

KERALA CALLING

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Head-on with Extreme Poverty

**The Government is resolute in erasing
the last traces of extreme poverty in the State**

Scripting History



The first batch of KAS (Kerala Administrative Service) has successfully completed training and is about to serve the people.



Achieving the Ambitious Goal

In a giant stride towards sustainable development, Kerala has emerged as a shining example in the global fight against extreme poverty. The recent implementation of the Micro Plan and the “Right to Swift Assistance” initiative under the Extreme Poverty Eradication program has marked a significant milestone. With an unwavering commitment to address the plight of the impoverished, Kerala is paving the way for transformation and inspiring regions worldwide to combat poverty effectively.

Kerala’s journey began with a comprehensive survey initiated in 2021, aimed at identifying areas of distress and formulating tailored strategies for poverty alleviation. Through meticulous data collection and analysis, the government successfully identified 64,006 impoverished families, offering a granular understanding of the challenges faced by the extreme poor. The subsequent implementation of micro-level plans laid the foundation for sustainable poverty eradication.

The government’s approach encompasses immediate, short-term, and long-term projects, targeting diverse aspects of poverty alleviation.

Efforts include the provision of essential facilities, healthcare access, and food supply. Housing schemes have been implemented, empowering families to break free from homelessness. Collaboration among various government departments and agencies has ensured the holistic implementation of the Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme.

As we celebrate Kerala’s extraordinary efforts in extreme poverty alleviation, it is crucial to recognise the unwavering commitment of the government and collaborative efforts of various departments and agencies involved. Kerala’s commitment to leaving no one behind sets a commendable precedent, reinforcing the vision of a more equitable and prosperous society.

The tireless efforts of Kerala’s government and its people in their pursuit of extreme poverty eradication serve as a testament to the transformative power of inclusive and sustainable development. Kerala’s success offers hope for a brighter future, not only for the state but for the entire world. Let us draw inspiration from the State’s achievements and work collectively towards a more just and poverty-free world.

T.V. Subhash IAS
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Dr. V. Venu IAS assumes charge as the new Chief Secretary of the State



Dairy Sector: Well-established and Fastest Growing Sector in Kerala

J. Chinchurani,

Minister for Dairy Development & Animal Husbandry

The dairy sector in Kerala has experienced remarkable growth and has become one of the fastest-growing and most promising sectors in the state. Led by the efforts of Milma, the state's milk marketing federation, Kerala has achieved self-sufficiency in milk production and has emerged as a market leader in the sale of milk and its products. With a range of supportive schemes and initiatives, including increased procurement prices, subsidies, and value-added product development, the government is committed to ensuring the prosperity of dairy farmers and the overall development of the dairy sector in Kerala.

The milk sector in Kerala has a very bright future. The situation now is very conducive to the prosperity of dairy farmers and the well-being of the animals. The Kerala government is pledged to enable the dairy farmers of the state to fully utilise the immense marketing potential now available. It is of the firm conviction that in the next five years, the dairy sector in the state will emerge as the foremost among the income-generating sectors. That is the assurance the government gives to the dairy farmers of Kerala.

Today the dairy sector in Kerala is worth around Rs 48,000 crores, according to an IMARC study, and Kerala is among the country's market leaders in the sale of milk and allied

products. The responsibility of the dairy development and animal husbandry departments is to ensure that all the favourable factors such as disease-free cattle, enhanced milk production, reduced production costs and a beneficial market etc reach the dairy farmers without fail. For this purpose, funds are allocated, combining the plans and programmes of the central and state governments and steps taken to ensure that the benefits of these programmes reach the grassroots level. Some of the schemes include Milk shed development scheme, Fodder development schemes, Clean milk programmes, Feed subsidy schemes, insurance schemes etc

Milk procurement and marketing are done by Milma under three regional unions in which 3076 primary milk cooperative societies function with more than 10.41 Lakh dairy farmers as members. In the early days, Milma was not able to go deep into the midst of the farmers. But today, it keeps pace with the trends of the change of time, making constructive changes in its functioning. One result of this change is the depletion in the number of milk vans arriving in Kerala from outside the state. Kerala's milk production in 2021 was 25.34 lakh metric tons.

What Milma is doing now is commendable. The cooperative has today become a synonym for milk, with Milma today procuring 13.50 lakh litres per day and selling around 16.50 lakh litres per day. It now markets a wide array of 80 value-added products. Apart from milk products, Milma markets dosa batter, mineral mixtures and cattle feed. Also commendable are the 'Milma on Wheels' initiative, making use of old buses at KSRTC bus stations, and its participation in the anti-drug campaign through the 'Milma at School' project. Besides, Milma provides a range of subsidies and insurance cover to support dairy farmers.

Milma is offering an array of beneficial schemes for the benefit of Dairy Farmers of Kerala. The highest procurement price



for milk in India is paid by our Dairy Farmers. Milma is also giving free Insurance schemes, subsidised veterinary services, pension plans to Dairy Farmers, Free housing to selected farmers every year, assistance for sourcing milch cows, subsidised feeds etc for the benefit of Dairy Farmers of Kerala. Milma is returning 83% of Milk price to Farmers.

The state is now on the threshold of attaining self-sufficiency in milk production. This has brought down the daily inflow of milk from other states. A milk powder plant, to take care of excess milk, is in the last stage of construction.

