

KERALA CALLING

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THE HONOUR OF BEING A MALAYALI



In spite of the distances and cultural differences between the countries they live in, the Malayali diasporic groups across the world are bound by a single, invisible cord - a sense of pride in being Malayalis.

To believe in fearless minds
and tireless feet,
to brave the raging seas every day
and walk side by side
with hearts that beat in time
with the waves.

HUMAN *by* NATURE





Ecstatic Homecoming

*"I knew I would have to go home, because I belonged to them.
If I did not return, they would come to seek me."*

— **Abdulrazak Gurnah** (*Memory of Departure*)

As Nobel-laureate Gurnah writes in *Memory of Departure*, those who have left home will have to go home or they will come seeking them for they belong to them.

Loka Kerala Sabha, in a way, is Kerala 'seeking its people' in different corners of the world.

It is the spirit of Loka Kerala Sabha. It brings home those who have left the homeland, and show them that they are an integral part of the home they have left behind.

LKS, in its third edition, is an ambitious initiative by the government of Kerala to show the Non-Resident Keralites that they matter to the people of Kerala. That, they belong to the land and the people.

Unlike most other states in India, Kerala has had many forms of exchanges with people of other countries and lands for many, many centuries. Our food habits, cultural and political milieu have been conditioned by these long years of foreign interaction and exchange. When Malayalis travel the globe and settle even in the remotest of places, they always carry a piece of Kerala in their heart.

When they come to Loka Kerala Sabha, they come with ideas and plans of how to make their homeland better in infrastructure and living conditions.

Over the years, the government of Kerala has taken up a number of welfare projects for those who have come back home. And, since the profile of those who seek jobs overseas has changed, NORKA and the government now offer various skill development programmes to equip them. The government is also getting into agreements with overseas countries to make sure NRKs are taken good care of.

In his Nobel acceptance speech, V.S. Naipaul said: "People are always on the move." Yes, people travel across borders for various reasons—fleeing the war at home, seeking better life, jobs, etc.

Malayalis are always on the move, to even the farthest corner of the world. No matter where they are, and for long they are away, 'they belong to us', and we go seeking them.

That's why there is Loka Kerala Sabha.

S. Harikishore IAS

Editor



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The third edition of the LKS: Imparting new Energy and Vision

Pinarayi Vijayan

10 Assimilating the Quintessence of Kerala

M.B. Rajesh



LKS is a democratic body that ensures the representation of Malayalis all over the world.

P. Sreeramakrishnan

14 A reflection on the past two Loka Kerala Sabhas

C.V. Rappai



Her journey to strange lands

Resmi Renchen

20

God's Own Diaspora

Prof. Meena T Pillai

26

COVID Time:
Kerala's nurses Taking
care of the world

Joby Baby

28

"Please don't leave
me, I am afraid, I will
die", Memoir of a staff
nurse at NHS

Rajitha Prakasini

34

A Golden opportunity
for Malayalis

38

A Searing Tale of Lust,
Loneliness and Lies

Abhayan Varghese

42

Around the World in
Solo Voyage

Abhilash Tomy

24

Writing is much easier
when you are abroad: Jaishree Misra

Dr. Aparna Ajith

30

Strong Malayali link to
Qatar World Cup 2022

D. Ravi Kumar

36

Migration and Cultural
Remittance: The Making of
'Gulf' in Kerala

K.M. Seethi

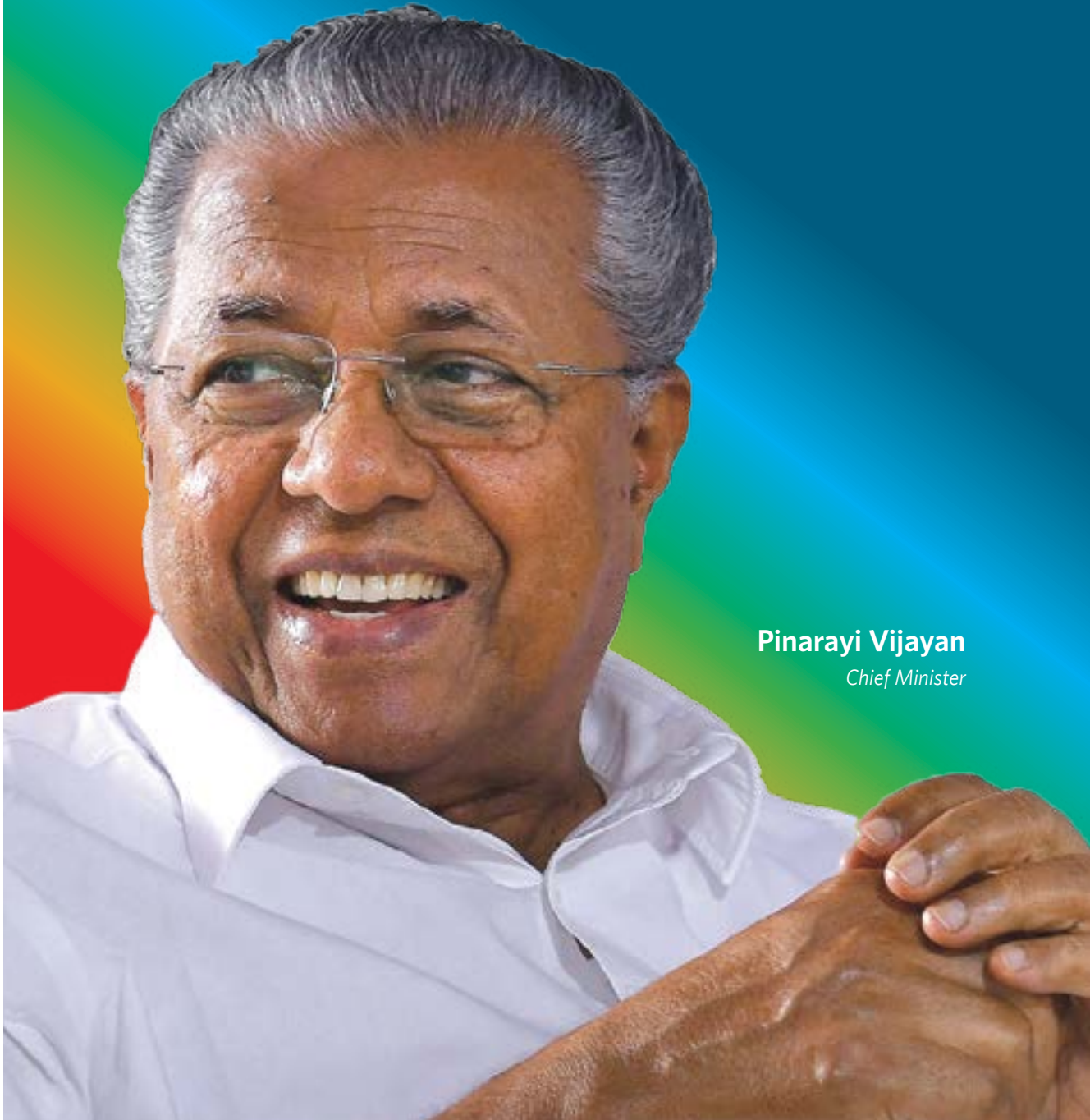
44

Back with a Bang

CONTENTS



The third edition of the LKS: Imparting new Energy and Vision



Pinarayi Vijayan

Chief Minister

The third edition of the Loka Kerala Sabha (LKS), one of the most ambitious efforts of the LDF Government to promote the welfare and progress of the Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs), will be held on 17 and 18 June. The previous two editions held in 2018 and 2019 were enormously successful in terms of participation and outcome. LKS has played an important role in increasing the Government's engagement with the Malayali diaspora and also helped to promote Kerala's cultural initiatives among its pravasis. Both previous editions proposed innovative ideas for the welfare and development of Malayali pravasis, many of which are in various stages of implementation.

The most important objective of the Loka Kerala Sabha is to create an inclusive democratic space for the NRKs and provide them with an important role in the formulation of policies concerning the development of their home

State. To accomplish it, seven sector-specific Standing Committees were constituted to develop and execute the ideas that emerged in the LKS. The LKS Secretariat reviewed the recommendations of the Standing Committees and categorised them into ten key areas including investment, welfare, skill development and culture. Concrete steps have been taken in most of the suggestions included in those key areas.

To enhance investment, we have founded the Overseas Keralites Investment and Holding Limited, and formed an NRI Construction Company as its subsidiary. The State Government will hold 26% of the company's shares, while NRKs hold 74%. The NRI Co-operative Society has also started functioning. We have established an NRK Women Cell in the NORKA Roots to facilitate the emigration of women, provide awareness, and address their grievances. An International Migration Centre has been set up in the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Loka Malayalam, a journal for NRKs has begun publication. The Global Kerala Cultural Festival has been launched so that NRKs can connect culturally and showcase their talents.

The COVID-19 pandemic truly displayed how important the LKS platform is in terms of ensuring the wellbeing of Malayali pravasis. The LKS played a vital role in providing support and care to the NRKs during the initial phase of the pandemic. With the help of the LKS, NORKA set up Help Desks in 18 countries including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the USA, the UK, Zambia, Germany, Botswana, Norway, Ireland and Canada.

The LDF Government has always taken immense care to ensure the welfare of our pravasi community. Santhwana Scheme is one such programme which proves the Government's commitment to their welfare. It provides one-time assistance for marriage, medical treatment, and purchase of equipment for differently-abled persons among NRKs whose annual income is below Rs. 1,00,000. Santhwana also gives financial assistance to the NRKs' families at the time of their death. COVID-19 deaths have also been included under the purview of the scheme. Through this scheme, Rs. 91.50 crore has been disbursed to more than 15,575 beneficiaries over the past 6 years.

We have taken immense care in ensuring the livelihood and welfare of the returned migrants. NORKA Department Project for Returned Emigrants (NDPREM) helps returned migrants who have spent at least two years working abroad, with a rehabilitation package which includes subsidies for starting enterprises. The limit of the loan amount is Rs. 30 lakh. 16 banks have partnered in this project and the Centre for Management Development gives technical support. From 2016 onwards, Rs. 50.92 Cr has been disbursed to 3,175 beneficiaries.

We aim to empower our youth with quality skill sets which would make them attractive in the emerging employment opportunities in developed countries. Accordingly, we are organising rigorous skill development programmes through various government institutions. The Information and Communication Technology Academy of Kerala offers ICT skill development programmes. The Nursing Institute for Career Enhancement trains nurses to pass the licensing examinations in various countries and the State Government meets 75% of the course expenses. Through the Triple Win project, Malayali nurses are being recruited to Germany. We are also entering



into agreements with Japan, Korea and the Netherlands to enhance job recruitment from the State.

NORKA's job portal unveils a lot of opportunities for skilled youth who seek jobs abroad. It connects them with reliable employers and helps them to find secure employment. NORKA has been selected by the Ministry of External Affairs as the Nodal Agency for Kerala to conduct recruitment to Japan. It is important that along with providing jobs, our pravasis' children are provided with good education. Education of the children of economically weak pravasis is being taken care of by the State Government. NORKA's Director's Scholarship scheme initiated in 2019-20 provided scholarships to more than 175 students.

