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KERALA CALLING

OCTOBER 01, 2023_VOL_43_No_12



KERALEEYAM
CELEBRATING KERALANESS

No matter where we go,
Kerala will be in our blood.





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KERALEEYAM

Kerala is ready to present a broader narrative this November. Keraleeyam 2023, set in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram, promises to be an exceptional showcase of Kerala's journey. This celebration is an embodiment of how the state respects its deep-rooted traditions while eagerly adopting new-age advancements.

Central to Keraleeyam's spirit is the synergy between the time-honoured and the modern. Traditional art forms like Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, which symbolize Kerala's artistic heritage, will share platforms with dialogues on current achievements in IT, healthcare, and education. Rather than mere juxtaposition, it portrays Kerala's fluidity in adapting. The state has maintained its roots while progressing, showcasing its aptitude to harmoniously integrate history with the present.

Kerala's natural allure goes beyond mere aesthetics. Its serene backwaters, unspoiled beaches, and the majestic Western Ghats signify more than tourist destinations. They epitomize the harmonious bond Keralites share with nature. The state's dedication to responsible tourism and its environmentally conscious initiatives have positioned Kerala distinctively in global tourism. Furthermore, Kerala's diverse culinary spectrum, influenced by myriad cultures over eras, provides a gustatory journey, each dish echoing tales of the state's vibrant history.

Keraleeyam 2023's vision also highlights modern sectors like education and healthcare. Kerala's impressive literacy rate is a testament to the state's long-term investments and inherent value for learning. Modern educational facilities, tech-integrated learning, and a globally relevant curriculum indicate Kerala's pursuit of moulding a generation poised for the future. In healthcare, Kerala's proactive strategies, evident during recent health challenges, underscore its sturdy infrastructure and community-oriented focus, ensuring comprehensive health benefits.

Kerala's economic sphere is buzzing with dynamism. Liberal policies, combined with infrastructure enhancements, are morphing Kerala into an innovation hub. The state's youth, equipped with quality education and a broad perspective, lead this transformation. The emerging startup culture, facilitated by government strategies and youthful entrepreneurial zeal, sketches a bright horizon marked by inventive growth.

Inclusivity remains a Kerala hallmark. The state's stride in gender equality is commendable. Initiatives like Kudumbashree are not mere symbols; they are strategic drives to position women at the heart of development. Kerala's emphasis on empowering women underscores its conviction: genuine progress is comprehensive and inclusive.

Keraleeyam 2023 extends beyond festivity—it's a global invitation to witness Kerala's continuum. Kerala's narrative, weaving traditions with forward-looking aspirations, stands distinct and motivational. The festival offers global enthusiasts a closer bond with Kerala, granting insights into its rich past, dynamic present, and promising future. Keraleeyam's essence encapsulates Kerala's growth ethos—anchored in heritage, eco-awareness, and inclusivity. Amid global flux, Kerala's paradigm imparts insights on sustainable and harmonious advancement.

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'OUR OWN KERALA, OUR OWN MALAYALAM'

MT VASUDEVAN NAIR- Writer, Novelist

The young generation now has an array of opportunities to gain knowledge. Earlier, children did not have free access to books and the schools did not have huge libraries. The schools these days, however, boast a huge collection of books and library facilities. This has helped the youngsters in a big way. That's indeed a big development.



SREEKUMARAN THAMPI- Poet, Lyricist

All humans should be equal. That's what our culture originally envisages. Let the Keraleeyam festival help analyse the cultural tradition of Kerala, its ritualistic art forms as well as its uniqueness and impart the same to the young generations. This festival also marks a nostalgic return to our olden days

EZHACHERRY RAMACHANDRAN- Poet, Lyricist

Keraleeyam comes as a huge celebration of a schematic arrangement oozing both blood and tears of Malayalam's creative ability to see, listen to, learn and communicate. On this occasion, my only prayer is to have a creative situation in which all Malayalis coexist as the children of the same mother irrespective of their caste, religion, creed, place and even times.



PROF. M.K.SANU- Writer, Critic



I regard the rich stock of resources as well as its natural beauty as the most important asset of Kerala. I have travelled to different parts of the world and paid visits to the most beautiful destinations such as Switzerland and the Alps mountains. Even while visiting those locations, I keep on thinking about Kerala. Listening to the intense yet indeterminate roar of the sea on the western side of Kerala is indeed a huge experience. We can see the charming visuals of mountain ranges in the East, clouds lingering on the peaks and the ups and downs of the landscape. Upon seeing this, I can't help but think that Kerala is such a place where even heaven would like to come down and give a kiss.

PF MATHEWS- Novelist

I extend my wishes to Keraleeyam that seeks to uphold the growth of Kerala as well as its cultural eminence.



MOHAN LAL- Actor



I take pride in two things as a Malayali. Kerala is known all over the world for its education and health. This feeling belongs to only a Malayali. Malayalis can be seen holding significant positions all over the world. I also take pride in the fact that I work in Malayalam films. The Malayalam movie industry has produced an array of talented writers, directors, actors and technicians over the years. It was in Malayalam that India's first 3D movie was produced and the first film Academy was constituted. I am extremely proud of being a Malayali. As a Malayali, I hereby extend all my good wishes to the Keraleeyam event organised by the state government on this Kerala Piravi day.

KS CHITRA- Singer

I am proud of being a Malayali. Kerala is a state that leads the way in all aspects of life and also in terms of natural beauty. We can say for sure that there are no countries in this world without a Malayali. Keraleeyam is a festival that showcases our cultural heritage.



SHANE NIGAM- Actor

I extend all my wishes to Keraleeyam, which showcases the gains made by Kerala to the world.



MRIDULA WARRIER- Singer

I take immense pride in being a Malayali. Above this, I feel extremely proud while thinking about Malayalam itself.



GR INDUGOPAN - Short Story Writer, Novelist

I am a writer who has emerged on the back of the rich cultural tradition of Kerala. Having grown as a community with a high degree of social and political awareness and through an evolution of attitude towards the fellow species and concerns over gender justice, we the Malayalis are a society that have responded and continue to respond to even the minute socio-political developments for a long time.



FRANCIS NORONHA- Novelist

As a Malayali, I take pride in two things. The foremost among these is that I was born in a land where people like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan were born. Secondly, ours is a dravidian society that has successfully fought and resisted the social, cultural and religious occupation attempts by the Aryans. I take pride in making interventions for the marginalised through my language while also being part of that movement.



SIDDHARTH VARADARAJAN - Journalist

Whenever I hear the words like Kerala and Malayali or even the Malayalam language for that matter, it brings to mind a place that has achieved high standards of social progress. A state where, unlike in other parts of India, different castes and communities coexists without hatred or division. The Kerala model of development accords priority to social progress and humane considerations. Keraleeyam is a concept, model as well as approach that other states in the country should watch with interest. I extend my good luck to Keraleeyam. I am also looking forward to being a part of this event in its subsequent editions.

S.SOMANATH- Chairman, ISRO

I have grown up as a student who was educated from an ordinary government school in Kerala and pursued my engineering here. My biggest achievement in life is that I was able to work in the space sector. Over and above being an Indian citizen, I also take pride in being a Keraleyan as well . The achievements that Kerala has made, especially in the areas of education, health, gender equality and equality in work spaces are indeed commendable



THANOOJA S BHATTATHIRI- Writer

Keraleeyam will play a crucial role in the journey to ensure equal justice to all by overcoming the communal thoughts and resolving the social issues.



SITHARA KRISHNAKUMAR - Singer, Composer, Lyricist, Dancer & Actor

With a view to showcase the gains made by Kerala in various fields, a huge festival titled Keraleeyam is being staged in Thiruvananthapuram from November 1 to 7. I too will be joining the event as a part of the musical programme led by my mentor and master M.Jayachandran sir. I extend all my wishes to Keraleeyam.



HARISHREE ASHOKAN - Actor

I hereby extend all my wishes to the Keraleeyam, a mega event to be organised by the state government



RENJU RENJIMAR- Makeup Artist

Kerala is the first state in the country to ratify a transgender policy and officially acknowledge the transgender personalities. The prevailing situation in Kerala allows transpersons to study and work by holding onto their gender identity. I am proud to be born in Kerala.





Keraleeyam 2023

Bridging Kerala's Past, Present, and Future





PINARAYI VIJAYAN

Chief Minister

Scheduled from November 1 to 7 in Thiruvananthapuram, Keraleeyam 2023 unveils a grand narrative tracing Kerala's journey from its cultural roots to its contemporary strides. More than just a showcase, this exposition embodies intellectual discussions, global partnerships, and the envisioning of a shared, progressive future. Through Keraleeyam, Kerala extends an invitation to the world, narrating a tale of a state where tradition harmoniously blends with modernity.

Kerala's cultural essence marks its signature. The inaugural segment of Keraleeyam guides spectators on a voyage through time, showcasing traditional art forms like Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, while highlighting modern-day accomplishments in sectors like information technology, healthcare, education, agriculture, tourism, housing, industries, startups etc.. This juxtaposition is a deliberate attempt to demonstrate the seamless blend of the old with the new.

The geographical charm of the State enhances its identity. The lush landscapes, calming backwaters, and pristine beaches symbolize the peaceful coexistence of Keralites with nature. This tranquility and beauty extend into the life philosophy of the people here, celebrated for their communal harmony and intellectual vibrancy.

The State is witnessing a surge in tourism due to its captivating natural landscapes, rich culture, and unique food experiences. The state's approach to responsible tourism, along with its traditional and modern hospitality, has significantly enhanced its appeal to tourists globally. Investments in tourism infrastructure and active promotion by the government are further propelling this growth, making Kerala a notable destination on the global tourism map.

Kerala's tradition of religious harmony and diversity, encapsulating a blend of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity among other faiths, reflects centuries of religious tolerance. Temples, mosques, and churches coexist peacefully within proximity, while festivals like Onam and Christmas are celebrated by all communities, transcending religious boundaries.



Realising the long cherished dream-
The first ship arrives at Vizhinjam.



Fostering a scientific temper has been a rich tradition in Kerala, from ancient to modern times. Once a hub of trade and a melting pot of cultures, Kerala's traditional Ayurveda system showcases an ancient understanding of medicine and human health. Today, the State prioritises education and scientific inquiry, reflecting a rational approach to contemporary challenges, including healthcare and environmental sustainability.

Education is a cornerstone in Kerala. Keraleeyam 2023 will spotlight the state's educational journey that has propelled its literacy rate to be an exemplar for many. The modern focus on world-class classrooms and integrating technology into education epitomizes Kerala's forward-thinking in nurturing a globally competent young generation.

Kerala has also carved a unique identity in healthcare. The effective management of recent health crises highlights a robust healthcare system. Community-based healthcare has been a focal point, ensuring basic medical facilities are accessible to all, a principle to be discussed and exhibited extensively during Keraleeyam 2023.

The economic realm of Kerala is undergoing a notable transformation towards becoming more investment-friendly. Policy reforms and infrastructure development have nurtured a conducive environment for business and innovation. The resulting confidence among the youth has fostered a burgeoning startup ecosystem.

The youth embody a blend of intellectual fervour and entrepreneurial spirit, driving innovative solutions to contemporary challenges. Numerous platforms and initiatives have been established to nurture the potential of the youth, channelling their ideas and energies towards productive and meaningful engagements.

Kerala stands at the forefront of gender equality and women empowerment, boasting

Kerala has also carved a unique identity in healthcare. The effective management of recent health crises highlights a robust healthcare system. Community-based healthcare has been a focal point, ensuring basic medical facilities are accessible to all, a principle to be discussed and exhibited extensively during Keraleeyam 2023.





a favourable gender ratio and promoting women's education, health, and socioeconomic participation. Women are actively involved in the workforce, leadership roles, and decision-making processes.

The state's commitment to gender equality shines through its Kudumbashree initiative. Translating to 'prosperity of the family', Kudumbashree, a women-centric, community-driven movement, aims at poverty eradication and women empowerment. By promoting self-help groups and micro-enterprises, it broadens women's role in local governance and community development.

The unity displayed by Keralites during crises is exemplary. The solidarity, resilience, and collective will to overcome adversities underline the social cohesion contributing to the state's stability and progress.

Keraleeyam 2023 also envisions a global dialogue platform, hosting dignitaries and experts from various fields across the globe to engage in fruitful dialogues, learn from global best practices, and foster collaborations driving further progress in the state.

Kerala's progression towards a balanced economic model by integrating traditional industries with modern economic policies showcases a sustainable growth model, a promising example in a world discussing balanced development.



Kerala has been a forerunner in embracing sustainable development, showcasing a balance between growth and environmental preservation. Its policies reflect a strong commitment to social equity, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Moreover, the traditional emphasis on harmony with nature, seen in practices like organic farming and eco-friendly tourism, underlines Kerala's holistic approach to sustainable development, making it a model worth emulating.

Keraleeyam 2023 extends Kerala's narrative to the world, inviting exploration of its rich heritage, appreciation of its present, and collaboration for a promising future. As the state exhibits its culture, development, and the unique essence of being a Keralite, it contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable and inclusive growth.

The ethos of Keraleeyam provides a lens for the world to view Kerala's remarkable journey and aspirations. It bridges the past and the present, tradition and modernity, exhibiting a path of holistic growth that other regions could emulate. Through Keraleeyam, Kerala celebrates its journey while opening avenues for collaborative growth, global partnerships, and a shared vision for a better future.





The Land

Cradled by the towering Western Ghats,
Kissed by the Arabian's gentle sea,
In emerald splendour and cultural dance,
Rich and vibrant, full of romance,
Lies the majestic land

KERALAM

The majestic Sahyadris (Western Ghats) to the east and the expansive Arabian Sea to the west frame Kerala, a unique state on India's southwestern frontier. Positioned between North Latitude 8° 18' and 12° 48' and East Longitude 74° 52' and 77° 24', Kerala unfolds as a slender ribbon of land, distinguished into three predominant zones: the eastern highland, graced by the towering peaks and lush forests of the Sahyadris; the western lowland, where sandy shores are gently lapped by the Arabian Sea; and the midland, a rolling landscape that bridges the two extremes.

For its modest size, Kerala's topographical diversity has consistently attracted tourists globally. Covering about 580 km from its northernmost to southernmost points, its breadth varies between a tight 35 km to a more expansive 120 km, averaging at around 65 km. Notably, as one traverses this compact land, the landscape transitions seamlessly from the rugged eastern heights to the tranquil western shores, presenting an array of picturesque settings.

Kerala, bordered by the Madras state to the south and east and Mysore state to the north and northeast, is a lush stretch lies between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Its position, combined with abundant rainfall, has bestowed upon it unique features distinct from the rest of India. With an average width of 42 miles, reaching up to 80 miles at its broadest, the land is a fertile assortment interwoven with numerous rivers and streams. The lush greenery is a proof to the richness of its soil.

The highlands of Kerala are characterized by dense forests, with the lower areas nurturing thriving plantations. The fertile lowlands, fringed with coconut palms, aptly named 'keram' or 'kalpavriksha', are also conducive to paddy cultivation. The midland, primarily laterite soil, supports crops like tapioca, cashew, spices, and more. In contrast, the high-altitude regions are ideal for cardamom and tea, while lower regions favour pepper, ginger, turmeric, and rubber.

Kerala's coastal region, a confluence of the sea, rivers, and backwaters, historically served as a trading hub. The natural ports along the coast facilitated external commerce. The diverse landscapes, from coastlines to plains and high ranges, have significantly shaped Kerala's socio-economic and political evolution. While the Western Ghats may have isolated Kerala from the rest of India initially, its vibrant coast ensured a seamless connection with the global world.





The People

Kerala, before the colonial era, was marked by a clear social hierarchy. The society was segmented into various castes and religious factions, each playing a distinct role in a broader structure. Anthropologists often describe Keralites as an "ethnological museum," owing to the diversity in their origins.

The foundational inhabitants of Kerala were Dravidians, considered the forebears of today's Keralites. However, with the Aryan invasion, there was a mingling of races. The earliest settlers trace back to the Negritos, primarily hunter-gatherers, who resided in the forests and mountains of eastern Kerala. Remarkably, some of their descendants continue to inhabit these regions.

Following the Negritos were the Australoids, associated with the Australian aboriginal lineage. As farming enthusiasts, they introduced rice and vegetable cultivation and pioneered sugar extraction from sugarcane. Significantly, they brought with them snake worship—a ritual still observed in various parts of Kerala.

By 700 B.C., Dravidians, believed to have migrated from the





Mediterranean region, expanded their footprint across India, majorly in the south. While they incorporated beliefs and practices from various races, their primary worship centered around the Mother Goddess, viewed in her diverse forms—protector, avenger, and bestower of wealth and arts knowledge.

Around 300 B.C., Aryans, having previously established themselves in northern India after migrating from the Mesopotamian region, began their southern journey, reaching Kerala. As a result, present-day Keralites exhibit a blend of three major racial strains: Mundas, Dravidians, and Aryans. The remote mountains and forests of Kerala continue to be home to tribal communities, referred to as Adivasis.

Kerala's unique geography often isolated it politically from the rest of India, but this did not hinder its rich cultural exchanges both nationally and globally. Archaeological findings, ancient texts, and foreign records affirm that Kerala was once a part of the broader Tamilakam, sharing its cultural ethos.

The early population of Kerala was predominantly Dravidian. Historians believe that hill tribes, Harijans, Ezhavas, and Nairs were the primary inhabitants. These communities were tied closely with the ancient Dravidian empires of Chera, Chola, and Pandya. Despite intermittent disputes and wars, a shared bond of language, literature, and lineage fostered a unified

cultural fabric in South India.

A key shift in Kerala's history was the decline of the Perumal empire. Post this, people near the Ghats began cultivating their unique customs, leading to a distinct cultural identity.

The Aryan migration further shaped Kerala. The incoming Aryans blended with the existing Dravidian culture. This amalgamation introduced concepts like private land ownership, the caste system, and Aryan cultural elements. It introduced Aryan literature, medicine, art, and architecture. Sanskrit became prominent, influencing the evolution of the Malayalam language, which assimilated a significant portion of Sanskrit.

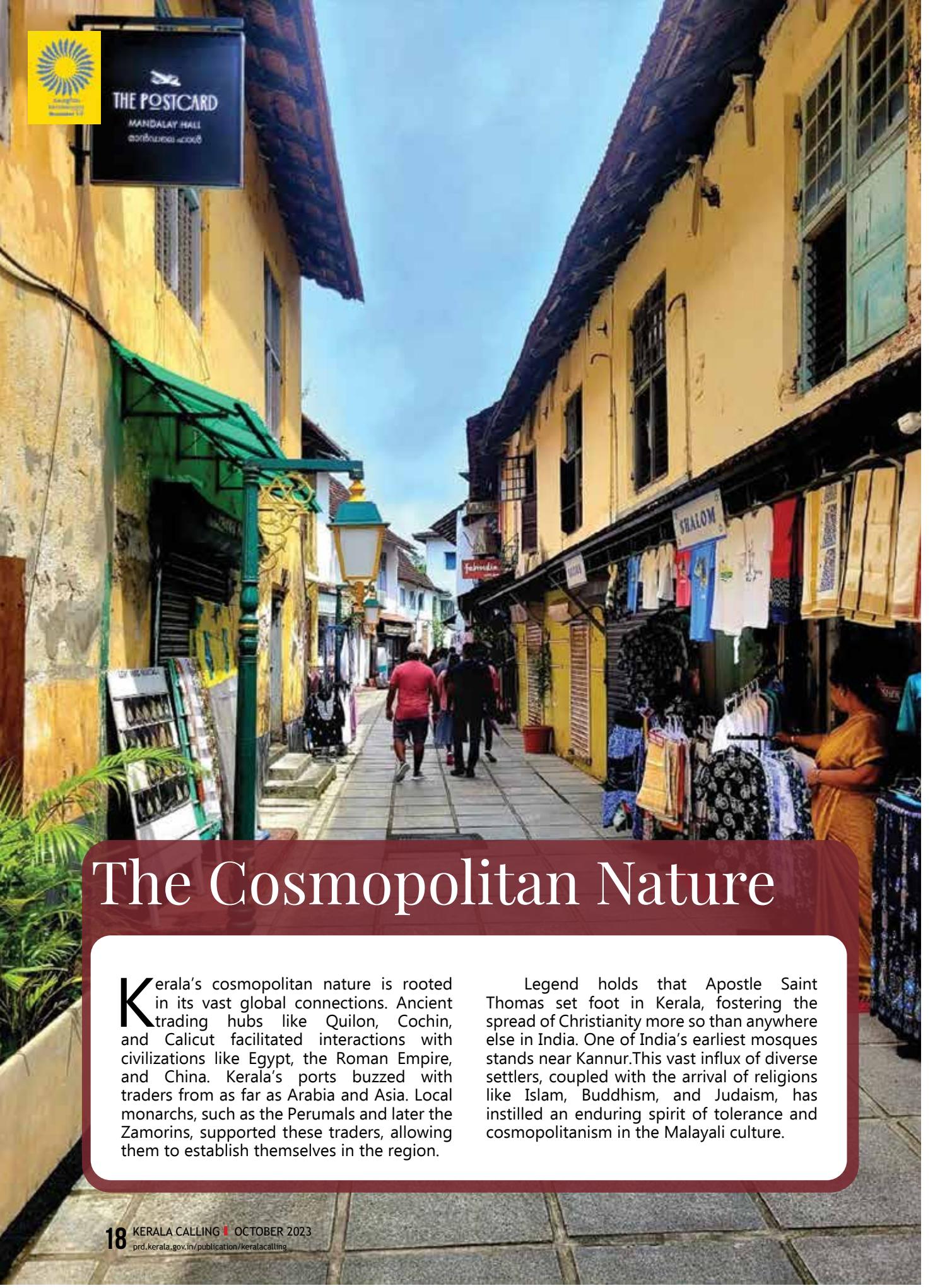
Yet, it was not a one-sided cultural exchange. Aryan settlers too adopted local customs, leading to a harmonious fusion of Aryan and Dravidian cultures. This blend formed the unique Kerala culture we recognize today, distinct yet resonating with the broader Indian cultural continuity. Major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity have enriched Kerala's cultural heritage.