The most important requirement of the milch cows is cattle feed, something about which all farmers are concerned. It was to prevent the onslaught of cattle feed from the private sector that the government started a public-sector concern: Kerala Feeds Limited (KFL). Not to be forgotten, Milma, even before KFL, was active in the production of cattle feed, with cattle-feed production units in Alappuzha and Malampuzha. The KFL, manufactures cattle feed with European technical know-how, producing 1,750 tonnes every day in its four manufacturing units across the state. The PSU is also involved in the free supply of cattle feed under a scheme of the government. The company, headquartered near Irinjalakuda in the Thrissur district, has succeeded in overcoming enhanced manufacturing costs and is maintaining a price beneficial to the farmers while still making a profit.

The policy of the government is to encourage farmers to take recourse to alternative feeds given the rising costs of cattle feed. As part of this, financial assistance is being provided for promoting green fodder cultivation. The rate of assistance is Rs 15,000 per acre. Another programme is to take up the cultivation of cholam (maize), which is a major ingredient of cattle feed. It envisages the cultivation of sweet corn in fallow

lands by farmers' cooperatives under the guidance of KFL.

The best way to make the farmers gain from the dairying market is to expand the role of value-added goods. There are 18-odd milk and milk products in the Kerala market today. Of this, milk constitutes 85 per cent.

But if the value-added products are promoted, the profit would go up a hundred per cent. For homemade ghee, the price would be 30 per cent more than the ghee available in the market. Changing food habits in Kerala shows that milk product like paneer is becoming very popular. Training is being imparted to take up the making of value-added goods at home. Finding a suitable market for such goods is also important.

Milk production to meet the full requirement, universal insurance, and modernisation of the existing infrastructure on a time-bound basis are matters that are under the consideration of the government for the promotion of the dairy sector. We are also planning to bring all government-run and semi-government institutions in dairying under a common setup.

Kerala has made great leaps forward in the matter of milk production. The National Dairy Development Board now sees Kerala on par with the country's milk-producing giants such as Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat.

Kerala agrees that the milk marketing federations of each state should have the financial strength and the marketing ability to compete with multinational companies in the field. But it should not be at the cost of the milk cooperative sector of another state. It is universally accepted that the leadership of the daily distribution of milk in the state is with Milma.

It is of the firm conviction that in the next five years, the dairy sector in the state will emerge as the foremost among the income-generating sectors. That is the assurance the government gives to the dairy farmers of Kerala.



Determined to Crush Extreme Poverty

M.B. Rajesh

Minister for Local Self Governments, Rural Development and Excise

The State has embarked on a ground breaking mission to alleviate extreme poverty. Through meticulous surveys, targeted strategies, and comprehensive plans, Kerala is setting an inspiring example for sustainable development and offering hope for a brighter future for its impoverished population.

The event held on April 24, 2023, in Pathanamthitta marked a significant milestone in the government's second term. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, unveiled the comprehensive implementation of the Micro Plan and the "Right to Swift Assistance" initiative as part of the Extreme Poverty Eradication programme. Recognising the utmost importance of this project, the government is committed to its swift and effective implementation.

Extreme Poverty Alleviation is a critical programme that places paramount importance on addressing extreme poverty, and the government has taken proactive measures to ensure its success.

On May 20, 2021, the second term government, led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, made a solemn pledge during the inaugural session of the cabinet meeting. This marked the beginning of a five-year plan aimed at eradicating extreme poverty in the state of Kerala. Immediate instructions were given to initiate a comprehensive survey to identify areas

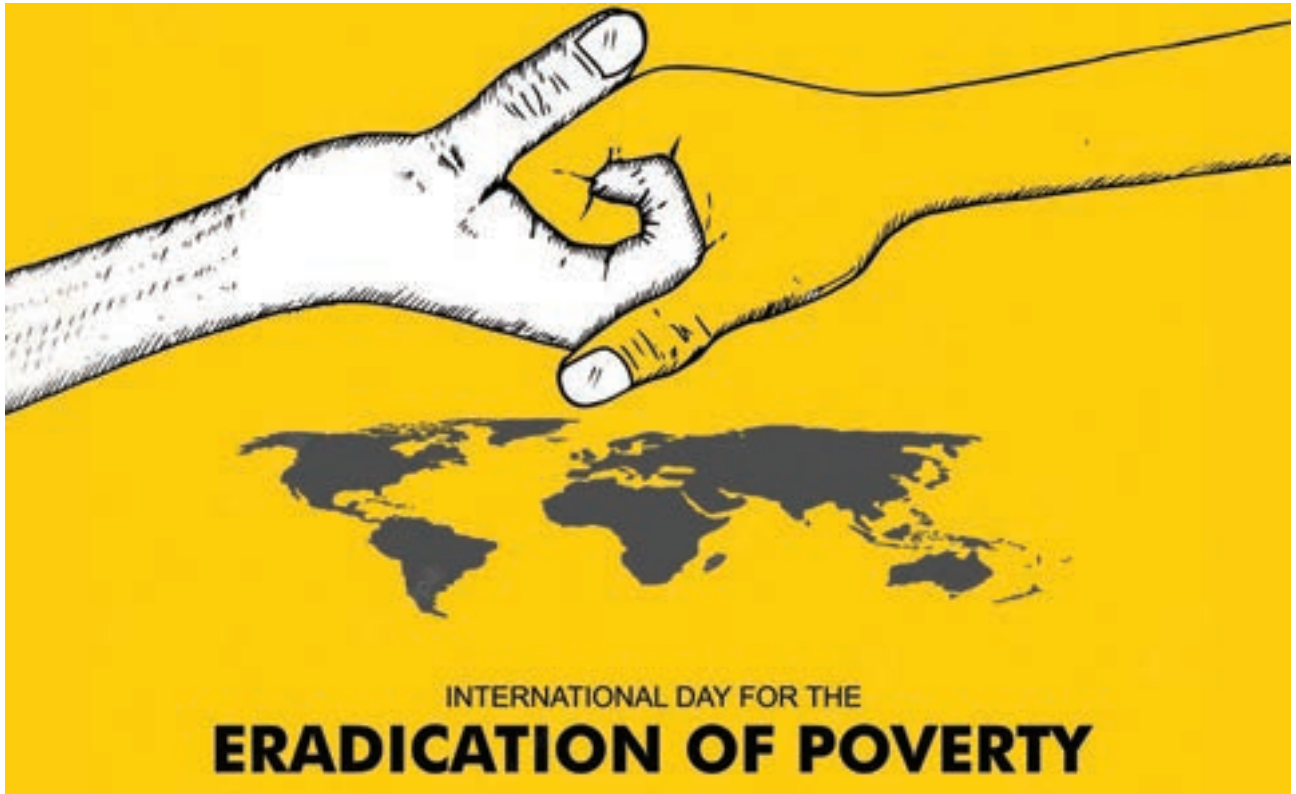
of distress and implement measures for poverty alleviation. Secretaries from the Department Local Self-Government were entrusted with the task of collecting detailed information and conducting a meticulous analysis of the survey data. The survey, which commenced in July 2021, was completed in January 2022. Through this survey, the government was able to identify the extremely poor population and devise micro-level plans to assist them effectively. Efforts were made to discover the impoverished individuals, provide necessary aid, and offer services according to their needs.