Pravasi Dividend scheme, which was introduced in 2019 through the NRK Welfare Board, is an ambitious project that links NRKs with Kerala's development. Along with ensuring financial benefits for the NRKs and returned migrants, it also provides resources for the infrastructure development of the State. It offers long-term options for investment between Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 51 lakh. A ten per cent dividend on the first three years is added to the deposit and a monthly dividend is made available to the investors. Another important initiative is NORKA Business Facilitation Centre which delivers extensive support to NRKs and returned migrants to find viable investment opportunities in Kerala. Since its inception in 2019, NORKA Business Facilitation

Centre has helped more than 30 enterprises in getting approximately Rs.110 crore and generated 750 jobs.

Getting prompt and proper legal service has always been a major hurdle for pravasis. To solve this issue, we have set up the Pravasi Legal Aid Cell. It offers legal support to Malayalis who are imprisoned in foreign countries for minor or petty offences. Such issues happen mainly due to the lack of understanding of the law of the land. We have engaged 11 legal consultants in six GCC countries as part of this programme. So far, we have been able to solve more than 90 per cent of the cases received. To further the assistance to NRKs, a 24x7 toll-free helpline has also been set



up. This service provides them with the appropriate information and ensures grievance redressal. It can be accessed through various communication methods including live chat, email, call and SMS. In the last two years, more than 3 lakh NRKs from across 31 countries have used this service.

Subsequent to the onset of COVID-19, it has been estimated that more than 7 lakh pravasis have returned and of these, more than 4.5 lakh had lost their jobs. Considering the situation, in addition to setting up helpdesks in other countries, Kerala provided financial assistance to the returned emigrants. An amount of Rs. 5,000 was disbursed as immediate relief. The returned emigrants who tested positive for COVID-19

were provided Rs. 10,000. We even intervened in bringing back NRKs during the lockdown period. We also sent medicines abroad at a discount of 25 % and arranged facilities for online consultations with doctors.

NORKA Roots has launched a 24x7 emergency ambulance service for NRKs who are ill or whose remains need to be transported back to Kerala. More than 700 beneficiaries have availed this facility so far. An Emergency Repatriation Fund has also been set up. It is used to reimburse the expenses associated with evacuating NRKs from countries experiencing civil unrest or natural disasters. The Government of Kerala even made timely interventions to ensure the safe return of our students and others held up in Ukraine. All those evacuated were provided with free transportation from various Indian cities to their homes in Kerala.

There are many more initiatives that reflect our commitment to the welfare and progress of the NRK community. Ours is a comprehensive policy that touches all aspects of their lives. At the same time, it is crucial that Kerala makes use of NRKs' full potential and experience, if we are to build Kerala anew, i.e., realise a Navakeralam. The Loka Kerala Sabha is the best platform to envisage and implement concrete plans in that direction. I wish the third edition of the Loka Kerala Sabha would be fruitful in achieving this important mission of ours. ■



M.B. Rajesh

Speaker, Kerala Legislative Assembly

Assimilating the Quintessence of Kerala

It is a moment of honour that we are conducting the third Loka Kerala Sabha and Global Cultural Festival. The Loka Kerala Sabha is a global platform for Keralites residing abroad, other Indian States, centrally administered areas and also in Kerala.

All over the world there is an increase in migrants and pravasis. In reality it is more than the increase of global population. India has the largest number of migrant labourers in the world. Obviously, India gets a towering amount of pravasi remittance, when compared to rest of the world.

The Loka Kerala Sabha is a glorious chapter in the democratisation of Kerala society. Our people are brave to venture out into unknown lands amidst different language and culture. Their struggle to survive in foreign lands coupled with the ability to



put up best performance has earned good will among foreign countries. The skill and honesty showcased by Keralites have made them the most sought-after workforce all over the world. Keralites have made their significant identity in most of the countries they landed. The Loka Kerala Sabha is an answer to the call for a common democratic platform for Keralites and Kerala culture all over the world. It is hardly surprising that Kerala society is not solely defined by the number of Keralites residing in our state. Indeed, it is the Keralites residing in other Indian States and those that migrated to the rest of the world that elucidate ourselves.

Apart from harnessing the financial sovereignty of the pravasis, it is the duty of our state to involve pravasis as think tanks, by utilising their experience in

foreign lands, their struggle amidst foreign language, food and living conditions and thereby successfully establishing a strong foothold in these lands. This expertise can equip them to contribute immeasurably towards the betterment of Kerala in particular and India in general. Loka Kerala Sabha is not only a conclave to share their job skills and research experiences in numerous spheres like science and technology, administration and education. It is also a forum to bind expatriates with our homeland.

I hope that solemn efforts will be taken to rehabilitate Pravasis who return to Kerala, after their long stint in foreign lands. Assurance is important for their financial investment. It should be ascertained that their monetary investments will not be depreciated or lost. These financial investments are the sweat and tears of our brothers who gave up the comforts of their family and motherland, in order to build better lives for their beloved. The financial support and creative instructions contributed by Pravasis has been instrumental in helping Kerala overcome the worst flood of the century.

The Loka Kerala Sabha endeavours to connect Malayalis worldwide and to introduce measures to protect our language and culture. Inevitably the necessity to associate under the spirit of being Malayali is expected. Reaching out to one another with love and care helps us overcome hard times and share happy days. The quintessence of being a Malayali and to keep Malayalam alive and vibrant among Malayalis all over the world underscores Loka Kerala Sabha. June 2022 will witness the third Loka Kerala Sabha and Global Cultural Festival. I wish this congregation all success. ■



P. Sreeramakrishnan
Resident Vice Chairman, NORKA Roots

LKS is a democratic body that ensures the representation of Malayalis all over the world.

The meaning of Democracy reigns a deeper meaning when it is taken to newer levels of understanding. The Loka Kerala Sabha was one such initiative that took democratic organisation into a new sphere. Kerala having paved ways into the new world with its enigmatic models of development in healthcare, infrastructure and much more, has contributed a democratic organisational body to the world democracy.

Kerala is a state that has developed and is maintained by its community of innumerable non-residents. A state with a thick density of pravasis or non-resident working community! Hence it is the duty and responsibility of the state to undertake developmental projects that contribute to the betterment and welfare of the community that sustains our state.



The organisation was formed as a noble initiative to represent all the Keralites across the world

Realising the concept of Navakerala

K-FON is one of the most innovative projects that is being executed as part of the Navakerala mission. We are living in a world where internet defines the technological advancements and development of a country. Internet has its fair share in the globalisation of the concept of communication and moreover bringing the world closer together. Kerala is on its way to close the digital divide that separates us within ourselves. K-FON is a major step towards realising this dream.

NORKA is transforming itself into a digital global platform where all the issues of migration have a solution.

we are in search of new paths in the field of sanitation and hygiene. We can execute plans similar to those of the Netherlands in order to conserve, preserve and adequately utilise our 44 rivers effectively. Malayalis have become a brand that is preferred world over for their talents skills and exceptional abilities to adapt to any corner of the world. We can proudly say that there is not a corner of the world where a Malayali hasn't set foot upon. Be it Europe, America, Africa, the Middle East or anywhere in the world, the people of Kerala have established themselves as a highly useful and efficient brand of work force. The youth of the state are incorporating means to gain permanent residence in countries where they can study and work together. The purpose and nature of migration is changing for the better, we can be sure if that.

When the Loka Kerala Sabha was formed, it faced numerous challenges, especially rumours that the organisation was formed to promote the rich and the well-off investors interested in the state. But on the contrary, the organisation was formed as a noble initiative to represent all the Keralites across the world. The democratic initiative aimed to contribute and value the contributions of the non-resident communities and paved way as a model to the world democracy, again!

The talents, skills and perseverance of Keralites across the world gets its rightful appreciation from a state that has grown to its potential from the efforts of these people. There arose numerous questions on why the Loka Kerala Sabha was formed. And the answer to that question is quite simple. It is a platform of reassurance. Wherever in the world you are, whichever part of the world you are labouring and struggling in, the state wants you to know that your issues are valid and that you are represented in the right manner. You have rights and those rights are meant to be protected. The Loka Kerala Sabha is an initiative that proves this intension to the world. It is a platform that provides the rightful opportunity of representation of a community that has laboured its way to better the state and nation.

Kerala is rising in its goal to establish a common ground for all Malayalis to be represented equally regardless of geographical borders and boundaries. The Loka Kerala Sabha is a global unification platform that contributes to the need for representation of a well-deserved community. When the state receives the presence, cooperation and contributions from a community that gives without expecting anything back, it is but a moral responsibility to give them back in the form of their rights.

Global Digital Platform

Even though all the decisions that were taken in the first two conferences in the seven zones could not be executed, a lot of them could be implemented. Rising stronger in the face of adversities faced by migrants and to address the issues of the global Malayali community is what NORKA aims to put forth. The institution has already come miles in its execution of integrating global immigration and collecting details of all the expatriates with the aim of availing their information in the fingertips for all future endeavours. NORKA is transforming itself into a digital global platform where all the issues of migration have a solution. When the digital platform is realised, it will have the capability and capacity to manage any all the information regarding Malayalis across the world. ■



C.V. Rappai
Director, NORKA Roots

A reflection on the past two Loka Kerala Sabhas

The people of the state started crossing the oceans several decades ago. Today, Keralites are working in every corner of the world, including the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. But it's migration to the Gulf, after the discovery of oil, that has changed the face of the state. This migration wasn't an entirely new phenomenon. Kerala enjoyed excellent relations with the Gulf states long before the discovery of oil, and this relation was centred on trade, as Arabs travelled to Kerala on dhows to buy spices and wood and other essential commodities.

The migration to the Gulf accelerated in the 1970s. In the past few decades, foreign exchange remittances from Keralites working in the Gulf have been the main fuel for the state's economy. Around 65 per cent of Keralites working abroad are working in the Gulf countries - in unskilled, semi-skilled and



It was a unique assembly and a first of its kind conference to be held in a state that can be emulated by other states. Many discussions were held and decisions taken at the first Loka Kerala Sabha.

skilled sectors across the six Gulf countries. Compared to NRIs working in Western countries, Indians in the Gulf are more attached to their motherland because they don't get citizenship there unlike Indians in Western countries. This means NRKs in the Gulf are dependent on the Government of Kerala for their welfare and social security when they return to the state.

The government of Kerala, led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, has initiated several programmes for the welfare of NRKs. The Lok Kerala Sabha (LKS) is an important initiative in this regard as it brings together Keralites spread across the world on a single platform to meet, interact and share ideas for their welfare and participation in governance. The first Lok Kerala Sabha was held in January 2018, which was hailed as a historic convergence of people and ideas. The meeting discussed the problems and concerns of Malayali migrants and explored possibilities and discussed solutions. The first LKS was a huge success on many fronts. Keralites from all continents such as Asia, Africa, America, Europe and Australia met and exchanged their thoughts and ideas.

It was a historical forum for select members of the Malayali diaspora along with 140 members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and all Parliament Members (MPs) from the state. The meeting was held in



the Assembly Complex under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, with the Opposition leader as the Vice-Chairman and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly as the moderator and they listened to all pravasis assembled there.