Unity is the foremost strength of people of Kerala. It was underscored during the mighty flood of 2018





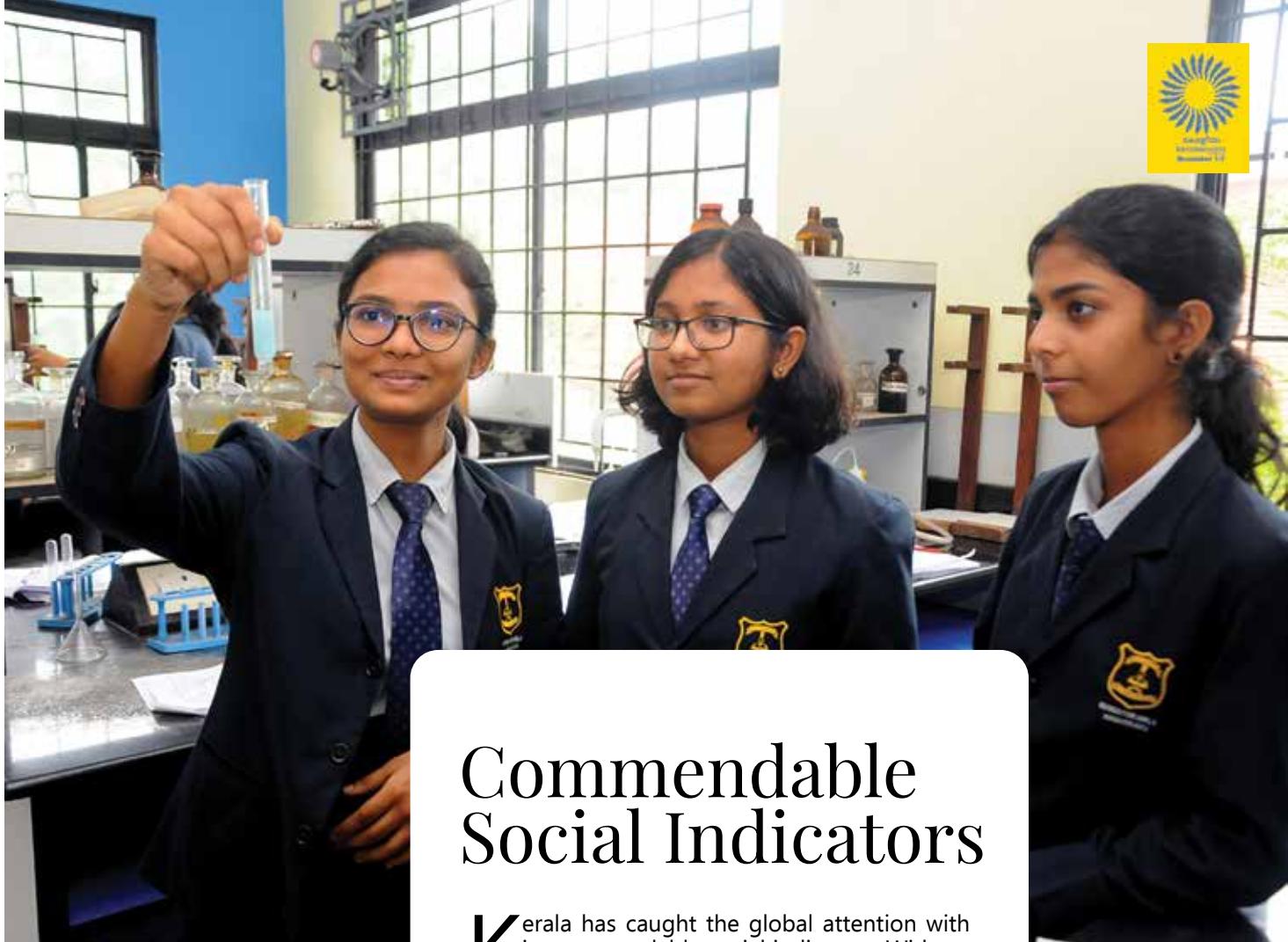
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The Cosmopolitan Nature

Kerala's cosmopolitan nature is rooted in its vast global connections. Ancient trading hubs like Quilon, Cochin, and Calicut facilitated interactions with civilizations like Egypt, the Roman Empire, and China. Kerala's ports buzzed with traders from as far as Arabia and Asia. Local monarchs, such as the Perumals and later the Zamorins, supported these traders, allowing them to establish themselves in the region.

Legend holds that Apostle Saint Thomas set foot in Kerala, fostering the spread of Christianity more so than anywhere else in India. One of India's earliest mosques stands near Kannur. This vast influx of diverse settlers, coupled with the arrival of religions like Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism, has instilled an enduring spirit of tolerance and cosmopolitanism in the Malayali culture.



Commendable Social Indicators

Kerala has caught the global attention with its commendable social indicators. Without riding the wave of 'rapid' economic growth typically seen in GDP metrics, Kerala achieved near First World standards in literacy, life expectancy, and infant mortality. While some dubbed this phenomenon an enigma, many saw it as an exemplary model worth studying for replication in other developing regions.

Incorporated on 1 November 1956, modern Kerala amalgamated areas from the erstwhile Madras state with Travancore-Cochin. Spanning 38,864 square Kms with a 580-kilometer coastline, Kerala's historical and cultural significance continues to resonate today.



The land, People, Cosmopolitan nature, Social Indicators are compiled by
Dr. Gopakumar University College, Thiruvananthapuram



We may be able to tell A new India story too

Kerala has many stories to share with the world about its proud secular tradition. These tales are ingrained in every Malayali's cultural heritage and are fundamental to defining the essence of being a Keralite.

**MANU S PILLAI**

Writer, Historian

Legend has it that when the goddess Annapoorneshwari journeyed to Kerala from Kashi, she travelled in a golden boat. Accompanying her were subordinate deities but also, interestingly, Buddhists and Muslims; indeed, her ship's captain was Muslim. After arrival, the goddess was consecrated at Cherukunnu, where her temple still stands. As for the captain who delivered her safely to her new home, on death he was buried nearby—at what is now the Oliyankara masjid, minutes away from the goddess's shrine.

For those with an interest in Kerala's culture, such tales are available in a surplus. Not mortals alone, but the gods also mingled here with one another, whether it is tribal deities sharing space with Sanskritic ones, or Christian saints with links to Hindu temples. The region's social fabric conceded

space to all major communities. At the duodecennial Mamankam (Maha-Magha) festival, for example, Muslims were participants; in southern Kerala, only oil "purified" by the "touch" of a Nasrani Christian was accepted in many orthodox Hindu kitchens and temples.

As a trading society, with links to lands as far apart as Arabia and China, it is hardly surprising that Kerala made room for the many. Brahmins and Arabs both arrived here as migrants; with the former, there is the legend of Parasurama "gifting" the region to them, and with the latter, the seeding of Islam is condensed into the tale of a kingly convert who sails to Mecca. Christian myth, meanwhile, tells that when St Thomas, the apostle, landed in Kerala, he not only found Jews already settled here, but also parleyed playfully with the goddess of Kodungallur.

Legends are not, obviously, always factual. Yet they communicate how people perceived their world, and how they wished to be remembered. Walking into the Cheruvathur Veerabhadra temple,



for example, one will find a bronze depicting an armless warrior. It commemorates a local Muslim who helped defend the shrine during Tipu Sultan's invasion, and whose limbs were chopped off in punishment by the enemy. Here, both "sides" are Muslim, but the line of division is between the Malayali and a foreign trespasser. Regional loyalty, not faith, is what matters.

This is not to romanticise Kerala. Tolerance of variety did not mean boundaries were erased; one was still labelled by community. Caste afflicted not just Hindus, but also Christians, where Nasranis—who trace a religious pedigree stretching back well over a millennium—disdained association with more recent "untouchable" converts. The 1921 Mappila Rebellion had many triggers, but also saw violent religious zeal unleashed. And in the Travancore principality in south Kerala, politics was pivoted on communal lines, between Brahmins, Nairs, Christians, and Ezhavas.

In general, however, the impulse was of tolerance, not conflict, with faith and ritual adapting to a heterogenous social landscape. As late as the 1920s, therefore, it was wholly natural for the childless maharani of Travancore—formally pledged to Lord Padmanabhaswamy—to make vows not only before her family deities, but also at a Christian church. When she gave birth after years of praying, she installed a flagstaff at the Attingal temple, but with equal devotion donated a silver cross to a Nasrani church. For the queen, both were part of "tradition".

Even today, if one observes nerchhas (festivals) organised in honour of saints and heroes by north Kerala's Muslims, the same elephants and drummers who lead celebrations at temples appear here. If

Hindus offered cock sacrifices to goddesses, Nasranis also did so when commemorating Christian saints. Many are the churches, mosques, and even the odd synagogue that stand on land granted by Hindu lords. Some ceremonial links are even now maintained—the Paliam family of Chendamangalam still, it is said, fulfils obligations at Vallarpadam church, originally instituted by a seventeenth century ancestor.

It must be admitted, however, that in the colonial era, as identities solidified in new ways, such links were often buried by elements on all sides. The Neelamperoor temple near Changanassery houses a goddess, thus, but once featured a cross-wearing figure, Pallivanar, also. A century ago, it was recorded that Christians were traditionally first to pull the festival chariot, besides which they had other duties in the temple. But it all came to an end, evidently at the demand of a Christian priest, who frowned on such religious elasticity among his herd. The tendency since then has been more towards maintaining rigid boundaries.

And yet, in all this, there is a legacy worth recalling and, indeed, reclaiming. These stories are part of every Malayali's cultural inheritance; they are essential to defining what it means to be Keralite. To me at any rate this is the real "Kerala story". It also offers something of value more generally. We live, after all, in times where every cleavage, every aberration is weaponised to craft new, not always pleasant versions of who we are, and what we must become. In an age when burning bridges has grown more attractive than nurturing them, this sliver of the Indian coast might show us the way to an antidote. And who knows: we may be able to tell a new India story too.





A Rhapsody of Unity in Cultural Verse



Kerala's culture is defined by its unparalleled pluralism and cosmopolitan nature. It serves as a mosaic of cultures and communities, celebrated for the harmonious coexistence of people from varied religious backgrounds. What truly sets Kerala apart is its unwavering commitment to secularism, making it a global beacon in terms of its secular credentials.



M.C. VASISHT

Historian

The state's abundant natural resources played a pivotal role in moulding it into a multicultural society. Historically, Kerala was renowned as the hub of black gold and spices. These treasures attracted myriad foreign traders to the shores of the Arabian Sea. Each year, during April and May, foreign sailors and merchants would harness the monsoon winds to venture to the southern realms of the Indian subcontinent, with Kerala – the land of pepper and spices – being their preferred destination. By May's end, their vessels would dock along the western coast. The subsequent monsoon months were reserved for trade, and they often collaborated with local merchants to facilitate

storage and movement of goods. Such flourishing trans-oceanic engagements were made possible largely due to the support of Kerala's local rulers. As these overseas merchants established their presence, they also brought with them their diverse cultural practices.

Historical evidence showcases the collaboration between foreign traders and local monarchs. An ancient reference from the Bible (BCE 10) mentions a port named Ophir. Some scholars believe that this port is Beyapore, located near Calicut in northern Kerala. The renowned Sangam literature of the Tamils speaks of associations between Roman merchants and Chera chieftains. Kerala's epigraphic evidence further underscores this mutual cooperation. For instance, the 9th-century Syrian copper plates chronicle the grants and privileges bestowed by a naduvazhi (local ruler) of southern Kerala upon Syrian Christian traders in Kollam. Another notable 10th-century



Hand in glove with each other. Temple and Mosque

Chera inscription, the Jewish copper plates, details the privileges granted by Chera king Bhaskara Ravi Manukuladitya to Jewish traders in his capital, Makotai (identified with modern Kodungallur) in central Kerala. Furthermore, records from Calicut in northern Kerala highlight the interactions between the Zamorins and local Muslims. Collectively, these records bear testimony to Kerala's rich cultural exchanges which transcended into various facets of daily life, fostering a spirit of peaceful community coexistence.

The Zamorins of Calicut owed much of their power to the economic backing of local Muslims. Notably, among the prominent figures in the Zamorin's domain was a Muslim named Kozhikode Koya. Kunjali Marakkar, the naval commanders under the Zamorins, valiantly resisted Portuguese colonial invasions for nearly a century. In January 1510, a Portuguese assault on Calicut led by Albuquerque resulted in the partial destruction of the Mishkal mosque. However, this attack was swiftly repelled by the Zamorin's Nair forces, leading to significant Portuguese casualties.

Throughout Kerala, it is common to find temples, churches, and mosques situated in close proximity. For instance, in regions like Palayam in Trivandrum, Thazhathangadi in Kottayam, Purakkad, Changanacherry, and Kattipedu in Calicut, diverse places of worship coexist harmoniously. A unique sight is at Kottai

Kovilakam in Chennamangalam, where a temple, a church, a mosque, and a synagogue stand side by side within the same compound.

Tirunavaya, a village in the Malappuram district, is known for its lotus cultivation, primarily by Muslims. For as long as locals can recall, these Muslim-cultivated lotuses have been offered at major Hindu temples throughout Kerala, including the revered Guruvayur Sri Krishna temple and the Kozhikode Tali temple. Kerala stands as a testament to the harmonious existence of diverse communities such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists, all of whom have enriched its cultural tapestry.

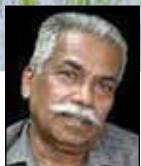
Near the Sabarimala temple complex is a mosque, revered by both Hindus and Muslims alike. A visit to the Vavar mosque is an intrinsic part of the Sabarimala pilgrimage, honoring Vavar, a Muslim ally of Lord Ayyappa's incarnation, Manikandan. The blending of the azaan with temple bells, temples and churches hosting iftar parties, and Muslims aiding Hindu families exemplify Kerala's cultural pluralism. This harmony is also evident in educational settings where students engage in diverse dance forms, transcending their religious backgrounds.

Today, the pressing challenge is to safeguard the rich blend of Kerala's pluralistic society. Kerala remains a land renowned for its authentic tales – stories of peace, camaraderie, and mutual respect.



Milestones that Changed the Face of Kerala

Kerala has achieved pace of material progress which through hard labour over the last few decades. The abolition of landlordism, Administrative Reform Committee, the Education Act and many more political interventions shaped the Kerala's vigour and dynamism.



PROF. V. KARTHIKEYAN NAIR

Historian

The struggle for India's freedom was fought mainly on four grounds. They were the anti-colonial struggle fought mainly in British provinces, the struggle for responsible govt. in princely states, the anti-landlord struggle and anti-caste struggle fought in the whole of India. They were all people's struggles irrespective of caste, religious or linguistic differences. Freedom from colonial rule was achieved when the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act in July 1947 and formally transferred power on 15th August, 1947. The Act also restored sovereignty to the princely states which they had surrendered in the past when they signed

the subsidiary alliance treaty with the British. In effect 555 princely states became sovereign states and they were given the option either to join India or Pakistan or remain independent. It was on this ground that Travancore, Hyderabad and Kashmir opted to remain independent. But the struggle by the native people coupled with the compulsion from the union govt. left these states with no option but to cede to India by signing the Instrument of Accession. Thus, the entire princely states became part of independent India. The rulers retired after accepting Privy Purse. In effect India became politically independent.

Ending Landlordism

The struggle against landlordism which had started in the 19th century (for example the peasant



uprising in Malabar) continued even after India became independent. The nature of landlordism in India varied from state to state. In Kerala while in Malabar the tenants were struggling against eviction, their counterparts in Travancore obtained freedom from eviction and also ownership rights in certain types of tenancy. This paved the way for the emergence of a small but wealthy middle class who led the struggle against caste discrimination, for civic rights and responsible govt. The two decades before independence witnessed intense agitations by the peasants and workers in Kerala for the abolition of landlordism and imperialism. The tenancy reform committee appointed by the Govt. of Madras in 1939 in which E.M.S. Namboodirippad was a member, recommended in favour of the perpetuation of landlordism, to which EMS wrote a dissenting note. This he published later in the form of a booklet titled *A Short History of Peasant Movement in Kerala*. In this booklet, EMS put forward the demand, for the first time, for ownership over the land which the tenant was in possession of. This formed the background of the Agrarian Relations Bill passed by his Govt. in 1957. As a continuation of this legislation Govt. issued an order in 1970 that abolished landlordism in the state. Thus, Kerala earned the reputation of being the first state in India to abolish landlordism.

As a result of the linguistic reorganization of states in India in 1956 the Malayalam-speaking regions were united together to form Kerala. The ministry headed by E.M.S which assumed charge after the first general elections held in the state in 1957 (the second in India) enacted four legislations

and appointed three Commissions with a view to free the state from age-old landlordism and introduce good governance to transform the state to become part of the welfare state concept introduced by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The four legislations were the Prevention of Tenancy Eviction Act, The Agrarian Relations Bill, the Kerala Education Act and the Abolition of Dowry Act. These legislations had far-reaching consequences in the state and can definitely be stated that they laid the foundation of the Kerala model of development. Of these the most important was the prevention of eviction of the tenants by the lords and the agrarian relations bill. The first one freed the tenants from the threat of eviction by the lords and fixed fair rent to be paid to the lords. This empowered the tenants financially and in due course a small section among them grew into a wealthy middle class to take forward the slogan of development. The indirect result of this was that their children were able to go to high school classes by paying three rupees as fees per month. Education up to the seventh standard was free even earlier. But to pay fees for high school classes was very difficult for the majority of the students who hailed from the agrarian class. This is reflected in the results of the SSLC examinations held from 1959 onwards. In 1959 pass percentage remained at 39, the number of candidates who passed the exam was 24000. In 1962 it rose to 48000, double the figure shown four years previously, maintaining pass percentage the same.

The increase in the number of students who were declared eligible for higher education put pressure on that sector. As a result, 43 junior colleges



EMS- The first Chief Minister of Kerala



E.K. Nayanar

were started in 1964 which led to the expansion of higher education in the state. The significant feature of this was that most of these colleges were in the Panchayat areas which meant that higher education was accessible to the rural population. The majority of the beneficiaries of this were girls who were denied education for want of money. Expansion of education among women was the main factor behind the well-acclaimed Kerala model of development. Low birth rate, low infant mortality rate, high life expectancy, efficient public health and public distribution system, network of public transport system connecting urban and rural areas, public distribution of energy and drinking water etc, were pointed out as the indicators of Kerala model of development. These were the steps undertaken by the govt. to fulfil the task of building a welfare state.

The Education Act passed in 1957 provided for the direct payment of salaries of the teachers and employees of aided schools was another piece of legislation that led to the expansion of education at the expense of the state. This was followed by the direct payment of salaries of aided colleges in 1972 led to the expansion of higher education. But state control over the appointment of teachers and employees in these institutions remains to be achieved, though, the Education Act of 1957 provided for it. The result is that social justice through the reservation of jobs in these institutions, as in the case of govt schools and colleges, could not be ensured, though the majority of the people of the state belong to backward communities.

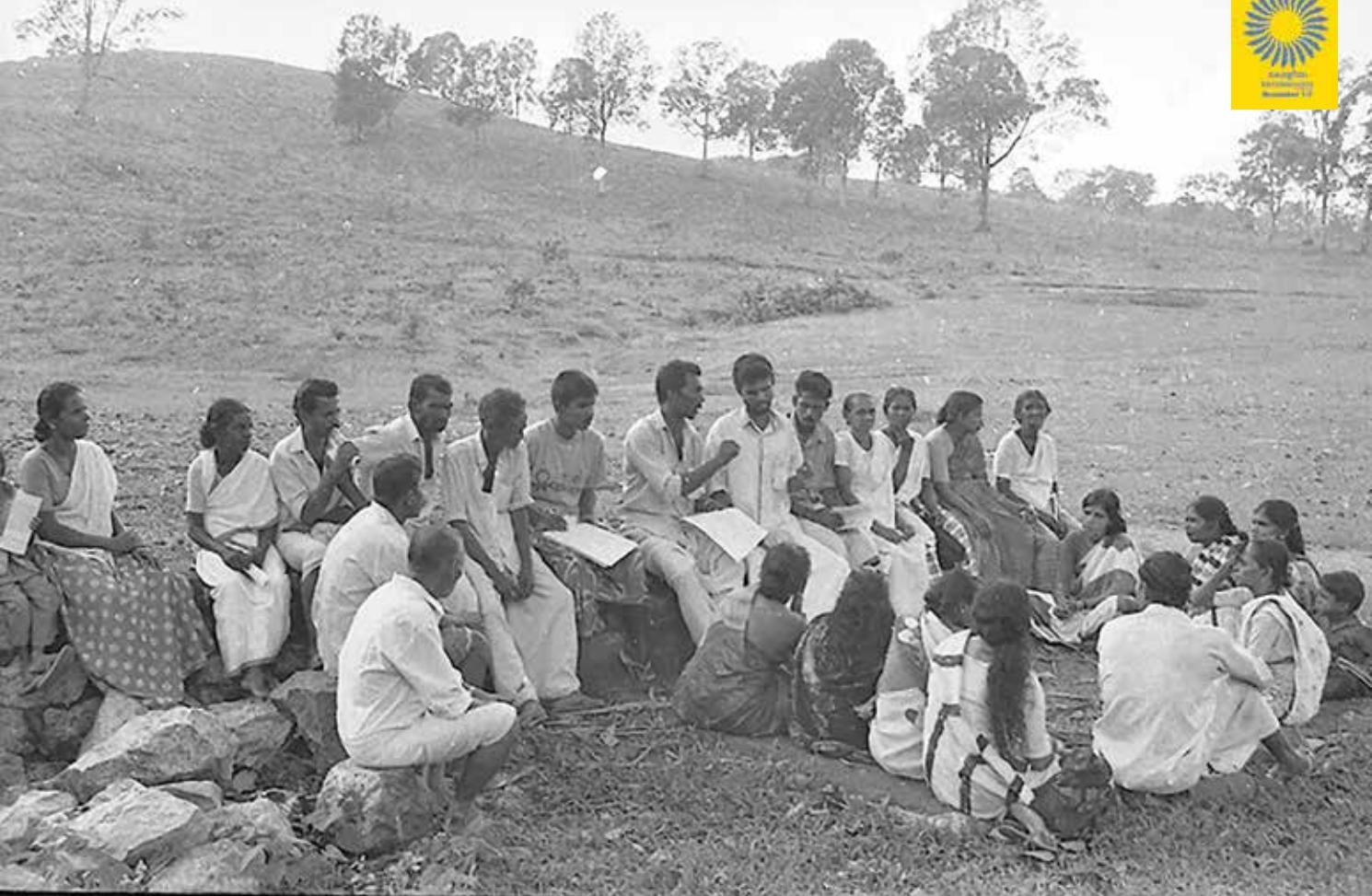
The Dowry Abolition Act passed in December 1957 was the first of its kind in India. The Union govt passed a similar Act in 1963. Though the intention of the govt. was good the society was not as egalitarian as it was expected to be and especially the system of marriage remained mainly based on caste and religious practices.

The first of the three commissions appointed by the govt of 1957 was the Official Language Commission headed by Komattil Achutha Menon. The Commission recommended replacing English with Malayalam as the language of administration in a phased manner. The recommendations of the Commission could not be implemented during the tenure of that govt. It was

during the second tenure of EMS as Chief minister in 1967 that necessary orders were issued in this direction.

The second was the Administrative Reform committee, headed by EMS himself, which recommended the reform of the colonial structure and devolution of power to the local level. It was based on this report that some thirty years later the People's Plan campaign and the local self-governing institutions were launched to ensure participation of the people at the grassroots level.

