planned to do book launches, book signings accompanied by a free Mindful Journaling session at the premises of these centers and clubs.

The author has plans to co-host *Eat My Words*, a book host event with a well-known local chef who will serve some of the Kerala dishes mentioned in the book.

AUTHOR BIO

Shalini Damodaran is an author, writing coach and teacher educator. She was a junior college English literature teacher for many years before becoming a teacher educator at the English Language Institute of Singapore (Ministry of Education). She is currently pursuing accreditation as a mindfulness teacher, and exploring the impact of mindfulness and meditation on journaling and story-telling because she believes in its therapeutic and healing effects.



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പ്രദീപ് നയത്തിൽ

കുരുവുപുരുഷൻ

പവിഴമല്ലി വിരിഞ്ഞൊരു സൗരഭം
നറുനിലാവിലലിഞ്ഞ സുലേപനം
വിതറിവരിയണിഞ്ഞു മറഞ്ഞുപോയ്
കനകനുപുരന്നാദമുതിർത്തു നീ.

പല നിശീഥിനിതോരുമിതേ വിധം
പിടി തരാതെയൊളിച്ചു കടന്നു നീ;
പരിഹസിച്ചുടനാർത്തു ചിരിയ്ക്കയാ-
യുധുകുമാരികളും ഗ്രഹവൃന്ദവും.

പദസമുദ്രമതിന്നു നടുക്കിതാ
പതറി നിൽക്കുകയാണിവനിപ്പൊഴും;
ഗഗനമൊത്തു വളർന്നൊരു ഭാവന
ചിതറിവീണു കൊഴിഞ്ഞു
കരിഞ്ഞുപോയ്.

ഒരു കടാക്ഷമൊരൊറ്റ മൃദുസ്ഥിതം
മധുരമോഹനമായൊരു തേൻമൊഴി
അതിന്നു മാത്രമിതെത്ര ജ്വരങ്ങളായ്
സഖി നിനക്കിഹ കാത്തു തളർന്നു
ഞാൻ.

ഇനി വരുമ്പൊളിരിത്തിരിനേരമെ-
ങ്കിലുമെനിയ്ക്കു സമീപമിരിയ്ക്കുമോ?
കരളു വെന്തിടുമെന്നുടയുൾത്തപം
കുളിരു വീശിയകറ്റി, യണയ്ക്കുമോ?

പ്രണയിനീ തവ ചാരുകരാംബുജം
സ്വരിതമാക്കിയുണർത്തിയ വാങ്മയം,
കവിതയായൊഴുകുന്നൊരു നാളിലേ-
യ്ക്കിനിയുമെത്ര ശരത്തു, വസന്തവും!



TO BECKON MAHABALI



Lathika Sadasivan

Amma and Achan would have had memories of Onam in their little villages in Kerala. I have always wondered how they absorbed so much of the culture in the short 18 – 20 years they lived there. As teenagers, they left what they knew intimately, in search of new experiences and opportunities.

Yes, we experienced Onam because Amma and Achan made it such a memorable part of our lives. Every year. In the month of Chingam, between August and September, there is a flurry of activities. Onam is celebrated for 10 days in Kerala. So much to do, so much to reap, so much to be joyful for. The fields and farms are bursting with grains, vegetables, and fruits. Such richness. What better way than to celebrate the windfall? Afterall, Onam is a harvest festival. In our home in Singapore, we bought all the produce and made Onam happen.

Weeks before Onam, we would do a deep cleaning of our house. Water thrown everywhere on the floor. Scrubbing, swishing, splashing. Dusting, polishing, clearing. The fun part was going shopping for new clothes and accessories, Our Onakkodi.

Days before Onam, Amma made the Palakarams (snacks). Achappam, Unniyappam, Neyyappam, Cheepappam, Orappam, Pakkavada, Diamonds, Murukku, and Upperi. She



had a small, old, clay stove, powered by firewood. She sat on a low stool as there were to be many hours of frying. A mixture of frying oil and burning wood tickled our noses. She blew into a metal pipe to fuel the fire. I never questioned these practices. They just were part of our Onam experience. Amma had these enormous Kong Guan Cream Cracker tins to keep the snacks crisp and fresh. We fell asleep with the sweet aroma of fried snacks pervading our home.

We wrapped the different snacks in newspapers, putting them in plastic bags. About 150 Onam goody bags for our family, near and far, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, India, Chinese, Malay. The six of us were dispatched to our beloved neighbors, friends, relatives to deliver these Palakarams. I remember Ah Beh Aunty, Gulam Aunty, Lakshmi Akka. We were eager to go to George Uncle's house - a long and enjoyable trip to Changi Point. I remember SBS Bus #2. That quaint little bridge still stands.

Amma and Achan would make that trip to Tekka market to shop for all the produce. Wet market, and provision shops. There must have been at least 50 different items. Yes, banana leaves too. Onasadhya is completely vegetarian. Amma made Narainga Achar, Manga Achar, and Inji Curry. Huge, air-tight tins held crunchy Pappadams.

On Thiruvonam, cooking would start at 5:00 am. How did Amma know how to cook all these items? Achan made Adapradhaman. My older siblings helped cut vegetables. We all had our oil baths, said our prayers, wore our Onakkodi. Slowly guests would stream in. The array of snacks arranged in a beautiful tray would welcome them. A precursor to the high point of the day.

The Vazhayela (banana leaf) is a feast for our eyes. Aviyal, Thoran, Pachadi, Upperi, Sharkara Varatti, Narainga Achar, Manga Achar, Inji Curry, Pappadam decorate the border of the ela. Choru (rice) is the center piece. Then the first course - Paruppu Curry with Neyyu over the rice. Sambar is the second course, and Pulisery the third. Moru and Jeeraga Vellam in small Kinnams. Dessert is Poovan Pazham to crush with Paayasam.

Onakkali (Onam Sports) was such fun. I remember enjoying Onam Night at Victoria Theatre. Singing, dancing, Kaikottikali, magic shows, skits. The community came together.

Mahabali is guided to our homes by flickering Vilakkus (oil lamps), Pookalams, and the sheer magic of Onam. The legacy continues.

Serangoon

RAINS 2021

A smattering of wetness
Smells of drenched marigolds
And freshly stewed sambhar
Overdosed on asafoetida
And jasmines harshly nudged
Into premature blooms
By wicked banana stem strands
Tied around their slender green necks
And vadais frying in oil
That must have lost its temper
Boiling many times over
Before settling down
To a thick dark brown state of zen
And mangoes ripening
Under the hot masked breath
Of their tired vendors
And clogged drains
Like blocked arteries
With their fatty inner walls of slime



Thara



സുനീൽ ശിവദാസ്

യിൻ യാങ്ങ

തലചായ്ക്കാനിടം തേടി അലയുന്ന വാക്കുകളിൽ
വിരഹഗഹവരത്തിൻ മാറ്റൊലികൾ.

അന്തിവാനം തുടക്കുമ്പോളെൻ പ്രാണശിഖരങ്ങളിൽ
കൂടണയും ചിന്തകളുടെ ചിറകടികൾ.

എന്നും കിനാവിന്റെ ജാലകപാളികൾ നിദ്രയുടെ
നിലാവൊളികൾ മറച്ചു വെച്ചു.

ദീപ്തനക്ഷത്രങ്ങൾതൻ സ്പന്ദനത്തിൽ പ്രജ്ജ്വലിതമാകുമെന്നന്തരംഗം,
ആയിരം മൗനങ്ങളിൽ കേട്ടിടുന്നു ഏകാകിതയുടെ മണിമുഴക്കം

സ്പർശനം വീണ്ടുമറിയും നമ്മൾ,
വാക്കുകൾ ഒഴുകി വരും വീണ്ടും,
ഒരു പക്ഷേ പണ്ടത്തേക്കാളും എളുപ്പമായ്,
നിശ്വാസത്തിൽ പ്രണയത്തിന്റെ ഈർപ്പം നിറയും,

കെട്ടുകൾ അലിഞ്ഞില്ലാതാവും,
പേശികൾ നിവരുന്നത് നാമറിയും,
പൂമ്പാറ്റ ആദ്യമായ് ചിറകുകൾ വിടർത്തിയ പോലെ,

സമയത്തെ മറക്കും നമ്മൾ,
ദിവസങ്ങൾ അലസമായ് പറന്നു പോകും,
നീലാകാശത്തിലെ പ്രാവുകളെ പോലെ,
നമ്മൾ വീണ്ടും പുഞ്ചിരിക്കും,
ഒരു കാരണവുമില്ലാതെ,
വെയിലാതാലും മഴയാതാലും.

സ്വതന്ത്ര വിവർത്തനം

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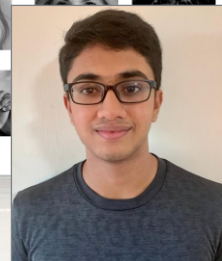


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mSimulacra & Hyperreality in Today's Media



Dhruv Manoj

Humanity has long relied on continuity and change to develop; from the discovery of fire to the Age of Enlightenment, progression has remained as the mainstay which spurred revolutions and brought the world to new heights.

However, the world we live in today seems like a far cry from the idyllic visions of change we were led to believe in. We are shrouded in chaos and uncertainty, with unthinkable atrocities and unimaginable circumstances manifesting itself in the midst of one of the most devastating pandemics ever. The ideals of change and continuity seem to have evanesced into non-entity, and the future seems bleak. This damning revelation is one many youths across the world have arrived at over the past few years, with changing social norms, lifestyles and geopolitics contributing to the dreaded future we envision. At least, this is what many seem to believe looking at the current global situation. An obstinate pandemic, government coups, draconian restrictions, all seem to point to a chaotic disruption of world order. That is to some extent true, with major changes in the way we live transpiring from the pandemic. However, one does wonder how these images are constructed in the psyche, and how such techniques, once

used to report and present seemingly objective truths, is now a vehicle for misinformation and deception.

Our culture today has developed a form of wariness to the phenomena of fake news, but this distrust does not stem from the recent surges in propagandistic right-wing news outlets or radical terrorist groups, but from a disillusionment with capitalism, more specifically 'late capitalism'. This, referring to the post-WW2 period in the 1970s in the midst of the cold war, revealed to postmodernists the flaws in the democratic culture which was then glorified as the path to a bright future. The loss of confidence can be attributed to one particular effect of 'late capitalism': the subordination of reality and actual news to image manipulation. The representation of the true reality of a situation, through images is a sly form of narrativisation, as these can be orchestrated to put forth a certain narrative with certain implications. A more overt form of this narrativisation can be observed in the fake news articles we find online, with images used to seemingly support unfounded claims. With the advent of more powerful and capable technologies for manipulation, this crisis of the representation of reality becomes more pronounced, as it is easier to fall prey to fake news.

Now, how does this lead back to us as a society? The circumspection first experienced by postmodernists in the 1970s has, through continuous repetition, implanted itself into the public's psyche today. People are told to be wary of the content they see online, and are much more suspicious of the news and information they get online. However, this wariness does not guarantee the truth. We have to be more critical of the news sources we read and learn to discern the absence of truth in the information we consume.

CHENA PAYASAM

by Anjana Balakrishnan



Ingredients:

- 500 gms chena /yam (please buy the one which looks more pink colour)
- 500 gms Jaggery ,boiled to a decotion and sieved
- 200 ml lite coconut milk
- 200 ml full cream coconut milk
- 1/2 tsp dried ginger powder (chukku podi)
- 4 cardamom pods crushed
- 100ml Ghee (adjust ghee as required)
- 1/4 cups coconut sliced to small pieces



Steps:

- Remove the skin on chena/yam and cut into small pieces.wash them under water till water clears
- Cook the sliced chena/yam in cooker till it's cooked with adequate water.I cooked till 5 whistle
- Let it cool thoroughly ,after draining any remaining water in cooker
- Once the cooked chena/yam is cooled to room temperature,grind to a fine paste using a mixer grinder
- Heat a pan with thick bottom,add 5 tbsp of ghee.
- When ghee is hot add,the chena paste and mix well.
- Always keep flame in medium to Low
- Cook the mix by continuously stirring till the ghee separates
- Add the jaggery decotion,mix well,cook it till small bubbles appear
- Add the dried ginger powder and crushed cardamom and mix well and bring to boil
- Add the trim coconut milk and Cook till the mixture boils and bubbles appear by stirring continuously
- Add the thick coconut milk ,mix well and in low heat slowly bring to boil by stirring continuously
- Remove from heat
- In a small pan,heat 2 tbsp ghee and fry the sliced coconut till slight brown
- Pour this into the cooked chena ,coconut mixture and give a mix
- Serve hot or cold.

Tips:

- Buy a young yam/chena for payasam,when we cut the chena/yam it should be light pink/peach colour
- Always soak the sliced yam in water for 10 minutes and wash it thoroughly till water clears
- I always taste the sweetness of jaggery before adding to any dish,so it is easy to manage te sweetness level
- I use store bought coconut milk for all my recipes if I am outside Kerala and ever ever I have felt a taste difference.
- I always test store bought coconut milk by using in stew first or make a small pudding ,so 8 know the taste and also helps me to adjust the quantity accordingly.
- Always use all ingredients in room temperature.



TRANSLATING SEMBAWANG

TWO YEARS IN MY MOTHER'S SHOES

A translator is like a foster parent. A parent who loves their child unconditionally and often stays up at night worrying about how the child is faring. And they do all that despite knowing that the child is not really theirs. A translator does all of that for the love of the language.

I spend the last two years translating a Tamil historical fiction novel, titled Sembawang, that was written by mother, an award-winning author, Kamaladevi Aravindan into English.

About Kamala Devi Aravindan

Kamaladevi Aravindan (maiden name Kamala Devi Nair) is an award-winning bilingual (Tamil and Malayalam) writer and playwright, whose writings have been published in India, Canada, Malaysia and Singapore. She was born in Malaysia and moved to Singapore after her marriage.

She is a prolific author who has in her lifetime published more than 162 short stories and essays, 18 stage plays, 300 radio dramas as well as 5 books. She has earned numerous awards and is a celebrated author among established writers since the start of her writing career in her teens to this day. Many of her texts have been chosen as course material by Universities in India and Malaysia.

Three of her books Nuval, Karavu and Sembawang were published under the auspices of a National Arts Council, Singapore grant. Her latest novel, Sembawang, is a Tamil historical fiction which traces the lives of those who lived in the Sembawang area in the early 1960s over a span of fifty years also received a National Heritage Board, Singapore, Grant. The English translation by Dr Anitha Devi Pillia was synchronously published in 2020 by Marshall Cavendish International Asia. Sembawang is now the the finalist of the Best literary award 2021 by Singapore book publishers addiction and the Singapore history prize by national university of Singapore.

Do you know what it's like to be raised by a mother who is a writer? I do. Like many writers, my mother, Kamaladevi Aravindan, too moves between worlds that she creates in her writing and reality. Often, my mother's characters in her novel become our dinner time companions. The conversations about plot and make-believe scenarios continue into the night with my mother's number one fan, my father.

A couple of years ago, I watched as my mother became engrossed in yet another novel. Only this time, the project was all too close to her heart as it was a story based on a place in Sembawang, a place which both my parents often reminisce about. It is the place where my father was raised in and it was my mother's first marital home in Singapore. It was a place that was called 'Kochu Keralam' because of the huge number of Malayalees who lived there and the novel revolved around the families of two Malayalee matriarchs, Sethlakshmi Amma and Parukutti Amma.

Sembawang is historically significant in the history of Singapore. It was a located next to the Her Majesty's Naval Base until the British forces pulled out of Singapore in the early 1970s. The surrounding village was divided into Milestones – a measure of distance during the colonial period. The novel explores the surroundings of Sembawang around 13th 14th and 15th miles – these were the sites of many interesting historical events.

At the heart of the novel, it traces the lives of several extended families who lived together in the village through the eyes of a Tamil woman, Kaaliyamma (Kaali) who is a descendent of coolies from Tamil Nadu. She escapes her mundane life as a rubber tapper in Malaysia and arrives in Singapore in the early 1960s. The vivid description of an idyllic life of the village is followed by events that show how many lives changed in face of the rapid urbanization

measures that were put in place after Singapore gained independence. The novel spanned a period of fifty years capturing many critical moments in Singapore's and Malaysia's history. Along with it, it provides a window into some of the cultural practices that were prevalent in that

time period.

The author, Kamaladevi Aravindan, spent hours in research by interviewing former residents and making several trips to libraries in Malaysia. It actually took several years before she finally relented to letting me read her final draft in March 2018.

And boy, was I hooked from the moment I read the manuscript. There were several stories within the novel of love, loss, laughter and disappointment. There were vivid descriptions of the Sembawang village in Singapore from a different time and one that I recognized from black-and-white photographs in the albums of my parents and their friends.

Balancing Fact and Fiction -Foregrounding People and Places

The novel, *Sembawang*, occupies a fluid space between reality and fiction, and to understand the relationship between the two worlds, I had to know the historical events that occurred in that time period, envision the landscape of Sembawang and understand the lives of the residents in that era.

While my mother had kept detailed notes on her sources, they were not cited nor represented in the conventional manner that I was accustomed to as an academic. Given that this was a work of fiction — albeit set in a historical context and based on people's memories of life in Sembawang, including the author's — I felt that it was essential that we made it clear where

the line between fiction and history lay. Historical fiction novels often tread a fine balance between reality and fiction. Detailed notes and references allow readers to distinguish the fictional elements from facts. I asked for permission to include historical notes, photographs of people who lived in Sembawang as well as references to all the sources. These were written in English and translated to Tamil afterwards.

I started curating a set of photographs of places, homes and people who lived in Sembawang between 1940 to 1970s and sketched a map Sembawang. The families, including many Malayalee families, whom my family has known for three generations came forward to help and from their collection of photographs and memories, I was able to curate a good set of photographs that would reflect the lives of our forefathers and the landscape. Both the map and the photographs were included in the novel which then provided an additional useful dimension. The sketch comprised key locations mentioned in the book and were drawn up based on a street directory of the 1960s and verified by members who had lived in that area. As it is a book with many characters — with long Tamil and Malayalee names — I included a list of characters for the benefit of the readers.

I must concede that, on most days, it was clear that my mother thought my approach to deconstructing the novel and foregrounding people and places was unconventional, but she was open to my suggestions. We both agreed that, with a book of this nature, the foregrounding of people and places would provide another dimension. But, then again, there were some days that I counted my lucky stars to be alive after our lengthy discussions on the plot, theme and additions we were including!

Translating and Editing

Next came the task of translating the novel to English. While I have published poetry, short stories and academic papers of my own, this is indeed the first novel that I am translating.