It was a unique assembly and a first of its kind conference to be held in a state that can be emulated by other states. Many discussions were held and decisions taken at the first Loka Kerala Sabha. Seven standing committees were formed on various subjects and this writer was the chairman of a committee on Qualitative Migration, which was formed to study migration, its future, concerns and challenges and submit suggestions and proposals to the government to improve the condition of migrants. The government has accepted many suggestions from the seven

However, during the pandemic years, NORKA Department, NORKA Roots, and Kerala Pravasi Welfare Board joined hands for the first time in two decades of their history to provide exemplary and remarkable support to expatriates affected by the pandemic in various parts of the world, under the guidance of the Chief Minister.

committees and started implementing them, one after the other, on a priority basis. In 2018 and 2019, Kerala was fatally affected by natural disasters such as floods and landslides which destroyed our ecosystem and resulted in the disruption of the implementation of many ambitious development programmes. But the Malayali diaspora stood solidly behind the Chief Minister and contributed massively through various platforms for the reconstruction of the affected areas and rehabilitation of victims.

Despite adverse circumstances, the second Loka Kerala Sabha was



convened in January 2020 and the member representations increased to 65 countries. The deliberations started by reviewing the decisions taken at the first Sabha, its implementation, and the follow-up process. A major issue discussed at this meeting was, how to improve our higher education system as the nature and quality of migration were changing, with new opportunities for migration getting more focused on the digital and information technology sector. It was highlighted that our candidates needed special skills to get jobs in these sectors and compete with candidates from other countries. Currently, Keralites wishing to migrate are facing so many challenges. Unfortunately, after the second LKS, our activities were hampered by COVID-19 which crippled the world from March 2020. However, during the

pandemic years, NORKA Department, NORKA Roots, and Kerala Pravasi Welfare Board joined hands for the first time in two decades of their history to provide exemplary and remarkable support to expatriates affected by the pandemic in various parts of the world, under the guidance of the Chief Minister. It was an operation of unprecedented proportions, carried out for the first time because we haven't faced a similar situation before. We worked for the well-being and rehabilitation of Pravasi returnees and helped those who wanted to return to their workplaces.

Further, NORKA Roots enhanced its involvement in the recruitment to various countries to eliminate corruption and prevent the exploitation of job aspirants by middlemen and thus protect the rights of both employees and employers. NORKA Roots has especially been successful in its mission of cleaning up the recruitment process in the healthcare sector, especially because this is one sector where middlemen were exploiting hapless healthcare workers, especially nurses. With all these constructive programs, every pravasi has enjoyed the protection and care of NORKA Roots and Kerala Pravasi Welfare Board, functioning under the government for the past five years. Today, NORKA has become an inevitable part of every Pravasi's life, regardless of their location, and whether they are working abroad or have settled back in the state.

We will never rest on the laurels of our success and will continue to work hard for the welfare of Pravasi. NORKA has several projects and schemes awaiting implementation including medical insurance coverage. Currently, NORKA Roots is providing financial support to low-income group Pravasi returnees and their families directly for prolonged treatment. ■



Resmi Renchen
Freelance Journalist, UAE

Her journey to strange lands

Women have participated alongside men since the earliest days of Indian immigration history. However, their migration to the Gulf countries has been strong since the 1980s. They were mostly employed in the unskilled labour sector to cope with the rising economic inequality.

Nurses from the Christian community in Kerala have been migrating to various cities in Europe since the 1960s. Subsequent advances in Kerala's education sector, which opened up more opportunities for educated men and women in other lands, led to an increase in women's migration to Europe and the Gulf countries.

Gradually, the participation of women in the diverse sectors of IT, healthcare, education, and business increased significantly. A large section of women who were denied equal justice on many issues including the right to higher education, employment, and freedom of movement are still employed in our



countries for business opportunities. The modern woman has the strength to respond and fight without compromising on the gender stereotypes that they faced over the years in the workplace, the wage system, or in the hierarchy. Hence, women today do not underestimate their efforts and achievements but progress further with hard work and willpower.

Indian Women today have marked their stance in the Gulf countries and abroad in various fields, as opposed to the traditional practices of being in the shadow of their male companions. Jumbo Group Chairman Vidhya Chhabriya, Aster DM Health Care Deputy Managing Director Alisha Moopen, and World Star Holdings Managing Director Haseena Nishad are some of the leading women in the world who have written distinct success stories.

Many countries have not yet considered domestic work as a separate area of employment. Due to the perception that domestic work is a job reserved exclusively for women, they face violence, exploitation, and human rights violations in this sector. Their lives were turned into hell with deception, and physical and mental abuse from fraud recruiting agencies and employers, without wages, food, or even shelter. A good portion of those who fall into this trap and immigrate illegally are domestic workers.

As per the recommendations of the National Commission for Women, the Government of India has come up with a solution by setting an age limit for women seeking employment abroad who are in the category of those requiring emigration clearance.

In general, these occupations are selected from the most socially, economically, and educationally backward sections of society. In the past, there haven't been enough discussions about the employment issues, wages, legal protections, and rights faced by domestic workers abroad. Hopefully, Gulf countries such as the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have come up with laws protecting the rights of domestic workers. The reality is that many of these workers do not have the knowledge of the law or the awareness to exercise their rights properly.

Expatriate life during COVID

While the COVID - 19 pandemic infected millions of people, the Gulf diaspora was the worst hit. With the advent of the work-from-home system during the COVID era, women expatriates faced many challenges due to professional pressures, domestic work, and domestic violence. The Pandemic period was a trying time for the sick, pregnant women, and those stranded in foreign lands, who lost their jobs and could not return home due to travel restrictions, and those who couldn't repatriate the bodies of relatives who died abroad. Many were stressed by the possibility of direct exposure to the pandemic from occupations directly related to the outside world, such as healthcare, food supply outlets, and educational institutions. ■

country and abroad. These women have amassed self-sufficiency and financial independence by fighting and breaking through the constraints of a patriarchal institutional society. It is now common for women working abroad, especially those working in the healthcare sector, to emigrate with their spouses and family. In many previous studies on the history of immigration, women's immigration efforts have been marked by a male-centric perspective.

Today, the expatriate world is open to educated women who migrate for work and gain employment with their families. They can not only pursue higher studies and earn a living, but also travel to other



Prof. Meena T. Pillai
*Dean, Faculty of Arts
 Director, Centre for Cultural Studies
 Professor, Institute of English, University of Kerala*

God's Own Diaspora

**"Thirike madunguvan
 theerathu adukuvan
 njaanum kodhikarundennum"**
-Arabikatha, 2007

Kerala is ubiquitous. The globe is full of invisible Keralas. One can take Malayalis out of Kerala, but never Kerala out of them. Witty Malayali banter in the streets of New York, Dubai, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Montreal, and Addis Ababa. A bevy of Malayalam newspapers, magazines, and TV shows to choose from, in all corners of

The diasporic experiences of Kerala have played a pivotal role in birthing the unique social fabric of the state.

from that narrow strip of land, cosseted by turquoise seas, green fields, lush coconut groves, swooning backwaters, and mighty mountains. Malayalis, habitual migrants that we are, have pitched our flags of belonging in every continent, every nation in the course of the last fifty years or so. Little surprise then that “the sun never sets” on God’s Own Diaspora

(T V Thomas, Malayali Diaspora).

The story of Kerala, its becoming and evolving, lies deeply intertwined with histories of migration and diaspora. Once a lucrative hub of exotic spices and goods in ancient trade routes, opened out to centuries of trysts with different ocean-faring cultures, the region has always harboured an impulse towards cosmopolitanism. It is this very consciousness of world citizenship, the sense that global spaces may be inhabited without forgoing ‘Malayaliness,’ that, against all odds, bonds the scattered diaspora of Kerala together.

Interestingly, the diasporic experiences of Kerala have played a pivotal role in birthing the unique social fabric of the state. During the Gulf Boom of the 1970s and ’80s, millions of Malayalis migrated to the GCC states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, toiling away amidst the sand dunes. Their collective remittances, averaging 600 crores annually, fueled the much-vaunted Kerala Model of Development, which is today globally acclaimed as a framework for social justice. If the first wave of foreign migration from Kerala consisted predominantly of blue-collar labourers, consequent waves of the diaspora included skilled and white-collared workforces. The destinations of Malayali migrants soon expanded to include North America, Europe, Africa, and other Asian countries. Malayali professionals from different streams of work, spread out across the vastness of the planet, continued to mould the socio-economic and cultural trajectories of the state. In the heyday of the ‘Gulf-Malayali,’ it was their trove of goods such as perfumes, sunglasses, and radios that initiated a whole generation into the wonders of global consumerism, while their remittances kept Kerala floating, and kept the fire burning many a Malayali hearth. Their dissemination of knowledge about foreign lands, and the technological and social advancements they witnessed, went a long way in the rapid acceleration of development in Malayali soil. In a sense, the diaspora translated/transmitted the futuristic world out there for the benefit of the home.

The histories of Kerala’s transnational connections exceed the material and cultural connections it has with these foreign geographies. These distant geographies are rendered into intimate spaces of Malayali sensibility through the many fond memories, affective recollections, and longings that they evoke. Malayali’s emotional repertoires are replete with images that brim with nostalgic reminiscences of exotic spaces that many might not have visited all, thus making many of us diasporic at heart. The wistful evocation of Kerala’s cultural scapes, that harks back not only to the folklorish histories of past opulence during the reign of

One can take Malayalis out of Kerala, but never Kerala out of them.

the world. The taste of Kerala in food trucks and restaurants halfway across the planet. Mohanlal and Mammooty gracing silver screens thousands of miles away. Well-thumbed pages of Basheer, Benyamin, Thakazhi, or Chullikkad in remote reading corners. Small overseas communes of Malayalis and seasoned Malayali Associations striding out to welcome overwhelmed migrants



Mahabali but also excites the Malayali aspirations for returning to their idyllic and verdant coast laden with ‘foreign gold and riches’ is best embodied through songs such as “Kadalinnakkare ponorae kaana ponninu ponorae...”; that brought cinema and television networks into Malayali’s popular parlance, their very social imagination. Many lyrical homages to Kerala, continue to stimulate the sensual registers of the Malayali diasporic population even as they create new aspirational grammars for all Malayalis. The cinematic reconstruction of diasporic spaces has undergone a palpable shift too in the ways in which the big screen has begun to imagine the larger diasporic populace, from the Gulf countries to the Global North. While films like Pathemaari (2015), Gadhaama (2011), Arabhikatha (2007), Jacobinte Swargarajyam (2016), and Diamond Necklace (2012) attempt to articulate the polarity of lived experience in Gulf countries, bringing into the fore class concerns that constitute one’s everyday interactions. Their juxtaposition with films that are set in exotic foreign locations in developed countries alerts the viewer to new hierarchies that distinguish various diasporic locations. Films like Ivide (2015) and English: An Autumn in London (2012), attempt to appeal to a reality where the millennials who hail from various socio-economic contexts are

enamored by the mobility and prospects that could be provided by developed countries like the USA, Canada, and New Zealand. There is also a largescale student migration. Lifestyles represented in these films receive fresh affirmation in the statistics on covid migration by the World Bank, which reveals that almost 50% of the migrants who returned to Kerala following the onslaught of COVID-19 desire to re-migrate (World Bank. Resilience COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens Migration and Development Brief 34 May 2021). The Malayali diaspora bore the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, being especially vulnerable in foreign lands away from their dear and near ones. Yet, they contributed significantly to rebuilding Kerala when it reeled under the shock of the multiple disasters that hit this small resilient State. In this digital age, the word ‘diaspora’ might no longer evoke a sense of unforgiving distances, where Malayali digital diasporas are some of the most connected users in the world, participating vociferously in the unfolding of everyday social relations and events in Kerala. In a world where space and time have shrunk in an unprecedented manner, the Malayali diaspora is as much in Kerala as outside, their labour and dreams seeping into the very soil, scripting Kerala in new ways. ■