The third was the Police Commission headed by N.C. Chatterjee studies the functioning of the police force in the state, suggests remedies for the ills that crept into the force and transforms it to suit the aims of a welfare state. The police force in colonial India and in the native states was one of suppression as the masters treated the



subjects as their enemies. But in a democratic state the people are the masters and the police and officials are their servants. This is the concept of the welfare state where the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the goal. The recommendations of the commission could not be implemented in 1957 but after fifty years some of the recommendations were implemented in the form of Janamaithri Police and the introduction of the Student Police Cadet.

Kerala has the unique experience of being a state where all the great world religions have their followers and live peacefully and tolerably. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims from their very day of living in the state function as traders and this made the presence of the Vaisya caste of the Brahmanical order irrelevant in Kerala. But the Jains and Buddhists had their followers here and their contribution to the progress of the indigenous knowledge system was immensely rich.

What Kerala requires at present is to carry forward our cultural heritage of universalism and multi-culturalism on the one side and keep up the pace of material progress which we have achieved through hard labour over the last few decades. Further, we have to transform ourselves as a knowledge society. The prerequisite of this is to produce

Our motto is to change ourselves into a knowledge society. That is envisaged in our program of Keraleeyam, which will surely be a great leap forward.

knowledge in our mother tongue. Knowledge production takes place at the university level. But there the medium of instruction and research is the colonial language of English. We are not able to free ourselves from the cultural hegemony of English because we are reluctant to produce knowledge in our mother tongue. We have to enrich our language with knowledge produced in all disciplines of study. When we produce books in our language on the various branches of study, naturally ours will become a knowledge society. Our motto is to change ourselves into a knowledge society. That is envisaged in our program of Keraleeyam, which will surely be a great leap forward.



Kerala has always been a crucible of intellectual and scientific pursuits. It is a place where traditional wisdom intertwined with pioneering research, leading to a robust scientific temper and innovative practices in various fields, ranging from mathematics to agriculture. The narrative below captures the essence of Kerala's scientific achievements and its continued quest for knowledge and innovation.

The Flourishing Scientific Legacy of Kerala



RVG MENON

Academician

Historically, scholars from the region journeyed to the eastern and northern parts of India, seeking wisdom and guidance from eminent thinkers and educators. It is noteworthy that following the era of Bhaskaracharya, Kerala witnessed the emergence of its distinct mathematical tradition, with Samgamagrama Madhavan (1340-1435) revered as its pioneering figure.

They not only carried forward the Aryabhata - Brahmagupta - Bhaskara tradition but also developed new approaches which were historic. For example, the traditional method for calculating planetary positions was the parahithaganitham. However, several errors were observed in the calculated positions. This was creating a serious problem for astrologers. Paramesvaran (Vadasseri Paramesvara Nampoothiri) developed a new system based on his observations over extended periods. This was called drukganitham and was



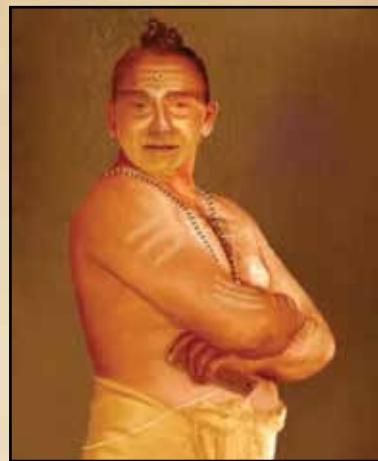
generally accepted as more accurate and appropriate. This shows that Kerala mathematicians and astronomers were not blindly copying the existing methods but looking at them critically and innovating wherever necessary. In addition to this, Paramesvaran also calculated the errors owing to the precession of the equinox and suggested corrections to compensate for it, according to Kelallur Chomathiri, a later astronomer. The infinite series expansion was developed for trigonometric functions like Pi, sine, cosine, and tangents. This school also anticipated what later came to be called the Gregory - Leibniz series, as well as the basic approach of calculus, which Newton termed fluxions. These are mentioned in later texts like Karana Paddhathi by Puthumana Chomathiri, Thanthrasamgraha by Neelakanta Somayaji, Yukthibhasha by Jyeshtadevan Nampoothiri (in Malayalam), and Sadratnamala by Sankara Varman (1800 - 1838).

However, these achievements would have gone unrecognized but for the fact that they were reported at a meeting of the Madras Literary Society and Asiatic Society by Charles M. Whish, an officer of the East India Company, in 1832. Mr. Whish came to know about these works when he was serving as Sub Collector and Joint Magistrate at Calicut. Whish was a language scholar (who wrote a grammar for Malayalam) and developed an acquaintance with Sankara Varman of the Kadathanad Royal family, the author of Sadratnamala.

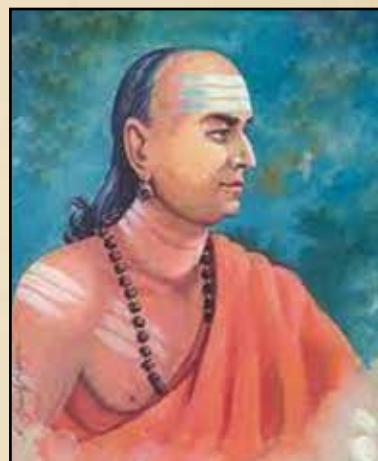
Apparently, Whish took a keen interest in the Malayalam Calendar and the technique of calculating the planetary positions explained in it. Thus, he came to know of the methods of Kerala astronomy. He had them checked by scholars in Madras and found that these were practically unknown outside Malabar. Apparently, the East India Company was very skeptical about the authenticity of these works and persecuted Whish for his credulity. However, he was sure about his discovery and went on to publish it on his own. Though the Whish paper was published in England, it failed to create a wave. However, it was revived a hundred years later through the work of C. T. Rajagopal, of the Ramanujan Institute of Mathematics, Madras. Now, modern scholars have recognized this work, and it is now well established that the Kerala School of Mathematics flourished for about four centuries from 1400 to 1850.

Ayurveda was also well established in Kerala, and the material contributions to the seventeenth- century Dutch publication Hortus Malabaricus were made by local Ayurvedic practitioners, including the practicing vaidya Itti Achuthan who belonged to the depressed caste. The uniqueness of the Kerala Ayurvedic tradition was that it was not the monopoly of the Brahmins, and many from among the depressed castes also excelled in its practice.

The depressed castes were engaged in various life-supporting activities like agriculture, metalwork, carpentry, etc. Naturally, they excelled not only in artisanship but also in the knowledge of material properties and practices. Thus, many local varieties of rice were developed to suit the special climatic conditions of this region. For example, the Pokkali Rice, which is saline resistant, came to be widely cultivated in the districts of Alappuzha, Ernakulam, and Thrissur. This variety has special relevance in view of the imminent climate change and global warming. The Kerala Agricultural University is carrying on research to explore these possibilities. It is gratifying that the Government of Kerala has set up a number of Research Institutions



Vadasseri Paramesvara Nampoothiri



Kelallur Chomathiri



C.T. Rajagopal

More Than Mere Literacy



Honouring the will power-
Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan honours Karthiyayani Amma, the oldest leaner under the KSLMA. She passed away recently

The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority's (KSLMA) commitment is to ensure that individuals are equipped not only with foundational literacy skills but also with the knowledge and capabilities needed to thrive in a multifaceted, digitally connected world. We aspire to motivate them to attain literacy and subsequently integrate them into the broader societal framework.



AG OLINA

Director, Kerala State Literacy Mission

The 100-day literacy mission campaign in Kottayam saw hundreds of volunteers – united by the motto 'Each One Teach One' – join hands with officials from the municipality, district administration and MG University. Also, the "Lead Kindly Light" campaign was a comprehensive initiative launched with the ambitious goal of completely eradicating illiteracy within a year in the Ernakulam District of Kerala. Ernakulam created history when on February 4, 1990, the then Prime Minister, V.P.Singh, declared the district as the first literate district in the country. It was on April 18, 1991, that Chelakkodan Aysha declared Kerala a literate State in front of a huge gathering at Mananchira Ground in Kozhikode. This accomplishment was the result of sustained efforts by the government, non-governmental organizations, and community involvement. It was not easy to attain this coveted position, though the state was much advanced in education position even earlier.

Literacy and Continuing Education

The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority was set up in 1998 to co-ordinate and activate 'Literacy and continuing education. The then Chief Minister E.K Nayanar inaugurated it. In 1998, the initiative was centred on the district panchayats aiming to achieve total literacy. It was established to continue the state's efforts to eradicate illiteracy and promote adult education. Literacy Mission activities are carried out at the grassroots level by educational centres. These centres operating in the state can be divided into two. Continuing Education Centres and Nodal Continuing Education Centers. Vidya Kendras are the centres that operate at the lowest level. They work on a panchayat basis. Next are the development education centres operating in the block and municipality.

Equivalency programmes are organised to provide an alternative education that is equivalent to the existing formal system of education, be it related to formal or vocational education. This programme is targeted towards those neo-literates who aspire to continue their education and acquire a certificate that would place them in equal standing with others who have completed their studies from the formal system of education. The mission which started at 4th class equivalency has turned into a

big system which currently provides up to Class 12 equivalency. The lifelong learning programme is concentrated on the Equivalency Programme at the Four levels; 4th, 7th, 10th, 11th and 12th standard equivalency.

Women Development Through Literacy Mission

Undoubtedly, literacy initiatives in Kerala have illuminated the lives of women across our nation. The declaration of Total Literacy in Kerala owes its success to individuals like Chelakodan Ayishumma, an ordinary woman, and numerous other women who have been instrumental in this movement.

Rabia, who faces mobility challenges with two legs, serves as an Akshara Sevak, tirelessly spreading the light of literacy among her fellow illiterate citizens from her wheelchair.

During the 10th anniversary celebrations of the continuing education programme, Kavuttan Lakshmi, a 55-year-old woman from Payyannur

Undoubtedly, literacy initiatives in Kerala have illuminated the lives of women across our nation. The declaration of Total Literacy in Kerala owes its success to individuals like Chelakodan Ayishumma, an ordinary woman, and numerous other women who have been instrumental in this movement.

Kavvai Thuruthi, delivered a stirring speech at the inauguration of a state-level seminar.

The 2020 Nari Shakti Puraskar, the highest civilian award recognizing women's achievements and contributions, was bestowed upon two remarkable individuals: 106-year-old Bhageerathi Amma and 98-year-old Karthyayani Amma. During the 9th Episode of 'Mann Ki Baat 2.0,' India's Prime





Minister Narendra Modi shared an inspirational narrative about Bhagirathi Amma, who, at the age of 105, successfully cleared the Literacy Mission's 4th class equivalency exam. Similarly, Karthiyayni Amma achieved top rank in the literacy exam within the state.

Remarkably, the active involvement of literacy activists, especially women, has played a pivotal role in subsequent women's empowerment initiatives in Kerala. The majority of those who embarked on their journey to literacy through continuing education centres are women, with over 80 per cent of participants in the Equity Studies programme being female. Kerala now witnesses an inspiring transformation where women, armed with knowledge and confidence acquired through literacy, are stepping forward to engage in social issues with a newfound sense of empowerment. Furthermore, it is worth emphasizing that life's challenges have impeded educational progress in numerous instances. Consequently, a significant proportion of our learners, who enrol in our equality courses, are women. This endeavour forms an integral part of our commitment to promoting social justice in education and fostering equal opportunities in the emerging landscape of New Kerala.

As a result, the visibility of women in the social sphere of Kerala has increased significantly. The fact

As a result, the visibility of women in the social sphere of Kerala has increased significantly. The fact that 90% of the facilitators in charge of continuing education centres are women is also the reason for the increased participation of women in literacy programmes.

that 90% of the facilitators in charge of continuing education centres are women is also the reason for the increased participation of women in literacy programmes. It can be seen that women who have gained social awareness through literacy-equality studies have gained the courage to participate in the democratic process like Gramasabhas. The fact that many women, including Preraks, contested and won the elections to the Local Self Government Bodies is an indication of the excellence of our activities. In contemporary Kerala, the active involvement of women in the public sphere, especially those hailing from marginalized sections, owes a significant debt to the efforts of the Literacy Mission.



Education in the making of present day Keralam

**PK MICHAEL THARAKAN**

Former chairperson
Kerala Council for Historical Research
Former Vice Chancellor Kannur University

In numerical terms, the state of Keralam is ahead of other regions of India in several indicators of literacy and learning. Historical studies have pointed out that this trend was established even in the 19th century. Questions have arisen as to how and why it was so. The 'conventional' answer till recently was that it was due to the benevolence of monarchical governments and the comparatively intense activities of Christian Missionaries. A different explanation is also given. The increase in literacy and education where demand based and the demand arose earlier in Keralam.

The earlier rise in demand for literacy and education was linked in turn to the earlier commercialization of Keralam's agrarian economy. Commercialization occurred in the early 19th century in both extensive cropping of rubber, tea, coffee, and Kayal krishi of paddy and also in intensive cultivation of coconut, cash crops and Pepper and spices. The earlier commercialization was strengthened by the introduction of plantation agriculture primarily through colonial investment and the long tradition of cash cropping.

Social Mobility and Demand for Education

With the commercialization and the ensuing alterations in institutions and facilities in society and economy governed by a colonial-style administration, there was widespread demand for modern/Western education. This increased demand was attempted to be met by specific projects like starting Vernacular nevertheless

PK Michael Tharakkan explores the historical and socio-economic factors behind Keralam's distinctive educational advancement, examining the interplay between agrarian commercialization, social mobility, and policy-driven initiatives



'modern' Schools in different parts of the Thiruvithamcore state by the then Dewan T. Madhava Rao. This demand was not confined to the so-called upper castes alone in the caste-dominant society but had percolated down to the middle-level cast and communities in the commercialized social order. The middle-level cast and communities' sections of whom found themselves rich in money income were not only in demand for education, but were wanting education as a path to increased social status and upward mobility. They mobilised themselves under the aegis of Socio ritualistic (Religious) Reform Movements and effectively demanded and negotiated educational facilities among other benefits for members of their castes/communities. This ie, the desire for upward social mobility in the light of increased economic prosperity from the commercialised agriculture of middle-level castes and communities became the major reason for the increase in literacy and education in Keralam.

This pattern of literacy and educational

development could not have benefited the castes considered the lowest social order. In the earlier spread of literacy if there was any they would have been cordoned off any benefits by substitution and slavery. In the latter phase of literacy growth by demand, generated out of the commercialization of agriculture, the castes and caste groups could not have benefited for the reason that most of them were landless agricultural labourers. Being landless they could not generate enough demand from among themselves. There are observations of development in Keralam which tend to see the high level of literacy basic education and the number of graduates as a unilinear process of improvement in the lives of all people. The early increase in general literacy and education levels need not have benefited all sections of the population equally or evenly. There are qualitative and quantitative gaps still left. If the benefits of literacy and educational development are to reach every section of the people of the region, there should be equitable distribution of income-earning assets.



**GVHSS for Girls Nadakkavu,
Kozhikode**



Keralam is noted to have done well in terms of asset redistribution -both income and wealth-producing -through social welfare measures and reform-oriented legislation. The percentage of persons under the poverty line has considerably declined. Keralam is one of the high-income states. But cleavages between social groups seem not to have declined much. It is to be noted that regions which have a larger number of 'marginalized' persons are predominant among the most deprived regions of Keralam. The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act 1963 is generally considered to be an outstanding redistribute legislation. Even the landless agricultural labourers were to gain from land redistribution through allotment of Kudikidappu (squatters) rights. Distribution of excess lands could have benefited the relatively landless. These clauses in the land reform legislation seem to have strengthened landless agricultural labourers' income and reserve power; part of which is likely to have been spent for primary school admission. Around the time of redistribution through kudikidappu rights of landless come up in school admission. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the land reforms, did leave some serious gaps in terms of intergroup distribution of land holdings. Since the land reform emphasised the abolition of tenancy 'a legal form of occupation of land', relatively greater gains went to former tenants or middle or lower-level landholders. They could sell, mortgage or use the land that they could acquire in different ways to increase their incomes.

Meanwhile two groups among the 'marginalized' the Adivasis and fisherpersons did not gain anything much. The main body of land reforms seems to have largely sidestepped their land rights. Similarly the largely oriented land reforms 'neglected the rights of the marine fish persons for land. Further as it is found elsewhere too, whenever land reforms occur within a long-standing land-holding community those lands which will be made available for redistribution are likely to be rejects of the system. This seems to have happened in the case of Keralam too. In terms of the immediate gains and further opportunities there was a divide erected between landowners and the landless or relatively landless. This divide which happened in terms of Keralam's land reforms has also been applicable in the case of gains in literacy and education. Opportunities for the economic environment available in the economy of Keralam have initiated a consumption and investment pattern which is against the interests of the 'marginalized'. Resources which are depletable are syphoned off systematically to meet the requirements of the middle and upper classes.

The gains made by middle and lower-level landholders by way of land reforms occurred just before the advent of opportunities for emigration for employment particularly to the Persian Gulf region. They could very well reap these benefits, particularly with the backing of public investment in education. Among others, social welfare programmes, minimum wages, public distribution systems, etc were also greatly helpful for them to spare a share of their income to acquire the basic educational requirements for emigration. One of the major limitations of 19th-century public and private investment in education in Keralam was that it aimed almost wholly towards filling opportunities in bureaucracy and other public Institutions. Since the middle-level castes and communities who sparked off the demand for education were also motivated by upward social mobility, they did not object to the purely instrumentalist aims. Till around the 1920's colleges in Keralam were mere intermediate colleges with rare facilities for undergraduate training. Even when in the 1920's a few major colleges arose in the educational horizon, they did

The state can benefit from its past involvement in education and social development by formulating a new strategy of economic growth based on its 'human capital.'



not make any impressionable departure towards intrinsic values of education which are as important or even more important than mere instrumentalist aims. Even after independence with jobs at the middle and higher levels of bureaucracy and other organizations appearing, the training in major colleges remained to aim at acquiring 'better' results-more rank holders and first-class students -than in producing comprehensively trained sensitive, empathetic citizens. There were doubts expressed that constitutional and democratic values are being neglected by the training available in colleges. There are public debates around quantity and quality of education; particularly at higher levels.

At the time of Indian Independence, there was desertion of jobs held by expatriates thereby greater demand for higher education. Keralam was also party to it, but it was not matched by investment in productive ventures which could have created jobs for the educated. Keralam with its early successful investment in education progressed well in facilitating further education. However, the region was immersed in a problem of educated unemployment.

In spite of such problems, the pattern followed in the education sector has also produced some remarkable advantages too. The numerically high number of graduates, postgraduates and professionally trained personnel is the most important asset. Though the training and formation may require alteration, the fact that they are already trained by both governmental institutions as well as non-governmental institutions cannot be overlooked. The expansion of training and education facilities at graduate, post graduate and professional levels as early as the 1920s, has endowed Keralam with a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) comparatively higher than most of India. It was in the wake of the economic crisis felt in many countries that the argument that fresh investment in professional technical and higher education should be left to private agencies. Since the returns to such training which is considerable the potential beneficiaries should partake in the investment required rather than the public exchequer alone meeting the cost. The counterargument to this, lies in the need to have better coordination between gains in education and goals of sustainable national and regional development.

Advantages of Keralam's Education Model

Keralam is facing several challenges to sustaining its earlier social and human development. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the present pattern of global development driven more and more by knowledge capital is offering opportunities for sustainable development for the state. To fully realise its potential, past investment in social development should be seen as converted into 'human capital'. The opportunities for knowledge-intensive economic growth provided by international trends in technology and management is certainly offering a great opportunity to the state. To tap these opportunities the state has to continue with its past priorities in favour of human development. It should invest more in higher education, research and higher levels of training. The state can benefit from its past involvement in education and social development by formulating a new strategy of economic growth based on its 'human capital.'



A Unique Journey in Health and Development

Kerala boasts the most robust social health status in the country, comparable to developed societies worldwide. This health development model, known as the 'Kerala model of health and development,' has garnered international interest.

**DR T.S. ANISH**

Addl. Prof. Community Medicine,
Government Medical College, Manjeri

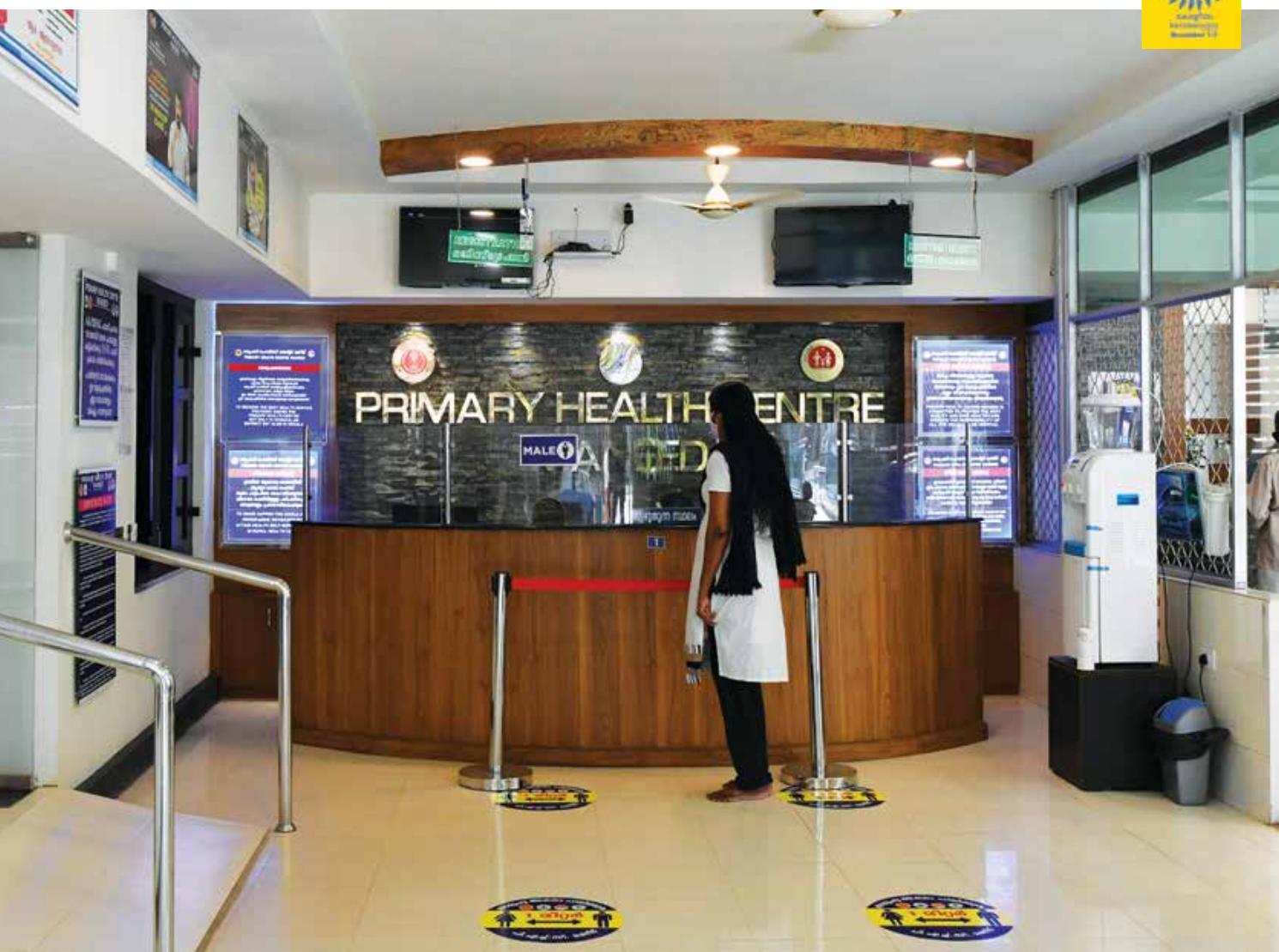
What makes the Kerala experience particularly intriguing to global social scientists is its demonstration that enhanced health outcomes can be achieved through substantial social investments, transcending the reliance on abundant financial resources alone.