I drew on my background and training as an applied linguist for most parts of the translation process. At first, I translated the text line by line. But this proved to be an arduous task. I soon gave up after about twenty pages or so. I returned to the drawing board after a few weeks, and this time read the novel aloud to myself and made copious notes on the characters and the chain of events. Things started falling into place.

I sought the help of one of my former students, Ravathi Gunasegaran, to read the novel aloud and had it recorded. Listening to an audio recording of a novel takes one's attention away from the visual text. It forces you to focus on the story at a different level. I must have listened to the recording of the entire novel at least four times before I felt ready to take on the task at hand head-on. By now, the characters in Sembawang had started to be with me in my silent moments and lived with me as they had done with my mother.

I was finally ready to translate the novel once again.

I played the audio recording aloud, pausing at every line to verbally translate it, to English, while my research assistant, Sumi Baby Thomas, typed it out. I found it beneficial to start the translation at clause level. It was a slow process but not having to deal with typing or moving between the screen and the text, helped me to focus on choosing the right phrase and the most suitable word for the given context. Sumi and I met almost every day for several hours and for an entire month.

I then edited the text by checking if I had gotten the meaning right at the paragraph level and then at chapter level by comparing both the Tamil and English texts side by side. Once I was satisfied that the content was accurately translated, I moved on to examine the lexis more closely.

I did not want to overuse the same words such as 'in those days' which appeared several times in the original and combed through the text slowly to see if I could use a more appropriate word to capture the nuances accurately. Words that could mean multiple things had to be re-read in the context that they appeared and corrected if need be; for instance, the word for 'honey' and 'nectar' was the same in Tamil. Then there were words, like Chua, whose name was written as 'Swah' in Tamil because there was no equivalent character to represent 'Ch' in Tamil and my translation had to be corrected.

Having access to the writer — at all times of the day — to consult as I translated was a boon. Often these discussions led to longer ones on elements of Tamil that often get lost in translation.

The Revision Process

Once the novel was edited and proofread, I had another important decision to make before I could start on revising the text. How authentic should the translated text be? My mum's answer to my query was short and crisp, "Do what you think is best for the 'English audience'."

My main purpose in translating this book was to ensure that it reached out to a wider audience and at the same time, for non-Tamil speakers to get a glimpse of the nuances of the Tamil language and culture. But therein lay the dilemma, I was not just translating the language but also the culture for a varied audience. How does one balance the two? The answer came from a chance conversation over Bru coffee and Chettinad kuzhi panniyaram, made with karuni rice, with Associate Prof. V. Nagarajan and Professor Madhan in Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, as I was returning from delivering a keynote address at a conference at Alagappa University. The more we talked about the translation process of Tamil texts, the clearer it became that transcreation played an equal role in projects like these. As experts in translation and literary criticism, they pointed out the word for word translations may be accurate to some extent but they rarely are as impactful as 'transcreated' texts, which are created with an understanding of the Tamil culture and language. Unintentionally, the trip also gave me a chance to understand many of the cultural elements in this novel better as Karaikudi is the birthplace of a few characters. That ninety-minute conversation then helped to propel the revision process.

This next part — the revision stage — was the hardest and kept me up at night. I was constantly waking up and replacing words and phrases with ones that suited the context best. As Ernest Hemingway once said, "The only kind of writing is rewriting."

I shortened some sentences and dialogues so that the text was tighter.

Metaphors and expressions that loosely translated to 'like a starving moon', 'shaved the horns of the bull', 'she/he felt like pulling out her tongue and dying', 'beat him like a dog', 'stamped on him/her', 'earning capacity' and 'talking casually', all needed more context for a non-Tamil reader to understand the implications. And yet, as a translator, I felt that my hands were often tied because I could not possibly add too much in the English version and still be true to the original.

Nevertheless, I had to substitute some idioms with the meaning such as in the case of an idiom

that loosely translates to ‘an old blind woman opened the door again’. It means ‘old habits die hard’ or a habit that is repeated. Since it was impossible to discern the meaning from a direct translation, I chose to replace the idiom with the meaning.

Then there were expressions such as ull pavadai (petticoat in Tamil) implying that a man was henpecked. In such instances, where it was possible to provide a very brief explanation without interfering with the text, I added sentences such as ‘It was a roundabout way of calling him henpecked’.

This novel is written in accessible language and even incorporates phrases and words that were used in that time period. Words such as aluru (‘drain’ in Tamil), kati (unit of weight) and ‘chopped’ (stamped) — rarely used in current times — were kept intact in the original language. In fact, Associate Professor Chitra Sankaran points to the language used in the original Tamil version of the novel, Sembawang, as ‘its crowning glory’. Given such an observation by the reviewer, I have decided to retain the original words in the English translation.

Likewise, the characters in the novel were often referred to through their nicknames which when translated to English sounded odd and often outdated but they reflect a time when people were given such nicknames without censure from others. These nicknames referred to where they lived (Maadi-vedu Amma — the lady who lives above or the lady who lives in a two-storey house), their jobs (Clerk Thambi — younger brother/young man who works as a clerk) or their ethnicity (Chinese neighbor).

Unfortunately, the one element of the language in the novel where it was not possible to capture the nuances is the dialectal differences amongst residents of Sembawang once the novel was translated to English.

The Two-year Journey Ends

It took me two years to translate the novel which included many long weeks of abstinence from the novel either because of work demands or that I needed space to think through the translation process. And, for the first time in my life, I spent hours with my mother discussing the novel, debating the research and writing process of historical novels and talking through the challenges in translating a text from Tamil to English. This journey has also given me two

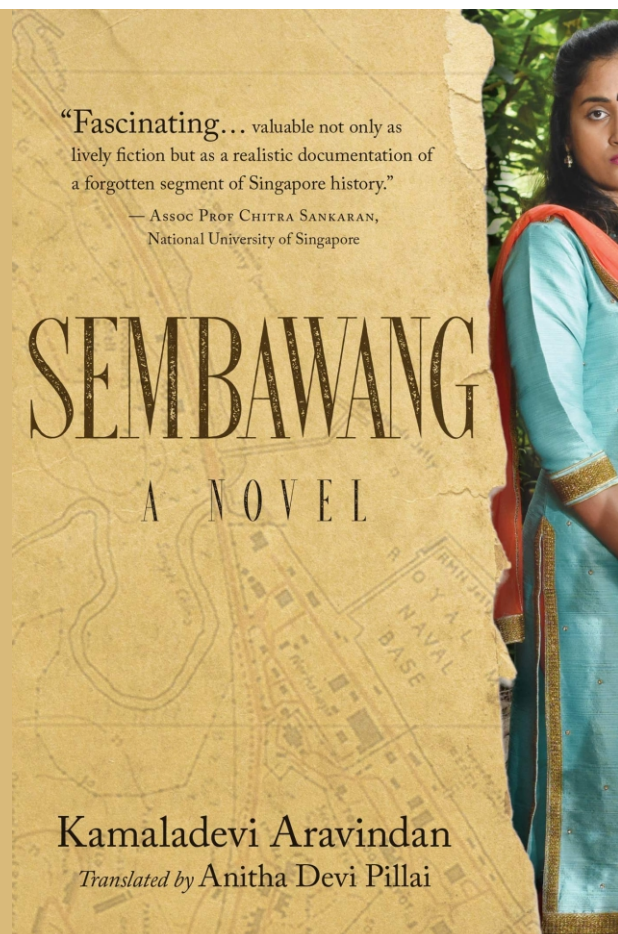
years of schooling into a writer's creative process of crafting a historical novel and a greater insight into my parents' past.

Sembawang will be published in English and Tamil almost synchronously as the translation and the editing of the original text took place simultaneously in July-August 2020. While I translated, my mother, Kamaladevi Aravindan, fine-tuned her original text. She added portions and strengthened other areas as a result of our discussions and research undertaken together. For that reason, I do feel connected to the 'making' of the original text as well, but that also meant that both books evolved many times during the translation process.

While my name does appear on the cover of the book as the translator, and I feel connected to the book in many ways, it is time to acknowledge that the novel Sembawang is my mother's and I was privileged to play a role in caring for it for a short a period of time.

Note: The original Tamil novel will be launched in early 2021. The translation, Sembawang: A Novel, was published in 2020 and is available for purchase at all major bookstores and online.

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Dr. T M Mathew

പാതാളക്കിണർ

അവൻ ഇനിയുംവരുമോ?
 ചത്തുമലച്ചു കിടക്കും
 സത്യത്തിന്റെ രാജ്യത്തെ
 ഉയർപ്പിക്കുമോ?
 കുന്നിൻ മുകളിൽ നിന്ന്
 ഒഴുകിയിറങ്ങുന്ന നദിയെപോലെ
 വരണ്ട താഴ്വരയെ കുളിർപ്പിക്കാൻ
 ഇനിയും അവനാകുമോ??
 മരുഭൂമിയിൽ
 ജീവജലവുമായി
 പുരുഷാരത്തിനിടയിൽ
 അവൻ നിൽക്കുമോ?
 വിശപ്പിൽനിന്നും ദാഹത്തിൽ നിന്നും മോചിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ
 അവനാകുമോ?
 അവനെ ജയിക്കാൻ
 ശത്രുക്കൾ,
 കാറ്റിനേയും കടലിനേയും നേരിടുന്നവർ
 കടലും കരയും താണ്ടി നടക്കുവോർ
 ഒരുങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നു.
 അവർ
 പുറം വെടിപ്പാക്കി വെക്കുന്നു
 നന്നായി ചിരിക്കുന്നു .
 പരസ്പരം വിശ്വാസമില്ലെങ്കിലും
 സംഘം ചേർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു.
 മുഖത്ത് പ്രസാദം സ്മരിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.
 മനസ്സിലെ പാതാളക്കിണർ ഒളിച്ചുവെക്കുന്നു.
 വരനേപ്പോലെ വിഴുങ്ങുവാൻ
 പതിയിരിക്കുന്നു.
 സത്യം തേടി നടന്നവർ
 എറിയപ്പെട്ട കിണർ
 നിറഞ്ഞില്ലതേ വരെ
 ഉറക്കുമുഷ്ടികൊണ്ടിടിച്ചാലും കേരില്ല
 ഞരക്കം പോലും കേൾക്കില്ല
 സത്യത്തിന്റെ രാജ്യം
 ഇനിയെന്ന് സ്വതന്ത്രമാകും?

EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES IN LIFE

by Sarojini Chandran



As a Malayalee who lived most of my adult life in Singapore and currently residing in Perth, I have been enthusiastically involved in Malayali activities in both cities. There are many similarities that I have seen between the Singapore Kerala Association (now known as the Singapore Malayalee Association) and both the Malayalee Association of Western Australia and the Kairali Club(MAWA) of Perth.

Although I joined the Singapore Kerala Association in the early 1960s it was not until 1968 that I took an active role. Over the decades, I was elected and served in various executive roles in the committee including Welfare Secretary, Cultural Secretary, Vice President and I was chairperson of the ladies wing for several years.

The Association was very family oriented in its initial years. On a daily basis many Malayalees in Singapore would gather at its premises in 44 Race course Road. We would meet in the two-storey building, to play card games and carom, read Malayalam and English books,

magazines and newspapers, and to discuss events of the day. During the weekends ,the place was a hub of activities for dance and drama rehearsals. Outside venues were booked for sports competitions such as badminton and football. The highlight was the Annual Onam sports with the men's, and later ladies' tug of war.

Onam night was a major annual event for the Association. It was a great unifier of Malayalee people from all walks of life and it gathered a very large participation and support from the local Malayalee community. It was a celebration of Malayalee culture incorporating the multi-racial art forms of Singapore. During Onam Night celebrations, we would always pay homage to Mahabali through tableau performance. To make the event more interesting, the Ladies Wing would brainstorm for new and entertaining events, while the traditional Thiruvathirakali and majestic appearance of Mahabali were mainstay events. Apart from comedy sketches , song-time, brides of Kerala, and different forms of dances from Kerala, we would also have dances from other Indian communities, Chinese dances and graceful Malay dances. All these contributed to the colourful spectacle that would draw full capacity crowds at the National Theatre wherever Onam night was held. In 1998 we inaugurated the Onam Queen competition.



The next big wave that gripped Malayalees in Singapore was drama. Most of the Malayalee associations in Singapore produced a drama on an annual basis. In 1973, I discovered my talent in acting when I was coaxed by the committee to act in the Association's drama production 'Cross Belt' based on a play written by N N Pillai. It was their encouragement that got me into trying things that I may not have otherwise considered doing. This resulted in 35 years of acting in 71 plays for the various Malayalee Associations in Singapore. I had the opportunity to do dramas with the highly respected National award-winning Malayalee actress Aranmula Ponnammamma in the play, 'Raja Hamsam'. Also acted in a play with the multi-talented Thikkurissi Sukumaran Nair and comic genius Adoor Bhasi in the drama 'Akasam Kuttappan' for Singapore Kairalee Kala Nilayam. Winning the T V Sukumar Drama Competition Challenge Trophy for three consecutive years in Drama competitions organised by Kairalee Kala Nilayam was another highlight of my drama journey.

Today as I sit back in my home in Perth and watch my sister Chandrika and my daughter Geetha being involved in the Perth Kairali Club and MAWA activities, I reminisce fondly and joyously my extensive and passionate involvement in the promotion of Malayalam culture and traditions, through my involvement in the Singapore Kerala Association.



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SOCIAL ISOLATION DURING THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A Real Worry and Bad News for the Elderly

What can Our Indian Community Do About It?

Covid-19 has upended daily activities as we have known and become accustomed for the longest time, from catching up with colleagues at the office pantry, to dining out with friends and exercising at the gym.

While life is slowly returning to normal in Singapore, many of us have stories to tell about friends — or even ourselves — feeling lonely or suffering from a sense of social isolation at one point or another during the current crisis. Stories abound of friends and family going on stay-cations just to be able to pack a suitcase to feel again the excitement of air travels and holidays. An acquaintance began taking solo long bus rides to nowhere because she wanted some form of “normalcy” after staring at her computer for hours on end.

Humans are social creatures. An average person spends about 80 percent of his/her time in the company of others. One suffers from loneliness when one perceives oneself to be socially isolated, even when surrounded by other people.

Various research shows that social isolation has been associated with lower psychosocial well-being such as happiness and life satisfaction, poor health effects, mortality and illness. Loneliness, which can occur at any phase of our lives, is not problematic in itself. But prolonged feelings of loneliness put people at risk and can lead them to withdraw themselves from society. This is distinct from the need to

retreat within in search of peace and answers to existential questions through spiritual pursuit. The latter is a conscious decision to be alone in solitude to feel connected spiritually within and with the cosmos.

With loneliness affecting more people than ever in this Covid-19 era of social distancing and periodic lockdowns, how can we prevent feeling socially isolated while retaining a sense of purpose in life?

One solution is to do volunteer work. During a recent engagement session Hock Lin conducted for a group of volunteers to promote well-being and an active lifestyle, one participant said that she felt lonely and homesick when she first arrived in Singapore three years ago, all alone, to work here. She decided to join a volunteer group where she accompanies people with special needs and senior citizens to exercise as well as promotes the use of digital devices among older adults. This helped her to reduce her sense of loneliness as she was able to find new friendships and joy in her new home through a renewed sense of purpose to serve others and the less privileged.

Is volunteerism only for the young or middle-aged individuals? On the contrary. Swapna helped an organisation to form a phone network for seniors by seniors to check on each other during the Circuit Breaker period last year. The network organically grew and sustained well beyond the Circuit Breaker period to become a source of support for senior members to cope with the social isolation arising from social distancing measures.

Pre-Covid, a study conducted by Associate Professor Leong Chan-Hoong from the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) found that volunteering one's time for a worthy cause, e.g., supporting charitable activities or organising community events, did not figure high in Singaporean's list of social norms.

Volunteer work ranked 37th in importance out of 40 types of social norms listed in the survey. However, this may change in the future, if recent events are anything to go by. The past few months have seen more and more Singaporeans, whether individually or in groups, coming forward voluntarily to help those badly affected by the pandemic, such as low-income families whose daily livelihoods have been impacted by the Circuit Breaker and post Circuit Breaker restrictions on movement and business activities in Singapore, vulnerable elderly, Malaysian workers or Indian foreign students stranded here due to their respective country's lockdown.

Hopefully, what started out on an ad hoc basis will turn into something more permanent for these Singaporeans — and others — even after the crisis has abated. Research has also shown that volunteering helps individuals find purpose and meaning in their lives, which can have a long-lasting positive impact on their physical and psychosocial well-being.

To attract more people to do volunteer work, charity and non-profit organisations could offer various

one-off projects without the need for a commitment over a long period of time. These organisations should also not shy away from constantly asking for volunteers since some studies have shown that the No.1 reason why people volunteer is because they were asked.

What does this mean for Indian seniors?

A source of main concern is Indian male seniors who are slowly withdrawing from interaction and participation in society after retirement. Events and activities organised by Indian Organisations are typically supported by senior ladies. Their spouses prefer to stay at home instead of accompanying their spouses to attend these events.

What Indian Organisations could do is re-think their activities strategy. Instead of making futile attempts at drawing senior gentlemen to their venue, they could bring activities that appeal to them closer to their homes. A 'Chai Session' led and organised by senior gentlemen for their peers at heartlands can draw them out of their home caves to meet and discuss issues of interest. With these initial successes, Indian organisations can organise active lifestyle activities that appeal to Indian senior gentlemen, be it walks or even cycling! More can definitely be done to encourage our older adults, both male and female, to exercise more often.

It has often been said that in every crisis, there is an opportunity. The pandemic has given us a chance to reflect on how we can live better with purpose and meaning, at the same time building the social capital to reduce loneliness if it ever comes.

We can take the first step by volunteering in a cause we believe in — not just for the beneficiaries' sake but for ourselves, too. Why not take the first bold move to proactively work as a community to tackle the ills of social isolation especially among our seniors?

As Mahatma Gandhi once said: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."



Sng Hock Lin

Sng Hock Lin is pursuing a PhD in gerontology at the Singapore University of Social Sciences. He completed his master's degree in gerontology at SUSS, where he received the Alice Lim Memorial Fund gold award.

Swapna Dayanandan is pursuing a PhD in gerontology at the Singapore University of Social Sciences. She is recipient of SUSS- Koo Chye Sheng Hong Temple scholarship for her doctorate dissertation. She was former President of Sree Narayana Mission (Singapore) from 2011 – 2015 and currently continues to serve on the Board of the organisation.



Swapna Dayanandan



K.Asokkumar

പ്രതിബിംബിക

ആ മണൽത്തിട്ടയിൽ നിശ്ചലമായ്, നിർജ്ജീവനായ് അവൻ കിടന്നു..
തെളിനീരുവറ്റി, കണ്ണീർക്കണങ്ങളുടെ ഒരു പാനപാത്രമായ് .. കൂടെ ആ കുളിർ
പൊയ്കയും..