MESSAGE



M.A. YUSUFF ALI

Chairman and Managing Director, Lulu Group International

I am happy that the Government of Kerala is conducting the third edition of Loka Kerala Sabha, an event to bring together the Malayali diaspora outside Kerala under one platform. I appreciate our Government for creating a common platform for the cultural, socio-political, and economic integration of Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs) with the State. NRKs in other states in India and in countries outside India have always immensely contributed to the development of Kerala. Pravasis always think about their State and they always carry that memory with them wherever they go. The development of our State is always upmost in their minds. I am sure as in the previous two editions, Loka Kerala Sabha will give due priority to the issues of NRKs in the State's policy-making process and effectively utilize their knowledge, skills, and expertise for the overall development of our State.



^ Jaishree Misra



Dr. Aparna Ajith

Writing is much easier when you are abroad: Jaishree Misra

“Nothing revives the past so completely as a smell that was once associated with it,” says, the renowned Russian- American novelist, Vladimir Nabokov.

Indians in foreign land express themselves best through the creation of literature. The avalanche of creative outpourings has traversed the borders and a galaxy of writers has seen, felt, and sensed the ethos of a diaspora. Jaishree Misra, the great-niece of the prominent Malayalam writer, Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai, is one eminent Indian novelist who rose to fame with her debut as well as her semi-autobiographical novel, *Ancient Promises*. Born in 1961 in a Malayali family in New Delhi, Jaishree Misra has lived the life of an expatriate and her characters do reflect those sensibilities. She holds a Master's degree in English Literature from Kerala University and two Post Graduate diplomas. Her notable works are *Accidents like Love and Marriage*, *Afterwards*, *Rani*, *Secret and Lies*, *Secret and Sins*, *A Scandalous Secret*, and *A House for Mr. Misra*.

Here's Jaishree Misra in an online conversation with our interviewer, Dr. Aparna Ajith

Your experience as a diasporic writer?

Writing is much easier when I live abroad. It's a less distracting environment. There are many more demands on my time when I am in India. Here that I find, once I come inside the house, and close the door, people don't drop in on me. Social expectations are a little more regimented. It is easier to find here a mental peace, balance and the equilibrium I need to write.

Dilemmas, Challenges, problems, and prospects of a diaspora writer?

It's much easier to write about a place when you are removed from it. The picture gets crystallized into your mind and I think we step out of the frame to see the picture better. You get a better clarity of what is in your mind's eye. I would recommend to anybody to get away from the place that you want to write about. It's always much more efficient.

What comes quintessentially in diasporic writing according to you?

Sometimes practical things, archival things, zoom and so on, you can get hold of people you want to. Accessibility was less when I started writing twenty years back.

My great uncle Thakazhi wrote about the fisher folk of Alappuzha. He used to work there as a lawyer. He knew their problems and he was representing the issues they had. He wrote Chemmeen many years after he had given up his work as a lawyer.

It's not about being diasporic it's also about being removed from the place in terms of time. A little bit of distance, both physical and emotional can be of massive advantage in writing

Where do you place your sense of belonging?

For me, belonging is becoming here in London. It's becoming my home spiritually and mentally.

What about your characters and the novel setting?

What a writer wants to write is essentially his/her choice. My setting has always been India. Ancient Promises is the best example to quote. The subject that comes naturally remains from my home country. I would like to say about the Secret series of novels. The publisher was from here and he was so



particular that the series should be about Indian women living here. Almost all of my characters have Indian origin.

Malayali diasporas and their love for their homeland?

Most of the Malayalis are very rooted in their home culture. The other day I came across a clip Malayalis of East London doing Thiruvathira Kali for the Queen's Jubilee. They are in a mood to gather, celebrate and have food.

Diasporas do a lot of things to promote culture warmly and gently.

Your fond memories about Kerala?

It's difficult to think of memories as such because Kerala is very much a part of my life. I come very often to Kerala. I try to make my trips as frequent as possible. My mother lives there at Trivandrum. My uncle and aunt all are there and getting old too. I am always looking ahead to my next trip. I have got a small home at Trivandrum in the outskirts of Veli

The place does matter. Kerala reminds me of the smell of pazhamporis being made in the tea time, the fragrance of dosa, chutney, and whatnot. How it smells like, feels like, tastes like.

What a writer wants to write is essentially their choice. ■



Joby Baby
Nurse, Kuwait

COVID Time: Kerala's nurses Taking care of the world

**"Live life when you have it.
Life is a splendid gift there
is nothing small about it".**

- Florence Nightingale

Since the deadly COVID-19 virus devastated the world in December 2019, the role of nurses, along with the doctors, has become more important and they are now being affectionately called 'Guardian Angels' by everyone. They have been appreciated for doing dedicated and selfless service in safeguarding the lives of virus patients. It was a matter of pride that Malayali nurses were on the frontline of the fight against the pandemic not only in the southern State but all over the world. Kerala nurses are found in huge numbers in the West, East, the

Former British MP Anna Soubry observed in an interview that “some of the best nurses that we learn from actually, are from South India, from Kerala in particular”. For nurses from Kerala, it’s all in a day’s work.

wage war against the fast-spreading COVID-19 virus in Gulf Countries. Persons who were cured of the virus have thanked the Malayali nurses profusely for rendering round-the-clock service. The patients are at the mercy of the nurses and doctors since even their relatives dare to meet them while undergoing treatment in hospitals and COVID care centers. Their love and compassion made a difference in the lives of virus patients. They instill hope in the minds of patients, which is more vital in the treatment. Forgetting their family members and loved ones, the Malayali nurses offer the services at hospitals, which have become their homes. While at work they are not able to get in touch with their family members even through cell phones. They have dedicated themselves to the profession.

Kerala’s nurses, Malayali’s pride

Kerala is known as the nursing capital of India. Kerala has the maximum number of registered nurses in India, and they can be found all over the world. According to the Indian Nursing Council, of the 20 lakh registered nurses in India, 18 lakh are from Kerala. Historically, intrepid nurses from Kerala travelled to remote corners of the country and the world — a trend that continues today. A WHO report noted that “nurses trained in India form a significant portion of internationally educated nurses working overseas, second to nurses trained in the Philippines. It is estimated that over 30 percent of nurses who studied in Kerala work in the UK or the US, with 15 percent in Australia and 12 percent in the Middle East.” A significant number work in other parts of India, with Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai being among their favoured cities. Compassion and care, that’s what make Malayali nurses outstanding. If any crisis arises, definitely there will be Malayali nurses as front liners. Malayali nurses doing good work abroad is due to their multidisciplinary education. This kind of multidisciplinary knowledge is lacking in nursing graduates abroad. Former British MP Anna Soubry observed in an interview that “some of the best nurses that we learn from actually, are from South India, from Kerala in particular”. For nurses from Kerala, it’s all in a day’s work.

Kerala Government Initiative for Nursing Recruitment

The Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC) will enhance the recruitment of doctors, nurses, and other professionals to work establishments in European countries this year. As many as 250 nurses were selected for appointment in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Discussions were on for recruitment to Germany and Japan. Countries such as Kuwait and Qatar had also evinced interest in directly recruiting nurses, paramedical staff, drivers, and other skilled workers in different sectors. First Batch(22)nurses are placed in Germany recently. ■

According to the Indian Nursing Council, of the 20 lakh registered nurses in India, 18 lakh are from Kerala.

Middle East, Down Under and several other countries, for many years.

Kerala Nurses Number one in Gulf Region

Facing challenges the Kerala nurses are serving the virus patients from the front. Along with doctors, police, and journalists, they have been considered frontline workers to



Rajitha Prakasini
Staff Nurse, NHS, UK

“Please don’t leave me, I am afraid, I will die”,

Memoir of a staff nurse at NHS

It was early March and I was returning to London after a week’s stay in India. During the stopover at the Doha International Airport, I casually switched on my phone and to my dismay, I found numerous messages one after the other falling in like a gushing stream of water.

I was awakening to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic, which had already taken a toll in various parts of the world, has hit my hometown in Kerala too. The news was worrying and I was just hoping that things would all be in control in the UK where I work as a staff nurse at one of the best NHS hospitals in London.

Soon news about the lockdown and social distancing trickled in from different parts of the world. It was dawning on me the fact that I am separated from



my dear family back in Kerala. However, life had to move on. Life returned to the routine wake up alarm and long hectic shifts. I started to get the eerie feeling that something is going to change at the workplace. It came true, and yes, the COVID pandemic has begun to take its toll in the UK too and our hospital was chosen as one among the two hospitals declared as COVID-19 friendly sites in London. Confusion and uncertainty gripped staff members on how to face this challenge, media-fuelled the commotion and left common people in an utter state of shock. All of a sudden, I didn't know what was going on in the outside world with limited food and social distancing and all sorts. Meetings at managerial levels decided on how to prepare the staff to stand forth as front liners in one of the deadliest pandemic

outbreaks of the century. Then came the decision on converting our Dementia-friendly ward to the first COVID speciality ward in the hospital.

This came as a piece of emotionally and physically challenging news to our otherwise strong work team. Together we gathered the courage to fight with might. With the realisation that some things are beyond our strong will.

The first week of transition from the Geriatric to an Infectious ward was a roller coaster ride. We had to compromise, not just ours, but our families' and loved ones' health and well-being at risk.

For the first time, I could see fear in the eyes of my colleagues who had to return to their frail elderly parents and little children at home after work not knowing whether they had contracted the virus or not.

I realised that not having my family with me in London at this time was a blessing. Though everyone back home was worried about me, constantly checking on my wellbeing with more frequent calls and messages.

I remember at one instance, my little boy on our regular video chat, asked me to show my legs and the surroundings and sighed in relief saying: "Ok, now I trust your words that you are safe. You are not in a hospital bed!!". Those words and thoughts cling to me and I take life in its strides and move on.

The hospital provided training sessions on COVID-19 infection protocol and staff safety. We were trained to ensure the provision of the best nursing care for all our patients fighting this deadly virus. Our team worked day and night to ease the suffering of the sick. However, in a few days, we were running out of enough PPEs. More appropriate to say, the proper PPEs. More and more of our staff fell sick with the virus. There was a steady rise in patient turnover and a steep fall in staff numbers. This pandemic swept our strong team off our feet in no matter of time. But like the saying: "Tough times do not last, but tough teams do!".