Historical Perspective

Kerala has a rich and enduring legacy of healthcare, rooted in both traditional and



innovative streams of medical sciences. Families of practitioners of indigenous systems like Ayurveda have transmitted their traditions from generation to generation, guided by the principles of 'Ashtanga Hridaya,' which is considered the hallmark of Kerala's unique Ayurvedic system. The High Ranges of the state, nestled in the Western Ghats, have been renowned for spices and rare medicinal plants. 'Hortus Malabaricus' ('Garden of Malabar') chronicles the description of medicinal plants found in the Western Ghats, compiled by Dutch Governor Hendrik van Rheede in collaboration with physicians and tribes of the state. Published in 1678 in Amsterdam, the book encompasses thousands of medicinal plants and herbs, detailing their medicinal value, methods of preparation for various medications, usage, and indications. Its inclusion of a pictorial demonstration aids easy recognition, rendering it authentic and relevant even after three



centuries.

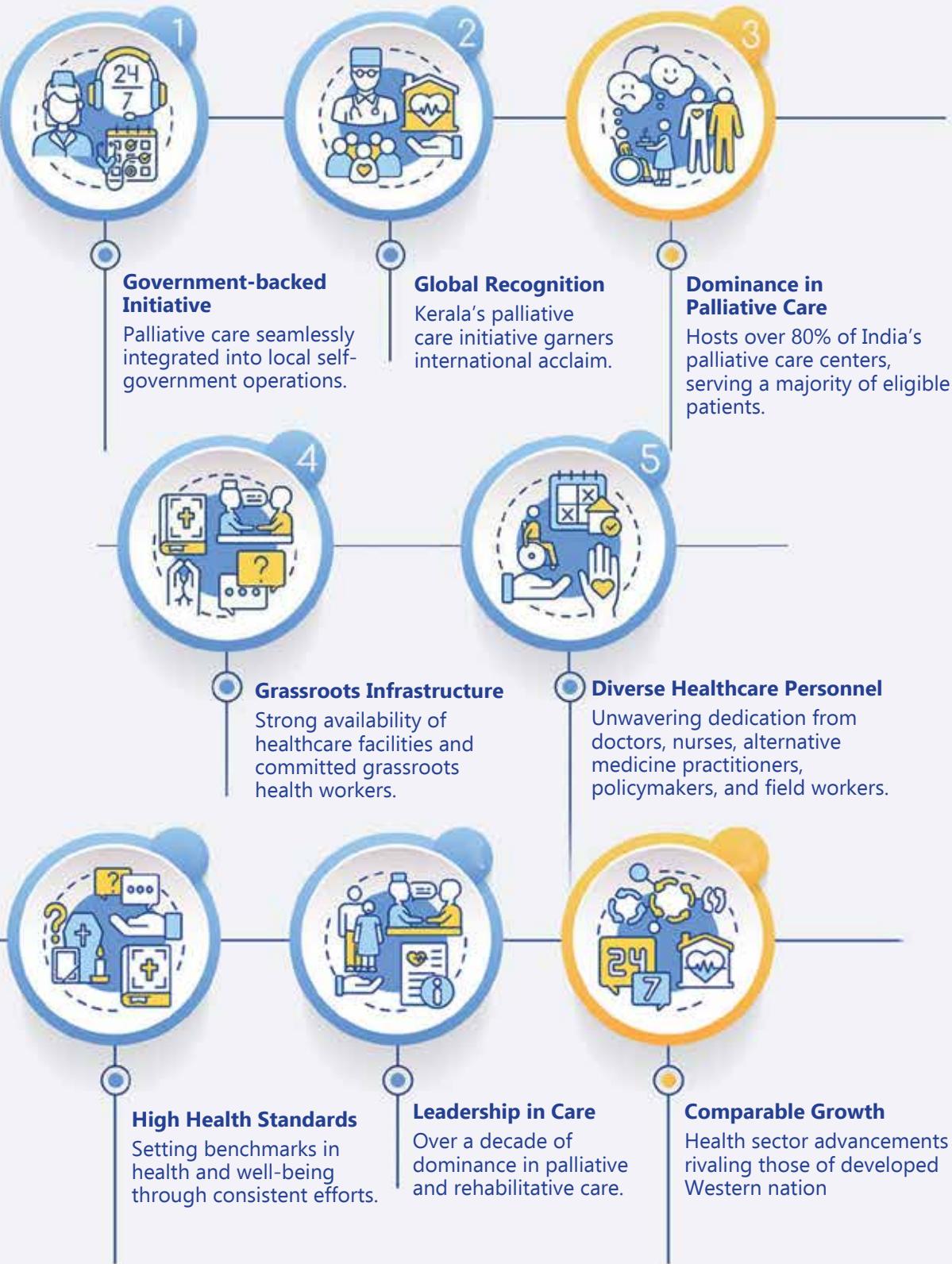
The state also boasts a long and illustrious tradition of modern scientific medicine. Notably, the Travancore State considered healthcare provision a state duty. In a moment of pride, it's noteworthy that vaccination against smallpox commenced in Travancore in 1813, predating its popularization in England. Faced with public apprehension, the royal family of Travancore underwent the vaccination procedure themselves to reassure the subjects. A royal proclamation in 1879 made vaccination compulsory for public servants, prisoners, and students. The introduction of Western medicine in Kerala was initiated by Rani Gowri Lakshmi Bhai, who appointed the first doctor of Travancore in 1813 at Thangasserry, Kollam. A historic moment occurred at the beginning of the 20th century with the appointment of Dr Mary Punnen Lukose as the

surgeon-general of Travancore—a groundbreaking achievement as she was the first woman trained in medical science in Europe to hold such a position in an Indian State. This feat is particularly significant considering the rarity of women doctors even in Europe and America at that time. Christian missionaries also made substantial contributions. Neyyattinkara in Travancore witnessed one of the first Primary Health Units in the history of India, established in 1930 under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation. This initiative, coupled with the foundation's support, led to parasite surveys in Travancore. These surveys paved the way for strategizing public health measures to control hookworm infestation and Filariasis—an unprecedented effort in the state. The health unit incorporated primary health concepts and introduced surveys to quantify morbidities among the population.



SETTING THE GOLD STANDARD IN PALLIATIVE CARE

Kerala's palliative care model demonstrates the power of community engagement, government support, and a holistic approach in addressing critical health challenges. It offers invaluable lessons for regions worldwide looking to establish or improve their palliative care systems.



Kerala Model

Kerala, despite being a relatively small Indian state with 14 districts and covering only 1 percent of India's total land area (38,863 sq. km), has garnered several accolades in education, literacy, social reforms, land ownership, and healthcare. Its healthcare facilities are notably more widespread and accessible compared to other states in India. Parallel services, such as ensuring safe drinking water and providing primary education, especially for women, have further augmented the development of health.

The Kerala model of development has received acclaim from social scientists and economists, including Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, as an exemplary model for a developing state. This model redefines development by emphasizing high-quality healthcare with a low economic burden. Kerala, as a consumer state with low per capita income and agricultural production, directs its expenditures predominantly toward the social development of its people. The hallmarks of the Kerala model of health development include low-cost healthcare, universal accessibility, health care availability for the economically disadvantaged, investment in social capital over material resources, decentralization of expertise and services, community involvement, emphasis on health promotion, and political

The Kerala model of development has received acclaim from social scientists and economists, including Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, as an exemplary model for a developing state.

accountability.

Kerala's standout health model is deeply rooted in its distinct socio-economic tapestry, with women's empowerment shining as its cornerstone. Elevated literacy levels among women have notably shaped pivotal health metrics — from plummeting infant and maternal mortality rates to a dip in fertility rates. The power of education can't be understated: it's been the catalyst propelling Kerala's community health to enviable heights. Even though the state's healthcare financing isn't exorbitantly higher than the national average, its strategic social investments have triggered profound shifts in health outcomes.





As pinpointed by Nabae in 2003, Kerala's health excellence is not solely an educational feat. It's a harmonized blend of progressive land reforms, an effective public distribution system, and the delivery of top-notch, cost-effective healthcare. In essence, Kerala's story isn't just about healthcare—it's about a society that places the well-being of its people at its heart.

Health Indicators

Kerala stands out in demography with high life expectancy, remarkably low infant mortality, a very slow population growth rate, and a positive sex ratio. During its formation, the state had one of the highest mortality rates in the country, with a crude death rate (CDR) of 16.1 per 1,000 population. The infant mortality rate (IMR) was approximately 110-120 at that time, close to the national average. However, by 1971, Kerala's CDR had dropped to 9.0, while the IMR in Kerala was 58 per 1000 births, notably better than the national average. By the end of the 20th century, the IMR had further decreased to 12-13, with a crude death rate of just six per 1000 population and an average life expectancy exceeding 70 years—comparable to any socially developed community globally. The infant mortality rate, a key indicator of health development, decreased significantly by almost 100 points within the first 50 years of the state's formation, positioning Kerala among the best in the nation. The neonatal mortality rate also experienced a considerable decline from 33 in 1976 to five in recent years. This data underscores the demographic transformation witnessed in Kerala during the latter half of the 20th century. It is interesting to note that the IMR of

In the latter years of the 20th century, the health indicators of Kerala encountered a period of stagnation. However, the landscape underwent a transformative shift with the introduction of the Ardram mission by the Government of Kerala.

Kerala is in the single digits now close to five deaths for every 1000 live births, which is on par with that of any developed country of the world.

The high life expectancy of women and the notably feminized sex ratio in Kerala are attributed to the state's social development. It is posited that the general population of India lags behind Kerala by 18-20 years in life expectancy, by 23-25 years in IMR, and by over 40 years in female literacy. The demographic achievements of Kerala underscore the success of its unique model of development, emphasizing social well-being and health outcomes.

In the latter years of the 20th century, the health indicators of Kerala encountered a period of stagnation. However, the landscape underwent a transformative shift with the introduction of the Ardram mission by the Government of Kerala. This initiative proved pivotal in revitalizing the trajectory





of public health in the state. The public health system faced formidable challenges, ranging from the rise of lifestyle diseases and recurrent epidemics to escalating medical expenses and suboptimal infrastructure quality. Ardram Phase 1 and Ardram Phase 2 were instrumental in addressing these multifaceted challenges head-on. Today, the revamped public health system in Kerala stands resilient in confronting various health issues. Ongoing efforts in system building indicate a commitment to fortifying the system further. While challenges persist, the dedicated political leadership of the state inspires confidence that these issues will be effectively addressed, ensuring the continued progress of public health in Kerala.

Kerala has emerged as a beacon of socio-economic and health development. Its journey from high mortality rates to achieving remarkable demographic indicators reflects a unique model of development that intertwines social progress with health outcomes.

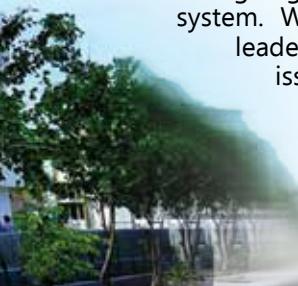
Kerala's success story is marked by widespread and accessible healthcare, underpinned by a strong health system and social development. The 'Kerala model of health' also highlights the pivotal role played by empowered women in shaping the health landscape. The state's commitment to education, literacy, and progressive social reforms has led to unprecedented improvements in health indicators. The hallmark features of Kerala's demographic profile—high life expectancy, low infant mortality, a slow population growth rate, and a positive sex ratio—are not just statistical achievements but reflections of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to development. From pioneering land reforms, Kerala's innovative strategies have set new benchmarks. The focus on palliative care, an exemplar for the world, stands as a testament to the state's commitment to holistic well-being, addressing not just curative but also compassionate aspects of healthcare. Its journey offers insights and inspiration for regions grappling with similar challenges, presenting a compelling narrative of how a state can redefine development by placing the health and prosperity of its people at the forefront.

The challenges faced by Kerala's health indicators in the late 20th century were decisively addressed by the Ardram mission, initiated by the Government of Kerala. This strategic intervention revitalized the public health system, enabling it to confront escalating trends of lifestyle diseases, recurrent epidemics, rising medical expenses, and infrastructural inadequacies. Ardram Phase 1 and Ardram Phase 2 have played instrumental roles in overcoming these challenges. Today, Kerala's public health system is better equipped to address emerging health issues, with ongoing efforts focused on further strengthening the system. While challenges persist, the dedicated political leadership of the state inspires confidence that these issues will be effectively addressed, ensuring the continued progress of public health in Kerala.

The narrative of Kerala's health journey, characterized by resilience, innovation, and political commitment, stands as a testament to the state's ongoing efforts to redefine and strengthen its public health system for the well-being of its people.

KERALA'S HEALTH INDICATORS

- Life expectancy over 70 years.
- Initial IMR: 110-120; now close to 5.
- Positive feminized sex ratio.
- Neonatal mortality: From 33 to 5.
- Health indicators faced 20th-century stagnation.
- Introduced transformative Ardram Mission.
- Ardram Phase 1 and 2 addressed challenges.
- Robust public health system.
- Empowered women shape health.
- Strong emphasis on education and literacy.
- Pioneering in land reforms.
- Global exemplar in palliative care.
- Continued leadership confronting health challenges



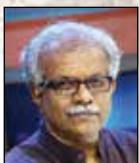


MEDIA



MEDIA

The Fuel Of Kerala's Modernity



M.G. RADHAKRISHNAN

Senior Journalist

The history of Malayalam journalism in Kerala is closely linked with the social, political, and cultural history of the region. From its early stages with missionary presses to its role in social reforms, nationalism, and the growth of mass media, the media in Kerala has reflected and influenced the state's development. With roots in the public sphere, Kerala's media has been at the forefront of change, challenging traditional power structures and promoting progressive

ideals.

The mass media has been the fuel for Kerala's modernity. Malayali's tryst with modernity (Western) began with the advent of colonialism accompanied by missionaries from Europe. Spreading the "good" word was the missionaries' primary objective, so establishing printing presses was a logical first step. The first printing machine arrived in Goa in 1556 via Jesuit missionaries from Portugal, just a few years after its invention in Germany. The first printed book in India, "DoctrinaChristam" (The





Christian Doctrine) in the Portuguese language, attributed to St. Francis Xavier, emerged from this press. Missionaries established printing presses throughout India wherever they settled. Kerala followed suit two decades after Goa. However, the first book in the Malayalam language was not printed until 1821 at a press in Kottayam established by the renowned English missionary Benjamin Bailey of the Church Mission Society. Another 26 years passed before the first Malayalam periodical, "Rajyasamacharam," made its appearance in June 1847, produced by Hermann Gundert, the German missionary of the Basel Mission based in Thalassery, Kannur. This debut was followed by newspapers/magazines created by missionaries of various orders active in Kerala. "Paschimodayam" (Basel Mission), "Jnana Nikshepam" (Church Mission Society), and "Vidya Sangraham" (CMS) emerged between 1845-65, marking the early years of Malayalam journalism.

Nation, Identity, Language

The missionaries established the first modern schools: the first English school in 1806, the first girls' school in 1818, the first vocational school, the initial schools for Scheduled Caste children, and the earliest arts and science colleges. While missionary publications primarily aimed to spread religion, they also included news about science, technology, and contemporary literary forms like novels. Most notably, they played a direct and pioneering role in the development of the Malayalam language. Western missionaries, such as Gundert, Bailey, and Richard Collins, assisted by their Malayali colleagues, authored not only the first Malayalam-English dictionary but also various works on Malayalam grammar and books about Kerala's history and culture. These contributions were significant milestones in the evolution of a modern pan-Malayali identity, well before its formal establishment over a century later.

By the end of the century, even Christian church newspapers ardently championed the Malayalam language. A prime example was the campaign by "Nasrani Deepika," the oldest surviving newspaper and representative of the Syro Malabar Catholic Church, to promote the Malayali mother tongue. "Deepika" actively supported the social and political movements that shook Thiruvithamkoor in the early 20th century. The rise of publications from Christian, Hindu, and Muslim communities fostered self-awareness, leading to newfound self-confidence and broader social progress, as observed by Puthuppalli Raghavan. These publications offered a "newly imagined cultural space for modern articulations."

Challenging the State

It was in Jeffrey's next stage – "scarce" – in Kerala media's history that secular newspapers emerged. It was also when the media began to "shape Kerala's peculiar socio-political environment" (Jeffrey). It is remarkable that by the middle of the 19th century, media in all three regions –Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar– of the then Kerala had begun to question and challenge the state's abuse of power. Kerala's first secular





newspaper itself created history by publishing critical articles on the Travancore royal government. The paper, Western Star (1862), was in the English language and was produced jointly by two Englishmen and a Gujarati merchant from Kochi. An article in this paper by a student in 1883 led to his expulsion from the then Maharaja's College of Thiruvananthapuram, thus being the first to be formally punished for writing against the state. He was Barrister G P Pillai, who went on to pioneer the popular and civil resistance movement in Travancore. He raised his voice not just inside India but in the British Parliament also for the rights of all Malayalis, including the lower castes, even during the heyday of caste hierarchy. Pillai was one of the architects of the Malayali Memorial, Travancore's first major democratic political agitation. Western Star had many followers, not just in articulating dissent but also in suffering persecution as a consequence. Paschima Taraka, the Malayalam version of Western Star and the first Malayalam newspaper to deal with political affairs, was the first to have Malayali editors—Ittupp Writer, T J Paily, and Dominic Philipose. This paper too was a constant headache to Kochi's royal government with its tirade against corruption and favoritism.

In 1867, Sandishtavadi became the first Malayalam paper to fall victim to royal rage. Its criticism of the powerful Diwan Madhava Rayar led to its ban, which triggered protests with prominent writers. In 1874, Dr. Kees became the first journalist

In 1867, Sandishtavadi became the first Malayalam paper to fall victim to royal rage. Its criticism of the powerful Diwan Madhava Rayar led to its ban, which triggered protests with prominent writers. In 1874, Dr. Kees became the first journalist to be banished from Travancore for his scathing articles against the royal government. But by then, his contrarian positions had won many admirers, indicating how society was preparing from below for the emerging changes in values and perspective. He was soon invited to Malabar to take over as the editor of Malabar Spectator. All these occurred before Sree Narayana Guru, the chief architect of Kerala Renaissance and uplifter of the intermediate caste, Ezhava, was even born.

Nationalism, Public Sphere

Kerala's first nationalist newspaper, Kerala Patrika (1880), was born a year preceding the Indian National Congress's birth. Its editor, Chengalath Kunhirama Menon, even travelled to Calcutta to attend a nationalist conference. He was thoroughly impressed by the nationalist newspaper of Calcutta, Amrit Bazar Patrika, and after he returned to his native Kozhikode, he launched Kerala Patrika. Ulloor Parameswara Iyer called it Kerala's first paper of the Congress party.

The Kerala media was rising to emerge as the dominant space in the Public Sphere. After three decades in journalism, Menon wrote, "When I entered the world of journalism, the concept of public opinion was almost non-existent. Most people did not think differently from the local bigwig or bureaucrat...But things dramatically changed in the last 27 years. Today public opinion is a reality as there is no scarcity of writers or articles even in the Malayalam language who could effectively discuss





and debate on various issues...". Menon openly championed the Right to Opinion.

In 1888, Malayala Manorama was the first registered company in Travancore owned by a Malayali. The company was registered with Rs 10,000 as authorized capital divided into 100 shares worth Rs 100 each. Indigenous forces of commerce and capitalism were taking root. Journalism, driven by idealism, was beginning to accommodate commercial interests. That the phenomenon began as early as the late 19th century is remarkable. It was when industrial capitalism was only taking its roots in the whole country. The paper championed the rights of the depressed castes, the Malayalam language, and literature and backed the social and political struggles against forces of state and caste.

Human Rights

Kerala Darpanam (1899), a newspaper from Thiruvananthapuram, in its first issue carried an editorial about the decay to which journalism had fallen even by then. Its editor, a college student in his early twenties, came to be later known and revered as Swadesabhimani K Ramakrishna Pillai (1877-1916), an all-time hero of Malayalam journalism. He constantly attacked the Travancore royalty's misrule and corruption, championing the cause of democracy and, scathing critique of the upper castes' hold over the government and its structures. He also championed rationality, science, socialism, women's rights, etc. His was the first biography (1910) of Karl Marx in Malayalam. Much ahead of his time, Pillai paid a heavy price for his daring. He was exiled from Travancore, and he pledged never to return to his native land or his beloved profession.

Social Reforms

Kerala's modernity and renaissance were defined by the powerful social movements that swept across communities to uplift them from generations of exploitation and uproot the forces of orthodoxy within and out. The media effectively functioned as the vehicle and torchbearers of these movements during the period beginning in the late 1880s. Upper caste Nairs were forced to introspect about its outdated customs by its reformists under Nair Service Society, backed by newspapers like Malayali and others; the OBC Ezhavas' epoch-making reform movement was fuelled by a spate of publications like Sujananandini, Vivokodayam, Mitavadi, Kerala



Kaumudi, Deshabhimani, etc.; radicals among Nampoothiri Brahmins had Yogakshemam and Unni Namboodiri; Reformers in the Muslim community were backed by Muslim, Al Ameen, etc.; even rationalists had their own mouthpieces like Sahodaran or Mithavadi. The first Dalit journal -Sadhujana Paripalani- was launched by Ayyankali in 1914 from Venganoor in Thiruvananthapuram under the editorship of Chembumthara Kalichothikuruppan. In 1917, Dr. Velukkutti Arayan, the leader of the fishing community, launched its mouthpiece-Arayan.

Women's Own

Kerala's modernity and renaissance certainly witnessed women from different communities coming out of their cloistered lives. However, certain inherent weaknesses in the modernity project succeeded subsequently in aborting the women's advancement, as it was in the case of the Dalits. Publications of/for women were vibrantly present



during the social reformist period when they made major advances. But although Kerala women were much ahead of their counterparts in the rest of the country in literacy level even during the turn of the century, the first women's publication –Kerala Suguna Bodhini (1892) was brought out wholly by men from Thiruvananthapuram. Though claimed to be a publication for women, the contents were mainly literary in character. Although the next women's publication –Sarada- (1904) owner and editor was male, the rest of its staff were women. The contents too became more women-oriented. An article by Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai during the period spoke of the need for a larger women's presence in journalism.