Long-term projects have been planned to lift these individuals out of poverty over a period of three years, focusing on their overall well-being. The implementation of these projects involves sustained efforts and time-bound actions.

Through surveys and meticulous investigations, a total of 64,006 impoverished families were identified. In 2021, based on the multidimensional poverty index formulated by the "Niti Ayog," Kerala emerged as the state with the lowest poverty rate. Only 0.71 percent of the population in Kerala falls under the category of poverty.

The lack of four essential factors, namely food, secure housing, basic income, and good health, forms the basis for determining extreme poverty. The information gathered through the process of identifying extreme poverty was meticulously collected, incorporating both macro and micro perspectives. This comprehensive approach helped in formulating an accurate and reliable list.

Micro Plan is a meticulous initiative aimed at liberating families and individuals from poverty after identifying them through the process of extreme poverty assessment. Special



guidelines were prepared and implemented to create Micro Plans. In addition to the collected information, additional details were included if necessary. The programme was designed to consider the opinions of each family and individual regarding their state of extreme poverty and the strategies to overcome it. Under the leadership of KILA, an expert group formulated the Micro Plan in a format that comprehensively gathered information about each impoverished family and individual.

The highest number of impoverished families, 8,553, was found in Malappuram district, while the lowest number, 1,071, was found in Kottayam district. No impoverished individuals have been found in the panchayats of Kumaramputhur in Alappuzha district and Kallar in Kasaragod district.

In the list of extreme poverty, 35% of the families are experiencing difficulty without any income sources. 24% suffer from severe health problems due to lack of access to healthcare. 21% of people face food scarcity. 15% of individuals do not have suitable housing. Only 3% belong to the category of extremely vulnerable groups. Among all the families, 5% come under the scheduled tribe category, while 20% fall under the scheduled tribe category, and 75% belong to the general category. There are 2,737 families residing in coastal areas.

Activities can be categorized as immediate, short-term, and long-term. Short-term projects encompass initiatives that can be completed within a period of three months to two years. These projects involve providing essential facilities and learning resources, establishing permanent treatment centers,

assessing the nutritional and health status of individuals and providing appropriate food, connecting homeless individuals with rehabilitation centers, establishing community kitchens in situations where services are required for a larger population, distributing food kits, facilitating access to various government health schemes, and ensuring service provision while considering the disease status. Additionally, short-term projects involve supplying mobility aids to those in need, offering fundamental facilities for self-sufficiency, providing housing to the homeless through housing schemes, or establishing shelter homes for individuals requiring accommodation.

A comprehensive long-term plan consists of projects that are not feasible to implement within short-term plans. These long-term plans are designed to be implemented over a duration of two to five years and have been prepared by local self-governing bodies. Micro-plans, comprising 77,557 urgent projects, 36,433 short-term projects, 30,696 long-term projects, and 1,641 other projects, have been formulated by these local self-government bodies. The implementation of these micro-plans, with a focus on essential needs such as food, shelter, health, rehabilitation, and income, has commenced within the local self-government bodies.

As part of the urgent assistance provided to impoverished individuals, essential documents were made available to every family under the name "Avakasam Athivegam". Through this initiative, 5132 families obtained ration cards, 3974 people received Aadhaar cards, and 4382 individuals obtained election identification cards. Social security pensions were granted to 1721 people classified as extremely



poor. Additionally, 1281 individuals obtained health insurance cards, 1257 people obtained bank accounts, and 1576 individuals received employment guarantee cards. 664 individuals were enrolled in the Kudumbashree programme, while 508 people were issued disability identification cards. Another crucial activity involved including 5722 families who required housing and 5615 families in need of both property and housing in the LIFE list. These families were eligible for the LIFE housing scheme but had not previously applied. In the 2020 LIFE list, there were 2930 ultra-poor individuals in need of housing only and 1531 ultra-poor individuals in need of both property and housing. Measures have been taken to provide new houses to 15798 extremely poor families. 1558 people have commenced house construction, and 104 individuals have successfully completed their housing projects.