The road to recovery was not smooth but never impossible. Every one of us fought with determination and came back stronger to fight the pandemic. Soon we saw more wards were open for COVID.

The emotional trauma we had to go through was beyond words. Nobody could complete a work shift without shedding tears. The suffering of the sick, who were alone and away from their family and friends was never easy.

Hospital visitor restrictions in effect to prevent the spread of the virus made the patients suffer loneliness. Many of our elderly patients with comorbidities had to succumb to the infection alone without anyone nearby to wish a final adieu.

At a morning handover, one of the colleagues with heaviness in his heart told us that he had the most emotionally crippling night shift the previous night when one of his elderly palliative patients begged him to stay by his side all night holding his hand saying not to leave him alone and that he is feeling afraid to die.

These are moments when we as humans stare at the biggest challenges in our lives. It comes as a moment of awakening. We are all living here with a smile on our faces with heavy hearts filled with thoughts of our dear ones during the time of the pandemic. In reality, this is more than just a crisis for us all.

This is the moment in our lives when we realise that there are powers beyond our control and no matter how advanced our lives are, we are mere humans.

Our losses in this battle are invaluable and irrevocable. But there is always a sunrise after a sunset. And like old times, together we will fight and once again prove the supremacy of the human race on this mother planet. With a hope that we all realise that we are not omnipotent as we think we are. ■



△ Al Bayt Stadium



D. Ravi Kumar
Managing Editor (Inside Qatar)
Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy
FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

Strong Malayali link to Qatar World Cup 2022



The official opening match of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 will be kicked off at 7 pm on November 21, with a match between hosts Qatar and Ecuador, one of the South American qualifiers, at the unique Al Bayt Stadium, designed in the shape of a traditional Bedouin tent. This magnificent stadium, which has a capacity of 60,000, has a strong Kerala connection to it. The stadium was constructed by Qatari company Galfar Al Misnad Engineering & Contracting, in conjunction with Italy's Salini Impregilo Group. Galfar Al Misnad was established in 1995 as a subsidiary of the Oman-based Galfar Engineering and Contracting, which was co-founded by prominent Malayali P. Mohamed Ali, and its Qatar operations are led by Executive Director Satish G Pillai.



Dr Mohan Thomas
*President,
Indian Sports Centre, Qatar*



P N Baburajan
*President,
Indian Cultural Centre, Qatar*

Another World Cup venue, the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan area, also has a strong Indian connection. It was constructed by the joint-venture between Qatari company Al Balaghand India's own Larsen and Toubro Company. Al Balagh, is a leading business house in Qatar serving the construction, industrial, medical, laboratory, oil and gas, and Information Technology sectors of the country. Several top management functionaries of this

company are Indians, with Vijay Kumar Bhattacharya as the current General Manager and Srinivasan Venkatesan as the CEO.

The Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium has a capacity of 40,000 and it will host seven World Cup matches. India's Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, who toured the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium during his recent visit to Qatar, was very impressed with its finish. "Visited Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium at Al Rayyan. Congratulate Larsen and Toubro and their Qatari partners on an impressive project. It has enhanced India's reputation for quality and delivery. Best wishes to Qatar for FIFA 2022," Jaishankar tweeted.

Apart from the contributions of various Indian companies towards infrastructure building for the World Cup, the Indian community in Qatar as a whole is excited about the tournament. With Indians being the largest expatriate group in Qatar, and Malayalis being the most prominent among them, their strong presence is felt during the build-up to the tournament and is expected to continue during the



△ Khalifa International Stadium 2

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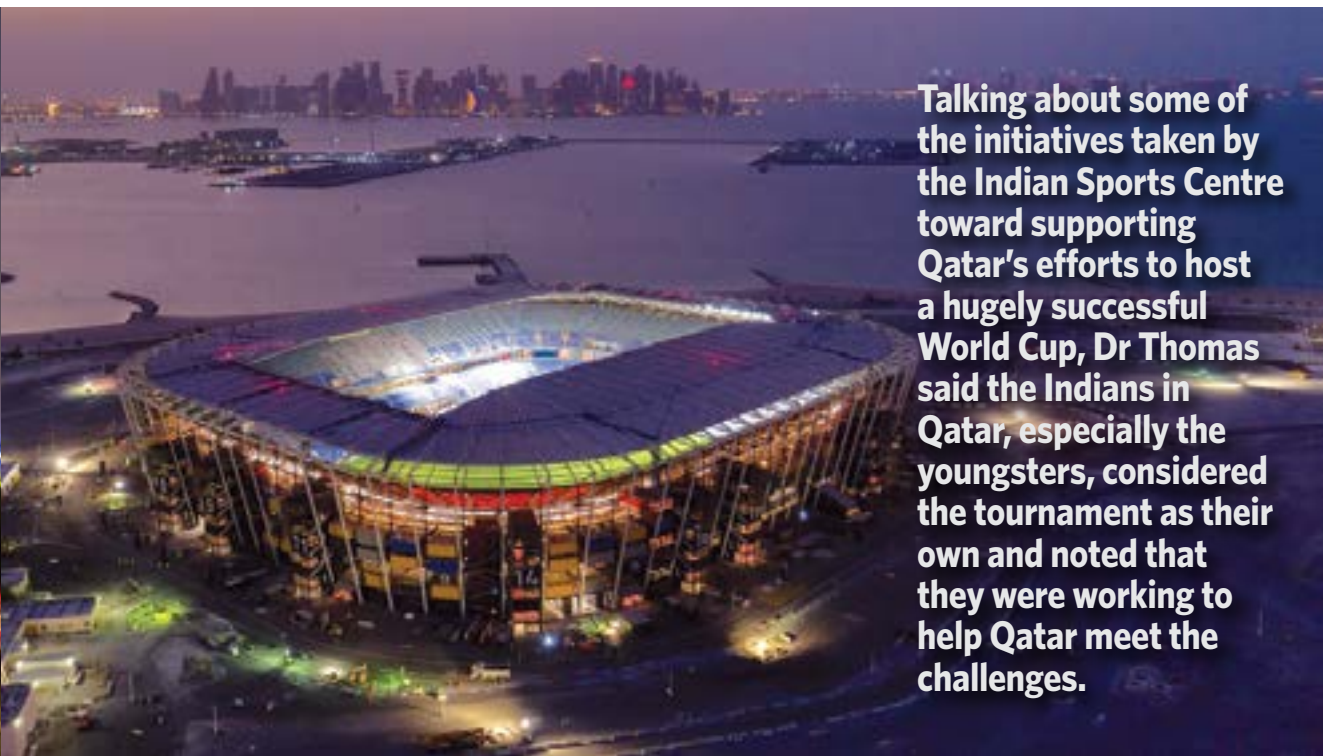


△ Al Janoub Stadium

tournament as well – be it as part of the local organizing committee, local media, workforce, health care support staff, volunteers, spectators etc.

P.N. Baburajan, President of the Indian Cultural Centre, which is the apex body of all socio-cultural associations among the Indian community in Qatar, felt there was an overwhelming excitement among the community members. “There is a lot of excitement and enthusiasm among Indians living in Qatar about the World Cup. It has been there for the past several years, but now it is reaching a crescendo,” said Baburajan. “Ever since FIFA started the sale of tickets, there is a huge demand among the Indians in Qatar. As you know, FIFA themselves announced that Indians are among the top applicants for tickets,” he added.

The Indian Cultural Centre President said the community had been supporting Qatar’s all initiatives to make the World Cup a huge success. “We have been at the forefront of supporting Qatar’s World Cup projects and initiatives. During last year’s FIFA



Talking about some of the initiatives taken by the Indian Sports Centre toward supporting Qatar's efforts to host a hugely successful World Cup, Dr Thomas said the Indians in Qatar, especially the youngsters, considered the tournament as their own and noted that they were working to help Qatar meet the challenges.

^ Stadium 974

Arab Cup we booked special buses and transported fans to the Al Bayt Stadium. Various associations affiliated with the Indian Cultural Centre are organizing football tournaments this year. This is a marked difference from last year when they organized cultural events. But this year, with the World Cup drawing close, there are several football tournaments organized by the affiliated associations. This shows the tremendous interest in football among the Indians living in Qatar," said Baburajan.

Dr Mohan Thomas, President of the Indian Sports Centre, which functions under the aegis of the Indian Embassy in Qatar, said the World Cup would be a memorable one. "The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 will be a memorable one-time experience for the countless sports buffs of the Gulf region and even for thousands of ardent football-crazy fans in the Indian community of Qatar," Dr Thomas told journalists.

Talking about some of the initiatives taken by the Indian Sports Centre toward supporting Qatar's efforts to host a hugely



^ Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium



^ Al Thumama Stadium

successful World Cup, Dr Thomas said the Indians in Qatar, especially the youngsters, considered the tournament as their own and noted that they were working to help Qatar meet the challenges. ■



△ World Cup Countdown Clock

A Golden opportunity for Malayalis

Kerala is known as 'God's Own Country' and football is said to be the world's 'Most Beautiful Game'. The strong link between Kerala and football is part of folklore. Malayalis' love and passion for football are unparalleled. They will travel any distance to watch good football.

For the tens of thousands of soccer-mad Malayalis, the FIFA World Cup 2022, which will be played from November 21 to December 18 this year in the tiny Gulf country of Qatar, will be a golden opportunity.


Apart from India's proximity to Qatar, the Qatar World Cup offers a whole lot of advantages for Kerala fans. The 2022 World Cup will be the most compact tournament in history. Unlike previous World Cups, all the eight venues are pretty close to each other. In fact, except for the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, all other seven stadiums are inside or pretty close to Doha city. There is no need of taking domestic flights to hop from one venue to another. A fan reaching Qatar can stay at the same accommodation until the end of the tournament and, if they have tickets, can watch more than one match on a single day. With tens of thousands of Malayalis already living in Qatar, many of the visiting fans will have friends or relatives with whom they can stay and avoid expenses for the hotel stay.

The local organizers of the Qatar World Cup themselves have gone on record saying they are expecting the highest ever Indian attendance for this edition.

"Because of the proximity between Qatar and India, fans from India will be a major fan base that will be travelling to Qatar," said Nasser Al



With tens of thousands of Malayalis already living in Qatar, many of the visiting fans will have friends or relatives with whom they can stay and avoid expenses for the hotel stay.

Doha skyline 

“Because of the proximity between Qatar and India, fans from India will be a major fan base that will be travelling to Qatar,” said Nasser Al Khater, CEO, of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Khater, CEO, of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.” We know, looking at numbers from previous World Cups, in 2010, 2014, and 2018 that the number of the Indian fan base at World Cup is growing more and more. Adding to that, and given the proximity, we expect to see a huge number of Indian fans coming to Qatar for

the World Cup,” Al Khater added.

Fatma Al Nuaimi, Communications Executive Director, Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (the entity responsible for delivering the infrastructure required for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar) also said she expected a sizeable presence of Indian football fans.