Although more women's magazines came out from different places during this period, the first to argue for women's rights was Vanitakusumam (1927) from Kottayam, edited by V M John. According to Raghavan, this magazine had a record circulation of about 2000, reflecting a growing interest of women in gender issues. Yet, women's role was only stunted during the subsequent period, reflecting the essentially patriarchal power relations that came into being in the modern period.

Nationalism, Socialism, Communism

Kerala Patrika was the early bird among nationalist newspapers. Newspapers and journalists played a significant role in the Indian nationalist movement in almost every part of the country from the beginning. It was no different in Kerala with newspapers like Swarat, Swadesabhimani (the only

paper to carry a highly complementary obituary of Lenin), Mathrubhumi, Al Ameen, etc. The power that the media came to enjoy by that time is evident from the fact that all the orthodox forces, hostile to nationalists or social reform movements, too had their own mouthpieces. Socialist and Communist parties, which were offshoots of national movements, stressed the intellectual content of politics and had their own important publications like Prabhatham, Deshabhimani, and Janayugam from the 1940s when they became active in Indian politics. The public sphere that the media opened in Kerala was far superior to its counterparts elsewhere due to the considerable presence of large sections of the depressed classes.

Mass Media

The post-independence media scene witnessed a large-scale entry of capital and technology. The physical expansion of media in terms of investment, technology, circulation, and advertisement has been phenomenal. Circulation of Malayalam dailies grew from 2.46 lakh a day when the state of Kerala was formed in 1956 to 6.88 lakhs in a decade. By 2001, the figure reached 30 lakh, crossed 40 lakh in 2012, and reached one crore in 2021-22. Media organizations that were in foreign hands changed to the ownership of Indian media groups after independence. This marked the near end of the era of media's role in the public sphere and heralded the advent of mass media in Kerala. All the commercial characteristics of the era of corporate and profit-driven mass media, as outlined by Jurgen Habermas, became visible in Kerala, along with its state-specific unique dimensions. As Habermas noted, the "refeudalization" of the public sphere became evident in Kerala media as well.

According to Jeffrey, Kerala's media entry into the mass circulation stage was not due to general economic development or the spread of technology. Instead, it was Kerala's mass politics that caused the emergence of mass media. "Politics came first; mass media followed." Despite the media's continuous growth, especially in South Indian languages and Malayalam in particular, even after print almost disappeared in the West, the writing on the wall is clear: the print media is on its last legs. Television has already replaced print as the agenda setter (and has a better ad revenue growth rate too), although it's only a matter of time before the web surpasses all legacy media. The spread of globalization in the media is much quicker and deeper, and in Kerala, it could progress at an even greater pace, thanks to its traditional exposure to the world.



Land Reforms in Kerala A Journey of Change



Kerala took a big step in the late 1950s that changed its story forever. This step is called the land reform movement. Here, large lands held by a few people were divided and given to those who actually worked on them. This did not just change the land stories but also played a part in how many people in Kerala could read, how long they lived, and how they moved up in life.

Long ago, only a few landlords in Kerala had most of the land. It was like an old story where kings and lords ruled, and many people worked under them. These workers and tenants did not have much power and were often not treated well.

In 1957, Kerala saw a change. A new government was chosen by the people, and they wanted to make things right. One of their first big actions? Making sure that those renting the land could not be easily kicked out. After this, they made even more rules. They wanted to ensure people were not drowned in debt, had a safe spot to live, and got the right amount for their hard work.

But 1969 brought the biggest twist in this story. A new rule called the Kerala Land Reforms

Act came into play. This rule said goodbye to the big landlord system. There was now a limit to how much land one could own. The land that was extra? It was taken by the government and given to those who did not have any and those who had been renting. This changed the face of farming in Kerala.

With these changes, a lot of things shifted. More people began to own the lands they worked on. This made things a bit more equal and improved the lives of many who lived in villages and farmlands.

The story does not end there. The farmers, now proud landowners, wanted to do their best. They learned better ways of farming, which meant more crops and a better economy for Kerala.

Another big change? The way people saw each other. The old king-like system faded away, making way for equality. Plus, more folks in villages started picking up books and going to school.

To wrap it up, Kerala's land story is not just about fields and crops. It is a story of change, growth, and hope. It is a lesson for any place looking for a fresh start and a better tomorrow.



A Transformative Gender Equality Agenda for the State

Gender became a major policy concern in Kerala from the onset of People's Plan Campaign for democratic decentralization in the 1990s and that initiated gender mainstreaming in programs and policies of the government.



MINI SUKUMAR

Expert Member,
Kerala State Planning Board

Ensuring welfare measures and labour rights of women was initiated long before that. The current policies, programmes and schemes were evolved through a long process over the years and gained significance in the context of accepting gender justice as the political framework in the development approach of the state. A stronger intervention in terms of creating opportunities for women in economic activities to ensure some sort of earnings, ensuring credit, skill development and trainings, supporting entrepreneurship and startups are also in place. The Policy outlook for the welfare of working women in organized, unorganized and traditional sectors is to ensure and protect their wages, better working conditions and safer work spaces. A new focus has been evolving here to

give importance on the educated unemployed women and women in career break due to family care work responsibilities.

Kerala, over the years, has seen several interventions that have ensured the enhancement of participation of women in social, political and public sphere. Gender aware planning was adopted through a number of measures such as, Women Component Plan (WCP) in the LSGIs with 10 percent of the plan grant-in-aid for projects directly benefitting women. Kudumbashree – a network of Women Neighbourhood Groups that spearheads community based intervention of poor women with focus on self-help, demand-led convergence of available services and resources under the leadership of the local governments. 46 lakhs women are part of this network. Kudumbashree is associated mainly with livelihood, banking, social development and gender development. Establishment of Department of Women and Child Development and introducing Gender Budgeting to integrate gender perspective into the Budget were implemented in 2018.

The socio-cultural development of the State can be attributed to its high female literacy, education and higher health indicators of women such as maternal mortality, life expectancy and sex ratio. As regards literacy, Kerala ranks first in the country with literacy of 94 per cent (Census of India, 2011) and having a very narrow gender gap. Kerala holds the first place in the country in female literacy with 92.07 per cent (Census of India, 2011). In school education universal enrolment at the primary-level and gender parity has been achieved; girl students constitute 48.93 per cent of total student enrolment. Girls outnumbered boys in higher secondary education at 50.73 per cent. At the higher education level also the enrolment of girls is higher than boys, except in technology courses.

Life Expectancy at birth of women in Kerala at 77.9 years is the highest in India. Low maternal mortality rate and high female life expectancy in Kerala are attributed to the extensive public provisioning for maternal care in the State. The universal access to health care institutions helps to ensure maternal care as well as institutional delivery to all.

Workforce participation rates of women in urban areas have always been much higher in Kerala reflecting the advantages of a literate State. The recent Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) show that gap between men and women has been to some extent reduced in this regard. Female WPR has increased from 20.4 per cent in 2018-19 to 23.3 per cent in 2020-21 in all age groups. In the productive age group of 15-59 years, the WPR



of women in Kerala is 32.3 while the all India average is 33.9. But the total number of women workers in the organised sector has increased during the last ten years. The IT sector (Techno Park, Cyber Park, and Info Park) has shown an increase in women's employment in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Co-operation, agriculture, animal husbandry and dairy development is a major sector to create employment opportunities for women and enhancing food security in the State. State has been witnessing a growing feminisation of agriculture in the State through group farming initiatives by women. It increases agricultural production by bringing fallow and cultivable waste land into agricultural use, and has significance as a food security measure. There are 378810 women farmers in 75,353 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) formed by Kudumbashree Mission engaged in group farming activities in the farm livelihood sector.

Government of Kerala had formulated the State Nirbhaya Policy for combating sexual violence against women and children and to safeguard them from trafficking. This includes shelters for survivors of sexual harassment, where they are provided with life skill education to gain employment and SOS Model Home for POCSO survived girls below the age of 12. One Stop Centres to support women face violence, 'Kathorth' an online consultation programme for resolving various issues through counselling, legal

aid and police assistance, Aswasanidhi for financial support to victims of sex crimes and heinous gender based violence, "Bhoomika", a gender based violence management centre provides social and psychological support to the victims, Kudumbashree Gender Help Desk- Snehittha and "Aparajitha is online" quick response mechanism for the grievance redressal of harassment Police Department and Mithra Helpline (181) by Kerala State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC) are functioning successfully as a 24/7 accessible and emergency response service for women in need. The Corporation also focuses on providing financial support to women entrepreneurs, trainings, gender awareness programmes and menstrual hygiene management awareness project. The Corporation has piloted a scheme of setting up of Integrated Skill Development Centre for tribal women. The Gender Park under WCD is intended to be the South Asian hub for gender activities with a Gender Data Centre in collaboration with UN Women, along with Heritage Museum and Library.

Kerala is the first State in India to declare a Transgender (TG) Policy in 2015. State has launched separate programmes for TGs, under the umbrella scheme Mazhavillu, for mainstreaming the target population. The programmes include financial assistance for vocational training, sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and post-SRS surgeries, marriage





K.R. Gouri Amma

assistance, scholarships, pension, and insurance. The Government issued ID cards to TGs; opened a TG cell, a crisis management centre, and 24x7 Helpline. The allocation to transgender persons in 2023 -24 budget amounts to 6.4 crores under various schemes. This has been increased from 5.8 in 2022-23. Mazhavillu scheme which includes various programmes for the welfare of transgender persons such as the financial assistance scheme, community level programmes, institutional interventions, provision for pension, insurance and loan and conducting workshops for the community and schemes in other departments.

Policy Focus

During the period of the 13th Five-Year Plan, emphasis was given on livelihoods and employment generation, especially women's entrepreneurship, setting up women friendly infrastructure and ensuring measures for women's

safety. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, state has made tremendous progress in women's lives and their meaningful participation in the society. During the pandemic years women's leadership and their contributions in terms of labour and time were very crucial in setting up the support systems at the grassroots level.

The working Group for Women and Employment of 14th Five Year Plan points out that, in 2018-19, 21% of working age women in Kerala were employed, of these employed women, nearly half were in regular salaried employment, nearly twice that in the rest of India. Kerala also has a relatively large share of women employers (2 percent) compared to only 0.6 percent in other states. Yet, the share of women in salaried work has remained more or less unchanged pointing towards stagnancy in the generation of 'good' jobs for women. Therefore, the challenge of encouraging women's work in the Kerala context is primarily one of enabling opportunities for a highly educated workforce. Kerala can reap the benefits of this highly educated workforce with investment in the right sectors enabling the creation of 'good jobs' and facilitating women's entry into work. Nearly 40 percent of women with education of graduate level were willing to participate in paid work but were out of the workforce. About 37 percent of women with post-graduate and above education were reporting as unemployed.

It is important to think seriously about how to remove obstacles to women's labour force participation. Acknowledge the pertinent issue of lack of adequate employment opportunities for women, especially for those with better educational attainments. A number of social factors contribute towards this. Social restrictions, unfavourable social and familial norms, stigma around entry into wage labour market, and various forms of discrimination against women at the workplace are still prevailing. We need to develop women-friendly policies for different workplaces. Introduction of flexible work timings for women, proper support systems like crèche and child-care facilities, adequate facilities & support systems for elderly care, and safe transportation systems are to be priority concerns. Providing women a clear career path from the time of their education (higher secondary and higher education) can make a good change. Programmes to facilitate women's re-entry into the workforce are also important. The two most important are Improvement in quantity and quality of work and the distributing the burden of care work. Government of Kerala is trying to address these two factors through policies in various sectors not only related to labour and employment. Education, social justice and women and child development sectors are also working towards this end.



MIGRATION



Changing Trajectories of Kerala Migration



DR GINU ZACHARIA OOMMEN

Visiting Professor
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Trivandrum

The ongoing migration from Kerala and the history of the Kerala diaspora abroad should be understood as part of the larger canvas of Asian migration history. Migration is the core theme of the Asia's rich cultural history. Until 19th century migratory movement in Asia was largely confined to the movement of slave men and women. However the labour migration which started in Asia in the mid 19th century occurred mainly because of colonial intervention. Sunil S. Amrit, has divided Asia's migratory history into four periods. First, from 1830s to 1930s, which is termed



as Asia's first mobility revolution. With abolition of slavery, Indians and Chinese were recruited to the French and British plantations in the Carribbeans, West Indies, Mauritius, Natal, and Guiana, Fiji under 'indentured labour system'. Migrants were largely from UP, Bihar, Orissa and some parts of Madras. The first ship from the Indian subcontinent sailed to Caribbean in 1834. The indentured system was highly exploitative and many died during this process. By the end of 19th century Kangani/Maistry system was introduced by British planters to recruit labours mainly to Ceylon, Burma and Malaya. The main foreman or Kangani from the laboring class was sent to their respective state or village to recruit the migrants, and families had to pay heavily to Kangani in the process. Akin to the present migration this was a debt ridden and highly exploitative system. Migrants were largely from Tamil and Telugu districts of Madras Presidency. By late 19th century the introduction of steam ships, telegraph, and postal system had heightened the communication and accelerated the pace of migration. The third category of migration during this period was "free passage" and this was largely to Africa and East Asia for the construction of roads, railways, but some also went as traders. However from 1930-1950, the migratory process slowed down due to the World War II and other related conflicts. On the contrary, from 1950s to 1970s, the newly formed post colonial states in Asia had witnessed the internal migration to emerging urban centres such as Delhi, Bombay, Karachi, Colombo

and so on. In the 1970s Asia's second mobility revolution changed the course of Asia's migratory history and this was largely to two regions – to the oil rich GCC countries and to emerging East Asian economies of Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. Simultaneously, an Asian migration industry emerged, consisting of recruiting agents, sub agents, passport agents, money lenders, travel agencies, micro financiers and so on.

The state of Kerala, located in the south-western part of India, has an intriguing history of migration. The participation of Malayalis from the former princely states, Travancore, Cochin, Madras Presidency in the indentured system was virtually negligible. However in the beginning of the 20th century, with the introduction of colonial economy and subsequent spread of modern education, Malayalis have been prompted to migrate to different parts of the world, particularly to East Asian countries. Robbin Jeffrey in his work pointed out that the educated class of backward communities, mainly Ezhavas, Nadars and Christians were the early movers since they were denied jobs in the princely states. Moreover, few Keralites, particularly from Malabar, moved to Ceylon, Burma and East Asia within the ambit of Kangani system. Migration Studies scholar K.V. Joseph who has documented the early history of Kerala migration has noted that by 1920s Malayalis migrated across the globe mainly to, Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya, Mesopotamia, UK, Europe, Africa, Australia, and America. In the post-independence period, Keralite migration to

urban centres of India increased, as also to various parts of Africa, particularly to Ethiopia as teachers, clerks, and medical professionals. The amendment of Immigration Act of USA in 1965 opened new avenues of migration for nurses and paramedics, though the migration was relatively slow until 1980s. As a result of migration, there is a drastic change in the economic and social sphere, which created money order economy. When compared to its South Asian counterparts, Kerala has a unique place in the geography of remittances. Interestingly in the year 2021, remittances flow to India had increased to US\$87 billion, and Kerala's share amplified to nearly 16 billion US dollars (19 percent), which is more than the annual remittances being received by Bangladesh.

Though the Gulf pockets across South Asia, including Kerala, have prospered over last four decades, the hardships and precarious conditions

of migrant laborers is continuing unendingly without any concrete remedies. The GCC countries continue to host the largest share of the Non Resident Keralites (NRKs), out of which more than 80 percent are low skilled and semi-skilled workers. The temporary nature and unequivocal control of sponsor makes Gulf migration unsettling and sojourning. However Kerala is the pioneering state which enacted legislative measures for the protection and safety of the migrants living abroad. Moreover the welfare schemes, including the pension introduced by the Kerala government for the returning Non-resident Keralites, is highly laudable. The astonishing achievement of the Kerala government is the meticulous channelisation of the remittances for the development of the state and also the steps taken for the involvement of diaspora in this process.

The COVID 19 pandemic has exposed the already existing exploitative nature of the Kafala system which invariably resulted in mass retrenchment of labourers by the employers. GCC workspace is also riddled with problems that are particularly related to the discrimination of women migrant workers, a vast majority of whom hail from Kerala. Women migrants, in the skilled category, are mainly nurses in the organised health industry; those in the semi-skilled or unskilled category are domestic workers, care workers, cleaning crew,

Though the Gulf pockets across South Asia, including Kerala, have prospered over last four decades, the hardships and precarious conditions of migrant laborers is continuing unendingly without any concrete remedies.





manufacturing workers, salon staff and salespersons. Interestingly, Malayali nurses and care givers have been working in the most volatile countries of the world such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Israel, including the remotest Asia-Pacific country, Papua New Guinea.

Impact of Migration in Families

Kerala's public space has been deeply influenced by Gulf migration and remittances. There are numerous studies on the economic and demographic impacts of the Kerala migration, but the social impact is untouched. The social cost of migration or in other words the impact of migration on the families, particularly the separation of families, is yet to be deeply researched. Kerala has a unique distinction of having 'women headed' households. These women are engaged in non-traditional roles due to migration of male members, thereby breaking the patriarchal norms. However the feminization of migration is also at the cost of separation of families which sometimes leads to socio-psychological issues. The children who are left behind, particularly with single parent households, had to be given utmost priority and requires in-depth research. Likewise, the ailing parents who are staying alone in the state is a matter of concern and the lack of geriatric centres and healthy old age homes has been exacerbating the miseries of the elderly. Moreover, the transnational nature of Kerala migration has paved way for circulation ideas, culture and practices from abroad and this unique impact termed as 'social remittances' needs to be explored.

Over the past few years, an increasing trend in student migration can be observed in India as a whole and even in the state of Kerala. The various dimensions of student migration from Kerala are yet to be fully explored.

Finally, one important area that needs to be studied is the widespread and vibrant second generation Kerala diaspora across the globe. Along with the subsequent generations in East Asia and Africa, the generation that has been groomed in both GCC and others parts of the world needs special attention. The migration to GCC is temporary in nature, unlike the permanent nature of diaspora in the West and Asia Pacific. Hence the second generation immigrants in GCC is a unique category of 'neither here nor there' and attempts should be made for the integration of these vivacious generation into both the social and economic space of Kerala. The experience of COVID 19 and the diversification of GCC economy may prompt Keralites to explore newer migratory paths and the government of India should immediately pass an all encompassing Emigration Act at the earliest to ensure the safety and protection of migrants.



Banking Beyond Boundaries

Kerala's co-operative banks seamlessly blend traditional trust with modern financial empowerment, revolutionizing both banking and societal welfare



T.V. SUBHASH IAS
Registrar of Cooperative Societies

Co-operative Banks, the first organised banking network in rural Kerala, are much more than your primary source of credit. They are a people-centred social enterprise, which do business in mutual self-interest.

The cooperative movement in Kerala, which has a profound civilising influence on its society, draws its strength from a vast network that extends from various small-scale enterprises to the sprawling conglomeration of Kerala Bank. These financial institutions, which symbolised a wide array of people from those who deposited just a few



pennies to those investing huge sums, borrowers, collaborators, farmers, and women, have always had a decisive impact on the state's economy as well.

The history of Kerala's cooperative movement is an interesting story, one worth telling. At a time when the farmers were faced with severe shortage of funds to purchase seeds, fertilizers and livestock when people, irrespective of caste and religion, engaged in mass self-help movements by giving money to each other. The practice fostered a friendly culture, which eventually grew to become the cooperative movement. The cooperative banks in Kerala trace their origin to the multi-purpose societies of 1920's, which were registered as rural societies. As the volume of business grew along with a proportionate expansion in their investment-



base, they took a leaf out of the national banking movement and evolved themselves into a huge network of cooperative societies.

Societal Transformation

The Co-operative societies, which freed the hapless people in search of credit including the rural farmers, helped free them from the shackles of the money-lending mafia, brought in an array of positive changes in all facets of Kerala's social life. These societies or sanghams, which offered credit for different requirements including the purchase of livestock and even fertilisers, soon went onto become an essential friend of each and every household here.

In some way or the other, all families established a connection with the cooperative movement, which never hesitated to lend money to its members in times of need. Riding on its secured financial credentials and transparency, it earned the people's confidence in such a scale that

The cooperative movement in Kerala, which has a profound civilising influence on its society, draws its strength from a vast network that extends from various small-scale enterprises to the sprawling conglomeration of Kerala Bank



no other banking network could ever achieve. The active involvement of popular movements and even popular protests too contributed to its growth.

With a whopping 2.5 lakh crore rupees as its working capital base, the co-operative sector in Kerala now accounts for 40 per cent of the overall banking activity in the state. The network boasts a strong foundation comprising 1627 service co-operative banks and 160,255 co-operative societies, which a huge loan base that extends up to 1.86 lakh crore rupees. Governed in a transparent and democratic manner, each of these co-operative institutions in Kerala now stands tall as a model of reliability and service in the area of farm credit and labour entrepreneurship.

As it stands now, Kerala ensures the highest degree of protection for the investments in its cooperative sector. The explicit support offered by the state government for the safety of investments in these societies lends further strength to that guarantee. To ensure the safety of investments, the government has constituted a Co-operative Rehabilitation Fund, besides another fund to ensure adequate liquidity and investment guarantee to fool proof the system of investment repayments.



The government has successfully weathered the consistent attempts to destroy the sector by blowing a few isolated incidents out of proportion by proposing strict legal measures through Cooperative Amendment

The sector made a quantum jump in terms of investment and public trust with the merger of all district cooperative banks in 2019 to form the Kerala Bank in 2019, which now has 823 branches and more than 50 lakh customers.

Government Oversight

But as in any other fields, the cooperative sector too is not free from undesirable trends and if unchecked, they can damage the reputation of the entire movement. To plug such loopholes in the system, which sowed the seeds of concern among the partners of this movement, the Kerala government now has amended the Cooperative Act. The government has successfully weathered the consistent attempts to destroy the sector by blowing a few isolated incidents out of proportion by proposing strict legal measures through this amendment. Evidently, its success in building the individual and collective capital needed to secure rural financial autonomy as well as the vision of socialised enterprise has unsettled those who prefer private and state ownership of the economy.

The activities of the cooperative sector in Kerala are a combination of many welfare assistance activities and social interventions, which range from the distribution of welfare pension to lakhs of people to care homes. From implementing a Member Relief Fund for the collaborators suffering from health problems, Care Home Scheme that constructed 2091 houses as part of the rebuild Kerala initiative and the flat complex projects in different districts, established examples are everywhere waiting to be studied. During the pandemic period, they also provided drugs, medical tests and testing equipment at low cost.