Nine individuals were issued transgender identity cards. Additionally, 671 individuals were provided with cooking gas connections, 216 people had their houses wired, and electricity connections were extended to 118 individuals. Furthermore, property certificates were given to 97 people. Cooked meals are being supplied to impoverished families lacking cooking facilities, while food kits are distributed to those who have the means to cook. Food distribution is carried out through various means, including People's Hotels, Kudumbashree Neighbourhood Groups, Voluntary Organizations, and Doorstep Service.

In certain cases, depending on the circumstances of the families, immediate and short-term service plans may need to be extended for longer durations. To address such

situations at a micro level, a long-term micro plan has been devised, encompassing three categories of projects. These include 77,557 emergency projects, 36,433 short-term projects, and 32,337 long-term projects implemented at the local level.

Various government departments and agencies play a crucial role in effectively implementing the Extreme Poverty Alleviation Programme. The Civil Supplies Department is responsible for distributing ration cards, the Revenue Department handles the distribution of election identification cards, and Akshaya Centers are involved in distributing Aadhaar cards. These departments have actively worked to ensure that these essential documents reach the intended beneficiaries.

The activities of the Health department are also noteworthy in this programme. They have been instrumental in providing treatment and medicine to those in need. The health department has implemented various strategies such as home visits and organizing special medical camps to identify individuals requiring medical attention. Out of the 34,544 people identified as sick, 22,054 were taken to hospitals for further treatment. Additionally, the health department ensures doorstep services and ambulance facilities for those who require them.

The Department of Education has taken the initiative to provide education to the uneducated individuals among the extremely poor and those who require further educational assistance. They have implemented measures to provide educational facilities and study materials to all children belonging to the poorest learners. Moreover, the Education



Department conducts counselling sessions and vocational training programmes for children.

The Department of Social Justice is actively involved in the rehabilitation of marginalized individuals, including the mentally challenged, differently-abled, transgender, elderly, destitute, and vagrants. They undertake efforts to provide support and assistance to these vulnerable groups, aiming to improve their quality of life and reintegrate them into society.

Efforts are underway to address malnutrition among impoverished mothers and children through the Department of Women and Child Development. The Department of Cooperation has also taken steps to provide financial assistance such as grants and loans through societies and banks, specifically targeting the most disadvantaged individuals.

Various departments, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Departments, Fisheries, Water Authority, and the Electricity Department, are collaborating with this initiative in their respective domains. Additionally, Kudumbashree has played a noteworthy role in ensuring the distribution of food through people's hotels.

The AIDS Control Society is providing services, including treatment, to 301 AIDS patients who are classified as extremely poor. Many community organizations dedicated to providing mass services have also come forward to support the eradication efforts. It is imperative to gather and coordinate these organizations to maximize their impact.

At the state level, the Extreme Poverty Alleviation Cell operates under the Principal Directorate of the Local Self-Government Department. Its role is to coordinate and

review various activities related to the Extreme Poverty Alleviation Scheme. The Principal Director of the Local Self-Government Department serves as the State Nodal Officer.

To facilitate efficient monitoring and evaluation, a web portal has been created to track project activities at different levels, starting from the ward level and extending up to the state level. This portal provides information on the individuals classified as extremely poor.

Additionally, Kudumbashree is developing a mobile application to assess the progress of the project. Once implemented, this application will enable accurate assessment of the progress of micro plans. Nodal Officers, Assistant Nodal Officers, and the Vigilance and Monitoring Committee have been appointed to evaluate project activities at the local body, district, and state levels.

By lifting 64,006 families out of extreme poverty, the state of Kerala has the potential to become a global example of sustainable development, successfully achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of eradicating poverty, ensuring a society free from hunger, promoting good health and well-being, providing quality education, fostering gender equality, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation, and promoting affordable and clean energy.

Through its efforts, Kerala contributes to the global agenda of poverty reduction, ensuring that no one is left behind. The state's successful endeavours in poverty alleviation serve as inspiration for other regions and countries, highlighting the potential for positive change through effective policies and targeted interventions.

The Battle has Begun



M.G. Rajamanickam IAS

*Principal Director, LS GD & Commissioner Rural Development
State Nodal Officer EPEP*

Kerala has made significant progress in reducing poverty, with only 0.71% of its population living in poverty. Despite these achievements, the government acknowledged the presence of extreme poverty and made a bold commitment to eradicate it within five years. In a powerful demonstration of their dedication to change, the government made a bold promise to eradicate extreme poverty within just five years. This commitment was swiftly followed by intensive discussions in the first cabinet meeting, leading to the formation of the Extreme Poverty Identification Process (EPIP) under the Local Self Government Department (LSGD).

The Extreme Poverty Identification Process (EPIP) was launched to identify and uplift families and individuals suffering from extreme poverty. Meticulous data collection and fieldwork were conducted, resulting in a list of 64,006 families and 103,099 individuals officially identified as living in extreme poverty. This journey, known as the 'Extreme Poverty Identification Process,' serves as the inaugural step toward fulfilling the state's vision and supporting the country's Sustainable Development Goals. It is an embodiment of hope, resilience, and the unwavering belief that extreme poverty can be eradicated.