“Qatar and India have centuries-old ties and we consider India as our strategic partner. Apart from the geographical proximity of the two countries, Qatar Airways connect a lot of Indian cities. This shows how close our ties are. We are anticipating a lot of fans from India to visit Qatar and enjoy the football festivity happening during the World Cup,” Fatma said during a media interaction recently.

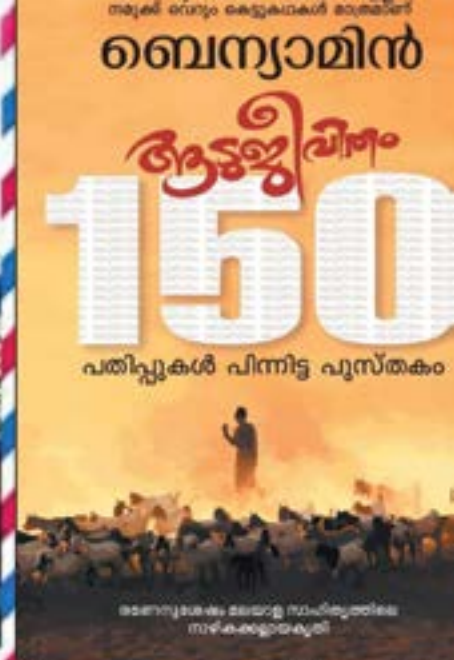
Indian football captain Sunil Chhetri recently told the media that Qatar World Cup will be a great opportunity for Indian fans to see top footballers in action.

“There’s a huge football fan base in India. This is the opportunity the Indian fans must be waiting for. Watching top footballers live from close quarters is always a dream,” said Chetri.

Several tour operators in India also shared the above views.

So many travel companies in India have already come up with various packages for those wishing to attend the Qatar World Cup.

“Qatar World Cup is the biggest opportunity for Indian football fans to watch the FIFA World Cup live as it has never been conducted so close to India. It’s hardly a three-and-a-half-hour flight away from their homes,” Raghav Gupta, Founder, and CEO of Fanatic Sports told media. For Malayalis living in Qatar, it is their second home. For a visiting Malayali fan, he will not miss anything that he is getting in Kerala. There are hundreds of hotels and restaurants serving Kerala dishes and the weather in November-December will be very pleasant. Overall, it is going to be one of the most memorable World Cups. ■



K.M. Seethi
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Mahatma Gandhi University*

Migration and Cultural Remittance: The Making of 'Gulf' in Kerala

Cultural remittance is mainly connected with the transmission and exchange of values, ideas, cultural and religious practices, food patterns, and lifestyles from the diaspora to the homeland social landscape.

In most migration studies, culture is explained more in terms of human behaviour than in relation to the transmission and exchange of values, ideas, and cultures of either 'host' or 'sending' countries. Similarly, not much consideration is given to the myriad forms of cultural expression brought about by the to-and-fro movements of migratory trajectory. However, it is in language, songs, music, films, literature, food, dress, and other creative and communicative genres that the ideas, values, and life-forms remitted from the diaspora to the homeland become visible in the most perceptible and striking ways.

Thus, the cultural impact of the 'remittance boom' on Kerala—which started in the 1970s—becomes important for understanding the social landscape of Kerala—with the emergence of new cultural spaces held out by the Gulf-related songs, Malabar home cinema, migration films, cuisine, dress styles, media, and the diaspora literature. An exploration into the text and context of such cultural artefacts is worthwhile in terms of understanding the contours of the 'Gulf life-world in Kerala.

Apart from questions of identity, authenticity, and collectivity, there are remittances having to do with issues of social mobility, gender, and sexuality with a richer cultural and thoughtful content. There are songs, narratives, and characters in films, novels, and stories—that emerged with the different waves of migration to the Gulf—which portray the limits and possibility of mobility, exchange relations, and material comforts. Cultural remittances having to do with gender roles and sexual orientation have also elicited differential responses in the home society, as has been portrayed in a range of Malayalam songs, narratives, films, and writings.

One of the earliest forms of the cultural expression of the migrant life-world came from S.A. Jameel's Kathupattukal (letter songs), popularised in the late 1970s, with the first wave of migration to the Gulf countries. Identified as a new literary genre, Kathupattukal exemplified the emotional appeals of migrant families with the wife and husband (of such families) exchanging their feelings of love, affection, dreams, and aloofness amid two subtle forms of struggle in the 'host' and 'home' countries. More than a track-setting scenario of

nostalgia and emotions, these songs captured the imagination of both migrant and non-migrant communities in Kerala and the Gulf with audio cassettes being sold by tens of thousands and heard by millions. That was the period when Kerala witnessed the flood of electronic goods and gadgets from the Gulf—such as tape recorders and audio cassettes—and Kathupattukal played a significant role in ushering in a new modernity of cultural rejuvenation. By the 1980s, this genre found itself transformed—from audio to video mode of circulation. Curiously, even after four decades, these songs have got renewed appeals with the advent of internet platforms and social media interfaces. The rationale of the continued appeal lies in their 'texts' of representation and 'contexts' of presentation within a 'host-home' matrix.

Parallel to the mainstream Malayalam film industry, there was another experiment in 'Home cinema' which became popular in the Malabar region towards the end of the second wave of Gulf migration. It all started with Salam Kodiyathur's self-supported movie, 'Ningalenne Branthanaakki' (You made me a Lunatic), in 2000. This was followed by several such movies, produced locally with amateurish technology and distributed as CD/DVD through video shops, bookstores, etc. 'Home cinema' began to gain legitimacy with the induction of 'Islamic content' and the experiences of the Gulf diaspora. Soon, such movies went beyond the locales of Malabar and got distributed in social gatherings, such as in labour camps, in the Gulf.

Similarly, the proliferation of novels, stories, poems, memoirs, etc emerging from the Malayali diaspora in the Gulf, over the last decade and a half, is also an indication that a genre of Pravasa Sahithyam (diaspora literature) has come to stay in Kerala with significant socio-cultural effects. Obviously, this is the end-result of the process of second-wave migration to the Gulf countries since the 1990s. The life-world experiences of the Malayali diaspora in the Gulf found expressions through novels and stories. These texts of/on Malayali diaspora have become immense sources of insight, imagination, and dreams of social reordering. The trendsetter was Benyamin's novels such as Aadu Jeevitham. There were a few diaspora novels and stories before, but Benyamin created a sensation in the Malayalam literature with some his novels having several editions, besides translations in several Indian and foreign languages. Similar works by Karunakaran, Babu Bharadwaj, Nisamudheen Ravuthar, Femina Jabbar, Puravur Vijayan, Krishnadas, Khadija Mumtaz, Baji Odamveli, Rafeeq Memunda, V. Muzafer Ahamed, Deepak Unnikrishnan, Sabin Iqbal, et al. all look at the Malayali diaspora in the Gulf from different angles such as class, gender, occupation, region, and country. The careful looping of exterior portrayal and interior monologues in each novel, story, and memoir powerfully brings home the life-world of migrants' dreams and expectations. These works are cultural artefacts to be understood by applying methods of dense portrayals. Conceivably, the Malayali diaspora writers have textualized the life-worlds of migratory spaces that produce and reproduce images of emancipation, dreams, and expectations that are essential for social writing through fiction.

Thus, cultural remittance from host environs (in the Gulf) has reinforced new norms, values, and ideas of social capital that eventually helped sustain a cultural public sphere in the sending society (Kerala) that characterizes trust, communication, and cultural exchanges in a wider social participation mode. ■



^ Sabin Iqbal



Abhayan Varghese
Writer and Art & Culture Critic

A Searing Tale of Lust, Loneliness and Lies

Shamal Days, the second novel from Sabin Iqbal, is a searing tale of fraught relationships, the loneliness of existing with others, and life in a foreign country. Centred around Abbas, Shamal Days (HaperCollins India, 2021) candidly explores the inner turmoil and vulnerability of the protagonist, an immigrant in a fictional country in West Asia, and his desperate desire to make sense of the external realities (love, lust, success, politics, relationships) that painted his pathos. In this interview, the author tells Abhayan Varghese about the motifs and motivations of writing a cosmopolitan novel about 'temporary people' in a region of political unrest and conflicts.

ATMOSPHERIC AND KEENLY OBSERVED
SHASHI THAROOR

SHAMAL DAYS



SABIN IQBAL



While reading the novel, one thing that stands out is the volatile socio-cultural-political background. Can you speak about this positioning of the political (the fragile socio-political backdrop) with the personal (their own personal lives that depend on the continuation of this fragile socio-political system)?

There is a parallel connect between the volatility of the region and the personal lives of the expatriates who are seldom 'settled' but are in an oxymoronic state of 'permanently temporary'. When Saddam Hussein's army invaded Kuwait in early 90s thousands of expatriates had to flee the country, leaving all they had collected and possessed over a long period of time. I know

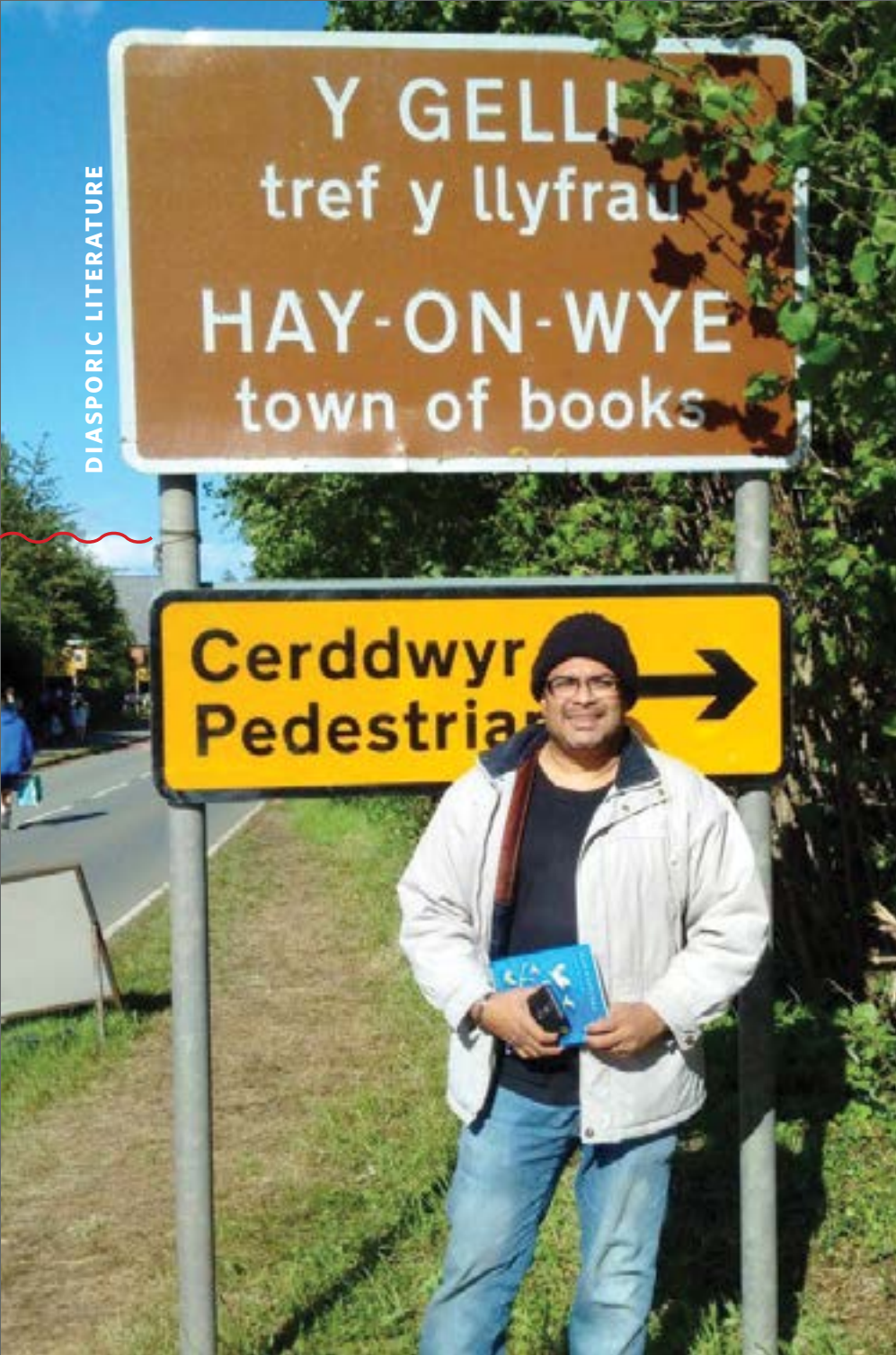
many people who had to abandon everything in their house to escape from the invading Iraqi army. The calmness of an expatriate's face is a facade. In his or her heart, there is a constant battle between aspirations and disappointments. There are well-disguised surges of anxiety.