Beyond Banking

This way, the cooperative movement in Kerala is growing in size and numbers by supporting and earning the trust of the general public and the farmers. The contribution of cooperatives to ensure sustainable income and progress and to strengthen the growth and financial security of the common man in the social structure of Kerala is indeed invaluable. And that is exactly why the state government is making committed interventions to protect our cooperative sector, which serves as a model to the world.

More than ever, Kerala needs a robust co-operative sector to lead the way and assert in practice, the beneficial constraint of mutual responsibility.



Government's Help for Keralites Abroad

The NORKA Department



Are you a Keralite living in another country? The Non-Resident Keralites Affairs Department (NORKA) is here to help. Started in 1995, NORKA is a special department by the Kerala government for people from Kerala who live and work in other countries.

What does NORKA do?

- **Job Help:** NORKA helps people find jobs in foreign countries. Before going abroad, they even train people so they are ready for their new life.
- **Legal Help:** If you have legal problems abroad, NORKA is there to guide you.
- **Money Help:** Need financial help? NORKA has got you covered.
- **Learning and Skills:** They support with education, and also give training for better jobs.
- **Emergency Help:** If you're in trouble and need to come back to Kerala quickly, NORKA will help.

Special Programs by NORKA:

- **For Those Returning Home:** If you come back to Kerala and want to start your own work, NORKA has a plan to help.
- **Self-Employment Plan:** Started in 2021, this is for those who want to work for themselves.
- **Scholarship:** If you're from a family living abroad and need money for higher studies, NORKA offers help.
- **Training for Nurses:** NORKA trains nurses so they can work in Gulf countries.
- **Business Help:** If you live abroad and want to start a business in Kerala, NORKA will guide you.
- **Help in Crisis:** For example, when there was trouble in Sudan, NORKA helped 183 Keralites come back home safely.
- **Free Legal Help:** If you face problems with your job, visa, or other issues in a foreign country, Malayalee lawyers will help you for free.
- **Santhwana Fund:** This fund helps families from Kerala living abroad who are facing hard times.

In short, NORKA is like a safety net for Keralites living in other countries. If you're from Kerala and living abroad, know that NORKA has your back.





IT

Kerala's IT Renaissance: A Beacon of Technological Innovation

Kerala has embarked on an extraordinary journey of technological innovation and excellence in the Information Technology (IT) sector. With a strong focus on e-governance, robust security measures, and substantial investments in technology and innovation, Kerala is poised for a bright, tech-driven future that is attracting attention not only across India but also on the global stage.





JAYAKUMAR K.
Data Analyst

Central to Kerala's IT success story is its thriving ecosystem. Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram, India's pioneering technology park, symbolizes Kerala's commitment to technological advancement. It stands today as the largest IT employer in the state, housing industry giants like Infosys, Oracle, Tata Consultancy Services, and Capgemini. Additionally, Infopark, situated in Kochi with strategic branches in Thrissur and Cherthala, significantly contributes to the state's IT revenues.

A Transformation in Citizen Services

At the core of Kerala's IT transformation is a revolutionary e-governance initiative. The Kerala State IT Mission (KSITM), propelled by the government, has tirelessly digitized government services, making them accessible to every citizen.

KSITM has conducted extensive training programs and workshops, equipping government officials at all levels with the skills necessary to lead and implement e-governance projects effectively. These efforts have not only expedited government service delivery but also nurtured a cadre of e-Governance champions within line departments.

Safeguarding Citizen Data

In an era where data privacy and security take precedence, the Kerala government has made the safeguarding of citizen data a top priority. Stringent measures have been implemented to ensure the secure handling of sensitive information.

One noteworthy step in this direction is the adoption of Aadhaar-based biometric authentication for eKYC (electronic Know Your Customer) purposes. This technology not only enhances security but also streamlines processes, benefiting both the government and citizens. Furthermore, it is employed for the direct disbursement of subsidies and benefits, curbing leakages and guaranteeing that rightful recipients receive their dues.

Technological Innovation: From Robotics to Graphene

Kerala's dedication to innovation is palpable through its initiatives aimed at introducing advanced technologies to its youth. Ambitious plans are underway to establish a staggering 9,000 robotics labs in high schools across the state. This bold move seeks to instill a culture of technology adoption from a young age, ensuring that the future workforce is well-prepared for the challenges of the digital era.

Additionally, Kerala is home to India's first Graphene Innovation Centre, a joint venture involving the Digital University of Kerala, the Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology, and Tata Steel. This center focuses on pioneering research in materials science, with a particular emphasis on graphene, a material with immense potential in various technological applications.

Nurturing Talent in Emerging Fields

The state actively nurtures talent in emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, and Analytics. Initiatives like the Future Technologies Lab, Digital Hub, Design Incubator, and Digital University introduce new talent to these domains while facilitating groundbreaking research and innovation.

A noteworthy initiative is the "Capacity Building in Responsible AI and Data Analytics" training program launched by Digital University Kerala for the Police Department in 2022. This initiative underscores the state's commitment to using technology for public welfare.

Leaders in Life Sciences: Pioneering Genomic Research

Kerala is making substantial investments in the life sciences sector. A standout initiative is the Genome Data Centre, a high-capacity data hub that enables researchers, healthcare professionals, and public health officials to access and share genomic data. This resource plays a pivotal role in advancing healthcare and biotechnological research.

Moreover, plans are in motion for the establishment of a Life Sciences Park in Thiruvananthapuram. This ambitious project aims to



bring together research institutions, academia, and companies working in Biotechnology, Nanotechnology, and Life Sciences, fostering collaboration and innovation in these critical fields.

A Skilled Tech Workforce: Kerala's Asset

Kerala boasts a highly skilled workforce, with a literacy rate of 92.2%. The cities of Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram have emerged as international IT hubs, attracting talent from across the state. Initiatives like Digital University and Kerala Blockchain Academy ensure that this talent pool remains at the forefront of technology and innovation.



Empowering Local Governance: LSGD and IKM

Kerala's commitment to grassroots democracy is evident through the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) and the Information Kerala Mission (IKM). Together, they empower local governance through ICT applications. The Citizen Service Portal offers online services such as property tax payments, building permits, civil registrations, and file tracking, significantly reducing the time and effort required by the public.

Securing the Digital Frontier: Kerala Police's Initiatives

In collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIMK), Kerala Police has established the Centre for Digital Innovation in Technology (CDiT). This initiative bolsters cybersecurity measures by fostering technical expertise within the police force. Furthermore, Kerala Police's Cyberdome project, a pioneering public-private partnership, focuses on cybersecurity, cyber forensics, and information security, earning international recognition, including the INTERPOL Special Award for Outstanding Leadership in Protecting Children.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT
Government of Kerala recognizes the critical importance of ICT as the key vehicle for the State's overall equitable development. Our aim was to establish Kerala as a preferred IT & ITES hub in innovation based technologies.

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE
To develop Kerala into a fully digitally empowered society, the core infrastructure and connectivity plays a pivotal role in the overall e-Governance programme.

DIGITAL COMMERCE
State Government has enacted policy for the enablement of growth of e-commerce in the state.

POLICY FRAMEWORK & DEVELOPMENT
The Policy of the Government is to make use of the digital technology for the overall development of the State.

DIGITAL EMPOWERED LIFESTYLE
Bridging the gap between academia and the industry.

CAPACITY BUILDING
The objective is to develop and strengthen the skills, abilities, processes and resources to accelerate implementation of e-governance initiatives in the State across all levels of government.

SECURITY
To ensure a secure Digital living for its citizens the government shall create a secure cyber security framework.

CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT
Government of Kerala has initiated action for universal Aadhaar enrollment linking all government databases. Citizens were empowered to access government services and grievance filing through mobile applications and web portals.

Nurturing Cyber Expertise

The annual c0c0n Cyber Security Conference, organized in association with Kerala Police, has become a flagship event in the cybersecurity domain. Collaborating with esteemed organizations like ISRA, POLCYB, UNICEF, ICMEC, and WeProtect, c0c0n serves as a platform for discussions and

education on the latest trends in cyber threats and data privacy. It brings together experts, IT professionals, law enforcement officers, researchers, and students to share insights and knowledge.

Inclusive Growth: Kerala's IT Odyssey

Kerala's IT journey, driven by the visionary government, is a remarkable example of how technology can drive economic growth, empower citizens, and bridge the digital divide. While celebrating government initiatives, it is essential to recognize Kerala's unique growth paradox—high human development indices alongside rising per capita incomes—resulting from collective efforts, innovative governance, and a responsive administration.

Kerala's Global IT Resonance

In conclusion, Kerala's transformation in the IT sector, underpinned by the visionary leadership of the Pinarayi Vijayan government, is a compelling model for nations and regions worldwide. Kerala's journey, from a lush paradise to a global IT powerhouse, is a testament to its unwavering commitment to progress, innovation, and inclusive growth. As Kerala continues to lead the way into a brighter, technologically advanced future, its resonance on the global stage cannot be ignored.





CINEMA

A Journey Like No Other

A Short History of Malayalam Cinema



Malayalam movies were always looked upon by the movie industries from other states for its fresh and realistic content. Even in its mainstream, Malayalam cinema used the magic of movie to create true to life stories while indulging in experimenting pathbreaking forms in its narrative



A CHANDRASEKHAR
Senior Media Person and Film Critic

As against other Indian languages, Malayalam Cinema since its inception handed social issues and revealed its affinity towards literature. While Indian cinema pondered mythology, the first movie in Malayalam, J C Daniel's Vigathakumaran(1928) was out and out a social drama, adapted from a published short story. Be it in the Mainstream or the Art House, Malayalam Cinema always upheld its social commitment unto the present where

Jude Anthony's 2018(2023,) the biggest money-grosser of all the time and India's official entry to the Oscars, is made from a recent disaster narrating the unity and integrity of Kerala society.

It's no doubt that Neelakkuyil (1954), the first Malayalam movie that had won national recognition, directed by P.Bhaskaran-Ramu Kariat duo which dealt with a social issue from a Dalit perspective would not have happened in any other language in India during that period. Kariat's National Award-winning movie, Chemmeen(1964) was the first movie of its kind, which had incorporated pan-Indian technicians to enhance its quality to International Standards. It should also be noted that Chemmeen again was a screen adaptation of a well-received literary work. This affinity towards literature has helped mainstream Malayalam Cinema to a great extent in ensuring an average quality in content.

Malayalam cinema has consistently prioritised content over stars and stardom. Directors were traditionally the primary focus, and films were known by their directors rather than actors. Prominent figures like Thikkurishi Sukumaran Nair, K S Sethumadhavan, M Krishnan Nair, and Sasikumar were celebrated for their quality contributions. The industry was closely associated with studios and production houses such as Udaya Studios in Alappuzha and Merryland in Thiruvananthapuram, which regularly produced films with actors and technicians on monthly salaries. Superstars like Prem Nazir, Sathyan, Madhu, Sheela, Sharada, and Jayabharathi were closely tied to these studios. Additionally, individual producers like Chandrathara Pareekkutty and Babu Sait from Kanmani Films made significant contributions. P N Menon played a pivotal role in taking Kerala cinema from indoor studios to breathtaking outdoor locations with his 1964 film "Rosie."

In 1968, the then Government of Kerala introduced Awards for excellence in the movie industry. P Subrahmaniom's Kumarasambhavam grabbed the Best Movie award. Envisaged and conducted by the Department of Industries, the State Film Awards sent a benchmark later and was entrusted to the Department of Public Relations (I&PR). Until the inception of the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy, the first of its kind in the country, in the year 1998, the Department of I&PR was responsible for setting up the juries, conducting award screening, declaring the awards, and conducting the State Awards' Nite. Later it was taken up by the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy and every year, awards in many categories evaluating technical and aesthetic brilliance in Malayalam have been adjudged and distributed without fail. The



ADOUR GOPALAKRISHNAN

Adoor Gopalakrishnan has left an indelible mark on the world of film. With a storytelling prowess that touches the depths of the human soul, he effortlessly breathes life into both the ordinary and the extraordinary. Gopalakrishnan's ability to weave intricate narratives and explore the intricacies of human existence has set him apart as a true master of the craft.

Academy is also involved in conducting academic activities like funding informal as well as formal research on cinema, seminars, classes, film festivals, etc.

In 1975, the Government of Kerala established the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC), inspired by the National Film Development Corporation, to fund quality films in both feature and non-feature categories. Their goal was to improve filmmaking and distribution infrastructure. During the eighties, KSFDC initiated the Chitrangali Studio Complex, the first-ever public-sector film studio, at Thiruvallam in Thiruvananthapuram. This studio played a crucial role in shifting the film industry from Chennai back to Kerala, which had been the hub of South Indian Cinema for decades.

KSFDC also played a vital role in organizing



CHEMMEEN THE TIMELESS MASTERPIECE

Chemmeen transcends time and language, touching the deepest emotions. Portraying themes of love, sacrifice, and the enduring human spirit, it is a cinematic gem based on Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's acclaimed novel. This film testifies to storytelling's power and cinema's enchantment. The narrative's emotional waves, like the turbulent sea it depicts, continue to resonate, evoking tears and smiles, reminding us that love, like the boundless ocean, is eternal. Chemmeen is not just a film; it is an emotional treasure cherished by those who have experienced its beauty.

the first film festival in Kerala. It partnered with Filmotsav88; a non-competitive International Film Festival of India conducted by the Ministry of I&B. This success led the state government to start its own film festival, the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), which has become one of the country's largest and most prestigious international film festivals. Recognized by the FIAFP, the IFFK boasts extensive audience participation and focuses on Afro-Asian and Latin American cinema.

In the 1970s, parallel off-beat cinema gained momentum alongside mainstream films. This movement began when Adoor Gopalakrishnan, a Kerala land survey officer, studied cinema at FTII Pune. Upon his return, Adoor, along with a team of young enthusiasts, introduced a transformative element to movie viewing in Kerala by establishing the Chitralekha Film Society, the first of its kind in the state. The activities of Chitralekha fostered a thriving viewing culture by creating a widespread network of Film Societies throughout Kerala. This film society movement played a pivotal role in nurturing a culture of film literacy and fostering a tradition of quality filmmaking in the state.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Kulathoor Bhaskaran Nair founded the Chitralekha Film Cooperative and set up a dedicated film studio in Thiruvananthapuram. In 1974, they produced the groundbreaking film *Swayamvaram*, often regarded as the "Pather Panchali" of Malayalam Cinema. Despite being initially overlooked at the state



THE KERALA STATE CHALACHITRA ACADEMY

Established by the Kerala government, it plays a pivotal role in promoting and celebrating the rich cinematic heritage of the state. The Academy organises various events, including film festivals, seminars, and workshops, to nurture emerging talents and facilitate meaningful discussions within the film community. Through its efforts, the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy continues to be a beacon for the flourishing film culture in Kerala, further enriching the cinematic landscape of the region.



REMEMBERING KG GEORGE

KG George leaves a lasting legacy that resonates with cinephiles. His cinematic contributions illuminated screens and explored the depths of the human experience. Through his films, he crafted intricate narratives that probed the complexities of life and the resilience of the human spirit. As we pay tribute to this cinematic luminary, we appreciate his significant impact on the world of cinema and acknowledge that his work will inspire generations to come.

level, this NFC-funded movie garnered significant recognition, including National Film Awards for Best Film, Best Director, and Best Actress. It gained acclaim both nationally and internationally for its artistic and aesthetic brilliance.

Swayamvaram triggered an extreme new wave in Malayalam cinema attuned to the Neo-realistic movement in world cinema. MT Vasudevan Nair's Nirmalyam was released the next year and won the National Award. Adoor continued his non-compromising journey as a filmmaker with his legendary productions like Kodiyettam, Elippathayam, Anantharam, Mukhamukham and Vidheyam and is still active with Pinneyum etc. Later

filmmakers like John Abraham, G Aravindan etc., marked their presence with pathbreaking movies like Cheriyachante Kroorakrithyangular, Amma Ariyan, Utharayanam, Kanchana Seetha and Esthappan. A new talented lot of filmmakers like K G George, K P Kumaran, K R Mohanan, T V Chandran, Shaji N Karun, PT Kunhumuhamed, Sivaprasad, Rajeevnath, PA Backer, Pavithran etc., dared to experiment with the Film grammar, by producing hitherto unseen kind of movies and narratives. Many of them including K G George, Shaji N Karun, John Abraham, M P Sukumaran Nair, and K R Mohanan were alumnae of the Film and Television Institute of India Pune. Understanding the importance of having a state-of-the-art academic institution on filmmaking, in the year 2024, the Government of Kerala started the K R Narayanan Institute of Visual Arts and Sciences at Kottayam

During the Eighties, Malayalam Cinema witnessed a new rise of actors, filmmakers, and technicians. Writers and filmmakers like P Padmarajan and Bharathan made their entries with a new formula of parallel that sandwiches the so-called Commercial v/s the Arthouse streams by incorporating qualities from both the streams. Stalwarts like I.V. Sasi, Hariharan Joshy and Fazil continuously came up with hits and megahits with stars and multi-stars, followed by an array of filmmakers like Sathyam Anthikkad, Balachandra Menon, Sreenivasan, Kamal, K Madhu, Sibi Malayil, Venu Nagavalli, etc., who widened the niche space for family cinema. Directors like Priyadarshan who started his career with slapstick comedies graduated himself to a serious player as the most successful filmmaker from Kerala who could create a brand space in Hindi as well. Shaji Kailas too emerged out to be a successful filmmaker by directing hit after hit, who along with writer turned director Renji Panicker was responsible for the stardom of Suresh Gopi. Successful directors like Siddique-lal, T K Rajeev Kumar, A K Lohitadas, Jayaraj, Shyamaprasad, Renjith, Lal Jose and many others have been the torchbearers of the brand Malayalam Cinema.

In the 1980s, following in the footsteps of P J Antony, the first Malayali actor to win the National Award for Best Actor (then named Bharat) for his remarkable performance in Nirmalyam, a new generation of stars emerged. This included actors like Bharat Gopi, Nedumudi Venu, Thilakan, Jalaja, and others who achieved success in both commercial and offbeat cinema. Their exceptional performances not only redefined screen acting but also set new standards and benchmarks for actors.

During the latter half of the 1980s, two actors made their debuts in Malayalam cinema. An advocate from Kochi named P A Muhammedkutty, known by his screen name Mammotty, began appearing



G. ARAVINDAN

G. Aravindan, was a visionary storyteller who deeply touched hearts. His films transcended narratives, exploring the intricacies of the human condition. His cinematic poetry mirrored life's beauty and complexities. Even in his absence, his films remain a source of inspiration and enduring storytelling. Aravindan, the master craftsman, is remembered with reverence for his timeless tales.



P. PADMARAJAN

The iconic story teller left has left an indelible mark on Malayalam film industry. His films, such as "Namukku Parkkan Munthiri Thoppukal" and "Thoovanathumbikal," are celebrated for their poignant storytelling and memorable characters. Padmarajan's contributions to cinema continue to be cherished, and his legacy as a prolific filmmaker endures in the hearts of cinephiles and admirers.

regularly in films starting with "Devalokam," written and directed by MT Vasudevan Nair. The other actor was Mohanlal, who initiated his career with Thiranottam, an amateur production, and gained stardom with his remarkable portrayal of the arch-villain in Manjil Virinja Pookkal. Malayalam Cinema owes much to these two actors for seamlessly blending commercial and arthouse elements, resulting in commercially successful offbeat cinema. While they formed the backbone of commercial mainstream cinema, they also dedicated themselves to meaningful arthouse projects, even if it meant compromising on commercial gains. Other actors like Jayaram, Mukesh, Jagadeesh, Dileep, Jayasurya, Revathy, Shobhana, Urvashi, Manju Warrier, and more demonstrated their talent and contributed significantly to the industry's success.

On one side, when the arthouse movies were

taking much advantage of by constantly updating and reforming itself, the mainstream commercial industry too has been developing meaningfully. It set a role model to other industries in terms of the form and content that it presented. During the eighties, when Udaya studio ceased production and M C Punnoose aka Appachan started Navodaya Studios at Kochi and ventured himself into production with commercial hits like Thacholi Ambu, Navodaya turned to be the epicentre of technological advancements as far as Malayalam Cinema was concerned. In 1982, Navodaya came up with the first ever 70mm 6 track stereophonic film entirely produced within the country named Padayottam and two years later, it produced the first ever 3D film in India called My Dear Kuttichathan, which earned a deserving acceptance and success on a pan-indian circuit. Malayalam Cinema is

proud to have contributed eminent technicians like Resul Pookkutty, the Sound Designer who won the Oscars for his work in a Hollywood production. Until the post-millennial era, Malayalam Cinema and its actors, directors and technicians had their dominance in the National Film Awards. It is with extreme pride that any Keralite could cherish the experience of a former President of India during his address in the State had to quote a movie scene from Malayalam as an anecdote. And definitely this proves the acceptance that our cinema has gained across boundaries.

The beginning of the 21st century proved to be a dark period for Malayalam Cinema, when the commercial mainstream tried to copy-paste its Tamil/Telugu/Hindi counterparts which resulted in meaningless repetitions. Movie houses faced closure and many of them were converted into convention centres. Soft porn cinema turned out to be the trend of the era. But soon thereafter the film industry of Kerala witnessed another uprisal of a fresh breed of sensible young filmmakers with global vision and technical knowledge. The cinema turned out to be teamwork. Filmmakers like Dr.Biju, Sanal Kumar Sasidharan, Vipin Vijay, Amal Neerad, Ashiq Abu, Rajeev Ravi, Rajesh Pillai, Ranjith Sankar, Sameer Thahir, Anwar Rasheed, Anjali Menon, Vineeth Sreenivasan, Dileesh Pothen, Sidharth Siva, Vidhu Vincent... came up with highly experimental works that earned critical appreciation as well as wide acceptance too from the filmgoers. Writers like Shyam Pushkaran have proved that we have more to say in contemporary cinema. Many of them fetched deserving spaces in many international festivals and platforms. During the COVID pandemic, through the OTT platforms, Malayalam Cinema gained worldwide acceptance from non-malayali audiences as well. Once again, the state has been put into the limelight for its outstanding contemporary contributions to the film world. Movies like Drishyam and Shutter have been remade to most of the languages and even in foreign languages. Minnal Murali, directed by Basil Joseph turned out to be an instant hit that redefined the Hollywood concept of super heroism

A fresh breed of actors and technicians too have emerged out from Kerala who could find better placement across language and geographical borders, thus establishing their stardom in a Pan-India magnitude. Actors like Fahad Faazil, Dulquer Salman, Nivin Pauly, Prithviraj Sukumaran, Tovino Thomas, Kunchako Boban, Vinayakan, Asif Ali, Shaine Nigam, Shine Tom Chacko, Shoubeen Shahir, Rima Kallingal, Parvathi Theruvoth, Remya Namboothiripad, Surabhi Lakshmi, Aiswaryalekshmi etc have literally redefined screen acting in tune with the contemporary global way. Stars and technicians have started funding meaningful productions.