മലഞ്ചെരുവുകളിൽ നിന്നും മരതക മുടിക്കച്ചയഴിഞ്ഞുലഞ്ഞുമാദിയായ്..
ഒരപ്സരവിലാപമായ്..ഒരു കുളിർതേങ്ങലായ്..

'ഒട്ടും കുറവല്ല, നിന്റെ ഈ ദുഃഖഭാരം.

എന്തൊരു അഭൗമസൗന്ദര്യധാമമായിരുന്നവൻ!.. തലോടലായ് തെന്നലിൻ
സ്വാന്തനമർമ്മരം..

'അവനത്ര സുന്ദരനോ?' - നീർക്കുമിളകൾ കാറ്റിനോട് സംശയിച്ചു.

വഴിപോക്കരായ ഞങ്ങളോടോ? നിൻ മനതാരിനല്ലേ അതറിയു....

നിന്നെയല്ലേ അവൻ തേടിയലഞ്ഞിരുന്നത്..

നിന്നരികിലല്ലേ നിന്റെ തെളിനീർച്ചായയിൽ അവനവനെ തന്നെ രമിച്ചിരുന്നത്..' -
അലകളൊന്നു തർക്കിച്ചു.

'എന്നരികിൽ ...അവനെനെ നോക്കികിടന്നപ്പോൾ.

എന്റെ സൗരഭ്യമല്ലേ, അവന്റെ കണ്ണിൻ കണ്ണാടിയിൽ പതിഞ്ഞിരുന്നിരുന്നത് ..അത്
കൊണ്ടല്ലേ ഞാൻ അവനേ..' - പൊയ്കയൊന്നു വിതുമ്പി..

അവന്റെ പ്രസന്നതയുടെ മധുകണങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും ,

ആ കണ്ണുകളിൽ നിഴലിച്ച സൗകുമാര്യതയുടെ ദർപ്പണമുകുരങ്ങളിൽ
നിന്നൊരുമുകുളമായ് , പൊയ്കയുടെ അടിത്തട്ടിൽനിന്ന് ഒരു പുഷ്പവല്ലിയുതിർന്നു ..
ഒരു ചെറുപൂഞ്ചിരിയോടെ ആ പൂ ചഞ്ചലമായി, അവനെ നോക്കി ഇതൾ വിടർന്നു
നിന്നു.



Hema

ഉറക്കം

വല്ലാത്ത തലവേദന!

മണി എത്രയായിട്ടുണ്ടാവും? മൊബൈലിന്റെ ടോർച്ച് തെളിച്ച് കട്ടിലിന്റെ ഇടതുവശത്തെ ടീപൊയിൽ നിന്നും ആക്സ് ഓയിലിന്റെ കുപ്പി തുറന്ന് ലേശം വലതു കൈയിലെ ചൂണ്ട് വിരലിൽ പുരട്ടി. ക്ലോക്കിൽ ഒരു മണി! എവിടെയാണ് തേയ്ക്കുക? തല മുഴുവൻ വേദനയാണ്. സഹിയാവാവുന്നതാണെങ്കിലും കഴിഞ്ഞ രണ്ടു ദിവസമായി വിട്ടു മാറാതെ കൂടെ ഉണ്ട്. ചിലപ്പോൾ ഉച്ചിയിൽ, മറ്റു ചിലപ്പോൾ തലയോട്ടിയുടെ മറ്റു ചില ഭാഗത്ത്. ഒരു തരം നാഗിങ് ഹെഡ് എയ്ക്ക്!

കയ്യിലെ ഓയിൽ പിൻകഴുത്തിലും ചെവിക്ക് പുറകിലും നെറ്റിയിലും പുരട്ടി എഴുന്നേറ്റു. ഇനി ഇന്നുറക്കുമുണ്ടാവില്ലേ? നേരത്തെ കിടന്നാൽ ഉറക്കം വരുമെന്ന് മീര പറഞ്ഞത് അനുസരിച്ചാണ് ഇന്ന് എല്ലാം ചെയ്തത്. മീര സൈക്യാട്രിസ്റ്റ് ആണ്- എനിക്ക് ഏറ്റവും നല്ല സുഹൃത്തും. ഇന്നലെ വിളിച്ചപ്പോൾ അവൾ വേഗം ഉറങ്ങാനുള്ള കുറച്ചു ടിപ്പ്സ് പറഞ്ഞു - ഉറങ്ങാൻ കിടക്കുന്നതിന് അര മണിക്കൂർ മുൻപ് മൊബൈൽ ഫോൺ നോക്കി മാറ്റി വെയ്ക്കണം, ഇളം ചൂട് വെള്ളത്തിൽ മുഖം കഴുകി, പറ്റുമെങ്കിൽ കാൽപാദങ്ങളും കഴുകി തുടച്ചുണക്കി വേണം കിടക്കാൻ. കിടന്നാൽ പിന്നെ ആദ്യം ഒന്ന് ചിരിക്കണം - പുഞ്ചിരിച്ചാൽ മതി. മുഖത്തെ പേശികൾ മാത്രമല്ല, ശരീരത്തിലെ മറ്റ് പല പേശികളും അയയും. ശരീരം റിലാക്സ്ഡ് ആവും.

എന്നിട്ടു ചിട്ടയോടെ ശ്വാസോച്ഛാസം ചെയ്യണം. നാല് വരെ എണ്ണുമ്പോൾ ഉള്ളിലേക്കും എട്ട് വരെ എണ്ണുമ്പോൾ പുറത്തേക്കും. കഴിവതും ചിരിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് തന്നെ. അങ്ങനെ ഒരു അഞ്ചാറ് പ്രാവശ്യം ചെയ്യുമ്പോഴേക്കും താനേ ഉറങ്ങി പോകുമത്രെ.

ചിരിയ്ക്കുന്നതെന്തിനാണ് എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിനും അവൾക്കുത്തരം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. നമ്മൾ ബോധപൂർവ്വം ചിരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സ് ചിരിയ്ക്കാൻ വേണ്ടി ഏകാഗ്രമാകും - മറ്റ് ചിന്തകളൊന്നും കടന്നു വരില്ല.

ഇന്ന് ഇതെല്ലാം ഞാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചു. എട്ടരയ്ക്ക് രാത്രി ഭക്ഷണം കഴിച്ചെഴുന്നേറ്റു. പാത്രം കഴുകി അടുക്കള വൃത്തിയാക്കി മൊബൈലിൽ വാട്സാപ്പും ടിറ്ററും ഫേസ്ബുക്കും ഇൻസ്റ്റഗ്രാമും നോക്കി, ഫോൺ സൈലന്റ് മോഡിലാക്കി ടീ-പൊയിൽ കമഴ്ത്തി ചാർജ് ചെയ്യാൻ വെച്ചു. കൈകാലുകളും മുഖവും കഴുകി പല്ലു തേച്ച് മുഖവും കാലും തുടച്ചുണക്കി ഒൻപതോടെ കട്ടിലിൽ കയറി ഇരുന്നു. ബെഡ് ലാമ്പിന്റെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ അമ്മ തന്ന് വിട്ട സന്ധ്യാനാമകീർത്തന പുസ്തകത്തിലെ വിരലിൽ തടഞ്ഞ പേജ് എടുത്തു 'അംബുജാക്ഷി പാഹീ' എന്ന കീർത്തനം ഒരാവർത്തി വായിച്ചു.

ലൈറ്റ് ഓഫ് ആക്കി കിടന്നു പുതച്ചു. ഒന്ന് ചിരിച്ചു - ഇരുട്ടത്ത് ആർ കാണാൻ. യോഗ മാസ്റ്റർ ശവാസനത്തിനു മുൻപ് പറയാറുള്ളത് പോലെ സ്വയം പറഞ്ഞു -റിലാക്സ് യുവർ ടോസ്, റിലാക്സ് യുവർ ഫുട്, അങ്ങിനെ ശരീരത്തിന്റെ മുകളിലേക്ക് ഓരോരോ ഭാഗങ്ങളായി റിലാക്സ് ചെയ്യാൻ സ്വയം ഓർമ്മിപ്പിച്ചു. ചിരിക്കാൻ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ചിരിച്ചു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചു. എണ്ണമെടുത്ത് ശ്വാസം ഉള്ളിലേക്കും പുറത്തേക്കും വലിച്ചു വിട്ടു. എന്നിട്ടു കണ്ണടച്ചു - ഞാൻ ഇപ്പോൾ ഉറങ്ങി എന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചു.

പക്ഷേ ഉറക്കം വഴിമുട്ടി നിന്നു. അപ്പോൾ മീരയുടെ അടുത്ത ടിപ്പ് ഓർത്തു - നിന്റെ ചിന്തകളിലൂടെ പുറകിലേക്ക് സഞ്ചരിച്ചു നോക്കൂ. പക്ഷേ ചിരിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് വേണം ആ യാത്ര! അപ്പോൾ സന്തോഷിക്കാവുന്ന ഓർമ്മകളിലേ ചിന്തകൾ ചെന്നെത്തു. ചിന്തകളിലൂടെയുള്ള യാത്രയിൽ ഉറക്കം താനേ വന്നെത്തും.

ചിന്തകളുടെ സഞ്ചാരത്തിന് പ്രകാശത്തേക്കാൾ വേഗമുണ്ടെന്നു ആരോ പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഏറ്റവും ഒടുവിൽ കടന്നു വന്ന ചിന്തയുടെ ചരടിൽ പിടിച്ചു പുറകിലേക്ക് പോകണം. അതേതാണ്? ഓ, കീർത്തന പുസ്തകം! ചുണ്ടിൽ ചിരി വരുത്തി. വീടിന്റെ ഉമ്മറത്ത് കൊളുത്തി വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന നിലവിളക്ക് തെളിഞ്ഞു. മുത്തശ്ശിയ്ക്കൊപ്പം സന്ധ്യയ്ക്കുള്ള നാമം ചൊല്ലൽ. ഗണപതി സരസ്വതിയിൽ തുടങ്ങി ശിവസ്തുതിയിലും പിന്നെ മുരുകൻ കൃഷ്ണന്മാർ കടന്ന് അയ്യപ്പനിലെത്തി ദേവീസ്തുതിയിൽ അവസാനിക്കുന്ന നാമ ജപം. ഇടയ്ക്കെവിടെയോ ഒരു സ്ത്രീയുടെ ഉറക്കെയുള്ള കരച്ചിൽ - ഏടത്തീ ഓടിവായോന്ന്

പറഞ്ഞു ഓടിവന്ന വലുത്തായിയ്ക്കൊപ്പം വടക്കേ പറമ്പിലേക്കോടുന്ന മുത്തശ്ശി , കൂടെ പെറ്റിക്കോട്ടിട്ട ഞാനുമുണ്ട്. വടക്കേ പറമ്പിലെ മുവാണ്ടൻ മാവിന്റെ കൊമ്പിൽ ലൂങ്കി ഉടുത്തു ആടുന്ന ഒരു രൂപം. മുത്തശ്ശി എന്റെ കണ്ണ് പൊത്തി - അത് കുട്ടമ്മാവനല്ലേ ? അപ്പോൾ അത് സന്ധ്യയല്ല - പുലർച്ചയാണ്. നാമജപം ആയിരുന്നില്ല, മുത്തശ്ശിയുടെ കാലത്തേയുള്ള രാമായണ വായന?

എന്റെ ചുണ്ടിൽ നിന്നും പുഞ്ചിരി മറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു. ചിന്തകളുടെ ചരട് കെട്ട് പിണഞ്ഞു മറ്റൊരിക്കലേയ്ക്കോ എത്തിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. മീര പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട് ചിന്തകൾ നിന്നെയല്ല നീ ചിന്തകളെ ആണ് കടിഞ്ഞാണിടേണ്ടത് എന്ന്. നിൽക്കവിടെ എന്ന് പറയുമ്പോൾ കടിഞ്ഞാണു വീഴുന്ന ചിന്തകളുണ്ടോ ആവോ?

മനസ്സ് ഏകാഗ്രമാക്കി ചുണ്ടിൽ വീണ്ടും ചിരി വരുത്തി. കണ്ണുകളടച്ചു കൊണ്ട് തന്നെ. കീർത്തനപുസ്തകത്തിൽ നിന്നും കാൽ കഴുകലിലേക്ക് - വീടിന്റെ നടമുറ്റത്ത് ആർത്തു പെയ്യുന്ന തുലാമഴ. ഈ കുട്ടികൾക്കുറങ്ങാറായില്ലേ എന്ന അമ്മയുടെ വാക്കുകൾ. കിടപ്പുമുറിയുടെ പടിവാതിൽ കടന്നു ഇടനാഴിയിൽ നിന്ന് ഞാനും ചേച്ചിയും നടമുറ്റത്തെ മഴയിലേക്ക് കാലുകൾ നീട്ടുന്നു. അന്യോന്യം മുഖത്തേക്ക് തട്ടി തെറിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മഴത്തുള്ളികളും പൊട്ടിച്ചിരിക്കളും. എന്താവിടെ ഒരു ബഹളം ഈ രാത്രില് - മുറുക്കാൻ തുപ്പാൻ വടിയും കുത്തി പുറത്തേക്കു വന്ന അപ്പപ്പനാണ്. കറുത്ത ആകാശത്തു മിന്നിയ ഇടിമിന്നലിന്റെ ഒരു നിമിഷത്തെ ഭീകരതയിൽ എങ്ങനെയോ കാൽ വഴുതി നടമുറ്റത്തേക്ക് വീഴുന്ന ചേച്ചി. ചേച്ചിയുടെ തലയുടെ ഇടത് വശത്തുനിന്നും വന്ന ചുമന്ന ചോരയും വായിൽ നിന്ന് വന്ന വെളുത്ത പതയും മുറ്റത്ത് മഴവെള്ളത്തിൽ കൂടിച്ചേരുന്നു. ഒരു സ്വർണ ക്യാൻവാസിൽ ആരോ കുറച്ചു നിറങ്ങൾ കൂട്ടി ചേർത്തത് പോലെ.. ആ നിറങ്ങൾ കുറച്ചു വട്ടം ചുറ്റി വെള്ളത്തിൽ കലങ്ങി ഒഴുകി എങ്ങോ പോയ്ക്കൊണ്ടു.

വേണ്ട! ചിന്തകൾ ഞാൻ പറയുന്നിടത്തേക്ക് പോകണം. തലവേദന കൂടുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഇത് ശരിയാവില്ല. മീര പറഞ്ഞത് വീണ്ടുമോർത്തു - കൈവിട്ടു പോകുമ്പോൾ ആദ്യം ഒരു ദീർഘനിശ്വാസം. എന്നിട്ട് വീണ്ടും ചിരി വരുത്തണം. ചിരി വരാനുള്ള കാര്യങ്ങൾ ആലോചിച്ചു നോക്കൂ - അടുത്തിടെ കണ്ട ഏതെങ്കിലും കോമഡി സിനിമയിലെ രംഗം, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ പണ്ട് കാട്ടിക്കൂട്ടിയ കോളേജ് വികൃതികൾ.. അങ്ങിനെ എന്തെങ്കിലും.

നാല് വർഷത്തെ ഹോസ്റ്റൽ ജീവിതം. ചിരിയും കളിയും തമാശകളും കൂട്ടുകാരും സഹമുറിയരും. വിട്ടുപോയതും വിവാഹത്തിലൂടെ കൂടി ചേർന്നതുമായ കലാലയ പ്രണയങ്ങൾ. ഒന്നിച്ച് കാട്ടിക്കൂട്ടിയ ഹോസ്റ്റൽ ഡേ കലാപരിപാടികൾ, കൂക്ക് വിളികൾ - ഇപ്പോൾ ചിരി ചുണ്ടിൽ തന്നെ ഉണ്ട്. ഇത്തവണ ചിന്തകളേ, നിങ്ങൾ എന്റെ നിയന്ത്രണത്തിലാകുന്നു എന്ന് മനസ്സിൽ പറഞ്ഞു. ഒന്ന് തിരിഞ്ഞു കിടന്നു. ചിലപ്പോൾ

ഇപ്പോൾ ഉറങ്ങി പോകുമായിരിക്കും എന്ന് കരുതി. പക്ഷേ -

ഓർമ്മകളുടെ കയ്യിൽ കൂട്ടുകാരി പ്രമീളയുടെ വലതു കയ്യിലാണ്. വർഷങ്ങൾ ചിലത് കഴിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു. പ്രമീളയുടെയും വിനീതിന്റേയും കല്യാണത്തിന് ശേഷം ആദ്യമായാണ് അന്നവളെ കണ്ടത് - നിന്റെ കയ്യിലെന്താ ഈ ചുമന്ന പാട്? മൂക്കാൽ കൈയുള്ള ടോപ്പിന്റെ കൈ വലിച്ചു താഴോട്ടേക്കാക്കി അവൾ പറഞ്ഞു - ഏയ്, ഒന്നുമില്ല. താഴേക്ക് തെന്നി മാറിയപ്പോൾ വെളിച്ചം കണ്ട കഴുത്തിലും ചുമന്നു തിണിർത്ത പാട്! പ്രമീളാ, എന്താണിത്? ഞങ്ങൾ പിരിയുന്നു, അയാൾ ഒരു സൈക്കോ ആണ് - അവളതു പറഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ ആ കണ്ണുകളിൽ എന്ത് വികാരമായിരുന്നു? അറിയില്ല. അയാളിൽ നിന്ന് വേർപെട്ടു പ്രമീള എന്റെ കൂടെ വന്നു താമസിച്ച ദിനങ്ങൾ - അയാളോടൊപ്പം കഴിഞ്ഞ ചില രാത്രികളിലെ ക്രൂരത ഓർത്തെടുത്ത് പൊട്ടി പൊട്ടി കരയുന്ന പ്രമീള! പിന്നീടൊരിക്കൽ എന്നോട് പറയാതെ എന്നെ വിട്ട് അവൾ പോയി. കണ്ടു പിടിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചില്ല. ശ്രമിച്ചാൽ, എന്തായി എന്നറിഞ്ഞാൽ ചിലപ്പോൾ താങ്ങാൻ പറ്റിയില്ലെങ്കിലോ?

ചിരി മാഞ്ഞു. എന്റെ കവിളിലൂടെ ഒഴുകിയിറങ്ങുന്ന കണ്ണുനീർ. തലവേദന വീണ്ടും കലശ്ശലായി. കൈ കൊണ്ട് കണ്ണ് നീർ തുടച്ചു വീണ്ടും ദീർഘ നിശ്വാസം. ഇല്ല - ഹോസ്റ്റൽ ഓർമ്മകളിലും ചിരി ശാശ്വതമല്ല. ഇനി കോമഡി സിനിമ? അതിന് സിനിമ കണ്ടിട്ട് തന്നെ കാലം കുറെയായി. അപ്പോഴാണ് എഴുന്നേറ്റതും സമയം നോക്കിയതും ആക്സ് ഓയിൽ പുരട്ടിയതും.