Enumeration Results		
Sl.No.	Process	Households/ Individuals
1	Identified in Focus Group Discussions	118309
2	Subjected to enumeration	87158
3	Number in the priority list	73747
4	Finalist approved by gramsabhas	64006



Premraj from Anchuthengu receiving citizenship document from the panchayath officials.

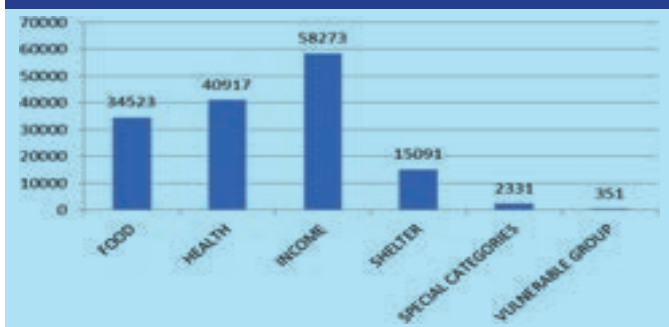
District wise split up of category-wise number of extreme poor in the State

District	ST	SC	other	Unknown category	Total
Malappuram	358	1310	6868	17	8553
TVM	140	1881	5214	43	7278
Kozhikode	106	1063	5582	22	6773
Palakkad	250	1588	4570	35	6443
Ernakulam	124	1223	4272	31	5650
Thrissur	44	1337	3604	28	5013
Kollam	68	1254	3098	41	4461
Kannur	226	273	3696	13	4208
Alappuzha	50	734	2809	20	3613
Wayanad	1028	201	1695	7	2931
Kasaragod	300	324	2130	14	2768
Idukki	233	594	1821	17	2665
Pathanamthitta	54	796	1709	20	2579
Kottayam	40	185	839	7	1071
Total	3021	12763	47907	315	64006

District wise percent contribution to extreme poverty



Number under deprivation categories - entire state (after data identification)



Overcoming Challenges, Transforming Lives: Convergence and Milestones in Extreme Poverty Alleviation

In the pursuit of eradicating extreme poverty, various government departments and agencies have joined forces, realizing the collective responsibility to uplift the most vulnerable. The 'Avakasham Athivegam' campaign served as a catalyst, inspiring proactive actions across departments to address both short-term and long-term needs of the extreme poor.

'Avakasam Athivegam' Campaign: Empowering the Marginalized

During data collection, it was discovered that 21,512 individuals in Kerala were deprived of basic citizenship documents. It was an unbearable realization, knowing that so many people were living without the fundamental rights and recognition they deserved. Deep within, I felt an unwavering determination to rectify this injustice. We launched the Avakasam Athivegam campaign to provide citizenship documents and restore dignity. We delivered documents to thousands and persisted to reach the remaining individuals. These documents represented belonging and hope. As the Principal Director of LSGD, I took pride in being part of this transformative movement. A momentous occasion took place in April 2023, as the Chief Minister declared the completion of the Micro Plan preparation and 'Avakasham Athivegam' Campaign at the district Stadium in Pathanamthitta. The campaign showcased Kerala's commitment to justice and equality, rewriting the narratives of the marginalized.

Health Department

The Health Department provided free treatment, medicines, and follow-up care. Home visits, medical camps, and doorstep services were crucial for those in need. During my field visit to Munnar as part of the Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP), I encountered a poignant situation that left a lasting impact on me. While observing the healthcare initiatives implemented by the Health Department, I came across a child with autism who had to visit the hospital every month to obtain essential medication. This revelation stirred something deep within me, urging me to take action and address this issue. Discussions were initiated for doorstep medicine delivery through 'Vathilpadi Sevanam' to ease the burden on families. We advocated for a bedridden patient's admission, highlighting the importance of urgent medical care. These experiences reinforced the significance of healthcare in EPEP. To further strengthen our efforts, we have already presented a proposal to the government, requesting the inclusion



The Extreme Poverty Eradication Project identified 15,798 homeless families in need of housing. The government prioritized housing for 8,652 families and land and housing for 7,146 families.

of EPEP beneficiaries in the Karunya Scheme. While there is still progress to be made, each small victory motivates us to continue addressing healthcare needs and promoting inclusivity.

Civil Supplies Department

The Civil Supplies Department efficiently distributed ration cards to 5132 families. Their program ‘Oppam’ gained popularity and was replicated throughout the state, delivering food items and kits to the extreme poor. Also, the Principal Directorate, LSGD has been actively engaged in discussions at the government level regarding the distribution of food kits to all EPEP families in need of food support. By collaborating with local bodies and Vathilpadi Sevanam volunteers, we aim to provide timely and appropriate food assistance, addressing the specific requirements of the extreme poor and ensuring food security.

Social Justice Department

Collaborating with the Department of Social Justice, the

Social Justice Department embarked on a mission to rehabilitate nomadic communities, provide palliative treatment, and offer assistance to the mentally challenged, differently-abled, transgender individuals, the elderly, destitute, and nomads. These combined efforts aimed to create inclusive and supportive communities.

Housing

The Extreme Poverty Eradication Project identified 15,798 homeless families in need of housing. The government prioritized housing for 8,652 families and land and housing for 7,146 families. After comparing the data with the LIFE mission housing scheme, it was found that 2,930 houseless and 1,531 landless-houseless individuals were already beneficiaries. A government order included the remaining 5,722 houseless and 5,615 landless-houseless individuals, ensuring a total of 15,798 families would be provided with houses or house and land. Construction has begun, showing progress in providing secure and dignified living conditions for the extreme poor.