JOHN ABRAHAM

Through works, such as "Amma Ariyan," John challenged conventions and pushed the boundaries of storytelling. John's ability to capture raw human emotions on screen and his fearless approach to tackling social issues through his films made him a true pioneer in Malayalam cinema. His legacy as a director continues to inspire filmmakers and cinephiles, reminding us of the power of cinema to provoke thought, stir emotions, and spark change. John Abraham's contributions to the world of filmmaking will always be remembered and celebrated.

Crowdfunding has been pitched for multi-crore productions. While film making as a process itself has become more democratic through the advent of digital technology, more and more promising youngsters have been coming forward with fresh ideas and projects thus enlightening the audience and brightening the future of Malayalam Cinema. Even when multi-crore, multilingual mammoth productions from Telugu or Tamil continue to dominate as Pan-India avatars, Malayalam is looked upon as an industry that continues to come up with small but beautiful true-to-life portrayals and that is the magic of Malayalam Cinema.



ART & CULTURE

A Melting Pot of Culture





Kerala, a southern Indian state, epitomises a rich blend of historical influences, varied art forms, and a vibrant cultural evolution that resonates on both local and global scales



RENU RAMANATH

Senior Journalist

Historically, Kerala, once part of the 'Thamizhagam' region encompassing the Tamil speaking kingdoms of Chera, Chola, and Pandya, has witnessed diverse cultural influences. These kingdoms often clashed, but regions beyond the Western Ghats, mainly under Chera rule, remained relatively insulated while still attracting invaders. The uniqueness of Kerala's culture is evident in its dialects, cuisine, arts, and traditions. By the 13th century CE, the Malayalam language, having branched from Tamil, developed 15 dialects. Kerala's spices drew civilizations like the Greeks, Chinese, and Arabs, impacting its culture and language. Interestingly, Malayalam integrated words from multiple foreign languages, a detail often unnoticed by its speakers.

Evolution of culture, language, and literature

As Malayalam emerged from Tamil, Tamil literature, particularly the Sangam Literature from around 300 BCE to 300 CE, can be seen as a precursor to Malayalam literature. It's believed that a significant portion of the Sangam literature originated in areas under the Chera Kingdom, or modern-day Kerala. The Sangam Literature also provides insights into the antiquity of Kerala's performing arts believed to be over two millennia old. Kutiyattam, the ancient Sanskrit theater preserved in Kerala, is among the world's oldest living theatrical forms and was recognized by UNESCO as an 'Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'. Kathakali, with about 300 years of history, evolved from Krishnanattam, a dance drama that tells the story of Lord Krishna and developed in the late 16th century. While Kutiyattam and Krishnanattam were confined to temples (Krishnanattam remains so), Kathakali was performed for general audiences outside

temples. Similarly, OttanThullal, which involves the same performer singing and dancing, entertained the masses. Theyyam, a ritualistic art form largely seen in northern Kerala, is a vibrant folk art rooted in local legends.

Kerala boasts a rich tradition of folk arts unique to various villages throughout the state. By some estimates, there are hundreds of folk arts in Kerala. Kalaripayattu, Kerala's indigenous martial art form, is believed to trace its





Kerala Kalamandalam

The Kerala Kalamandalam, now a Deemed University located in Cheruthuruthy, Thrissur district, founded in 1930 by poet Vallathol Narayana Menon and Manakkatt Mukunda Raja, has become a globally renowned center for classical arts, attracting scholars and students worldwide.

origins back to the Sangam Period. Kerala's theater has evolved from these diverse traditional and folk forms.

Kerala was also influenced by many religions that arrived by land and sea. Buddhism and Jainism left lasting impacts on Kerala's culture, including architecture, education, medicine, and performing arts. Christianity is believed to have been introduced to Kerala by Thomas the Apostle, one of Jesus Christ's 12 disciples, who arrived in CE 52 at the ancient seaport of Muziris.

All these religions left their marks on Kerala's language and culture. Arabi Malayalam or Mappila

Malayalam is a testament to this confluence, as are ChavittuNatakam and Margam Kali, along with various Mappila (Muslim) art forms like Oppana, Arabanamuttu, Duff Muttu, and many others.

Theatre in Kerala evolved from both traditional and folk forms and from touring musical theater groups that visited from neighboring Tamil Nadu mainly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Political and social reform movements utilized literature and performing arts to spread their messages and influence people. The play 'Ningalenne Communistakki', written by Thoppil Bhasi and produced by Kerala People's Arts Club (KPAC), was groundbreaking in its theatrical language and its promotion of Marxian ideology. Later, during the late 60s, the Nataka Kalari Movement introduced modernity to Kerala's theater, leading to the foundation of Kerala's first



school for theater studies, the Calicut University School of Drama in 1978 under Prof. G. Sankara Pillai.

Kerala also has an active film scene, with Malayalam cinema receiving international recognition since the 70s. Filmmakers like G. Aravindan, John Abraham, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and Shaji N Karun have earned international acclaim.

Kerala's contemporary visual arts trace their roots back to Raja Ravi Varma, the 19th-century painter who introduced oil painting and Western techniques to India and set up India's first lithographic printing press in Bombay in 1894. Subsequently, the state produced leading contemporary artists, many of whom studied at the Govt. College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram, established in 1881.

The Malayalam literary scene is among the

most vibrant in India, with over 140 publishing companies in the state. Before the advent of printing, Kerala had a tradition of palm leaf manuscripts. As Malayalam evolved from Tamil, Thunchath Ezhuthachan, the ancient poet believed to have lived around the 15th century CE, is considered the Father of Malayalam. His 'Adhyathma Ramayanam Kilippattu' is hailed as Malayalam's first literary text

The last decades of the 20th century and the 21st century have seen dynamic developments in the cultural scenario of Kerala. Events like the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), which began in 1996; the International Theatre Festival of Kerala (ITFoK), which started in 2008; and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, an international art event that kicked off in 2012, have built strong bridges connecting Kerala to the global cultural scene. All these events are now part of the international cultural calendars.



FESTIVALS

Festivals of Kerala A Mosaic of Culture, Tradition, and Spirituality



DR. APARANA AJITH
Freelance Writer

Kerala's vibrant festivals capture its rich cultural heritage, seamlessly merging ancient traditions with contemporary celebrations

In Kerala, a diverse range of festivals showcases the region's rich culture, tradition, and spirituality. The State offers celebrations ranging from the traditional Onam to the modern Kochi Biennale. These festivals transcend religious lines, highlighting unity in diversity.

Kerala, known for its unique geographical features, has a deep-rooted history and culture. Many of its festivals celebrate the state's origins and the diverse influences that have moulded its identity. Siddharth





Katragadda, an Indian-American writer, believes that the essence of a culture is mirrored in its festivals. Kerala, with its array of religious, cultural, and social celebrations, exemplifies this idea.

Onam, Kerala's iconic harvest festival, is celebrated with "pookalam" (floral patterns), feasts, dances like Kathakali, and snake boat races. The festival commemorates the return of the legendary King Mahabali and lasts for ten days. Onam's grand feast, the "Onasadya," features various traditional vegetarian dishes. Alongside, folk dances like Kaikottikali and Pulikali add vibrancy.

Vishu marks the Malayali New Year. The "Vishukkani" ritual, which involves arranging symbolic items, a mirror, and the golden blossom of "kanikonnaapoovu" in front of deities, is a highlight. Families reunite for feasts and exchange "Vishukaineetam" – a token amount believed to bring good fortune.

Thrissur Pooram, held in Thrissur, is famous for its grand processions, adorned elephants, and fireworks. Arattupuzha Pooram at the Sree Sastha Temple concludes with the "Arattu" ceremony, a ritualistic deity bath in the river. Beema Palli Uroos, at the Beemapalli Dargah Shareef, features processions and communal prayers.

Attukal Pongala in Thiruvananthapuram sees women preparing "Pongala" offerings to Goddess Bhagavathy. Chettikulangara Bharani, at the Chettikulangara Devi Temple, is known for the Kettukazhcha ritual and vibrant processions. Arthungal Perunnal is a Christian festival in Arthungal, focusing on St. Andrew, which attracts numerous pilgrims. Kottakkulangara Chamaya Vilakku in Kollam is distinctive for its procession, where men dress as women. Kottiyoor Festival at the Akkare Kottiyoor Temple is a pilgrimage centered around Lord Shiva.

Painkuni, a ten-day event at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram,

displays giant figures of the Pandavas. Nirannam Perunnal, celebrated at St Mary's Orthodox Syrian Church in Pathanamthitta, lasts 11 days and honors St Thomas with events like Kodiyettu and Perunnal Vilambara Rally. Vaikathashtami at Vaikom Mahadeva Temple in Kottayam spans 12 days with processions set against the backdrop of the Shiva temple. Aanayoottu of Vadakkumnathan Temple is a ritual where elephants are fed, highlighting Kerala's respect for these animals. Vettukadu Perunnal at the Madre de Deus Church in Vettukadu includes religious processions and feasts. Ettumanoor Ezhara Ponnana at the Mahadeva temple in Ettumanoor features a procession of elephants adorned in golden attire.

Theyyam is a dance form in which performers embody divine entities with costumes and makeup, especially popular in northern Kerala. Andalur Kavu Theyyam in Dharmadam village, Thalassery, depicts tales from the Ramayana. Padayani is a folk art form blending dance, music, and mask-wearing, usually associated with temple events.

Nehru Trophy Boat Race takes place annually in Punnamada Lake, Alappuzha district, showcasing the rowing of snake boats. Champions Boat League mirrors the excitement of snake boat races across Kerala, inspired by the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Kochi Biennale is a contemporary art festival in Kochi, presenting diverse artworks and installations, making the city an attraction for tourists and art enthusiasts.

The festivals of Kerala reflect its rich cultural heritage. They range from religious ceremonies and folk arts to contemporary events, together forming the essence of Kerala. These celebrations aren't just events but markers of tradition, spirituality, and unity that the state embodies. Each festival contributes to Kerala's identity, offering a blend of tradition and festivity for locals and foreigners.





The Musical Culture Of Kerala

If we turn our attention to the popular reception of classical music in Kerala, be it Carnatic or Hindustani, we see a promising picture



RAMESH GOPALAKRISHNAN

Music Critic

If we examine our musical culture on the basis of the rustic culture and community-living of our various tribal groups and Adivasi clans, we notice that more than a hundred musical forms have been in existence in our land from olden times. Most of them were organically related to their day-to-day life or their annual festivals and rituals. Paanan paattu, Pulluvanpaattu, sarpapaattu, villadichaanpaattu, vanchipaattu, velanpaattu, nandunipaattu, shasthaampaattu, braahmanipaattu, thottampaattu, thannaarapaattu, bhadrakaalipaattu, thiruvaathirapaattu, kathakali paattu, Krishnanaattapaattu, thullanpaattu, kanyaanpaattu, oppanapaattu, maargamkalipaattu, kurathipaattu, bhoothamkalipaattu, kalakalipaattu, mohiniyaattampaattu, sopanasaangeetham and others are integrally connected to the life and culture of the people of our land. Besides these, we have songs associated with ritualistic folk danceforms like theyyam, thira and padayani. These were musical genres that were the wellsprings of energy and sustenance to various tribal and social groups.

Although sopanasaangeetham is generally seen as the traditional musical genre



**The doyen of Sopana Sangeetham-
Njeralathu Rama Poduval**

of Kerala, one has to take into consideration the other musical forms too, if one wishes to unearth the real factors that triggered its emergence. The wealth of any region lies in the community that lives in that geographical space. Therefore, when a group of people give expression to their emotions and thoughts through the medium of songs, doesn't that become the indigenous music of the region? The answer to the question is an emphatic 'yes'. So, what about sopaanasangeetham?

It is a refined style of music, that is the result of a crystallization of melodies which underlay the various forms of folk music prevalent in Kerala. The folk forms of music were composed to venerate local gods. Therefore, the divinities honoured in sopaanasangeetham are their more sophisticated variants worshipped by the upper classes. It has been clearly demonstrated that the ragas and talas used in sopaanasangeetham carry a marked influence of the tunes and patterns of rhythms followed in folk music. Besides, there is another common link in the chain that binds the presentation formats of the two types of music. Folk songs give as much importance to the rhythm as to the tunes, or perhaps even more. In other words, the beat of the music and the song contribute equally to the overall effect of the presentation of folk songs. If we

examine the format of sopaanasangeetham, we can easily identify this peculiar feature. Kottipaadi seva [worship through rhythm and song], as it was originally called, was thus the parent ritual that led to the birth of sopaanasangeetham. When we speak of sopaanasangeetham of the modern age in Kerala, a name that deserves the first mention is Njeralathu Rama Poduval. Today, his tradition is taken forward by his son Njeralathu Harigovindan. Another artiste who has made a mark in this field is Ambalapuzha Vijayakumar.

If we turn our attention to the popular reception of classical music in Kerala, be it Carnatic or Hindustani, we see a promising picture. There is an informed audience that appreciates the nuances of these streams. If Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram enjoy an upper hand, historically speaking, in the field of Carnatic music, Kochi and Kozhikode outsmart the other districts of Kerala in appreciating Hindustani music. Among musicians, a name that stands on a par with the Trinity of Carnatic music is Swati Tirunal. The tradition of musicians that began with stalwarts like Irayimman Thambi, Kuttykunju Thankachi, Ennappaadam Venkatarama Bhagavtar, K. C. Kesava Pillai, Lakshmanan Pillai and Mahakavi Kuttamath has its latest





link in Thulasivanam. The modern history of

Kerala singers in the Carnatic tradition begins with Mundaya Rama Bhagavatar (1888-1957), the brother of Mundaya Venkatakrishna Bhagavatar who played a key role in modernizing Kathakali music. He was also known as Palakkad Rama Bhagavtar, and stood shoulder-to-shoulder with some of the outstanding Carnatic singers of Tamil Nadu. The next most illustrious member of this fraternity was Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavtar, who popularized Carnatic music and brought it down to the masses. The year 2023 has the unique distinction of being the birth centenary year of three famous musicians of Kerala – M. D. Ramanathan, Palakkad K. V. Narayana Swami and Puthukkad Krishna Murthy. Among the female singers in the Carnatic tradition in Kerala, Parashala Ponnammal is an unforgettable name, who became the first female singer to perform at the annual music concert held at the Navaratri mandapam in Thiruvananthapuram. K. Omanakutty is one of the foremost musicians and teachers of Carnatic music in Kerala today. Vaikom Vijayalakshmi, besides being famous for her exceptional skill in playing the rare Gayathri veena, is also a popular vocalist. A. K. Ravindranath is another immortal name in the history of classical music in Kerala. He authored a five-volume textbook on South Indian music for the benefit of Malayali students of music. The other giants in the field are Thrissur P. Radhakrishnan, a singer, expert in Hindustani music and researcher of folk arts, Mavelikkara R. Prabhakara Varma, a music teacher and scholar-historian of music, Neyyattinkara N. Vasudevan and Mangad K. Natesan who nourished the field of music in Kerala. Cherthala Gopalan Nair's contribution to music and thereby to the culture of Kerala – he set to music nearly 400 Malayalam keerthanas – will forever be remembered. Sreevalsan J. Menon, a famous Carnatic vocalist, is also famous as a music composer in the field of Malayalam cinema.



Swathy Thirunal



Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavtar



M.S. Baburaj



G. Devarajan

Although Hindustani music has been enjoying popular patronage in Kerala for ages, it was only recently that the state could catapult a singer of great repute to the national stage – Ramesh Narayanan. He is a Hindustani musician and music composer in the film world.

Film Music

If we scan the history of Malayalam film music, Neelakkuyil (1954) created a record of sorts with the composition of folk songs by P. Bhaskaran that were rendered in lilting folk tunes by K. Raghavan. Music composers like M. S. Baburaj, V. Dakshinamoorthy and G. Devarajan lent fresh energy to the genre and led it along other paths by infusing melodious tunes. While Baburaj breathed the tones and imaginative range of Hindustani ragas into poetic lines, V. Dakshinamoorthy draped Malayalam poetry over the intricate scaffolding of Carnatic music, and G. Devarajan blended the literary beauty of the lyrics with the emotional situations in the film to create certain gems that sent music lovers into a frenzy of delight. Those who followed them – Salil Chowdhary, M. S. Vishwanathan, M. B. Sreenivasan,

Among all of them, the one person who has attained an iconic status on a global scale is undoubtedly K. J. Yesudas whose extraordinary prowess has earned him the moniker “Gaana gandharvan” [demigod of music].



The Golden Voice of Kerala- K.J. Yesudas



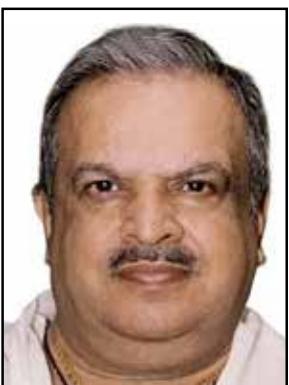
Sarojini



Vimala B. Varma



Janamma David



P. Jayachandran

M. K. Arjunan, M. G. Radhakrishnan, Shyam, K. J. Joy, A. T. Ummer, Jerry Amaldev, M. J. Johnson, Ravindran, S. P. Venkatesh, P. S. Vidyadharan, Bombay Ravi, Bernie-Ignatius – dripped honey into the hearts of sahridayas by intensifying the meanings and tropes of songs through their scores. Two female geniuses who joined this fold were Usha Khanna who debuted in Moodalmanju and P. Susheela Devi in Thakilukottamburam. The notable music composers of contemporary times are M. Jayachandran, Ouseppachan, Mohan Sitara, Vidyasagar, Bijibal, Kaithapram Damodaran Namboodiri, Jassie Gift, Kaithapram Vishwanathan, Ratheesh Vega, Deepak Dev, Gopi Sunder and Shan Rahman.

The history of female playback singing is no less rich, from Sarojini, Vimala B. Varma, P. Leela, Janamma David, Shanta P. Nair, A. P. Komala, K. Sulochana, Kozhikode Pushpa, P. Susheela Devi and B. Vasantha to P. Susheela, S. Janaki, Vani Jayaram, Madhuri (the last four of whom hailed from other states and dominated the 1980s). The arrival of K. S. Chithra introduced a new chapter into the history. Besides, there are Sujatha, Ambili, Jency, Lathika, Kalyani Menon, Salma George and Arundhati, followed by Swetha Mohan, Sithara Krishnakumar, Pushpavati, Reshma Satheesh, all of whom made Malayalam film music a native affair. By conquering the music worlds of other Indian states too, Chithra has made history of sorts.

The history of male playback singing is replete with giants like T. K. Govinda Rao, Sebastian Kunjukunju Bhagavathar, Pappukutty Bhagavathar, Augustin Joseph, A. M. Raja, P. B. Sreenivas, Kamukara Purushottaman, Mehboob, C. O. Anto, K. S. George, Kozhikode Abdul Khader, K. P. Udayabhanu, K. J. Yesudas, P. Jayachandran, K. P. Brahmanandan, Sreekanth, Ayiroor Sadashivan, G. Venugopal, M. G. Sree Kumar, Vijay Yesudas, Rakesh Brahmanandan, Madhu Balakrishnan and Vidhu Prathap. Among all of them, the one person who has attained an iconic status on a global scale is undoubtedly K. J. Yesudas whose extraordinary prowess has earned him the moniker "Gaana gandharvan" [demigod of music]. He is respected by every lyricist and every music director in Malayalam, Hindi and Tamil because of his uncanny ability to pitch their compositions at the perfect level. While Yesudas rode the waves like a cruise ship, P. Jayachandran, his contemporary, held his own with poise.

Having crossed the milestones of melodies and semi-classical compositions, Malayalam film songs of today have adopted a new style that is in sync with the visual power of modern cinema. This has helped Malayalam film music grow in stature and be recognized as an art form on the global arena.



Global Pillars of Hope and Care

Kerala's nurses stand as international symbols of dedication and compassion in healthcare



JOBY BABY
Freelance Writer

Doctors might be seen as the hands of God, but it's the nurses who stand as the comforting cloth that wraps and soothes us. These dedicated professionals tirelessly care for patients, attending to their every need day and night. Nurses embody qualities like sacrifice, patience, tolerance, and quick thinking. Remarkably, a significant number of India's nurses come from Kerala, one of its smallest states. The World Health Organisation highlighted that "India is a leading source of nurses globally." Many of these nurses from Kerala are part



of this global workforce. In fact, the WHO mentioned that nurses trained in Kerala are among the most significant groups of internationally educated nurses, second only to those from the Philippines.

Data from the Nurses Council of India reveals that out of 20 lakh registered nurses in India, around 15 lakh are from Kerala. The state can train up to 17,600 nurses every year. Research estimates that over 30% of these Kerala-trained nurses work in the UK or the USA, 15% in Australia, and 12% in the Middle East. The global community has embraced these nurses from Kerala because of their dedication and work ethic, which many believe stems from their cultural upbringing.

During the severe health challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses from Kerala found themselves at the forefront. However, the pandemic has intensified a worrying trend. It's notable that even amidst lockdowns, several flights transported Kerala nurses worldwide to care for COVID-19 patients.

The Chief Minister of Kerala, recognising their contribution, mentioned in a tweet that Kerala's most significant global contributions are love and care, further highlighting the state's role as a major supplier of nursing talent. In the UK, former British MP Anna Soubry recently commented on the exceptional skills of nurses from Kerala, saying, "...some of the best nurses that we learn from are from Kerala."

Nursing embodies care, service, and nourishment. Serving selflessly is a hallmark of nurses, resonating with the unconditional love of a mother. This gives patients a sense of assurance and confidence. During the pandemic, nurses shone like beacons of hope and compassion, earning them the title of heroes. Their genuine passion drives them to provide unparalleled care, with patient gratitude being their most cherished reward. Keralites view nursing as more than just a job—it's a noble calling. Going above and beyond for patients is part of their ethos, which might explain their global demand



Science, Technology and Society

Science is not just about discovering the secrets of nature and using them to create tools to improve our lives. It has also helped us to develop a better understanding of the world around us and our place in the universe.



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At first glance, the question of science's role in modern society seems almost trite. Generation after generation, students have confidently penned down essays on this very topic, articulating the vast influence of science on our contemporary world. After all, the evidence is palpable, omnipresent, and undisputed. Or is it?

The consensus often conflates science with technology. Our daily news feeds, brimming with headlines about the latest tech marvels, categorize these innovations under the umbrella of 'science'. But pause for a moment and consider the developing nations. They are launching satellites while grappling with fundamental challenges on terra firma. It is a stark reminder that understanding the line between science and technology is not just semantics; it's imperative.

There is no denying the profound interconnection between science and technology. They feed off each other in a beautifully choreographed dance. Every leap in scientific understanding can birth a technological marvel, and every technological hurdle can spark a new avenue of scientific exploration. But to truly appreciate their unique roles, one must delve deeper.

Science, in its purest form, is humanity's quest for knowledge. It seeks to comprehend the world around us, from the tiniest atom to the vastness of the cosmos. Through observation, experimentation, and theoretical discourse, science attempts to unravel the intricacies of nature. It grapples with the 'whys' and 'hows', building a tapestry of testable explanations and predictions.