മീര ചോദിക്കാറുണ്ട് - എന്തിന് ഒറ്റയ്ക്ക് താമസം. ഒന്നുകിൽ പേയിങ് ഗസ്റ്റ് ആയി ഏതെങ്കിലും ഫാമിലിയോടൊപ്പം മാറൂ, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കൂടെ ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒന്ന് രണ്ടു പെൺകുട്ടികളെ കൂട്ട് വിളിച്ച് താമസിപ്പിക്കൂ. അല്ലാതെ ഒറ്റയ്ക്ക് ജീവിച്ചാൽ ഇനിയങ്ങോട്ട് ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടാണ് കൂട്ടീ. ഈ ചെറുപ്രായത്തിൽ ഉറങ്ങാനുള്ള മരുന്നൊക്കെ ശരിയാവില്ല!

എനിക്കുത്തരമില്ല മീരാ. പ്രമീളയ്ക്ക് ശേഷം കൂട്ട് നോക്കിയിട്ടില്ല. കൂട്ടുകാരും. ഞാനും എന്റെ ചിന്തകളും എന്റെ ലോകവും- അത് മതി എനിയ്ക്ക്.

ആക്സ് ഓയിൽ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു തുടങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നു - തലവേദനയ്ക്ക് ശമനം ഉണ്ടെന്നല്ല - പക്ഷേ തല ഒന്ന് തണുത്തതുപോലെ. കൈവിട്ടു പാഞ്ഞ ചിന്തകൾ എന്റെ മുന്നര മണിയ്ക്കൂർ സമയമാണ് കളഞ്ഞത്. വേണ്ട, ചിന്തകളിലൂടെയുള്ള സഞ്ചാരം എനിക്ക് ശരിയാവില്ല മീരാ.

ഒരു തവണ കൂടി ഉറങ്ങാൻ നോക്കട്ടെ, അവസാന ശ്രമം. മീരയുടെ മറ്റൊരു ടിപ്പ് - നിനക്ക് വാച്ച് ചെയ്തു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കാൻ ഇഷ്ടമുള്ള എന്തിനെയെങ്കിലും മനസ്സിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ട് വരിക. അനന്തമായ ഒന്ന് - ചുമന്ന ചക്രവാളം, ബീച്ച് അങ്ങിനെ എന്തെങ്കിലും. കണ്ണടച്ച് കൊണ്ട് തന്നെ മനസ്സ് ആ അനന്തതയിലേക്ക് ഏകാഗ്രമാക്കണം. അവിടെ നീ എന്താണ് കാണുന്നത്?

വീണ്ടും ഞാൻ കിടന്നു, പുതച്ചു, ശ്വാസം വലിച്ചു വിട്ടു. അനന്തത. ചക്രവാളം കാണുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഭൂമിയെ ആകാശത്തിൽ നിന്ന് വേർതിരിക്കുന്ന പ്രത്യക്ഷ രേഖ. അവസാനമായി അങ്ങനെ ചക്രവാളം കണ്ടത് എന്നാണ്? ഓർമ്മയില്ല. ഈ വീടിന്റെ ബാൽക്കണിയിൽ പുലർച്ചെ ചെന്ന് നിന്ന് നോക്കുമ്പോൾ അനന്തമായ ആകാശം കാണാമോ? ശ്രദ്ധിച്ചിട്ടില്ല. പക്ഷെ എന്നും കാലത്ത് ബാൽക്കണിയിൽ കൂട്ടിനുണ്ടാവാൻ നീണ്ട വരിയിൽ നിരനിരയായി പോകുന്ന കുഞ്ഞ് കറുത്ത ഉറുമ്പുകളാണ്. ബായ് വന്നു എന്നും അടിച്ചു വാരിയിട്ടായാലും പിറ്റേന്ന് വീണ്ടും ഉറുമ്പുകളുടെ നീണ്ട വരി കാണാം. ബാൽക്കണിയുടെ ഒരു കോണിൽ നിന്ന് വന്ന് മറ്റൊരു കോണിലേക്ക് നീളുന്ന വരി. ആ നീണ്ട വരിയുടെ തുടക്കവും ഒടുക്കവും കണ്ടു പിടിക്കാൻ നോക്കി. സാധിച്ചില്ല. താഴത്തെ വീട്ടിലെ ബാൽക്കണിയുടെ മേൽക്കൂരയിലേക്കാവാം അവറ്റകൾ പോകുന്നത്.

ആ ഉറുമ്പുകളുടെ വരിയും ഒരർത്ഥത്തിൽ അനന്തമല്ലേ? എനിക്കതിന്റെ ഒടുക്കം കാണാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നില്ല - തുടക്കവും. തുടക്കവും ഒടുക്കവും ഇല്ലാത്തത് ചക്രവാളം - ഉറുമ്പുകളുടെ വരി പോലെ. അനന്തമായത്! പണ്ടെങ്ങോ നാഷണൽ ജിയോഗ്രഫി ചാനലിൽ ഉറുമ്പുകളെ വെച്ച് നടത്തിയ ഡോക്യുമെന്ററിയിൽ ലെൻസ് വഴി കണ്ട ഉറുമ്പിന്റെ രൂപം ഓർത്തെടുത്തു. ഉന്തിയ കണ്ണുകളും മുന്നോട്ട് നിൽക്കുന്ന രണ്ട് ആന്റിനയും ആറ് കാലുകളും ഒരു കൊച്ചു ഉടലും ഉള്ള കൊച്ചു ജീവി. കണ്ണടച്ച് കൊണ്ട് ഞാൻ എന്റെ മനസ്സിനെ ആ ഉറുമ്പുകളുടെ വരിയിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ട് പോയി - ഓരോ ഉറുമ്പിനെയും സൂക്ഷ്മമായി നോക്കാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചു. വളരെ അടുത്ത്. അപ്പോൾ അവ എന്റെ അടുത്തേക്ക് വന്നു.

അടുത്ത് വന്ന ഒന്നിന്റെ രൂപം മാറുന്നു. അത് ചിരിയ്ക്കുകയാണ്. ചിരിയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ പല്ലുകളും കാണാമിപ്പോൾ. നിരയൊത്ത പല്ലുകൾ. ചേച്ചിയുടേത് പോലെ. അതിന്റെ ആന്റിന നീണ്ടു വരുന്നു കൈയായി മാറുന്നു. ചേച്ചിയുടേത് പോലെ നീണ്ടു ഭംഗിയുള്ള വിരലുകൾ. ഇളം റോസ് നിറത്തിലെ നഖങ്ങൾ. അവ ഇപ്പോൾ എന്റെ കവിളിലാണ്. മെല്ലെ കവിളിൽ തലോടുന്ന കൈകൾ. മറ്റൊരു ഉറുമ്പ് ഇപ്പോൾ എന്റെ തലമുടിയിൽ കയറുന്നു. അതിന്റെ ആന്റിന നീണ്ടു മറ്റൊരു കൈ ആയി - അമ്മയുടേത് പോലെ തണുവുള്ള കൈവിരലുകൾ. അവ തലയിൽ തലോടുന്നു. ഇനിയൊരു ഉറുമ്പിന്റെ ആന്റിന നീണ്ടു വന്നു ഇടതു തോളിൽ മറ്റൊരു കൈ ആയി മാറി - മുത്തശ്ശി ഇറക്കെ ചേർത്ത് പിടിക്കാറുള്ളത് പോലെ ചേർത്ത് പിടിക്കുന്നു. എനിക്ക് ഭാരമില്ലാത്തതു പോലെ. ഉറുമ്പുകളുടെ കൈകാലുകൾ എന്നെ ഉയർത്തുകയാണ്, അവ വരിയിൽ നടന്നു എന്നെയും കൊണ്ട് പോകുകയാണ്, ആ അനന്തതയിലേക്ക്. ഞാൻ ഉറങ്ങുകയാണോ മീര? ഉറക്കത്തിൽ സ്വപ്നം കാണുകയാണോ?

വിശപ്പ്



Savina

വക്കുപൊട്ടി
തിളക്കം മങ്ങിയൊരു
സ്റ്റീൽപാത്രവും സ്പൂണും പിടിച്ച്,
പിന്നു കുത്തി ഉടുത്ത യൂണിഫോമിൽ,
ഇടുങ്ങിയ നീളൻ വരാനയിൽ
ഉച്ചക്കഞ്ഞിക്കായി
വരി നില്ക്കുന്നു
വിശപ്പിനാൽ കുമ്പിപ്പോയൊരു പെൺകുഞ്ഞ്.

രണ്ടാമത്തെ പിരിയഡിൽ
പഠിച്ച മുന്നിന്റെ ഗുണനപ്പട്ടികയും
ഒരു പുറം നിറയെയെഴുതിയ
ഇദ് ഉൽ ഫിത്തർ എന്ന വാക്കും
വിശപ്പ് തലയിൽ നിന്നു മാർച്ചു കളഞ്ഞിരുന്നു.

രാവിലെ കുടിച്ച കട്ടൻ ചായയിലെ
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ആകാവുന്നത്ര ബലത്തിൽ
ആ കുഞ്ഞു ശരീരത്തെ താങ്ങി നിർത്തി;
കാറ്റു പോലും വീശാതെ മാറി നിന്നു .

വരിയെത്തി.
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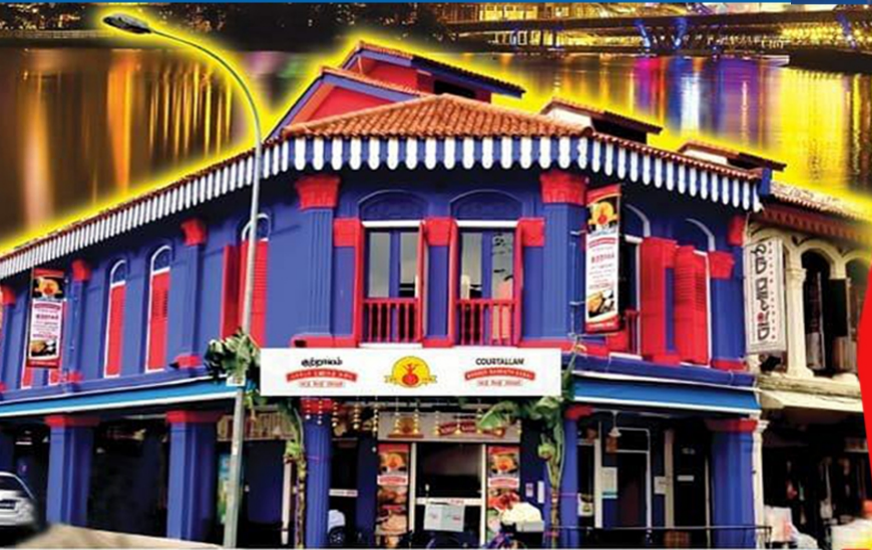
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ജീവിത പാഠം ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കിയത് ഈ കാലത്താണ്. പല തരം ജോലികൾ ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കാനുള്ള അവസരം ഇവിടെ നിന്ന് എനിക്ക് ലഭിച്ചു.

കുറച്ച് കാലം മുൻപ്, രണ്ടുമാസം ഞാൻ പത്രം ഇടാൻ പോയിരുന്നു. നാട്ടിൽ പത്രം ഇടുന്ന പോലെ അത്ര എളുപ്പമല്ല ഇവിടെ. ബഹുനില ഫ്ലാറ്റുകളിലാണ് ഭൂരിപക്ഷം ആളുകളും താമസിക്കുന്നത്. അതുകൊണ്ട് തന്നെ ഈ നിലകൾ മുകളിൽ നിന്നും പത്രം ഇട്ടുകൊണ്ടിറങ്ങി വരണം. വേഗത്തിൽ ഇട്ടു തീരാൻ ലിഫ്റ്റ് ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ പടികളിറങ്ങുന്നതാണ് നല്ലത്. പുലർച്ചെ മൂന്ന് മണിക്ക് പോകും. രാവിലെ ഏഴ് മണിയോടെ തിരിച്ച് വീട്ടിൽ എത്തും. എന്നിട്ടാണ് ഉറങ്ങുക. പത്രം ഇടാൻ വേണ്ടി മാത്രം ഒരു ദിവസം പത്രണ്ട് കിലോ മീറ്ററോളം നടന്നിരുന്നെന്ന സത്യം വളരെ വൈകിയാണ് ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നത്. എന്റെ സുഹൃത്ത് സിറിലും ഒപ്പമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു, പക്ഷേ വേറെ രൂട്ടിൽ ആയിരുന്നു.

സത്യം പറഞ്ഞാൽ ഇതുവരെ ചെയ്തതിൽ വെച്ച് തികച്ചും വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ജോലികളിൽ ഒന്ന്. ആരും ഭരിക്കാൻ ഇല്ല. നിശ്ശബ്ദത നിറഞ്ഞു നിൽക്കുന്ന സമയത്താണ് ജോലി. സമയബന്ധിതമല്ലാത്തതിനാൽ അല്പം വൈകിയാലും ആരും ഒന്നും പറയില്ല. പാട്ട് കേട്ട് ആസ്വദിച്ചു ജോലി ചെയ്യാം.

അപ്പോഴാണ് ഒരു ദിവസം എന്നെ വല്ലാതെ സ്പർശിച്ച ഒരു കൊച്ചു സംഭവം ഉണ്ടാകുന്നത്. പത്രം ഇട്ടു തുടങ്ങുന്ന ആദ്യ കെട്ടിടത്തിലെ എട്ടാം നിലയിലെ ഒരു വീട്ടിൽ പത്രം ഇടുന്ന പെട്ടിയിൽ ഒരു 100പ്ലസ് ഐസോടോണിക് ക്യാൻ ഡ്രിങ്ക് തിരുകി വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. ഞാൻ അത് ശ്രദ്ധിക്കാതെ വാതിൽക്കൽ പത്രം ഇട്ട് ജോലി തുടർന്നു. പിറ്റേന്ന് ആ വീട്ടിൽ പത്രം ഇടാനായി ചെന്നപ്പോൾ ഒരു അപ്പപ്പൻ എനിക്ക് വേണ്ടി വാതിൽക്കൽ കാത്തു നിന്നിരുന്നു. അന്ന് പത്രം വരാൻ വൈകിയത് കൊണ്ട് ഞാനും വൈകിയാണ് എത്തിയത്. അദ്ദേഹം ഏറെ നേരം കാത്തുനിന്നിട്ടുണ്ടാവണം. ഞാൻ അടുത്തെത്തി സുപ്രഭാതം ആശംസിച്ചു, അദ്ദേഹം തിരിച്ചും, എന്നിട്ട് എന്നോട് പറഞ്ഞു 'ഇനി ഈ ക്യാൻ ഇവിടെ കണ്ടാൽ എടുത്തിട്ട് പൊക്കോളണം'. എനിക്ക് പെട്ടെന്ന് മനസ്സിലായില്ല. ഇനി ആ ഡ്രിങ്ക് എന്റെ ആയിരിക്കുമെന്ന് തെറ്റിദ്ധരിച്ചാണോ അദ്ദേഹം അങ്ങനെ പറഞ്ഞതെന്ന് ഞാൻ സംശയിച്ചു.

അദ്ദേഹം വീണ്ടും പറഞ്ഞു. 'ഇത് ഇനി ഇവിടെ കണ്ടാൽ നിനക്കെടുക്കാം, ഇത് ഞാൻ നിനക്ക് വേണ്ടി വെക്കുന്നതാണ്'. ഞാൻ പെട്ടെന്ന് വല്ലാതായി. സന്തോഷം കൊണ്ട് നന്ദി പറയാൻ വാക്കുകൾ കിട്ടിയില്ല. അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ ആ പ്രവൃത്തി എന്നെ സ്പർശിച്ചു. നമ്മുടെ നാട്ടിൽ പോലുമൊരു പത്രക്കാരന് ഇങ്ങനെയൊരു അനുഭവമുണ്ടാകില്ലെന്ന് എനിക്ക് തോന്നി. വംശീയതയെ ഇവിടുത്തെ ഭരണകൂടം ഒരു രീതിയിലും പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്നില്ല, എങ്കിലും ഇവിടെ ചിലരിലെങ്കിലും അത്തരം മനോഭാവങ്ങൾ അപൂർവ്വമായി കണ്ടേക്കാം. എന്നാലിവിടെ ചൈനീസ് വംശജനായ അദ്ദേഹത്തിന് ഒരു കൊച്ചു പ്രവൃത്തിയിലൂടെ വലിയ

രീതിയിൽ എന്റെ മനസ്സ് നിറയ്ക്കാൻ സാധിച്ചു. അദ്ദേഹം എന്നെ കാണുന്നത് തന്നെ ആദ്യമായിട്ടാണ്. ഒരു നല്ല പ്രവൃത്തി, അത് ചെറുതാകട്ടെ വലുതാകട്ടെ, അത് ചെയ്യുന്നതിൽ ജാതിയും, മതവും, ദേശവും, വർണ്ണവും ഒന്നും ഒരു പ്രശ്നമല്ല എന്ന് അദ്ദേഹം പ്രവൃത്തിയിലൂടെ തെളിയിച്ചു.

അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ ആ പ്രവൃത്തി ഒരു ദിവസത്തിൽ ഒരുങ്ങി നിന്നില്ല. അത് പിന്നെയും ആവർത്തിച്ചു. ഇത് സിറിലിനോട് പറഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ ആണ് അറിയുന്നത് എനിക്ക് മുൻപ് പത്രം ഇട്ടിരുന്ന റാസിക്ക് ഇദ്ദേഹം ഒരു വലിയ ബാർ ഡയറി മിൽക്ക് ചോക്ലേറ്റ് കൊടുത്തിട്ടുണ്ട് ത്രെ. കുറച്ചു മാസങ്ങൾക്കു മുൻപാണ് എനിക്ക് ഈ ജോലി നിർത്തേണ്ടി വന്നത്. അവസാനത്തെ ദിവസം ഞാൻ ഒരു കുറിപ്പ് പത്രത്തിനൊപ്പം ആ പെട്ടിയിൽ ഇട്ടു. അതിങ്ങനെയാണിരുന്നത്.

" Hi

Today is my last day of newspaper work and I really wanna thank you for the drinks! It means a lot! Stay safe and take care!