Best Practices - Models that Inspire Hope

'Oppam' - The Thrissur Model: Delivering Hope at Doorsteps

In Thrissur district, proactive measures were taken by Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) to address the needs of 5013 families living in extreme poverty. One notable initiative was the 'Oppam' program, implemented by the Civil Supplies Department. It ensures the delivery of essential food items and kits to the doorsteps of vulnerable families through autorickshaw drivers. This successful program has benefited 400 families and inspired replication in other local self-governments across the state.

Velu and Girija, a struggling couple in the district, lived in a cattle-shed with their children. Their income depended on cattle rearing and wages from the NREGS. After Girija's spinal surgery, they faced financial instability. To help them, the LIFE Mission provided a new house with a grant of four lakhs. This housing rehabilitation has provided them with shelter, and Velu now earns income through cattle rearing.

Ayyapan, from Avannisery, lacked income and required civic documents for pensions. With support from the authorities, he obtained an Aadhaar Card, granting him access to regular social security pension benefits. Similarly, Susheela, a differently-abled individual from Arimbur, received a tricycle model wheelchair, enabling her to earn a living by selling lottery tickets.



Way Forward: Paving the Path to a Transformed Kerala

The Government aims to eradicate extreme poverty by November 1, 2025. By that date, 26,551 families will be uplifted through comprehensive assistance in food, shelter, healthcare, and income support. Priority will be given to families facing individual distress factors, targeting food scarcity (4,736 families), health challenges (13,153 families), and both (8,662 families). An additional 26,900 families will be empowered by November 1, 2024, and efforts will be made to support all remaining families out of extreme poverty by November 1, 2025. This endeavor will impact 103,099 individuals from the 64,006 families, contributing to the achievement of zero poverty and zero hunger in Kerala. The government seeks collective support from citizens, community organizations, and government departments to create a society where extreme poverty is eliminated, enabling a future of dignity, empowerment, and hope for all.

By that date, 26,551 families will be uplifted through comprehensive assistance in food, shelter, healthcare, and income support. Priority will be given to families facing individual distress factors, targeting food scarcity (4,736 families), health challenges (13,153 families), and both (8,662 families).

The Roadmap to Achieve the Target



Dr. Joy Elamon

Director General, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

Nava Kerala Karma Padhathi was launched to address the second generation issues the State of Kerala is facing as well as to accomplish the aspirations and needs of the future Kerala. As in any such development initiatives, poverty becomes one of the prime concerns. The annual report of NITI Ayog for 2021-22 gives detailed information on Multi-Dimensional Poverty in India. According to the report, Kerala is the only state with poverty below the value of one compared with other states. (Value is 0.71). Similarly, Kerala has been regularly placed at the top with regard to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) too. However, the Government of Kerala led by Pinarayi Vijayan has upheld the basic principle of SDGs - Leave No One Behind.





Paul Jeborias receiving food kit from Anchuthengu panchayath officials as part of Extreme Poverty Eradication programme

Economic Review, 2021-22 of the Kerala State Planning Board, states that even though Kerala is better off than all other States in India in terms of average poverty estimates, there are still a few pockets of deprivation in the State. It points to the need for actions focusing on these groups to get them out of the poverty trap. It is in this context that the identification of the Extreme Poor was initiated, which is to be followed up with appropriate programmes.

From Poverty to Extreme Poverty

It has not been very easy to assess extreme poverty. Even defining extreme poverty is a difficult task, socially, academically and politically. The Extreme Poor are those who are unable to meet their basic needs (food, clothing, safe accommodation, basic income) for survival and whose survival is in crisis. They are people

who are unable to convince others about their own condition and overcome it. There are also people who are physically and mentally incapable of making earnings for their living and survival. In addition is the group of people who are unable to move forward in their daily life due to mental challenges, old age and chronic illness.

Extreme Poverty Identification Programme - The Approach

The approach was to identify the Extreme Poor who are left out of the earlier schemes, and to help them move out of poverty by implementing survival schemes through micro plans. Named as “Extreme Poverty Identification Program (EPIP), it has been declared by the Government that the identified families would be brought out of poverty within five years through household-level micro

plans.

Local Self Governments and Poverty Alleviation

Local Self Governments (LSG) have played a major role in poverty alleviation activities in Kerala. The LSG-Kudumbashree project Ashraya Scheme, was launched in 1998 with the objective of alleviating poverty in Kerala, is one of the most significant in the history of the State. All subsequent poverty alleviation schemes were implemented in Kerala with the participation of Kudumbashree and Local Self Governments.

A Theoretical Framework

The EPIP framework for the identification of the Extreme Poor has evolved by weaving the deprivation criteria of both Kudumbashree Ashraya and MPI. As a process of identifying the



Extreme Poor, relevant changes have been made during the adaptation process (Handbook on Extreme Poor Identification Process, 2021).

The major criteria included in the assessment are Food, Health, Income and Place of residence. These indicators are identified because they are critical in leading an individual/family to an Extreme Poor status. Considering the historical vulnerabilities of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Coastal Communities, special indicators have been developed for them. Other than historical vulnerability, social deprivations of certain groups such as HIV-affected, LGBTQIA+, orphans and urban poor have also been addressed through certain

special indicators. Among multiple vulnerabilities, the families affected with cumulative vulnerabilities will be given more importance. In addition to the general criteria, special criteria were developed for historically and socially vulnerable groups. Sub-criteria have been developed under each major criterion and special criteria. All the criteria have been divided into two sections: critical and Extreme critical.