Technology, conversely, is the practical child of science. It harnesses the knowledge borne from scientific discoveries and moulds it into tools and processes that address specific societal needs. Where science might ask, "Why does this phenomenon occur?", technology queries, "How can I use this understanding to benefit humanity?"

At its heart, technology is a manifestation of applied science. Even without humanity, the principles of science would remain immutable. But technology? It's birthed when an external force, such as humans, taps into these principles, converting them into tangible, beneficial applications. This harmonious interplay is what propels society forward, bridging the gap between understanding and application, between knowledge and progress.

The science in technology

In the modern world, the smartphone is perhaps the most conspicuous example of technology. It has a number of functional units, each of which relies on a

variety of scientific principles.

The central processing unit (CPU) is responsible for executing instructions from applications and the operating system. The operating system is a functional unit that manages the hardware and provides services for smartphone applications. Smartphones also need a device to store information and instructions, called memory. Whether it is a movie, an image, a piece of text, or a workable application, storage has to happen in the form of electricity. To encode this abstract information as tangible voltages and currents, a set of logical rules is required. This is where mathematics and logic come in. Voltage and current are also important concepts, which are taught in physics classes. Computer science classes teach students how to design these rules explicitly to suit a computing device like a smartphone.

What about the display? Smartphone screens are made up of an array of light sources, called pixels, that are lit up in a specific order, with a specific colour and brightness, to create the perception of an image being displayed. If it is a movie, this information has to change with time to give the perception of an evolving image. This requires knowledge of how light is emitted by materials, how lights of three specific wavelengths are combined to produce a specific colour, and how this choice has to be made. In addition, smartphone displays are touchscreens, so they must be able to collect feedback by sensing where you touch and deciphering what you mean by touching there. This requires an understanding of capacitance, which is the ability of surfaces to store charges, and how the amount of charge and the voltage it creates depends on the separation between the surfaces. Knowledge of materials that can respond to touch and transform that touch to a change in voltage of capacitance is also necessary.

These are just a few examples of the scientific principles that are employed in a working smartphone. Tens of thousands of such pieces of knowledge are stitched together to create this modern technology. Even an ordinary knife is a technology. It utilizes the connection between the amount of applied force, the area on which the force is applied, and the effect of that force. The translation of this simple textbook principle to a useful tool is what makes a knife a technology, although a comparatively simple one because the number of principles involved is small. The larger the number of principles involved, the more sophisticated the technology. Rocket science, for example, is notorious for its sophistication because of the huge number of principles that are simultaneously at work.

What is science

The word "science," in its modern sense, is



comparatively very young, maybe three centuries old. It is a more rigorous and refined form of what was once called natural philosophy. There is no single, universally accepted definition of science, but it is most commonly understood to be a method of knowing rather than a body of knowledge.

All organisms possess some form of knowledge. Imagine the first primitive organisms in the ancient oceans. They "knew" when to move towards a source of nutrition or away from a threat, not through conscious thought, but through simple chemical reactions. As life evolved and became more complex, so did the mechanisms for obtaining, storing, and using information. In animals, this process of acquiring information evolved into learning behaviors, instincts, and, in higher animals, conscious thought. For example, a bird might have an innate knowledge of how to build a nest, while a human learns to construct a shelter using tools and techniques passed down through generations. We humans possess the unique ability to share, record, and build upon

knowledge over successive generations.

Even for cognitively complex animals like humans, knowledge comes in different ways. Some knowledge is innate and imprinted in our genetics, such as the reflex reaction to pull your fingers away when you touch something very hot. Other ways of acquiring knowledge include intuition, experience, tradition, and authority. All of these contribute to the body of knowledge we possess. However, science is unique in its approach. It has an obsession with objectivity, which is both its strength and its weakness.

Objectivity is a strength because it can be independently verified by anyone, anytime. It is a weakness because it cannot claim to know everything. Objectivity is a result of the method science adopts to find answers to questions. Science relies on empirical evidence and logical reasoning, and rejects the domination of authority, majority opinion, or unquestionable scriptures. Science begins with observations, which generate questions. Instead of jumping to answers, science develops hypotheses, which are candidate answers to the question at hand. Each hypothesis must go through a rigorous testing process involving prediction, observation, and experimentation. Only the hypotheses that pass the testing process are considered to be answers, even if they are counterintuitive. Many of the scientific principles we have discovered are counterintuitive, which is why they are only as old as or younger than science. This is also why we have witnessed the technological revolution only during the last few centuries of human history, which is lakhs of years old.

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A society with a scientific aptitude is undoubtedly a better society, equipped with the immense power of knowledge. That is why science should be celebrated in the same way we celebrate art, culture, literature, and cinema.

What science tells us about ourselves

We now know that we are made up of living cells, which are in a sense life forms themselves. We know that most life on Earth is made up of single cells, and that cells are made up of many complex molecules that are fundamentally made up of a few kinds of atoms. The same atoms make up non-living matter as well, such as rocks, metals, Earth, and even stars throughout the universe. The atoms in a distant star and in our body are the same and obey the same set of physical laws, which we understand quite well.

We now know our place in this vast universe. We are one of millions of species that evolved on Earth, which is one of eight planets orbiting a star called the

Sun. The Sun is an average member of a hundred billion stars in a Galaxy called the Milky Way, which is just one average member of billions of galaxies in this universe.

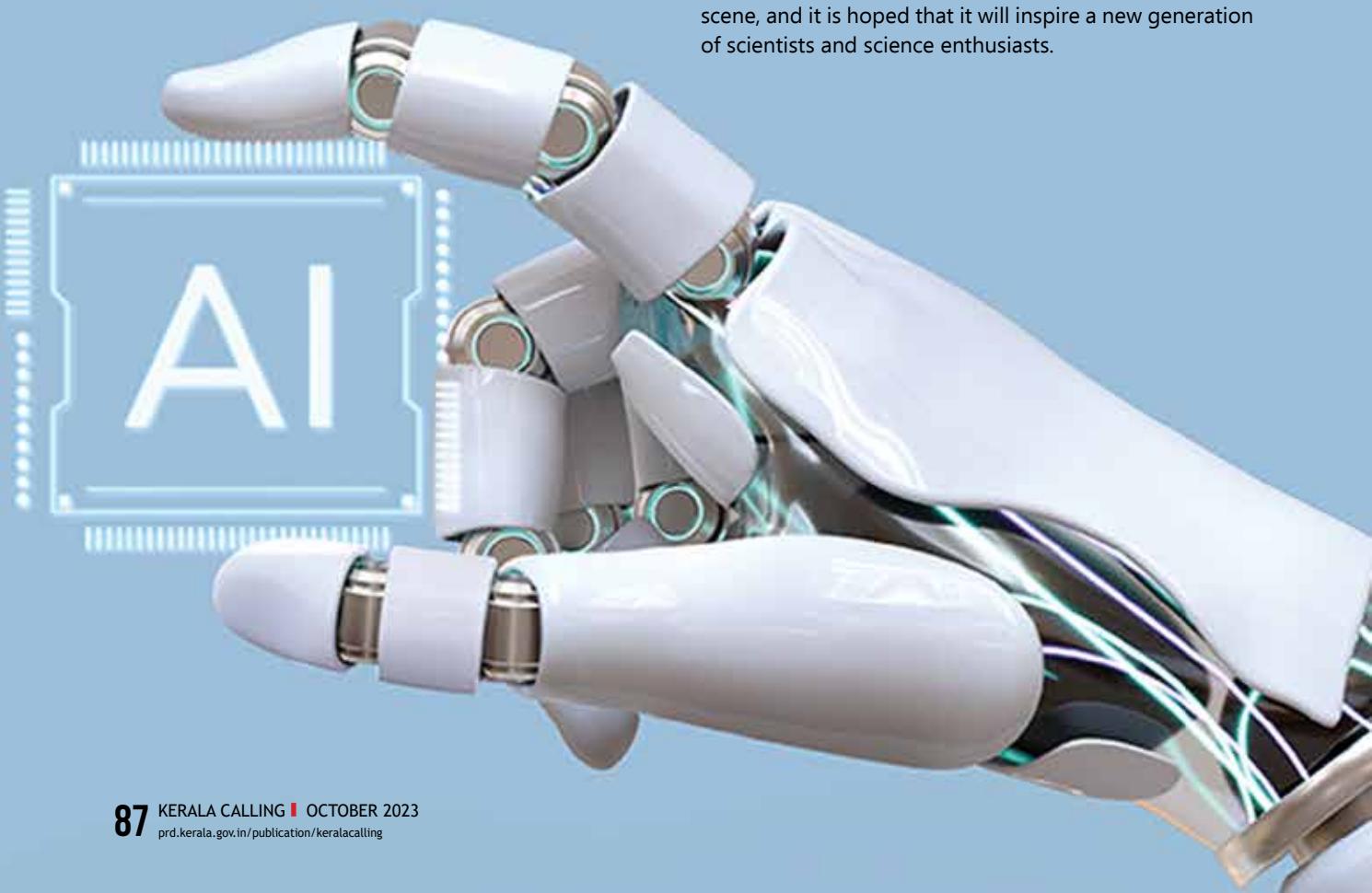
The realization that we have deciphered the governing rules that operate in every nook and corner of this universe, while being confined to this tiny speck in its vastness, is profound. It is a capability that we have built up only through science.

Why celebrate science

Science is often overshadowed by the dazzle of technology, but it is not a magical power possessed by a few chosen. It is a way of thought that is useful for everyone, giving us better judgment and a better worldview. A society with a scientific aptitude is undoubtedly a better society, equipped with the immense power of knowledge. That is why science should be celebrated in the same way we celebrate art, culture, literature, and cinema.

The Global Science Festival Kerala (GSFK) aims to do just that. It is a new initiative of the Government of Kerala, organized by the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology, and Environment (KSCSTE) and Amuseum Artscience. To be held in December 2023, GSFK will be the first of its kind in India, showcasing a unique blend of science and art and utilizing state-of-the-art technologies to better communicate science and its philosophy.

GSFK is a welcome addition to the Indian science scene, and it is hoped that it will inspire a new generation of scientists and science enthusiasts.





Kerala's Growing Startup World

Encouraging New Ideas and Business Growth

Kerala has a lively startup world, with 4,700 new businesses there. The government wants to encourage new ideas and business growth. The Startup Mission helps a lot in this. It began as a Technology Business Center at Technopark in 2002. In 2014, it became the main agency of the state government. It aims to grow an entrepreneurial spirit and shape new technology business people. Kerala is now a leader in this area in India, with 4,700 startups, 64 support centers, 450 idea centers, and a big space of 10 lakh square feet for business activities. Kerala was the first to include a startup policy in its state budget.

In 2019, a big Startup Complex was made in Kochi. It helps startups with new technologies, training, advice, and full support. Startups in Kerala are not just in the IT sector. They are also in electronics, making goods, and more. Kerala's startup world is unique in India. It connects schools, businesses, research places, and startups.

There are many ways to fund startups. They include Idea Grant, Production Grant, Scale-up Grant, Women Productization Grant, and Startup Research Grant. Startups can also get support from investors through different types of funding.

There are many programs like Hackathons, Climathons, and others that focus on different areas.

These programs pick the best ideas. The Big Demo Day lets startups show their products. The Startup Mission also organizes Huddle Global (a big startup event at the beach), Seeding Kerala (a meeting for investors), training for investors, programs for people from other countries, support initiatives, and a program called Fail Fast or Succeed. There is also a special project called Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centers (IEDCs) in 450 colleges to teach students about business.

The state government has more support for women in business. They have special events and programs for them. They also give information in the local languages. The government works with over 10 departments like education, police, sports, young people, and tourism to make startups stronger.

One great story is about Open Financial Technologies. It is a financial startup helped by the Kerala Startup Mission. It became the first big startup of its kind from Kerala. It is 100th in India's big startup list. The Startup Mission got many awards for its work in 2021-22. It was also the best in India's national rankings three times. It got the Chief Minister's Award for new ideas and good public work. It was also named the second-best in the world for science-based support.

The Startup Mission has a big role in helping the society grow. It tells young people in the state that starting a business is not just for rich people. It needs hard work, staying power, and a clear vision.





Kerala's Power-to-People Approach

A Unique Development Story



In 1996, Kerala did something unusual. The E. K. Nayanar government decided to give a big chunk – one-third – of the state's budget to local groups. The catch? These local bodies had the power to decide how to use the money. And just like that, Kerala put its development in the hands of its people.

What Changed?

This “people planning” move made a big splash. It changed how Kerala developed. By reducing the state’s control and giving more power to local groups, things started to improve. Schools got better, fewer people were poor, and more people had homes.

A Big Win for Women and Fairness

Kerala's way of doing things is not just popular; it's also very fair. Here is an exciting fact: these local groups in Kerala were the first to say, “Let's give 10% of our funds to projects for women.” This was a big step towards gender equality.

Helping Hands During Hard Times

Kerala has also faced challenges. Remember the 2018 floods? These local groups were front and center, helping out. They were quick in giving aid and helping people rebuild their lives.

Impressive Results

Because of this local focus, Kerala has some cool achievements. Places are clean, farming is eco-friendly, water is saved, and there's more homegrown food. Now, the aim is to keep this success going in the future.

In a Nutshell

Kerala has a great story to tell. By putting its people in the driver's seat, it has shown a new way to develop. Other places might want to take a page out of Kerala's book.



Kochi Water Metro The Water Way Wonder

Kochi Water Metro is a proud project of the state government that has brought a revolutionary change to the water transport sector in Kerala. It is the world's first electric-powered water metro. Through this project, the government has showcased another model of Kerala to the people of the world. Kochi Water Metro, which has attracted international attention, completed six months in October. In this short period, approximately 10 lakh people have traveled on the Kochi Water Metro.

This project, which is expected to lead the islands of Kochi towards development, has placed Kochi on the world tourism map. When the project is completed, 78 water metro boats will service 38 terminals on ten islands. The first phase of this service has commenced with 12 boats operating between High Court Junction-Vypin-Bolgatti Terminals and Vytila-Kakkanad Terminals. Vypin can be reached from the High Court Junction Terminal in less than 20 minutes without encountering any traffic jams, while Kakkanad can be reached within 25 minutes by water metro from Vytila.

The service from High Court Junction to South Chittoor will be launched soon, with preparations in the final stages. The construction of Fort Kochi, Mulavukad North, Willington Island, Kumbalam, Kadakkudy, and Paliyamthuruth terminals is also progressing rapidly. The Fort Kochi Terminal, one of the main terminals, is targeted to be completed by December. The tender process for the construction of the Mattancherry Terminal is also progressing rapidly.

The electric-hybrid boats of the Water Metro, which are revolutionizing public transport, have garnered

international attention. The Kochi Water Metro Boat has won the public transport boat category at Guzzi's Electric Boats Awards, an international award for electric boats. Kochi Water Metro has also received recognition in the 2023 Energy Leadership Award organized by the Economic Times, the Shiptech Award in the Maritime sector, and the International Project Management Association Award.

Terminals and boats are designed to be disabled-friendly, allowing wheelchair users to board the boats without assistance. The floating pontoons, which keep the boat at the same level during high and low tides, are a unique feature of the Kochi Water Metro. It operates in an environmentally friendly, non-polluting manner. Kochi Water Metro's AC boats provide a safe and cost-effective journey for the public, with a minimum ticket price of Rs. 20. Weekly and monthly passes are also available for frequent travelers, and the Kochi One Card can be used for travel on both Kochi Metro Rail and Kochi Water Metro.

The tourism potential of various islands can also be utilized through water metro terminals. The Kochi Water Metro has not only resolved the travel issues of the various islanders in Kochi but has also improved their quality of life by focusing on the tourism potential. The water metro terminals will alleviate the travel challenges of the residents of isolated islands that lack transport links to the city. The Kochi Water Metro project requires 1136.83 crores, with Rs. 908.76 crores being provided by the German funding agency KFW and the remaining amount by the state government.





Haritha Karma Sena to Cater Habitable, Nature-Friendly Places

The state government is taking the initiative to make the country clean and healthy. As small steps lead to revolutionary changes, the government is moving ahead with the support of Haritha Karma Sena, a Kudumbashree initiative, to create habitable, nature-friendly places.

Haritha Karma Sena is a system formed to solve the acute waste problem of the state in a decentralized manner. Haritha Karma Senas are working with the objective of ensuring employment and income through the collection and treatment of waste materials, thereby finding a solution to the waste problem faced by Kerala to some extent. Haritha Karma Senas are playing a huge role in achieving cleanliness in the state as part of the 'MalinyamukthamNavakeralam' campaign.

Activities related to Haritha Karma Sena are carried out under the joint guidance and cooperation of various development missions, local self-government bodies, and various government private agencies in the state. Haritha Karma Sena was founded on the idea of turning waste into income. According to the situation of the state, waste collection and disposal will be decentralized, with revenue generated from them.

Currently, 32,440 Haritha Karma Senas under Kudumbashree are working for a Garbage-Free Kerala

in collaboration with Local Self-Governments, Suchitwa Mission, the Health Department, and Clean Kerala Company. The social benefits and environmental impact of Haritha Karma Sena are noteworthy.

This group of women is making significant social progress by working at the forefront in collecting and processing the garbage that is dumped in water bodies and on the streets, causing environmental waste problems. Haritha Karma Senas have collected 11,000 metric tonnes of sorted plastic and 51,000 metric tonnes of other non-organic waste in the last financial year and handed it over to the Clean Kerala Company.

Haritha Kerala Mission, which works with the objectives of water, cleanliness, and yield, Suchitwa Mission, which provides technical assistance for sanitation activities, Kudumbashree, which takes up poverty alleviation and women empowerment as its main theme, Clean Kerala Company, which works to ensure the scientific treatment of waste, and Employment Guarantee Mission, which helps in the construction of source waste treatment facilities. Haritha Karma Senas are run by local self-government bodies with the combined help of the regulatory authority, the Kerala State Pollution Control Board.



Haritha Keralam Kerala's Green Vision

Kerala has always been synonymous with lush green landscapes, and the HarithaKeralam Mission, initiated in 2016 by the Kerala government, is a testament to the state's commitment to preserving its natural treasures.

Achievements so Far: Within a short span, the mission has registered several accomplishments. Notably, more than half of Kerala's local self-governments have achieved sanitation status. Furthermore, over 15,000 government offices have adopted eco-friendly practices, and an impressive 95% of local bodies have set up material collection centers, managed by a workforce of 33,000 green workers. As a result, cultivation has made a triumphant return to over 5,200 acres of land.

Mission at a Glance: HarithaKeralam is one of the four significant missions rolled out by the state government, aimed at shaping a revitalized Kerala. The mission's mantra, "Water, Cleanliness, and Yield," sums up its primary objectives: water conservation, sanitation, and promoting the production of safe food.

Three Pillars of Success: Underpinning the HarithaKeralam Mission are three sub-missions: Water Conservation, Sanitation and Waste Management, and Agriculture. Local self-government bodies oversee their smooth execution, ensuring an integrated approach that involves various departments.

Impact Beyond Numbers: While the tangible results, such as improved soil, air, and water quality, are evident, the mission has also succeeded in fostering intellectual growth and raising environmental

awareness among citizens.

Flagship Initiatives: The mission's innovative programs, like Freedom from Garbage, Green Festival, Clean House Campaigns, and Fallow-Free Village, are setting benchmarks in waste management and water conservation. Munnar's "VazhikattanVagamon" showcases how tourism can be harmonized with green principles. The digital "Harithamithram" app ensures traceability of waste from origin to disposal, while river rejuvenation projects are revitalizing Kerala's iconic waterways.

A Surge in Agriculture: With the support of the Department of Agriculture and local agencies, agricultural initiatives are flourishing. Barren lands are now productive, organic vegetable cultivation is on the rise, and innovative programs like "Pachathuruthu Project" combat climate challenges. Kerala's ITIs are evolving into green campuses, and temple grounds are blooming under the Devaharitam project.

A Unified Vision: Under Chief Minister Pinarayi's leadership, the second phase of the Nava Keralam action plan integrates the four missions launched during his first term. Together with the Rebuild Kerala Initiative, this collective endeavour promises a brighter, greener, and more sustainable future for Kerala.

In the heart of Kerala's progress lies its dedication to harmony with nature. Through HarithaKeralam, the state is not just preserving its legacy but also crafting a green blueprint for the future.



LIFE Mission fulfilling the Dreams

The LIFE Mission, a comprehensive housing scheme, is a vital component of the Nava Kerala Action Plan designed to create Nava Keralam. The LIFE Mission has developed and implemented unique solutions to the multifaceted problems faced by the housing sector in Kerala. It is a significant project that takes over housing constructions started through various departmental projects of the state government, as well as those left unfinished, to ensure livelihood. It is a collaborative effort led by local self-government bodies and the government. Since the subsidy in the central housing schemes is insufficient, the local self-government bodies and the state government work together to cover the remaining costs and provide financing at the state rate without differentiation. To date, 4,75,291 beneficiaries have contracted with the local self-government bodies through the LIFE Mission.

The activities of the LIFE Mission are grounded in the belief that there should be suitable places to protect the elderly, sick, and suffering families, as well as to nurture the next generation as responsible citizens with social consciousness. Moreover, it includes empowerment processes that enable individuals to earn their own livelihood through self-employment, participate with dignity in social processes, and benefit from all social welfare schemes, including financial services.

The LIFE Mission activities are being implemented in phases. In the first phase, the goal was to commence construction of houses through various government schemes and complete those that had stalled. During this phase, 54,116 houses where construction had halted were

identified and subsequently completed. In the second phase, the rehabilitation of homeless people with land is being implemented. Thus far, 2,77,777 families have received safe houses. Meanwhile, 1,20,579 beneficiaries are at various stages of housing construction. In the third phase, the Life Project aims to provide housing to the landless and houseless. Of these, 34,488 eligible beneficiaries have become landowners by acquiring land either independently or through the department. As a result, 23,612 beneficiaries have completed the construction of houses by receiving financial assistance for the construction of houses on their land.

Making construction materials available at low cost to the beneficiaries has made LIFE Mission activities more popular. Paint, cement, electrical equipment, wiring equipment, sanitary equipment, water tanks, etc., are offered to the beneficiaries at reduced rates. A total of 24.55 acres of land has been provided to the Life Mission through the 'ManasodithiriMannu' campaign, which was launched to find land for the resettlement of landless homeless beneficiaries. The Chittilapilly Foundation has signed an MoU with the government to provide financial assistance of Rs 25 crore at a maximum rate of Rs 2.5 lakh per family to purchase land for 1000 landless homeless families. Accordingly, the registration process for 450 beneficiaries has been completed.

LIFE beneficiaries have been included in the 'Green Energy Income Scheme' of the state government agency, Anert. The electricity generated in the plants can be entirely used in homes, and any excess electricity can be supplied to KSEB to earn income. Induction stoves are also available for houses that install solar power plants.





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