Newspaper boy

കുറച്ചു ദിവസങ്ങൾക്ക് ശേഷം പുലർച്ചെ ഞാൻ ഉറക്കമുണർന്നപ്പോൾ, എനിക്ക് പകരം ഇപ്പോൾ പത്രം ഇടുന്ന എന്റെ സുഹൃത്ത് മിലിന്റെ ഒരു വാട്ട്സ്ആപ്പ് മെസ്സേജും അറിയാത്ത നമ്പറിൽ നിന്നൊരു മിസ്ഡ് കോളും. ഈ അപ്പുപ്പനെ പറ്റി മിലിനോട് ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്. അവന്റെ മെസ്സേജ് ഇങ്ങനെയാണിരുന്നത്. അപ്പുപ്പൻ എന്റെ പേരും നമ്പറും വാങ്ങിയിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നും വിളിക്കാനോ മെസ്സേജ് അയക്കാനോ സാധ്യത ഉണ്ടെന്നും. മിസ്ഡ് കോൾ അപ്പുപ്പന്റെ ആണെന്ന് ഞാൻ ഉറപ്പിച്ചു. നേരം പുലർന്നതിനു ശേഷം ഞാൻ തിരിച്ചു വിളിച്ചു. അദ്ദേഹം വളരെ സന്തോഷവാനായിരുന്നു. എന്നെ കാണണമെന്നും എനിക്ക് ഉച്ചഭക്ഷണം വാങ്ങിത്തരണമെന്നും ആഗ്രഹം പ്രകടിപ്പിച്ചു. എനിക്കും സന്തോഷമായി. കാണാമെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞുറപ്പിച്ചിരുന്ന സമയം അൽപ്പം നേരത്തേയ്ക്കാൻ കഴിയുമോ എന്നറിയാൻ വേണ്ടി വാട്ട്സ്ആപ്പ് മെസ്സേജ് അയച്ചപ്പോൾ അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രൊഫൈൽ പിക്ചർ കണ്ട് ഞാൻ അമ്പരന്നു. ഒരു പോലീസ് ബൈക്കിൽ അദ്ദേഹം ഇരിക്കുന്ന ചിത്രം!

ഞങ്ങൾ പറഞ്ഞ സ്ഥലത്തു കണ്ടുമുട്ടി. ഭക്ഷണം വാങ്ങിത്തരുന്നതിന് മുൻപ് അദ്ദേഹം കയ്യിൽ കരുതിയിരുന്ന കവർ എന്റെ കയ്യിൽ തന്നു. അതിൽ ഒരു 100പ്ലസ് ഡ്രിങ്കും രണ്ട് പോലീസ് വണ്ടികളുടെ ഫ്രസ്ത രൂപങ്ങളും ആയിരുന്നു. മൂപ്പത്തിരണ്ട് വർഷത്തിലധികം പോലീസ് സേവനമനുഷ്ഠിച്ചു ഇപ്പോൾ റിട്ടയർ ആയി ജീവിക്കുകയാണ് ആ മനുഷ്യൻ. എന്നെ സ്പർശിച്ചത് അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രവൃത്തിയാണെങ്കിൽ അദ്ദേഹത്തെ സ്പർശിച്ചത് എന്റെ കുറിപ്പായിരുന്നു. അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞതിങ്ങനെയാണ്. ഇതുപോലെയുള്ള പ്രവൃത്തികൾ മുൻപും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട് പക്ഷേ ആദ്യമായാണ് ഒരാൾ അങ്ങനെയൊരു കുറിപ്പ് എഴുതി വെക്കുന്നത്. ഇനി ഇത്തരം കുറിപ്പ് എഴുതി വെക്കാൻ അവസരം കിട്ടിയാൽ ദയവു ചെയ്ത് പേരും നമ്പറും എഴുതാൻ മറക്കരുത്. ചിരിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് അദ്ദേഹം ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ടു. മിലിൻ എന്റെ

സുഹൃത്താണെന്ന് അറിയുമായിരുന്നില്ല എന്നും എന്റെ നമ്പർ ലഭിക്കാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടി എന്നും അദ്ദേഹം കൂട്ടിച്ചേർത്തു. പറഞ്ഞറിയിക്കാൻ പറ്റാത്ത ഒരു അനുഭവം ആയിരുന്നു ആ കൂടികാഴ്ച!

ആദ്യം പറഞ്ഞതുപോലെ,കൊച്ചു കൊച്ചു കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ സൗന്ദര്യവും ആനന്ദവും കണ്ടെത്താൻ ശ്രമിക്കുമ്പോഴേ ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള കാര്യങ്ങൾ ആസ്വദിക്കാനും അതിലൂടെ സന്തോഷിക്കാനും കഴിയുകയുള്ളൂ എന്ന് ഞാൻ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ട് തന്നെയാവണം എന്തെങ്കിലും എഴുതണമെന്ന് തോന്നുമ്പോൾ എന്റെ മനസ്സിലേക്ക് ആദ്യം വരുന്നത് ഇത്തരം ചെറിയ അനുഭവങ്ങളാണ്. തിരിച്ചൊന്നും പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ചു ചെയ്യാത്ത ഓരോ ചെറിയ പ്രവൃത്തിയും വളരെ വിലപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. ഒരു പക്ഷെ ചുറ്റുമൊന്ന് നിരീക്ഷിച്ചാൽ ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള പ്രവൃത്തികൾ നമുക്ക് കാണാൻ സാധിച്ചേക്കാം. പലപ്പോഴും നമ്മൾ അത് ശ്രദ്ധിക്കാതെ പോകുന്നതായിരിക്കാം. ബുദ്ധൻ പറഞ്ഞതുപോലെ ‘ സന്തോഷം ഒരുപാട് വാങ്ങുന്നതിലല്ല, ഒരുപാട് നൽകുന്നതിൽ ആണ് ‘



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Singapore Malayalee Literary Forum, a sub committee of the Singapore Malayalee Association, conducted a virtual programme in honor of the authors of the novel, 'Sembawang'- Smt Kamaladevi Aravindan, and Dr Anitha Devi Pillai, her daughter who translated the tamil novel into English. Mr Viswa Sadasivan, SMA's current advisor and past president, as well as former NMP, delivered the keynote speech, where he gave an extensive review of the book. The transcript which he kindly shared, is reflected below. The session also included a commentary on the author's works by Mr Suresh Kumar. The highlight of the session was the interaction with the author, who shared in depth about her extensive research, incidents and people who influenced her writing, and the nuances involved in blending fiction and history.

SINGAPORE MALAYALEE ASSOCIATION ONLINE FORUM

Saturday 7th of August 2021

A literary Session with the author of Sembawang – A Novel

Keynote Speech by Viswa Sadasivan


Introduction

- Good evening, President SMA, the illustrious author of Sembawang – A Novel, Madam Kamaladevi Aravindan, the talented and prolific Dr Anitha Devi Pillai who translated the book into English, and dear friends.

- I consider it an honour and privilege to be given this opportunity to say a few words about this amazing fictional history – a labour of love for the writer and her daughter...an evocative, emotional, epiphanic sojourn for the reader, especially one who is semi-initiated, like me.
- I spent 4 straight hours reading the book – the English version. [Reading the Tamil version would have taken 3 times the duration!] It was such a compelling read that I just couldn't put it down. And it's evident that the nuances weren't lost in translation.
😊
- Dear Mdm Kamaladevi and Anitha – the Indian community and indeed, the Singapore society is indebted to you for giving us Sembawang – A Novel. The book serves as a tribute to a very important part of Singapore and our shared history. It has rekindled interest in Sembawang and brought back fond memories of “Kochu Keralam”. The Malayalee community is especially proud of you for this achievement. We applaud you. Congratulations!
- For a literary piece, language is important. Just as important or perhaps even more important is the authenticity of the narrator's voice. Projecting this authenticity is especially challenging when it's fictional history where facts need to meet imagination, credibly. It's even harder when the author is emotionally invested in the narrative – as is the case here. She's got to convey the emotions surrounding the story without being obtrusive in making her point.
- This is what Kamaladevi said about why she embarked on the multi-year journey writing this book: “Sembawang is my humble attempt to capture the essence of time...and the life experiences of many from my soil.” In my view, Kamaladevi achieved this right.

Capturing History

- Historical events and turning points are skillfully weaved into the narrative, enhancing the reader's appreciation for the life and times in the Singapore of the 1960s and 1970s.
- In page 63 (chapter 4), we are introduced to Chetti Melakas a mixed heritage sub-ethnic community that originated in Malaysia. The late President SR Nathan was




from this community. The book introduces Rangan as a Chetti Melaka. [Pg 63] “Rangan’s mother always wore a baju kurung and his father a lungi and a colourful shirt. Rangan explained that his mother was Malay and his father a Tamil...Chetti Melakas were a distinct group of people with a mixed parentage of Indians and Malays. The area was called Kampong Chetti.”

- Then, much to my delight, I read in page 78 about the ship – the State of Madras. It brought back for me vivid memories of travelling aboard this ship in the 1960s to Madras and back. Let me just say it was an adventure – 7 days in the choppy seas of the Bay of Bengal. The story in the book is about Kader Bhai bringing the young Mathai – an orphan – to Singapore. [pg 78] “He guided Mathai’s hands on the rope ladder. Mathai pressed his legs down on the rope ladder and reached out for the rope above his head...Only when he entered the ship did he have a sigh of relief...when Mathai entered the dormitory room, he realized that there would be two others in the room too. As Mathai walked around, many new sights awaited him. Holding a canvas-like pillow, many men were lying on the ground in the deck. These people bought a cheaper ticket....”
- Then there was the detailed description of the infamous Japanese death trip – called the Siam Railway during the second world war. This account was told through the story of how Sangayya or “Siam Thaatha” lost his legs. [210/211] “The Japanese had gathered Tamils, Ceylonese, Malays, Chinese and Burmese to clear the jungles for a railway line...men were dying like flies around him from exhaustion, starvation and illness. Those who were not able to work were shot with no mercy. The dead bodies were gathered and dumped into a shallow hole that was dug out by the remaining prisoners and covered with sand.”


Social Commentary

- Apart from embedding history in the storyline, Kamaladevi weaved in messages that made us think and reflect. It is social commentary that cleverly gets into our system intravenously! Most effective, I must say. ☺
- She describes how the Kranis or supervisors – who were mainly Malayalees or Sri Lankan Tamils – looked down on the estate workers who were mainly Tamil and



indentured. Sadly, even till this day Malayalees appear to have this orientation towards the Tamils! Kamaladevi used humour to capture how much the estate workers hated the Kranis and gave them hilarious nicknames: [Pg 43/44] “Kungkumutti Krani looked like a huge barrel with his massive tummy. Lol Lol Krani barked like a dog and was named ‘lol lol’ to mimick the bark of a dog. Mandai Moonju Krani or ‘head-faced Krani’ would constantly scold them by asking, ‘is there anything in your head?’”

- Sembawang has a lot references to alcohol abuse – as a primary escape for the poor and helpless. Unfortunately, the Indian community is till today struggling with this entrapment. In the novel, there’s the story of how three young men in a drunken state gang-raped two nurses in the Maternal and Child Health Clinic in Sembawang. [The actual account is that 4 young men were charged for this heinous crime.] The novel also presents wife battering and abuse as being very much the norm especially when there’s the struggle to make ends meet. Even when the woman is working multiple jobs or shifts, she’s expected to do the household chores and raise the children. It’s the sovereign right of the man to demand high quality cooking at home and then to recharge the spirit through alcohol! It still happens today especially in the Indian community. This is how Kamaladevi captures it most colourfully: [ps 32/33] “When Kaali returned, Munusamy – her husband – too walked into their home. As usual, the man was reeking of toddy. Like his son, he too hurriedly ate his dinner and promptly fell asleep. It was only now that Kaali could do the odd jobs around the house...Munusamy would wake up at dawn, in time for the peratu or roll-call just as she was about to leave the home. Munusamy would run into the forest to take care of his morning business, pour a few buckets of water over his head in a jiffy...drink the coffee that Kaali made for him...and rush out of the door before Kaali for his peratu. She would be right on his heels to report for her job.”
- Another major social theme that Kamaladevi highlights is re-entry by ex-convicts into society and our capacity for empathy and willingness to forgive. It is about how easily we forget our own frailties and failings in our self-righteous judging of others. There’s a powerful section in the book where this ethnic Chinese man, Gabriel, gives brotherly advise to Vellayaa – an ex-convict who had a fist-fight with another Indian



entrepreneur: [Pg 235/236] “Do you know during the Japanese Occupation, how the Japanese tortured the Chinese, Vellaya?...You know, they told the Chinese folks to turn up at Jalan Besar for compulsory registration...The Japanese soldiers inspected them, tied their hands behind their back, loaded them on lorries and took them to Tanah Merah Besar beach...the heartless soldiers shot them in their backs with machine guns. The men fell like worms to the ground...their bodies were left there to rot...some bodies were claimed by screaming and crying relatives...the Japanese went on killing rampages and admitted to them much later. But what can we do to them? Aren’t we all living? Look at how much my community has progressed! Think about it. If we can forgive murderers, can’t you forgive one another? How can you fight with each other? It doesn’t matter who is at fault?...Gilbert spoke for a long time before parting ways. It was a matter of learning to live and let live.”

Women Empowering Themselves

- Clearly the most compelling theme in Sembawang is how women – no matter how much they are put down – find their own dignity, energy and power to keep going. Women have always been the backbone of the family unit and, indeed, of society. In many ways women are stronger and more resilient than men. There’s enough evidence that wives outlive their husbands much Mubetter than when it is the other way around.
- It is precisely for this reason – that women are generally more responsible and accountable – that Prof Muhammad Yunus started the famous Grameen Bank with women as the focus. The micro-loans were given only to women in Bangladesh. Billions of US dollars of loans have been given out. Amazingly, the default rate is close to zero! It speaks volumes.
- The women featured in Sembawang, especially the protagonist, Kaali, is the quintessential woman with fire in her belly and steel in her nerve. She’s one of those women who keeps getting up when smacked, kicked and pushed to the ground. In Malayalam, you call it “aantarika shakti”. She also had “chona”! As a vegetable store assistant, Kaali, “learnt how to weigh vegetables, when to give a few extra

vegetables to those who bought a lot of vegetables...she was a quick learner and learnt how to run the shop in a month. The person who was most happy with this turn of events was Muthulechimi, who was happy that her friend had found a way out of the problems in her life....”

- What I found particularly inspirational was this powerful sisterhood among the women in Sembawang. It is admirable how they were able to rise above their petty issues or idiosyncrasies and stand up for each other when it counts. I grew up witnessing this, and I still see it. We have witnessed it all the time, for years, in the Singapore Malayalee Association – where women are the silent sentinels. Kamaladevi captures this with such skill that we internalize the message subliminally. It is still style which converts the mind and shifts attitude.
- The novel ends in celebration of Kaali’s resilience that allows her to keep going even when the odds are stacked against her. It’s the ability to stretch the dollar. It is the ability to not just see the bottle as half-full but actually make it so. It is attitude. [Pg. 254/255] “Munusamy was now eighty-five years old. He had severe memory loss. He was completely dependent on Kaali...she was still spritely for a seventy-eight year old Paati. She did all her chores and cooked all the meals in the home...Once Munusamy showed his displeasure by throwing the plate of food she had placed in front of him at the wall. Kaali did not say anything. Instead, she ignored him for the next two days....As first-generation migrants, their lives had turned out well. She was in reasonably good health which she attributed to working long hours as a maid when she was younger. She was grateful that they had moved to Singapore at the right time. There was a tinge of sadness about the life they had left behind at 13th Mile. Those days would always have a special place in her heart. When the news ended, she went into the kusini (or kitchen) to prepare a bowl of oats for Munusamy. The old woman’s heart was content.”

Conclusion

What a powerful yet understated acknowledgement of women – Indian women – who have long suffered, mostly in silence, their dignity intact. To me, this is the strongest take-away from Sembawang – A Novel. It should remind us of the women in our lives –

our wives, sisters, daughters and most of all, our mothers.

In essence, Sembawang is about real stories involving real women in real relationships. Kamaladevi does not preach or philosophize. She suspends disbelief and puts a moratorium on moral judgment and forces us, instead, to examine the ethics of actions and reactions. She presents reality in its naked, primal truth as a mirror for us to confront. She beckons us to replace rules with norms that adapt better to changing times; and suspend moral judgment and discrimination that comes with it in favour of humanity, decency, dignity, forgiveness and acceptance.

I have long lamented the lack of emphasis on “people’s history” – as opposed to historian’s history. The latter is important for us to know where we came from. People’s history, on the other hand, is about who we really are and what we stand for. It is essential for collective consciousness and for our evolution as a people. Works such as Sembawang – in their authenticity - are critical in helping us preserve the effervescence of our spirit, and the sanctity of our soul.

More importantly, books such as Sembawang help build and strengthen bridges between those of us who are homegrown and those whom we welcome as they make Singapore home. Knowing history and making it our history is key to rootedness.

Thank You

Madam Kamaladevi Aravindan
Dr Anitha Devi Pillai



Where is the Acchapam ?
Where is the Murukku ?

Whenever Mother hides them before Onam
We'd find, finish & plead 'innyum vaenum'

Behold her tales of greed & emptied tins !
Withhold guilt-filled remnants in mouths & chins

We say the diminishing quantity
Is the recognition of rising quality

Refilling efforts need be undertaken exactly
In the spirit, generosity of King Mahabali !

And in the mini window screen of a sole Acchapam
I peer at her resolute smile & secretly confirm

The other circling murukku – Time, may slow her
But our adoration expands Vamana like, further & further.

Own, Mother's



N C Prakash

Future Suture

She smiles synthetic,
He flexes steroid
They discuss e-tabloid
They move frantic, fanatic

Information staged
Impulsion revs in virtual overdrive
Time, in no time, lost
We all find reasons

Observation, stillness,
Raindrops sliding to the drain -
Such nearest rivers and waterfalls
Wasted, flows unnoticed

No to the lotus in full fragrance
Only it's surrounding filth!
Whatever lies in the weight of the wait
The unlive world lives by



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Sujith Sivaram

ELIXIR SOJOURN

elixir. / (ɪˈlɪksə) / noun. an alchemical preparation supposed to be capable of prolonging life indefinitely (elixir of life)

My annual vacation to my home in Kerala had been my elixir sojourns that invariably provided the much-needed recharge of energy to go on until the next vacation. Never before have I been deprived of this elixir for such a long stretch of time. As much as I have tried to get it administered virtually, I have come to realise the irreplaceable nature of the combined experiences that constitute this alchemical vaccine for the soul.