Participatory Process to identify the Extreme Poor

The most common condition of the Extreme Poor is that they are unable to advocate for themselves or

even raise their voice. A traditional poverty survey method may not be effective in identifying the Extreme Poor as they are incapable of raising their voices for their own rights and often go unnoticed by the general public. A participatory process at the local level involving a present active fragment of the general community is essential to identify Extreme Poor families.

Rolling out of Extreme Poor Identification Process

After preparing guidelines, intensive training from the state level to the ward level has been organised. Peoples' committees from ward to LSG level were formed across the

state. Committees with multi-departmental participation were formed at district and state levels to coordinate the process effectively. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) for identifying the extreme poor were. Ward-level committees have been able to finalise their lists of the deserved after the FGDs, by compiling them. Enumeration teams were formed in all wards comprising one ward officer, one facilitator and one volunteer. This enumeration team did the household enumeration process after preparing the list. Twenty per cent of the enumerated household data were super-checked by a block-level super-checking team. Draft lists of the deserved were prepared after enumeration, and super checking were placed in Grama/ Ward Sabhas. LSG-level draft lists of the deserved were prepared and published after Grama/ Ward Sabhas and chances for options for grievance redressal were also given. Final lists of all LSGs were published after addressing the complaints from the public. The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) have acted as a major tool in the identification process. The FGDs were designed to handpick the extreme poor with the discussions based on the criteria. A total of 57,947 FGDs were conducted in the state in the process. The average participation per FGD was 15.01. Followed by survey method, super check mechanism and Gram Sabha ensured the transparency of the process. The total number of 13,74,085 participants were involved in the entire identification process. The entire list of households was also geotagged. All these finally led to the identification of 64006 households who are extremely poor. The results were in line with the Multidimensional Poverty Index reports by the NITI Aayog, 0.73% of the State's population were identified as extremely poor.

Category wise distribution of households

Category	Number of households
SC	12673
ST	3021
Unrecognisable	315
Other Categories	47907
Grand Total	64006

District wise distribution

District	SC	ST	Unrecognisable	Other categories	Grand Total
Alappuzha	734	50	20	2809	3613
Ernakulam	1223	124	31	4272	5650
Idukki	594	233	17	1821	2665
Kannur	273	226	13	3696	4208
Kasaragod	324	300	14	2130	2768
Kollam	1254	68	41	3098	4461
Kottayam	185	40	7	839	1071
Kozhikode	1063	106	22	5582	6773
Malappuram	1310	358	17	6868	8553
Palakkad	1588	250	35	4570	6443
Pathanamthitta	796	54	20	1709	2579
TVM	1881	140	43	5214	7278
Thrissur	1337	44	28	3604	5013
Wayanad	201	1028	7	1695	2931
Grand Total	12763	3021	315	47907	64006

The major criteria included in the assessment are Food, Health, Income and Place of residence. These indicators are identified because they are critical in leading an individual/family to an Extreme Poor status. Considering the historical vulnerabilities of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Coastal Communities, special indicators have been developed for them.

The Kerala Experiment with Micro Plans



Dr. Jiju P. Alex

Member, Kerala State Planning Board

Among the states of India, Kerala has the remarkable legacy of making prudent policy initiatives to deal with poverty. This has had tremendous results, with absolute poverty reduced to levels envied by other states.

According to Kerala's poverty index, only 11.3% of the population is poor, compared to 29.5% in the country in 2011-12. There has been a constant drop in poverty over the last 40 years, with the incidence of poverty falling from 59.8 percent in 1973-74 to 25.4% in 1993-94, and then to 11.3% in 2011-12. NITI-Aayog reports that in terms of multidimensional poverty index in 2021, Kerala is the least poor state in India. Only 0.7% of the population are multidimensionally poor considering various parameters.

Unique methodology of estimating extreme poverty

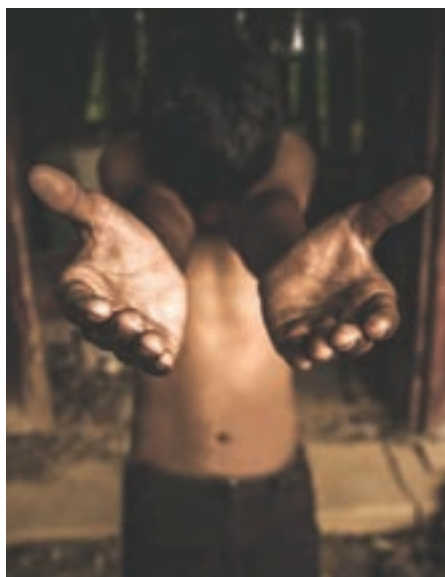
This massive attempt is unique in terms of the methodology it adopted: detailed household survey to identify the poor in terms of well-defined parameters, assessment of the exact causes of



poverty by individual household examination and formulation of strategies to address each cause of poverty. Absolute poverty was defined in terms of key parameters like debilitating health conditions, disability, old age, lack of entitlement and material possessions like land and shelter, lack of livelihoods etc. The status of impoverishment of marginalised sections of the society like SC and ST were assessed with broader criteria like remoteness of dwelling places, low education status, malnutrition, lack of amenities like drinking water, electricity etc. The method of identification of the extreme poor had been a difficult task as targeting had to be precise, without the risk of missing out eligible households. The survey was done by members of the Kudumbasree and led by local self-governments.