It's refreshing that the expatriate life is not depicted through easily available cliches. And yet Abbas, Ratnam, Matt, the Asians, Africans, and Europeans all look to "exploit" the place because the place itself doesn't give them any moorings. What's your take on the relationship between an expatriate and the place that has been explored in Shamal Days?

In Shamal Days, we come across a group of expatriates engaged and engrossed in their own islands of conflicts. Though they write and make daily newspaper pages about the violence in the region, little does it affect their personal life. Every day they come to the newsroom appearing calm and settled to cover the conflicts and violence in the region but in their heart there is a constant conflict between their existential crises and aspirations and ambitions. The land where they live is never their 'homeland' and their homeland is never the land they live in. Yet, most of the expatriates, especially the Asians, cannot leave this 'space' of impermanence. They end up living a life of sacrifice, which is, sadly, under represented or less acknowledged in the mainstream English literature. There are many layers to the relationship between the expatriate and the place.

Shamal Days also, perhaps inadvertently, establishes a kind of expectation of "doing the right thing", of conforming to social expectations of your homeland even while your homeland has all but abandoned you. So in that sense, Abbas neither belongs to the unnamed country where he worked nor does he fit in in his homeland that he yearns for silently. How do you look at this duality and the supposed privilege of a foreigner abroad?

This 'duality' is the core of an Asian expatriate in the Gulf. The situation may have changed a bit now (Shamal Days is set in late 90s and early 2000s) but still there are thousands of men, and women too, surviving the many forms of hostility in a foreign country. We should understand the difference between a 'skilled Indian' migrating to the West and the 'unskilled labourer' in the Gulf. In the Gulf, most of the Asians cannot own anything. A sad box tucked under a bunker bed is the reality of many. Coming from a 'Gulf pocket' like Varkala, I have seen this life from close quarters. The one-or two-month-long 'leave' when the men come home like guests to their own house, and the silent sighs and loneliness of the women left behind are the two faces of this life. Having said that, there are also many men who have made their fortune in these countries. For Abbas, his problem is the loneliness he faces in a foreign land. He has no one in his life. He has money but he has no one to live for. The ennui or the lack of frisson is what haunts him and drives him to almost a state of hallucination.



There's a sequence where Matt is trying to dig up the history that's not there. This is interesting when seen against the spectrum of the anomalies of the present. Why's digging up history more important than creating a liveable and inclusive present? Or can the latter be possible only through the former?

The unnamed country doesn't have a long history to speak of. If we lift off the glittering facade of wealth, the 'past' has nothing to boast of. There is a lack of period where a country goes through a phase of socio-cultural and political evolution. And, Matt, being a crook, knows it well. And, he knows

there is an opportunity to siphon off millions of dollars if he could 'dig up the relics of past' to appease the ruler's desire to prove that his country and people have a past worth documenting. Matt digs up an absent past of the country to make his present/life comfortable. It is also a question of historical identity. The ruler is willing to spend millions of dollars in the archeology project because for him, a culturally-rich past in a way validates the wealthy present.

Shamal Days feels like an exploration of sadness, of one's many shades of regret, loneliness, desires, and the consequences of acting on those desires. This along with the volatile social-political background makes for a very grim picture. Can you tell us about the hope that emanates from such conditions and finding happiness in the small things that we take for granted?

Yes, Shamal Days at the outset reads like a sad novel or an exploration of a man's unhappiness or the gradual creeping in of boredom in his lonely life. He suffers from a sudden death of frisson in his life. But if you read carefully, the book doesn't end on a pessimistic note but, on the contrary, it ends with a promise of hope. Abbas's decision to find some 'reason' to live or at least a thin strand of hope supersedes the overt leitmotif of grief.

“In his first novel, *The Cliffhangers*, Sabin Iqbal wrote of the complex links between religious identity, politics and communalism in contemporary India. In *Shamal Days*, the focus is on the aspirations and alienation of members of the Indian diaspora in West Asia. The murky politics of newsrooms and of the volatile region are sketched with deft strokes.”

—The Hindu

The people of *Shamal Days* are what you have called “temporary people”. They are never part of the civic structures or infrastructures that make up a place and its people. How do you reflect on their cultural representation and how it shapes their mutual perception?

The characters in *Shamal Days*, a group of expatriates from different countries coming together in a newsroom, are a menagerie of people from different cultural backgrounds. Their aspirations are as distinct and different as their dresses and dialects. Under the common roof of a newsroom, they discuss the political issues of their ‘foreign’ homeland. The power equations, biases and a dash of nepotism manifest in many ways.

It’s refreshing that the men in the novel seem to be unsure of how to use their sexuality, except knowing that they need sex, while the women are confident about their sexuality and desires. All this is thrown in the midst of love, life, and loss. What about this continues to fascinate you? Would you say there is still a dearth of gender-fluid characters when it comes to mainstream Indian English writing?

Sex and sexuality, gender and gender-fluidity, and life, lies and loss are the areas which I want to explore as a writer. The ‘in-between’ life, the ‘secret’ life and the lies men practise are goldmines for a writer. The men in the novel, particularly Abbas, Bhaskar and Abdullah, have their own ‘adventures,

escapades and lies’ about their sex life. Yes, yet they don’t come across assured or concrete in their sexual identity (not gender identity). Abbas has had high libido and has fallen prey to his own sexual proclivities, which lead him to the illicit relationship with Ratnam. In contemporary Indian English writing, there are a few brave attempts to explore gender and sexuality, which is encouraging. What I’ve tried in *Shamal Days* in a way is to break the taboo on writing sex, away from titillating stuff but not being politically correct or culturally sanitised.

The people of *Shamal Days* are not labourers who sweat the hot desert sun. The newsroom is, in a sense, multi-cultural. Yet they seem to occupy the same space with no real cultural or intellectual capital. Abbas is jaded, Matt is corrupt, and everything that the newspaper does is paying lip service to the ruler. Essentially nothing means anything except the relationships that you cultivate. But time eliminates that as well. So what are we left with in the end?

As I said earlier, in the end we are left with a glimmer of ‘hope’ as Abbas, despite all his grief-stricken, sorrow-laced life, is hopeful of a new beginning. No one’s life a sequence of linear incidents but cyclic. Nothing is permanent. Hardships are not eternal. Wealth is not permanent. There are changes in life, like the seasons. The winds of shamal are not for all seasons. They come and go. Faith and hope are the engines that drive us forward. The ending of the novel is not the culmination of his suffering but a departure from his many woes, and terrible loneliness. It is in fact the beginning of Abbas’s journey of reckoning and healing. ■

“It is, fundamentally, a very sad book. Sad is too simplistic a word – this book aches, almost every page of it, not just with sorrow but with a distinct sort of self-loathing rooted in disgust. The emotion permeates each line, regardless of whether or not it’s addressing it directly; it is a convincing depiction of the way unhappiness can seep into one’s very worldview.”

— Scroll



∧ Abhilash Tomy

Around the World in Solo Voyage

Commander Abhilash Tomy is the first Indian and the second Asian to sail around the world solo, nonstop, and unsupported. Abhilash, a naval aviator from Changanassery was drawn to sailing and adventure from a young age. He started his first solo circumnavigation on November 1, 2012, from Mumbai, which took him 151 days to complete. His participation in the Golden Globe Race 2018 ended tragically with an accident and spinal injuries. Abhilash is hoping to race again in GGR2022. He won the prestigious Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award and the Kirti Chakra for his gallantry and heroic actions. Abhilash has documented his extraordinary travels in two books and a blog, and he continues to interact with others through talks and storytelling.

Madagascar was the first country I visited outside of India when our ship called at one of its ports. It was 1999 and I half expected to find a Malayali there, but I was proven wrong. We called on at Port Victoria in Seychelles on our way back. By the time the ship was back in India, I was already bitten by sea fever. Volunteering to be a pilot in the Navy might appear counterintuitive, but that is what I did next spending a year with the Air Force as far



away from the sea as possible. I did learn flying, but being in the Air Force caused me to miss out on an opportunity to sail on INS Tarangini. Her voyage, called Lokayan, took the three-masted barque rigged ship around the world. Many stops later when she arrived in India, I was back in the Navy and raring to go to sea.



△ Captain Dilip Donde & Commander Abhilash Tomy

An opportunity to work closely with some of the fastest yachts in the world presented itself in 2008 when I was appointed as the yacht services manager at the Kochi stopover of the Volvo Ocean Race. A day after the boats cast off for Singapore, the Navy sent me in the opposite direction towards Salalah, where the Kochi-built sailing catamaran belonging to Prof Radhakrishnan waited for me to embark. Ashkelon Marina, Israel was to be our destination, but various problems in the boat forced us to stop at Mukalla in Yemen, and having found no way to make good all the damages, we continued on our way to Aden where the boat was moored and the voyage called off.

On my way back to joining flying duties in the Andamans, I stopped at Delhi to debrief the Navy about the Volvo Ocean Race and the most recent voyage to Yemen when I was asked to help out with the Navy's single-handed circumnavigation project, Sagar Parikrama. Capt. Donde was to sail around the world alone but he needed someone to help. That is how I joined the Mhadei as his shore support and got an opportunity to sail with him to Colombo and Port Louis. When the Mhadei sailed around the world making stops, I flew down after her to Fremantle, Lyttelton Port of Christchurch, Port Stanley in the Falklands, and Cape Town in South Africa. Flying down to these places took me through some exotic places such as Santiago, Punta Arenas, and a chance to land in Bleaker Island. ■



Back with a Bang

It had been a silence of 30 years. A silence that disappointed many readers in Kerala. In 1992, Priya Joseph wrote her last story from Kerala as a college student and it came second in the State level short story competition. Her story *Vellikolusitaa Nombaram* signalled the emergence of a promising writer. And the topper in that competition, Priya A.S. carved a niche not only in the short story circle but in many hearts as well.