Right from the first breath of the midnight air from the Kochi airport till the final pre-departure blessings from Amma, the usually two weeks stint provides regular repeated doses of rejuvenating, refreshing, healing, strengthening capsules coated with love. It would be past midnight by the time I normally reach home from the airport but would still eagerly look forward to the first meal at home, in spite of having had dinner on the flight. Irrespective of what was on

the plate, the first mouth of the long-lost taste would serve as the instant booster to my spirits.

The morning after holds the most excitement. Even with little or no sleep, I would step out in the wee hours to meet my God Father, my favourite deity, Ernakulathappan. By hook or crook, an auto would slowly appear from nowhere, and as we enter the temple premises, I would be brimming with joy. Every pillar, lamp, grain of sand would seem to be gleaming while Ernakulathappan in his true nonchalant style would seem engrossed in his morning chores. Yes, I do mentally visit, meet and greet him daily, but nothing would come close to being able to experience his presence at Ernakulambalam. And this would be a daily routine throughout the two weeks I am there. I would relish in the varied enriching experiences of being at the temple at different times of the day.

Irrespective of the number of days of leave I had, it was important for me to meet as many relatives as possible during the trip. Having grown up in a joint family we are all very close to our aunts, uncles and cousins, I always felt like a 19 year old, in their midst, as that was when I first left home. Needless to mention, they would all give me the opportunity to bask in their unconditional love, and relish all the simple yet endearing treats that they would take pains to prepare in anticipation. While whatsapp groups and video calls have kept us close, it is such meetings that unleash random acts of affection that provides abundant ammunition of positive energy to last till the next visit.

Evenings with friends provide adequate opportunities to meet and indulge in recollecting memories, laughing out loud and losing oneself in the safety net of very close friends. These are experiences which cannot be lived virtually. On rare occasions we would also have a class reunion, occasions where you realise how strong your bonds with your friends are and one that reiterates the fact that it's not the length of the relationship that matters but the depth.

Depending on the season, a visit to either or all of the temples, like Guruvayoor, Chottanikara, Shabarimala would be the icing on the cake. It would give us a chance for a road trip with family, usually visiting a few relatives en-route. As tiring as the trip would be due to the packed schedule, we would return home with a deep sense of fulfilment.

It would be close to the date of departure when I would realise that I haven't spent enough time at home with Amma and my sisters. We would spend some time together shopping for the return trip, getting some "palaharams" and of course visiting our family deity.

Silence would replace the cheerful banter as we descend from upstairs with our bags ready to leave. There was nothing to be said. More than the goodies that we had filled our bags with, we have had healthy potions of Elixir that would see us through until the next time!

സംഹാര താണ്ഡവം



ചാരുചന്ദ്രകലാധരാ
കാലമാം രുദ്രവീണയിൽ
തവ കരാംഗുലീ സ്പർശനാൽ
നാദ വീചിയതിദ്രുതം

ഇടിതാളമോടേയോ താണ്ഡവം
സംഹാരമായരങ്ങേറിയോ
നയനഗോചര രഹിതമീയണ്ണു
മൂന്നാം തൂക്കൺ തുറന്നതോ
ഭൂവിലഗ്നി പടർത്തിയോ

ചിറകറ്റു വീഴുമീ ശലഭതുല്യരായ്
എരിഞ്ഞടങ്ങുനിതഗ്നിയിൽ
കാര്യകാരണ സഹിതമോ
അജ്ഞാതമോ വിഭ്രാന്തിയോ

ചഞ്ചലം കലികാലം ചപലം
പ്രകമ്പിതം ചിലമ്പിൻ സിഞ്ചിതം
അന്ത്യരഹിത വിചിത്രമീയണ്ണു
രക്ത ബീജ സമാനനോ



Biju

Musings & Ramblings



This is a collection of poems and writings which randomly sprout in my head. So welcome and enjoy the words.

Uma Kalyani

CONTEMPLATION



Last night I dreamed.

I dreamed I was dead.

And I was talking to Death.

A hooded figure with a warm voice and feeling of comfort.

We were talking about my life.

The ups and downs.

The tears, the heartache, the laughs, the noise.

Musings & Ramblings

“Have you ever felt love?”, I asked.

“Hmm.. yes.. I think so...”

“Who was it?”

“Well. They were as bright as a star, smelled like a field of roses, voice like a lullaby...”

Death’s face twisted into a smile.

I quietly enjoyed this serene expression.

“Life is what I fell in love with. How unlucky is that?”

“Unlucky? How? To have loved is a great thing!”

“Really?”

“Haven’t you heard the expression ‘to have loved and lost is better than having never loved at all’?”

“Mmm... how do you feel having left your love behind?”

I pondered the question.

“It doesn’t feel great, but I know he will survive. He has to...”

The smile kept up, but softened with the weight of knowing.

We sat in silence.

“My love...”

The voice sent chills down my spine.

“I promised we would be together, forever. Even in death...”

Bittersweet.

Tears fell away, soft whimpers as I felt the warmth around me again.

And we stayed that way, for eternity, in front of a smiling Death.

Musings & Ramblings

Imagination

A couple years ago you were my only friend.
You were always there when I needed you and roamed wild,
Came before I even called.

But now I have to search for you.
Why is that?
Is it because my body grew and my thoughts matured?

If this is growing up,
I don't think I want that – I'll stay forever young.

Childhood stories

I remember the warmth of your hands as you held and played with my little fingers and toes.

I could feel your chest pumping, the rise and fall of your belly.

And the sweet echo of your voice.

That voice told me so many stories, opened my eyes to the possibilities of imagination.

You told me stories of kings and queens, love and war, beasts and sweets.

There was lesson in there somewhere.

We laughed and played; you remembered, I memorized.

It's been eight years since I heard your voice, but I always hear it call out to me -

In every page I turn, in every book I hold.

When I think of home, love and warmth.

My childhood begins and ends with you.

Musings & Ramblings

W I N D O W S



Windows are very curious things. They are essentially a filament that separates the outside from the inside. Be it everyday things like your home or office or profound understandings like your soul.

They are the sliver of protection from the elements, prying eyes – behind them lies a world of stories, a path that will never be explored unless you are invited in. Windows ensure a sense of privacy, because they contain much of the noise from within. But are they really private? Most windows are made of glass – taking a look inside is possible. But how much can you understand from only a single peek, without much context? Hmm... So, windows reveal a picture but the understanding still remains mysterious. Curious.

I have often heard the expression “your eyes are the windows to your soul”. So, when you look into my eyes, can you really see my soul, or do you only grasp a picture without context. Can you see the darkness, the torment, the happiness, the tears, the pain, the love? Can you see me? The real me who struggles and fights, the me with unending hope, the me with unyielding happiness? Wait. Stop. Maybe I don’t want you to look too hard.

A window is a gallery for the lost soul to view the beautiful world out there, from a safe distance. The colours, the movement, the light, the shadow. Life is interesting, it is curious.



Introduction:

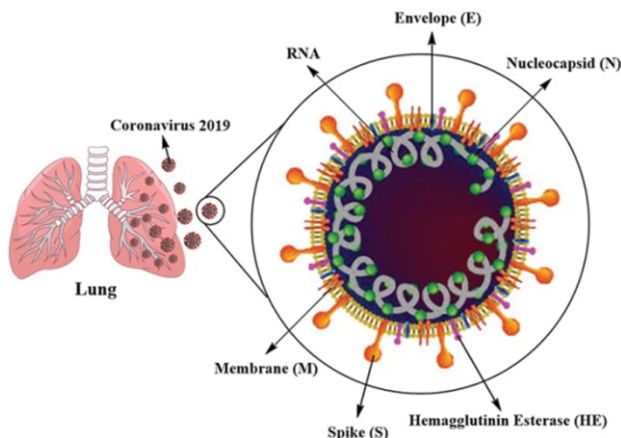
Original SARS CoV 2 virus, renamed as COVID 19 by WHO, and commonly known as Corona virus by the public, was first confirmed in Wuhan, on 31 December 2019. The origin of the virus is still uncertain. The mutant strains were later detected in South Africa, Brazil, UK, India and South America. They are now renamed by the WHO as in Greek alphabets as α (Alpha), β (Beta), γ (Gamma), δ (Delta) and Delta variants also known as λ (Lambda) or delta plus corona 19 variant. Delta variants are more virulent and spreading rapidly all over the world.

Globally, as of, 16 August 2021, there have been 207,995,834 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 4,374,966 deaths, reported by WHO. As of 16 August 2021, a total of 4.7 billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide. As of August 16, 2021, Singapore Coronavirus Cases: 66,172, Deaths: 44. Singapore has administered 8,429,249 doses of COVID vaccines so far. Assuming every person needs 2 doses that are enough to have vaccinated about 73.9% of the country's population. This is one of the best in the world.

Adverse outcomes: The morbidity and mortality in COVID 19 patients are primarily related to respiratory and or circulatory failure. The respiratory distress in severe COVID-19 may be the result of

the combination of lung injury (Pneumonia/Acute respiratory distress syndrome) and heart failure due to ACS (Acute Coronary Syndrome) or myocardial injury.

Structure of Coronavirus



Dr. Allan Jaffe, Mayo Clinic, 8 May 2020, stated that cardiac enzymes, Troponins, especially hsTnT or hsTnI, (highly sensitive tropT} may be elevated in COVID-19 patients whose hearts are affected by the SARS-CoV-2 corona virus. In some cases, 25 to 30% elevation of hs Trop T is possible. In the majority of cases when NSTEMI (Non-ST elevation Myocardial Infarction) is the diagnosis, the

management should be conservative. If plaque rupture is suspected or there is STEMI, (ST elevation Myocardial Infarction), then coronary angiography and PCI (Percutaneous Coronary Intervention such as balloon Angioplasty and Stenting) may be done with utmost precautions with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Both short-term and long-term prognosis may be worse in these classes of patients.

Dara K. Lee Lewis, Harvard Medical School, 8 January 2021, stated that Pre-existing heart conditions and poor metabolic health increase risk of severe COVID-19, compared to the general population.

Pre-existing conditions: Diabetes, increases risk of severe COVID-19 by suppressing the immune system; other diseases like asthma, increase the risk by weakening the lungs.

People with cardiovascular disease (CVD) were more than twice as likely to contract severe forms of COVID-19. There are 2 explanations how CVD increased the risk of severe COVID-19.

The first is that pre-existing heart conditions, such as damaged heart muscle or blocked heart



Dr V P Nair in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

arteries, weaken the body's ability to survive the stress of the illness. A person with a vulnerable heart is more likely to succumb to the effects of fever, low oxygen levels, unstable blood pressures, and blood clotting disorders — all possible consequences of COVID-19 — than someone previously healthy.

A second explanation relates to poor underlying metabolic health, which is more common in those with heart disease. Poor metabolic health refers to diseases such as type 2 diabetes or prediabetes and obesity, which themselves cause inflammation and risk of blood clots, compounding the effects of COVID-19 and increasing the likelihood of devastating complications of COVID-19.

COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2 virus can damage the heart in several ways. The virus may directly invade or inflame the heart muscle, and it may indirectly harm the heart by disrupting the balance between oxygen supply and demand. Heart injury, which may be measured by elevated hs Trop T in the bloodstream, has been detected in about one-quarter of patients hospitalized with severe COVID-19 illness. Of these patients, about one-third has pre-existing CVD.

The majority of people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms and recover fully. However, about 20% will develop pneumonia, and about 5% will develop severe disease. In the severe form of COVID-19, the body's immune system overreacts to the infection, releasing inflammatory molecules called cytokines into the bloodstream. This "cytokine storm" can damage multiple organs, including the heart.

Myocarditis typically occurs only in advanced COVID-19 disease. Myocarditis can result from direct heart invasion by the virus itself, or more commonly by inflammation caused by cytokine storm. When this occurs, the heart may become enlarged and weakened, leading to low blood pressure and fluid in the lungs. While this severe form of myocarditis is rare, recent studies have suggested that a milder form of heart muscle inflammation may be much more common than previously recognized. A recent study showed that asymptomatic heart inflammation was seen on Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in up to three-quarters of patients who had recovered from severe COVID-19. Increased oxygen demand and decreased oxygen supply lead to heart damage

Fever and infection cause the heart rate to speed up, increasing the work of the heart in COVID-19 patients who develop pneumonia. Blood pressure may drop or spike, causing further stress on the heart, and the resulting increase in oxygen demand can lead to heart damage, especially if the heart arteries or muscle were unhealthy to begin with.

Heart damage is most often caused by heart attacks, which results from the formation of blood clots in a vulnerable heart artery, blocking delivery of oxygen to the heart muscle. COVID-19-related inflammation raises the risk of this type of heart attack by activating the body's clotting system and

disrupting the blood vessel lining endothelium. When inflamed, this lining loses its ability to resist clot formation. These blood clots in the large and small arteries of the heart cut off its supply of oxygen. The increased clotting tendency can also lead to blood clots in the lungs, which can cause a drop in blood oxygen levels. Severe pneumonia drops blood oxygen further. When the oxygen demand exceeds the supply, the heart muscle is damaged.

People with Cardiovascular disease (CVD) who adopt adequate physical activity and healthy diet can strengthen their defences and reduce long-term risk from CVD against COVID-19.

Vaccination is important to protect all and create herd immunity. There are many players in this field namely, Pfizer/BioNTech USA/Germany, Moderna USA, Oxford - Astra Zeneca UK/Sweden (= Covishield India), Sputnik Russia, Sinovac China & Covaxin India. The first two have 90-95% protection while the other 3 claims 65 to 85% protection. All of them need 2 doses and special storage facilities. Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech are novel type of vaccine made from messenger RNA (mRNA), and are effective against original and the more contagious mutated strains including delta variant. Mutations in the virus are the random changes in its genetic sequence. Messenger technology can directly start to engineer a vaccine which completely mimics this new mutation.

The mRNA vaccine involves injecting only fragments of the genetic material. When these viral genetic fragments enter the human cell they commandeer the cell to produce the signature protein of the corona virus. This trains the body to recognise the key part of the virus- the spike protein, without exposing to the whole virus. This contrasts with previous methods where the protein itself is used which usually took years to manufacture the vaccine, but recently only 2-6 weeks.

In January 2021, two new vaccines from USA namely Johnson & Johnson's single dose vaccine and Novavax have come into the market.

Benefits of vaccination outweigh the rare incidents of myocarditis or pericarditis, which may present as chest pain, dyspnoea or palpitation within 14 days of vaccination especially after the 2nd dose mainly in younger males. Other symptoms include fatigue, muscle aches and fever. Treatment consists of rest and Paracetamol. As physical exertion increases risk, avoid strenuous exercise for 1 week after each dose.

Ideally a Universal Vaccine effective against all Variants and Mutations of COVID 19 should be available in the near future.

Types of vaccine and its efficacy:

Pfizer/BioNTech (USA/Germany)- RNA vaccine efficacy: 95%

Moderna (USA)- RNA Vaccine efficacy: 94%,

Astrazeneca (UK)- Viral Vector Vaccine, efficacy of up to 90%

Sinovac (China)- inactivated vaccine, efficacy: 51%

Sinopharm (China)- inactivated vaccine, efficacy: 79%

Janssen/ Johnson & Johnson (USA)- viral vector vaccine, efficacy: 85.4%

Sputnik V (Russia) - also known as Gam-COVID-Vac viral vector, efficacy: 91%

Covishield (India)- Serum Institute of India (SII) (under licence from AstraZeneca), Viral Vector Vaccine, efficacy: 90%

Covaxin (India) -Bharat Biotech India, inactivated vaccine, efficacy: 93.4%

Novavax, (USA)- recombinant nanoparticle vaccine, efficacy: 95%

Booster Dose: After 10 days and 578,000 booster doses of the coronavirus vaccine administered to Israelis over the age of 60, the Health Ministry and its advisory panels are discussing whether to extend the program to those aged 45 and over. Israeli Experts are Split on giving COVID Booster Shots to those 45 and over. Israeli Health Ministry's advisory panel broadly believes that the shots do good, but there's no broad consensus. Attitudes could shift in accordance with morbidity trends in Israel or signs of positive impact

The team broadly believes that the shot does more good than harm, and experts have already begun to discuss giving the shot to younger people, particularly health workers, though there were still disagreements. But as a source on the team said, "The higher the number of seriously ill climbs, the less opposition there will be. According to the Israel Health Ministry announcement, among the nearly 600,000 people who have gotten the third dose, fewer than 50 have reported side effects. The reported symptoms (pain at the injection site, fever, and nausea) were mild and passed quickly". They recommend booster dose for health workers over age 50.

Prof. Ran Balicer, who heads the cabinet of experts and is a member of the response team, tweeted that if the third dose among those 60 and over continues to prove safe and effective, Israel would expand the campaign to include other groups.

Pfizer and partner BioNTech plan to ask U.S. and European regulators within weeks to authorize a booster dose of its COVID-19 vaccine, based on evidence of greater risk of infection six months after inoculation and the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said, however, in a joint statement that Americans who have been fully vaccinated do not need a booster COVID-19 shot at this time.

Booster shots have begun in a handful of other countries, including Israel, where people over 60 who have received their second shot at least five months earlier are eligible for a booster, as are the immunocompromised. France, Germany and Britain are planning to give booster shots starting in September 2021. The World Health Organization has called for a moratorium on additional doses until at least September — with billions of people globally yet to receive their first shot.

Booster shots are approved for immunocompromised patients in USA, but not for the normal population yet. According to Dr Anthony Fauci, USA, vaccine durability is not indefinite. So booster shot may be indicated for all, but is not confirmed yet.

Young children and teenagers are also susceptible for the more virulent Delta variant. So, trials are ongoing to vaccinate children age 6 months to 12 years, but we have to wait for further scrutiny and confirmation.

MRNA vaccine Pfizer or Moderna is safe at any stage of pregnancy, safe for the mother and safe for the new-born. These are the latest findings from the CDC USA August 2021. This vaccine is also indicated for immunocompromised patients, such as organ transplant, cancer and HIV.

As a take home message, I urge each and every Singaporeans, Citizens and non-citizens alike, to follow the MOH Guidelines “Get vaccinated, protect yourself and the loved ones”. Indeed, wear appropriate masks, practice hand hygiene, stay home as far as possible and keep social distancing. Fortunately, Singapore has adequate and world class special vaccination centres, polyclinics, participating GP clinics and Mobile Vaccination Stations.



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Vinod E P

ചന്ദിക

സമയം പതിനൊന്ന് മണി. സൂര്യൻ തിളങ്ങി നിൽക്കുന്നു. ഈ ക്ലോക്കിനെന്താ മെല്ലെ പോക്കാനോ ? എത്ര നേരം നോക്കിയിരുന്നിട്ടും സൂചി മുന്നോട്ടു പോകുന്നേയില്ല. എങ്ങനെയെങ്കിലുമൊന്ന് പന്ത്രണ്ടായാൽ മതിയായിരുന്നു. ഇനിയുമുണ്ട് ഒരു മണിക്കൂർ. വേറൊന്നും ചെയ്യുവാൻ തോന്നുന്നില്ല. തെക്കോറത്തുള്ള അരഭിത്തിയിൽ മലർന്നു കിടന്നു ഒരു മാസിക വെറുതെ മറിച്ചു കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു.

മണിയുമായി വെള്ളം വേണോ എന്ന് ചോദിച്ചു. വേണ്ടെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു കിണറ്റിനരികിൽ ചെന്നു. കിണറ്റിലെ തണുത്ത വെള്ളം മോന്തി കുടിച്ചാലുള്ള സുഖം ഒന്ന് വേറെ തന്നെയാ. ഞങ്ങളുടേത് ഒരത്ഭുത കിണറാണ് ഒരിക്കലും വെള്ളം വറ്റാറില്ല . അധികം ആഴമില്ലെങ്കിലും ഒരിക്കലും കിണറ്റിന്റെ അടി കണ്ടിട്ടില്ല. മഴയായാൽ പറമ്പിന്റെ അത്രയും ഉയരത്തിൽ വെള്ളം കാണും. ചുറ്റു മതിലില്ലെങ്കിൽ ആ വെള്ളം മുഴുവൻ പറമ്പിലേക്കൊഴുകുമെന്നു തോന്നും. ഒരു പ്രത്യേക സ്വാഭാണ് വെള്ളത്തിന്. കിണറ്റിൽ തൊട്ടിയിട്ടു വലിച്ചു തൊട്ടി ചെരിച്ചു കൈ കുമ്പിളിൽ വെള്ളമൊഴിച്ചു കുടിച്ചു അവസാനം ആ വെള്ളം കൊണ്ടൊന്നു മുഖം കഴുകിയാൽ എല്ലാ ക്ഷീണവും പറ പറന്നു പോകും.

ഇന്ന് രാവിലെ നേരത്തെ ഉണർന്നു. സാധാരണ കുലുക്കി വിളിച്ചാലും എഴുന്നേൽക്കാറില്ല.

പക്ഷെ ഇന്ന് ഉണർന്നു പോയി. പല്ലു തേച്ചു മുഖം കഴുകി വന്നപ്പോഴേക്കും അമ്മായി ചായ തയ്യാറാക്കിയിരുന്നു. സന്തോഷം മനോജും എഴുന്നേറ്റിട്ടില്ല. മാതൃഭൂമിയും മനോരമയും വായിച്ചു തീർക്കുമ്പോഴേക്കും എല്ലാവരും എഴുന്നേറ്റിട്ടുണ്ടായിരുന്നു.. അവർ ബ്രഷും പേസ്റ്റും കൊണ്ട് കിഴക്കേ പറമ്പിൽ പോയി. ഞാനും പിന്നാലെ ചെന്നു. മനോജിനും സന്തോഷിനും രണ്ടര വയസ്സിന്റെ മൂപ്പേ ഉള്ളുവെങ്കിലും അവർക്ക് സ്വകാര്യം പറച്ചിൽ കുറച്ചു കൂടുതലാണ്. എന്നെ ഒഴിവാക്കി അവർ ഏറെ സ്വകാര്യം പറയുന്നുണ്ട് . അടുത്ത് ചെന്നാൽ നിർത്തിക്കളയും . ഞാൻ ഒന്നും അറിയാത്തതു പോലെ ചുറ്റിപ്പറ്റി നിൽക്കും അപ്പോഴേക്കും അവർ വേറെ സ്ഥലത്തേക്ക് നടന്നിരിക്കും.

കഴിഞ്ഞ വേനലവധി ഇങ്ങനെയായിരുന്നില്ല. അതിനു മുമ്പത്തെതും അതിനു മുമ്പത്തെതും ഒക്കെ. എല്ലാ വേനലവധിക്കും ഞാനും ചേട്ടനും നാട്ടിലെത്തും. ഞങ്ങളെ നാട്ടിലാക്കി അമ്മയും അച്ഛനും തിരിച്ചു കോയമ്പത്തൂരിലേക്കു പോകും. അവർക്ക് അധിക ദിവസം ലീവെടുക്കാൻ പറ്റില്ല. പിന്നെ സ്കൂൾ തുറക്കുന്നത് വരെ ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് ആഘോഷമാണ്. രാവിലെ മുതൽ വൈകും വരെ കളിയും ഓട്ടവുമാണ്. തെങ്ങിൻ പട്ട വെട്ടി ബാറ്റ് പോലെയാക്കി ക്രിക്കറ്റ്, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഫുട്ബാൾ. കഴിഞ്ഞ രണ്ടു വർഷം സ്പോർട്സ് ആണ്. ഓട്ടം, ചാട്ടം, ഹൈ ജമ്പ്, ലോങ്ങ് ജമ്പ്. മനോജാണ് എല്ലാറ്റിലും ഒന്നാമൻ. സന്തോഷ് എപ്പോഴും രണ്ടാമൻ. അനൂപ് വന്നിരുന്നില്ല. അവൻ വന്നാൽ പിന്നെ എനിക്ക് അവസാനമെന്തേണ്ടി വരില്ല. - ഉറപ്പാണ്.

കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷമാണ് പറമ്പിൽ ഓല കൊണ്ട് കുടിൽ കെട്ടിയത്. മാങ്ങകളെല്ലാം അതിൽ പെറുക്കി വെച്ച് അതിനുള്ളിൽ കിടന്നും ഇരുന്നും കഥ പറഞ്ഞും സമയം ചെലവഴിച്ചിട്ടു. ഉച്ച ഭക്ഷണത്തിനും പിന്നെ സന്ധ്യ ആകുമ്പോഴും മാത്രമേ വീട്ടിലെത്തുമായിരുന്നുള്ളൂ.

ഞങ്ങളുടെ വീട്ടിലേക്കു കയറുന്നതു തോട്ടിൽ നിന്നും തുടങ്ങുന്ന ഒരു പടിക്കെട്ടിലൂടെയാണ്. പടിക്കെട്ടു കയറിയാൽ ചതുരത്തിൽ ഉയർന്ന ഒരു പീഠം. പീഠത്തിനിരുവശവും കഷ്ടിച്ച് ഒരാൾക്ക് പോകുവാനുള്ള വീതി. രണ്ടു ഭാഗത്തും സിമന്റ് തേച്ച കമ്പതിൽ. കമ്പതിലിൽ രണ്ടു ഭാഗത്തും ഇരുന്നു പീഠത്തിൽ പുസ്തകങ്ങളോ, മാങ്ങയോ വെച്ച് കഥ പറഞ്ഞിരിക്കും. ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ പീഠത്തിൽ ചെസ്സ് ബോർഡ് വെച്ച് കളിക്കും. രഘുമാമനും സുഹൃത്തുക്കളും വന്നാൽ അതിന് മുകളിൽ ക്യാറം ബോർഡ് വെച്ച് കളിക്കും ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ ചീട്ടു കളി. മഴക്കാലത്ത് തോട്ടിൽ നിറയെ വെള്ളമാണ്. ചെറിയ മീൻ കളിക്കുന്നത് കാണുവാനെന്തു രസമാണ്. ചിലപ്പോൾ വലിയ മീശയുള്ള കറുത്ത മീനിനെയും കാണാം അതിനെ കാണുമ്പോൾ പേടിയാണ്. പക്ഷെ കുറി വെച്ചാൽ നല്ല സ്വാദാണെന്നു അമ്മായി പറഞ്ഞു കേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇനി തോട്ടിൽ വെള്ളം വരണമെങ്കിൽ സ്കൂൾ തുറക്കണം. അപ്പോഴാണ് മഴ. മഴയുടെ രണ്ടാം ദിവസം മുതൽ തോട്ടിൽ വെള്ളം നിറയും. വെള്ളത്തിൽ കാലിട്ടിട്ടു നടക്കാൻ എന്ത് രസമാണ്. ഞങ്ങൾ മൂന്നു പേരും വെള്ളത്തിൽ ഓടി കളിക്കും. ചിലപ്പോൾ മണ്ണ് തടഞ്ഞു തടയണയാക്കി വെള്ളമുയർത്തും. രഘുമാമൻ ഞങ്ങൾ വെള്ളത്തിൽ കളിക്കുന്നത് കണ്ടാൽ ചുരലുമായി വരും.

മാമന്റെ വലിയ അലമാരയിൽ നിന്നുമുള്ള പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ വായിക്കുകയാണ് എന്റെ ഇഷ്ട

വിനോദം. എന്തെല്ലാം കഥകളാണ്. മാമന് എവിടെ നിന്നാണ് ഇത്രയധികം പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ? എനിക്കിഷ്ടം ഐതിഹ്യമാല, കോട്ടയം പുഷ്പനാഥ്, ഫേമസ് ഫൈവ്, ഹാക്കൾബറി ഫിൻ, ഷെർലക് ഹോംസ് എന്നിവയാണ്. പിന്നെ റീഡേഴ്സ് ഡൈജസ്റ്റും, ബാലരമയും പുസ്തകവും ഇഷ്ടമാണ്.. വേറെയും കുറെയധികം ഇംഗ്ലീഷ്/മലയാളം നോവലുകളുണ്ടെങ്കിലും വായിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ ഓർമ്മയിൽ തങ്ങുന്നത് ചിലതുമാത്രമേയുള്ളൂ . അവകാശികൾ എന്ന് പേരുള്ള നാല് വലിയ പുസ്തകങ്ങളുമുണ്ട്. ഒരിക്കൽ അവയും വായിക്കണം. ഏട്ടന്മാർക്കൊന്നും വായിക്കാനിഷ്ടമില്ല. കഥ പറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുവാനാണിഷ്ടം. എന്നെ ഒഴിവാക്കി അവർ സ്വകാര്യം പറഞ്ഞു ചിരിക്കുന്നത് കാണാം. ഞാൻ ചെന്നാൽ നിർത്തും. അവരെന്തേ ഇത്ര മാത്രം മാറിപ്പോയിരിക്കുന്നു.

കഴിഞ്ഞ പത്തു ദിവസമായി ഉച്ചക്ക് പടിക്കെട്ടിലിരുന്ന് ചെസ്സ് കളിയാണ്. പണ്ട് ഇവർക്കാർക്കും ചെസ്സ് ഇഷ്ടമല്ലായിരുന്നു. ഇപ്പോൾ ഉച്ചയാകുമ്പോൾ കളി തുടങ്ങും. ചെസ്സ് കളിക്കുന്നത് എനിക്കിഷ്ടമാണ്. തോൽക്കുന്നതിൽ കൂടുതൽ ഞാൻ ജയിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. പന്ത്രണ്ടു മണിയാകുമ്പോൾ ലതികയും ഉഷയും സിന്ധുവും ട്യൂഷൻ കഴിഞ്ഞു നടന്നു വരും.

പടിക്കെട്ടിനോട് ചേർന്ന് ഇംഗ്ലീഷിലെ സി ആകൃതിയിലുള്ള റോഡ് ആണ്. റോഡിനൊരു വശം തോട്. സിയുടെ മധ്യ ഭാഗമാകുമ്പോൾ പടിക്കെട്ട്. അവിടെവെച്ചു റോഡും തോടും പിരിഞ്ഞു രണ്ടു ദിശയിലേക്കു മാറി പോകും. അവർ നടന്നു അടുത്ത് വന്നു വളവു തിരിഞ്ഞു ദൂരെത്തെത്തുന്നത് വരെ കാണാം. എന്തൊരു ചന്തമാണവർക്ക്. തിരിഞ്ഞു നടക്കുമ്പോൾ ലതികയുടെ നീണ്ട മുടി കാറ്റിൽ പറക്കുന്നത് കാണാനെന്തു ചേലാണ്.

മറ്റു രണ്ടുപേർക്കും അത്ര മുടിയില്ല. പക്ഷെ കാണാൻ ഭംഗി സിന്ധുവിനാണ്. നല്ല നിറം, ചന്ദനക്കുറി, പിന്നിയിട്ട മുടി മുന്നിലിട്ടാൽ അത് നടത്തിനൊപ്പം തത്തി തത്തി ആടുന്നത് കാണുവാൻ നല്ല രസമാണ്. സിന്ധുവിനൊപ്പമെത്തുകില്ലെങ്കിലും ഉഷയെയും കാണാൻ ചന്തമുണ്ട്. അവരെ കാണുമ്പോൾ സന്തോഷം മനോജും സ്വകാര്യം പറഞ്ഞു ചിരിക്കുന്നത് കാണാം. എന്നോട് പറയാറില്ല. അവർ വളവു തിരിയുമ്പോൾ ഒന്ന് കണ്ണ് വെട്ടി ഞങ്ങളെ നോക്കും പിന്നെ ദൂരെ എത്തിയാൽ ഒന്ന് തിരിഞ്ഞു നോക്കും . അത് കണ്ടാൽ സന്തോഷിനും മനോജിനും വലിയ സന്തോഷമാണ്. എനിക്കും.

ഇന്നലെ സന്തോഷും മനോജും ഉച്ചക്ക് പാടത്ത് പണിയെടുക്കുന്നവർക്കു ഭക്ഷണം കൊടുക്കുവാൻ പോയി. പാടത്ത് പോകാൻ അവർക്കു നല്ല ഉത്സാഹമാണ്. അടുത്ത വീട്ടിലെ ദേവി ചേച്ചിയും ചിലപ്പോൾ അവരുടെ കൂടെ പോകാറുണ്ട്. കളിച്ചു ചിരിച്ചു പോകുന്നത് കണ്ടാൽ ദേഷ്യം തോന്നും. ദേവി ചേച്ചി ഉള്ളപ്പോൾ മാത്രം എന്താ ഇത്ര ചിരിക്കാൻ. ഞാൻ ഒറ്റയ്ക്ക് പടിക്കെട്ടിൽ ഇരിക്കുമ്പോൾ ലതികയും സംഘവും വന്നു. എന്നെ കണ്ടപ്പോളവർക്കു സന്തോഷമായി. പരസ്പരം എന്തൊക്കെയോ പറഞ്ഞു ചിരിച്ച് എന്നെ വീണ്ടും വീണ്ടും നോക്കി. മനോജും സന്തോഷും ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അവരുടെ കണ്ണ് നിലത്തു നിന്നും മാറില്ല. അടുത്ത് വന്നപ്പോൾ ലതിക എന്നെ നോക്കി അതിമനോഹരമായി പുഞ്ചിരിച്ചു. ഇന്ന് ഒറ്റയ്ക്കാണല്ലോ എന്ന് ചോദിച്ചപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ

അന്തം വിട്ടു പോയി. വാക്കുകൾ വന്നില്ലയെങ്കിലും, അതേ എന്ന് എങ്ങനെയോ പറഞ്ഞാപ്പിച്ചു. എന്നെ കടന്നു കുറച്ചു മുന്നേ ചെന്നപ്പോൾ ലതിക വീണ്ടും തിരിഞ്ഞു നോക്കി മധുരമായി ചിരിച്ചു. .

എന്താണെന്നറിയില്ല, എനിക്കൊരു വിമ്മിഷ്ടമോ സന്തോഷമോ എന്താണ് തോന്നിയതെന്നറിയില്ല. വൈകിട്ട് കളിക്കുമ്പോഴും ലതികയുടെ മുഖമാണ് ഓർമ്മ വരുന്നത്. ചേട്ടന്മാരോട് പറഞ്ഞില്ല, അവർക്കുതന്നെ തോന്നും. ദേവിച്ചേച്ചി അവരോടൊന്നിച്ച് ചിരിക്കാറുള്ളത്. പുസ്തകം എടുത്തുവെങ്കിലും വായിക്കുവാൻ തോന്നിയില്ല . ദേഹം മുഴുവൻ ഒരു എരിപൊരി സഞ്ചാരം. ഒന്ന് രാവിലെയായെങ്കിൽ എന്ന് വിചാരിച്ചാണ് കിടക്കാൻ പോയത്. പുലർന്നെന്നു വിചാരിച്ചു രണ്ടു മൂന്നു പ്രാവശ്യം എഴുന്നേറ്റെങ്കിലും കൂരാകുരിരുട്ട്. അമ്മായി മുറ്റമടിക്കുന്നതു കേട്ടപ്പോൾ ഉണർന്നു . ഇനി കിടക്കാൻ വയ്യ. ചേട്ടന്മാർ നല്ല ഉറക്കത്തിലാണ്.

ലതികയോട് സംസാരിക്കണമെന്ന ആഗ്രഹം മനസ്സിൽ തിരതല്ലിക്കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. ക്ലോക്കിന്റെ സൂചി മാത്രം നീങ്ങുന്നില്ല. പറമ്പിൽ വീണ മാങ്ങയുണ്ടോ എന്ന് നോക്കി. നല്ല ചെറു മാങ്ങ കുറെ വീണിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇത് ചെറിയതാണ് ഈമ്പി കൂടിക്കാൻ നല്ല രസമാണ്. രണ്ടു മൂന്നെണ്ണം കഴിച്ചു . അടുക്കളയിൽ ചുറ്റിപ്പറ്റി നിന്ന്, കുറച്ചു ചിരവിയ തേങ്ങ തിന്നു. പിന്നെ വീടിനു ചുറ്റും നടന്നു. ചേട്ടൻമാർക്കിന്നും ജോലിയുണ്ട്. പറമ്പിൽ ഭക്ഷണം കൊണ്ടു പോകണം. അമ്മാവന്റെ ആജ്ഞ ആണ് അനുസരിച്ചില്ലെങ്കിൽ വിവരമറിയും.

atha അഃ പന്ത്രണ്ടായി. ഞാൻ പടിക്കെട്ടിൽ ചെന്നു നിന്നു. അവർ വരുന്നുണ്ട്. ലതികയുടെ നടത്തം കാണാൻ ചേലാണ്. അവൾ ദൂരെ നിന്നു തന്നെ എന്നെ നോക്കി ചിരിച്ചു . ഹാ, എന്ത് ഭംഗിയാണ് ആ ചിരി കാണാൻ. അടുത്തെത്തിയപ്പോൾ അവൾ ഒന്ന് നിന്നിട്ടെന്നോട് ചോദിച്ചു

എന്താ ഇങ്ങനെ ഒറ്റയ്ക്കിരിക്കുന്നത് ? .

ചേട്ടന്മാർ പറമ്പിൽ പോയി ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞു.

ഓഹോ അവരെപ്പോൾ വരും ? ,

കുറച്ചു വൈകും.

ശരി വരട്ടെ എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞവൾ നടന്നു.