Then happened the migration and nothing flowed out from her pen and a pall of gloom descended over the short story buffs in Kerala. Some thought the migration had killed the writer in Priya

**But they went wrong...
Priya is back...**

△ Priya Joseph

*In an interview, exclusively with **Kerala Calling**, short story writer **Priya Joseph** opens up her heart on her own writing, diasporic life, and her views on contemporary Malayalam short story scenario.*

Priya had a past of having the honour of a budding popular writer before you had migrated to the US. After a long pause, you are back again in writing. What made you keep this long silence? And what made you break it?

Even though I received the 'Grihalakshmi' award twice, I never considered myself as a writer. And so I never considered this as a long silence. If a reason is needed, perhaps the only explanation I can offer is that life happened.

Now I have more time at my disposal. The impulse to write and the stubbornness to keep going came late for me, I guess.

Though you have been in the US for a long time, you write in Malayalam. Most diasporic writers write about the life of the country they have migrated to, whether it is their life or others. How can you write about the Malayali lives in Kerala in detail from this point of view?

I lived in Kerala for the first 24 years of my life. I use those memories when I'm writing about Kerala. Although I live here, I'm not disconnected from Kerala. As for my stories, most of my characters are about people who

have taken a little piece of their home with them to their new country.

A writer should not be restricted by something as simple as geography to write about what they wish to share with their readers.

Can you brief me about your writing career in a nutshell?

I first started writing personal memories in 'Indian Express Malayalam', which gave me a chance to stretch and exercise my writing skills after such a long break. Before long, I had branched out into writing stories and published them in 'Samakalika Malayalam', 'IE Malayalam', and 'True Copy Think' etc. This was exciting for me because I loved writing short stories and I was able to create a small world, fill it with characters, and let the readers catch a glimpse of that world for a short moment. My published stories are 'Kanyavrathathinte Kaavalkkaan', 'Karl Marx Charitham 'Gurjjari Bag' and 'Thammanam Muthal Chicago Vare -Oru Adholoka Kadha'.

The characters of your stories have different dimensions. In 'Gurjjari Bag', you tried to portray 'Random acts of Kindness'. In 'Kanyavrathathinte Kavalkkaran' it was foot fetishism and so on. Is there a particular philosophy you try to say through your stories?

No. I leave that up to the readers to interpret whatever they want from my stories.

Being an expatriate, how do you find time to write on different subjects?

I'm not sure if there's a correlation between being an expatriate and time-management skills. No matter where you reside in the world, people tend to learn how to manage their time and find time to do what they love.

How do you assess contemporary diasporic writing across the world? Or in the US?

'The Dharma Forest' by Keerthik Sasidharan was shortlisted for the coveted JCB Award this year. He is a Malayali and writes from New York.

Crying in H Mart: A Memoir, which was first published as a personal essay in *The New Yorker*, is written by a Korean writer named Michelle Zauner Knopf. I am positive that one day, one of my daughters is going to cry in Patel brothers or Royal Malayali groceries, missing me. All the immigrants can relate to this memoir no matter who wrote it.



△ Priya Joseph

Bengali author Amar Mitra has been conferred the prestigious 2022 O. Henry Prize for Short Fiction. 'The Old Man of Kusumpur', originally written in Bengali in 1977 with the title Gaonburo bagged the prize.

I was happy and proud to read Perumal Murukan's story in Paris Review.

What I am trying to say is that the international literature field is sizzling with new writers and awards emerging every year. I am very proud to observe that the Indian writers play an active role here.

Your opinion on contemporary Malayalam short stories? And the writers of your choice?

I try to read as many Malayalam short stories as possible through Magzter. I follow many Malayalam writers as Unni R, Vinoy Thomas, S.Harish, Salin Mankuzhy, E.Santhosh Kumar, Santhosh Echikaanam, C. Anoop, Francis Nerona, KV Manikandan, Shinilal, Abin Joseph, Manoj Vellanad, Manoj Vengola, Gracy, KR Meera, Priya AS, Rekha K, Jisa Jose, Farsana etc.

I just happened to read a beautiful story titled 'Kule' by a young boy named Mridul, published by *Samakalika Malayalam* recently.

What a story! What a craft! Very promising young writer

How far have you succeeded in portraying diasporic lives in your stories?

That's for the readers to decide. Let them decide.

Your present life in America? Family?

My husband, Robin is a Computer Engineer who graduated from CET and we have been living in the US for the last 25 years, running our own IT consulting company. We have been blessed with two daughters. The elder one is starting Medical school and the second one is doing Computer Engineering. ■

MESSAGE



Ravi Pillai

Chairman & Managing Director (RP Group of Companies)

The third edition of Loka Kerala Sabha brings in renewed hope and aspirations for the Malayali diaspora across the globe. It is a platform for the cultural, socio-political, and economic integration of non-resident Keralites. Malayalis have made a niche for themselves in every field of activity across the globe and have unparalleled experience and expertise in various fields. Our home state of Kerala can make use of this expertise and tap the investment potential of NRKs for the development of Kerala. Loka Kerala Sabha offers an opportunity to explore the job prospects in various countries, share the concerns of Non-Resident Keralites, and provide them a more inclusive democratic space and due representation in deciding matters that concern their well-being. The two-day Loka Kerala Sabha shall witness the presence of eminent Non-Resident Keralites from almost 70 countries along with members of the Parliament and Legislative Assembly. I hope the government shall focus more on fostering investment opportunities for the NRKs. Rehabilitation of returned NRKs to be given priority. There should be constructive discussions to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of the NRIs from Kerala. Promotion of Language and Culture among the Malayali diaspora is also important. The trends and patterns of post COVID migration (Emerging Destinations and Emerging Sectors) should be discussed and debated. I am sure the third Loka Kerala Sabha shall have fruitful discussions to address the concerns of NRKs, making the necessary legislations to benefit both the NRKs and the state of Kerala. Creating a positive Global Kerala Synergy is the need of the hour as the NRKs are the backbone of the state of Kerala.

MESSAGE



O. V. MUSTAFA

*Director Norka Roots,
Vice-Chairman Overseas Keralites Investments Holdings Ltd.*

A brainchild of the first LDF government, Loka Kerala Sabha has now become an integral part of Kerala diaspora globally. Though still in its infancy, the LKShas created various platforms for 'Pravasis'to express their views and take part in the policy formation of our state.

The collective efforts of the LKS members during the flood and COVID times have been of tremendous support to the Pravasis as well as to our state in various activities including support to CMDRF and the initiative of sending timely needed medical supplies to the state.

Expatriates expect more opportunities for them to participate. It is hoped that the LKS Assembly in June 2022 will pave way for the same.



P. MOHAMED ALI

*Founder,
Galfar Group*

It is a great initiative of our Chief Minister to bring all Malayalis across the world under a single platform 'Loka Kerala Sabha'to utilize their individual capabilities and collective strength, much needed for the development and prosperity of our state. They are experts in many areas, financially capable, and with unmatched socio-cultural exposure and expertise. There needs to be a definite plan to utilise and channel these unique resources and capabilities in the right way for the benefit of our state. Infrastructure development, tourism, waste management, information technology, traditional industries, health care, etc are some of the areas where the world Malayali diaspora can be contributed effectively. Our state is densely populated, has limited endowments, and is battling a unique set of challenges. There are lessons for us in how other economies overcame similar challenges and thrived. Singapore's development model stands out well as an approach for us to look at and adapt.

Wishing the endeavour all success.

MESSAGE



KUMBLENGAD UNNIKRISHNAN

*Secretary Malayalam Mission, TamilNadu Chapter
& Vice President Madras Kerala Samaj (REGD)*

Loka Kerala Sabha is a Kerala Government-approved platform to discuss the Problems and related issues of Pravasis of outside India and inside Indian states. It is a unique assembly of nominated members of the government. LDF government is a model to all the Governments all over the world. Kerala under LDF Government is also a model in social engineering, education, Health, Social security pension distribution to old age peoples, public distribution system, Pension Board for Pravasis, providing free net connections (K-FON), etc.

This model prevails only in Kerala. In Kerala, a peaceful atmosphere also prevails. All other states and the people there have to learn about this Kerala model.



K.P.M. SADIQ VAZHAKKAD

*Member, Loka Kerala Sabha Chief Patron,
Keli Kala Samskarika Vedi, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

As we all know, the Govt of Kerala has constituted Loka Kerala Sabha (LKS) as a common platform for the Keralites living across the Globe. It envisages a platform for cultural, socio-political, and economic integration, providing for a more inclusive democratic space wherein these Non-Resident Keralites are truly represented. The immense potential of the Malayali diaspora in facilitating greater participation of the Non-Resident Keralites will definitely reflect in the development of the State of Kerala. This world assembly of Non-Resident Keralites truly recognized the constructive role of the Kerala diaspora through democratic decisions for the overall development of our state and the well-being of the people of Kerala.

MESSAGE



REVI BHASKARAN

CEO-Serikandi Group of companies

LKS is a forum to exchange ideas and best practices to attract Foreign Direct investment, provide assistance to develop the state as a knowledge-based economy, to draw the attention of policy maker's in the state towards the advancement of science and technology in various countries and economic zones across the globe as well as to introduce new Kerala to the world with "motherland at heart" approach while supporting needy Malayali abroad.



ASHRAF THAMARASSERY

Social Worker

Loka Kerala Sabha is a wonderful initiative by the Kerala government to unite and bring together for the advancement of Keralites living all around the world. Despite the busy life and frustrations involved in our public life, we are unaware of the government policies, programs, schemes, etc., which are initiated by the government for our betterment. These government policies have encouraged citizens for a better tomorrow.

I wish and hope that the Loka Kerala Sabha will together make a better environment for the NRKs.



ANNIE JOHN

Ex Vice Chairperson of World Malayalee Federation, Logistics Analyst, USA

We really appreciate the launching of this special edition of "Kerala Calling". Let this be a platform for all non-residents of Kerala to come together, spread their wings of imagination, give vent to their feelings, find a solution to their problems and thus let the motto of Loka Kerala Sabha be fulfilled. We create our own future and think and act in the present in order to create a better tomorrow. Let "Loka Kerala Sabha" be an impetus to all Keralites living abroad to work and strive together for a better future personally, economically, socially, and globally. All my best wishes.

The importance of being a Malayali

When the FIFA World Cup Football kicks off in Qatar, it will be a matter of pride for the Malayalis as well. They have been contributing a significant part of their hardwork for making the greatest spectacle on Earth a grand success!



∧ Lusail Stadium

To go with the flow, along slow-moving canals, to find deep journeys in little country boats, to catch the drift of conversations under quaint log bridges, and discover close-knit lives on distant islands.

HUMAN *by* NATURE

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