ഞാനും തലയാട്ടി. അവരുടെ പുറം നോക്കി ഞാനിരുന്നപ്പോൾ പെട്ടെന്നൊരു ഇടി വെട്ടു ശബ്ദം രഘുമാമനാണ്.

എന്താടാ നോക്കുന്നത്?

ഒന്നുമില്ല ഞാൻ മുറിയിലേക്കോടി പോയി.

ലതികയ്ക്കെന്നോടൊന്നു ഇത്ര സ്നേഹം? ഒരേത്തരം പിടിയും കിട്ടുന്നില്ല. ഈ ചേട്ടന്മാരെ പോലെയല്ലാതെ നല്ല കുട്ടിയായാൽ പെൺകുട്ടികൾക്കിഷ്ടപ്പെടും. ബുദ്ധനാഴ്ചയും

വ്യാഴാഴ്ചയും ലതികയുടെ ചിരിയും കൊച്ചു വർത്തമാനവും കേട്ട് നിൽക്കുമ്പോൾ എനിക്ക് തോന്നി ലതികയ്ക്കെന്നോടൊരു ഇതാണെന്ന്. പുസ്തകത്തിൽ വായിച്ച രംഗങ്ങൾ ഓർമ്മ വന്നു. പോയ ആഴ്ച കണ്ട സിനിമയിലെ ചില രംഗങ്ങളും. ഓർക്കുമ്പോഴും എന്തെന്നില്ലാത്ത ഒരു സന്തോഷം, എങ്ങനെ പറയണമെന്നറിയുന്നില്ല.

നാളെ വെള്ളിയാഴ്ചയാണ്. ലതികയോട് ഇഷ്ടമാണെന്നു പറയുവാൻ തോന്നുന്നു . സിനിമയിൽ പറയുമ്പോലെ എനിക്ക് നിന്നെ ഇഷ്ടമാണ് എന്നു പറയാം. കല്യാണം കഴിക്കണമെന്നു പറഞ്ഞാൽ പ്രശ്നമാണ്. ജോലിയൊക്കെ കിട്ടിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു കല്യാണം കഴിക്കാമെന്നു പറയാം. ഞാൻ പറയുമ്പോൾ ലതികയുടെ മുഖത്തു വിരിയുന്ന നാണമോർത്തിട്ടെനിക്ക് ചിരി വന്നു. ഇന്ന് പറഞ്ഞില്ലെങ്കിൽ പിന്നെ തികളാഴ്ചയേ കാണുവാൻ പറ്റുള്ളൂ.

എന്തിനാ ഇത്ര നേരത്തെ പറയുന്നേ ?

നെഞ്ചിലുള്ള ഭാരം കുറച്ചു കുറയട്ടെ.

ലതികയും അത് കേൾക്കുവാൻ കാത്തിരിക്കുകയാണ്. എനിക്കുറപ്പു് .

പറമ്പിനു ചുറ്റും നടന്നും, മാങ്ങാ പെറുക്കിയും വെള്ളം കുടിച്ചും സമയം തള്ളി നീക്കി. ചേട്ടന്മാർ നേരത്തേ പാടത്തേക്ക് പോയി . ഇന്ന് കുറെയേറെ പണിക്കാരുണ്ട്. രാവിലെ ഒന്ന് കുളിക്കാം. കുളിച്ചാൽ ഒരു സുഖം കിട്ടും . വിയർപ്പു നാറുന്നു എന്ന് അമ്മായി സ്ഥിരം പറയുന്നതാണ്. പതിനൊന്നു മണിക്ക് കുളിക്കാൻ ചെന്നപ്പോൾ അമ്മായി ഇവനിതെന്തുപറ്റിയെന്ന് അന്തർവ്വേദിച്ച്. എങ്കിലും വെള്ളം കോരിത്തന്നു. തണുത്ത വെള്ളം ദേഹത്ത് വീണപ്പോൾ എന്തൊരു സുഖം. മുടി ഒരുക്കി വെച്ച് നല്ലൊരു ഷർട്ടും ട്രൗസറും ഇട്ടു വന്നപ്പോൾ അമ്മായി എന്തൊന്നാണെന്ന് നല്ല ഭംഗിയുണ്ടെന്നു പറഞ്ഞു. ലതികയും ഇങ്ങനെ പറയുമായിരിക്കുമെന്ന് ആലോചിച്ചപ്പോൾ എനിക്ക് നാണം വന്നു മണി പന്ത്രണ്ടായപ്പോൾ ഓടിപ്പോയി പടിക്കട്ടിലിരുന്നു. അവരെ കാണുന്നില്ല. എന്തേ വൈകുന്നതെന്നോർത്ത് വിഷമിച്ചിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ അവരുടെ ചിരി കേട്ടു. ലതിക എന്നെ കണ്ടപ്പോൾ തന്നെ ദൂരെ നിന്ന് മധുരമായി പുഞ്ചിരിച്ചു. ഞാൻ എഴുന്നേറ്റ് നിന്ന് ഇല പറിക്കുന്നത് പോലെ അവിടെയും ഇവിടെയും പിടിച്ചു നിന്നു. അടുത്തെത്തിയപ്പോൾ ലതിക എന്റെ നേർക്ക് വന്നു. ബാക്കി ഇരുവരും മുന്നോട്ടു നടന്നു. വിനയം കാണാൻ എന്ത് ഭംഗിയാ എന്ന് ലതിക പറഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ എന്റെ ഹൃദയം പടപടന്നു മിടിക്കുവാൻ തുടങ്ങി. വായിലെ വെള്ളം വറ്റിപ്പോയി. ശബ്ദം വരുന്നില്ല. ഒന്ന് രണ്ടു പ്രാവശ്യം ഉമിനീർ ഇറക്കിയപ്പോൾ സംസാരിക്കാമെന്നായി. 'എനിക്ക് ഇഷ്ട' എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞപ്പോഴേക്കും അവൾ മനോജയെപ്പോലെ ചോദിച്ചു. പാടത്തു പോയി എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു വീണ്ടും പഠിച്ചുവെച്ച ഡയലോഗ് പറയാൻ തുടങ്ങിയപ്പോഴേക്കും ലതിക എന്റെ കയ്യിൽ പിടിച്ചു ഒരു കടലാസ്സു കഷ്ണം തന്നു. ഓ.. പ്രണയലേഖനം. ഞാനെന്തു പറയണമെന്നറിയാതെ കൺ മിഴിച്ചിരുന്നുപോയി. ഇതെനിക്ക് തോന്നിയില്ലല്ലോ. വീണ്ടും രണ്ടു പ്രാവശ്യം ഉമിനീർറക്കിയ ശേഷം 'എനിക്കും ഇഷ്ട' എന്ന് പറയാൻ തുടങ്ങുമ്പോഴേക്കും ഇത് മനോജിന് കൊടുക്കണം, ആരും കാണരുത്, മറുപടി പറയാൻ പറയണം എന്ന്

പറഞ്ഞു മധുരമായി ചിരിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് ലതിക അകന്നകന്നു പോയി.

എനിക്കൊന്നും മനസ്സിലായില്ല . എന്നെ ഇഷ്ടമാണെങ്കിൽ എനോട് പറയണം.

ഇതെന്തിനാണ് മനോജിനോട് കൊടുക്കണമെന്ന് പറയുന്നത്? വല്ലാത്ത ദേഷ്യം തോന്നി.

ഞാൻ ഇതൊന്നും അറിയാത്ത കൊച്ചു കുട്ടിയാണെന്നാണോ കരുതിയിരിക്കുന്നത്.

ഞാനും കുറെ സിനിമ കണ്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്, മനോജ് വായിച്ചതിനേക്കാൾ കുറെ പുസ്തകവും വായിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ചില പുസ്തകങ്ങളിൽ ഉമ്മ വയ്ക്കുന്നതുപോലും വായിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഹും.

എന്തിനു മനോജിനെ കൊണ്ട് വായിപ്പിക്കണമെന്നു വിചാരിച്ച് ആ കടലാസ് ഞാൻ

തുറന്നു നോക്കി, എന്റെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട മനോജിന് എന്നാണ് തുടക്കം. ഒന്നും

മനസ്സിലാവുന്നില്ല. എന്റെ പേര് കാണുന്നില്ല. അവസാനമെങ്കിലും എന്റെ

പേരുണ്ടാകുമെന്നു നോക്കി . 'ഒത്തിരി ഒത്തിരി ഉമ്മകളോടെ സ്വന്തം ലതിക'

എന്റെ നിൽപ്പ് കണ്ടിട്ടാണോ എന്നറിയില്ല രഘു മാമൻ എന്താടാ എന്ന് ചോദിച്ചടുത്തു

വന്നു. ഒന്നുമില്ല എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു കടലാസ്സു കീഴയിൽ ഒളിപ്പിച്ചുവെച്ച്, കിണറ്റിനടുത്തേക്കു

ഓടിപ്പോയി കുറച്ചു വെള്ളം കുടിച്ചു . വെള്ളത്തിനെന്തു മധുരം. തൊടിയിൽ വീണ

മാങ്ങാ മുറ്റത്തു പെറുക്കി വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതിൽ നിന്നൊന്നു എടുത്തു ഈമ്പി കുടിച്ചു. ഈ

മാങ്ങയ്ക്കു മാത്രം എന്തിത്ര മധുരം. റോഡിലേക്ക് നോക്കിയപ്പോൾ ലതിക ഒറ്റയ്ക്ക്

തിരിച്ചു വരുന്നു. അവളുടെ നടത്തം എന്ത് വൃത്തികേടാണ്. ഒരു കാര്യവുമില്ലാതെ

അവിടെയും ഇവിടെയും നോക്കി ചിരിക്കുന്നു. മൃഗ ശാലയിൽ കണ്ട കുരങ്ങന്റെ

ചിരിപോലുണ്ട്. എനിക്ക് കാരണമുണ്ട്. ഞാൻ ഓടി മുറിയിൽ കയറി ബാലരമയിൽ മുഖം

മറച്ചു.



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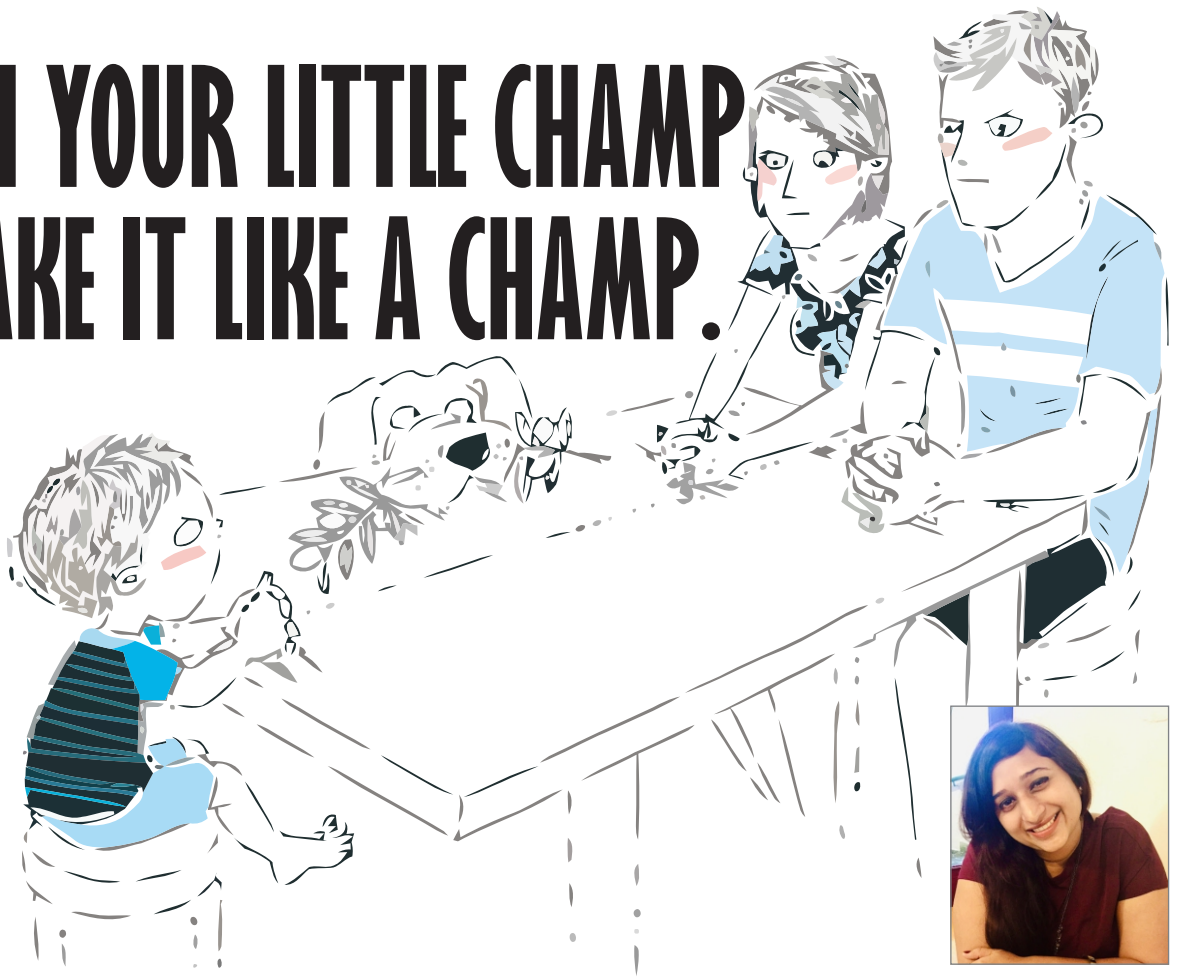
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TEACH YOUR LITTLE CHAMP TO TAKE IT LIKE A CHAMP.



Sami Austin

Win at Parenting by teaching how to lose gracefully.

We have spent hours and days and years teaching our kids how to succeed- done away with test scores for early schooling, giving awards to everyone participating, and constantly telling them that success is the only way to go.

But what's forgotten in this style of new-age parenting, is the art of losing with grace.

Modern parenting is dictated by fear. Risks seem to be lurking around every corner antibiotic-resistant germs, bullying kids, unfair teachers, lurking paedophiles – so when we tuck our kids into bed at night, free of cuts, bruises or emotional hurt, we have, for one more day, found tangible evidence of our parenting success.

Parenting is the most important leadership role you will hold. The strategies you use to bring this generation will be telling of the future.

As a person who has seen enough success and failures in life, I can now truly be thankful for

each one of those failures. While success gave me confidence and made me poised for growth, my failures taught me resilience, patience, courage, strength, and wisdom, much more than any of my successes did. If you thought that those people who are constantly succeeding think differently, you can turn to one of the world's greatest athletes who spent years preaching the importance of losing. Jordan has spoken extensively about how perseverance and resilience in the face of challenges on and off the court are what have made him a winner. Unfortunately, as the world puts increased pressure on kids to be winners, and parents feel compelled to enable them in every way possible, we're seeing more and more kids who become distraught over even the smallest misstep.

So, let's take my close friend John's daughter. Every time this sweet little kid lost on the basketball court; she would get completely distraught. She would at times, take the ball and throw it violently and worse still, take the ball and hit it on her head. Her coach had never seen a kid who was so hard on herself. She told her to treat herself like how she would treat her younger sister when she'd make a mistake and not be so mean to herself. But this fear of failure was already ingrained and would take years to peel those layers off. A better way would be to get started on the right foot.

So, what are the strategies to hail failure just as you hail Success? Talk it Out.

Help your child identify the emotions they feel and express them in an acceptable way. When your child is not successful, whether in the classroom or on the basketball court, parents (or any adult caregiver) should be available to help them work through the emotions.

Discover the why

Give them an opportunity to talk about why they think certain things didn't go the way they wanted or expected them to go. Even youngsters can express their feelings, and one of the best things a parent can do is to listen. Your child will likely to even provide some insight into what happened that you were not aware of.

Monkey See, Monkey do

Remember that your child watches how you respond to failures in your own life. It's okay to share your disappointment, and it's important to show them how you learn from these experiences.

Lay Off the Pressure.

Yes, diamonds are created in extreme pressure. And life is going to offer enough pressure to your kid. You can lay off a bit. Provide age-appropriate activities and goals that match your child's interests and skills. Too often, parents lose their way in expecting too much of a child at too young of an age. Relax and lay off the pressure to master skills early and excel at everything. It really is okay if your child can't do a toe-touch in first grade or is unable to hit the ball off a tee at age 4.

Journey matters. Teach them that.

Let your child know that winning isn't the most important thing. Give as much praise for their effort and attitude as you do for a winning outcome. Prioritize the journey, enthusiasm and trying, and what they learn along the way.

Superpowers are not just for Halloween.

Nurture Your Child's Superpowers. Talk to your child about their strengths—the things you observe as their positive traits. Notice those that make them unique. Let them see that there are many winning traits.

These qualities don't need to have anything to do with being the best or winning, either. For example, they may not have won the race, but they did congratulate the winner, cheer the loudest for other athletes, thank their coach, pick up trash left along the track, and/or shave two seconds off their personal best. Conversations such as this can help build self-esteem and perspective in even a very young child.

Love. It's just that simple.

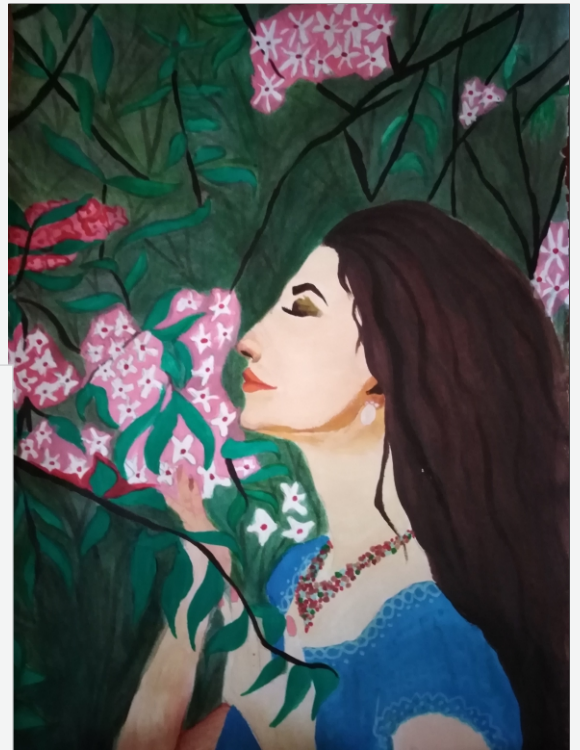
And most of all, truly love without limitations. Not just verbalize it. Show it, too. Just saying, "Whatever you do I will always love you," but showing up with a dejected face at every loss will tell them a different story. Let your child know that you value them, win or lose.



ART WORK



Arvind



Rosemol



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