Distribution of households across causes of deprivation

The survey has identified 64006 extremely poor households across the state. Out of this, as much as 52,000 households are in rural areas; 3,021 belong to scheduled tribes and 12,763 belong to scheduled castes. Disaggregation of household data based on the criteria of defining poverty and the current status of households has given clearer picture of the nature of poverty, its causes and how they are related to each other. Distribution of extreme poor households across key factors contributing to deprivation showed that 35% of the households did not have adequate income, 24% experienced health related issues, 21% were deprived of food and 15% did not have shelter. This distribution does not imply that a household is exclusively affected by one type of deprivation. Rather, most households are impoverished on multiple levels. A thorough examination of the houses would also assist us in identifying targeted treatments at the household and individual levels.



Formulation of extreme poverty eradication sub plans and micro plans

It is expected that the identified homes and individuals will be lifted out of extreme poverty by 2026. Each local authority would develop an extreme poverty subplan for this purpose. Kudumbasree will assist in the implementation and monitoring of the subplan. Each subplan would be a collection of microplans, which would comprise projects to address deprivation factors in each household.

The interventions at the household level have been categorised into immediate care plans, intermediate plans and long-term plans. The services to be provided to the extremely poor households on an urgent basis are grouped under the immediate care plan. They also include services that can be provided readily by various development agencies. This may include entitlements like Aadhaar card, ration card, health insurance, food, health care etc. The list of households that require such services would be handed over to the concerned development agencies for immediate action. Similarly, services or facilities that can be provided in a span of three months to two years have been included under the intermediate plan. Providing basic facilities,

educational assistance, rehabilitating people living in streets to care homes, continuous medical help, connecting the identified households and individuals to various welfare schemes etc are included under this category. Local governments would produce long-term comprehensive plans in circumstances when neither immediate nor intermediate plans were possible and interventions would take longer to implement. The projects will be scrutinised as per existing guidelines and approved by the District Planning Committee.

The numerous interventions indicated in the micro plan will be aggregated at the local government level based on the development sector. The concerned working group would formulate development projects, which would be carried out by the related implementing officer. As an early entry-level action of the government's historic intervention, a campaign was initiated to give documentation of various forms of entitlements to extreme poverty households in a timely way. According to a recent estimate, as many as 79% of households have received Aadhaar cards, 74% have received ration cards, and 72% have received election identity cards. As the first phase of formulation of development plans by local governments concluded in the year 2023-24, 1232 projects worth Rs. 90.03 crores have been formulated by local governments across the state.

This historic mission of eradicating extreme poverty has been made possible by the robust system of democratic decentralisation in Kerala, which enables the local bodies to intervene proactively at the grassroots level. Kerala can expect to have reached an important milestone in its enviable journey towards equitable and sustainable development if the micro-plans for reducing severe poverty are properly implemented. It would be known as the first state to fully fulfil two of the most critical sustainable development goals: 'no poverty' and 'zero hunger' through decades of persistent actions.

A Mission with a Difference



Manjula Bharathy

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Among the states in India, Kerala has the remarkable legacy of having Ashraya - the destitute caring programme of the Kudumbashree - one of the unique interventions of the Mission with a caring and humane face to eradicate extreme poverty of the most vulnerable and destitute population of the State

One of the key criticisms of Development discourse has been that it depoliticises poverty by rendering it into a technically manageable problem (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Harris, 2002). Kudumbashree differs from conventional programmes that it perceives poverty not just as the deprivation of money but as the deprivation of basic human rights and denial of spaces to exercise one's agency and subjectivity. The poor, thus identified, were organized under a well-networked CBO. This methodology has since been incorporated into the policy framework of the state for identification of the underprivileged. Ashraya is one such important interventions of the Kudumbashree for the most underprivileged.

Visalakshy, Alamkode panchayat, Malappuram, a woman whose legs and hands are crippled, lost her mother at the age of 17. She had lost her father when she was 2 years old. Her middle-aged spinster





aunts took her to a rented house. One of the aunts was not mentally balanced. It was the other aunt who earned income and food for the family by doing sundry jobs in the neighbouring houses. But she died in January 2011. Good Samaritans provided food for both Visalakshy and her mentally challenged aunt. Two weeks later the mentally challenged aunt too died. On the third day of the death, Visalakshy telephoned the CDS president. She wanted to meet the president. The president went to her house next morning with a food packet. Visalakshy gave the president a hundred rupee note and said that she needed a bottle of poison.

An urgent meeting of the CDS was convened that after noon. The panchayat governing body was also invited for the meeting. The issue of Visalakshy was presented at the meeting. As suggested by some members, an enquiry was made with the office of the government rescue home at Thavanoor, 30 km off Alamkode, about the possibility of getting admission for Visalakshy. The reply was heart breaking. They said that they were finding it difficult to take care of the destitutes who have

both legs and hands. Without going in for much discussion, the CDS decided to take care of Visalakshy.

A working arrangement was designed for providing food and care for Visalakshy; the members would be with her on rotation basis. The person who has to be with her on each day of the month was scheduled in advance, so that there would be no hiccups. In case of any inconvenience for any member, that was to be brought to the notice of CDS president, who would make alternative arrangements. Rs.500/- was collected from each NHG in the panchayat. Some philanthropists also chipped in. A bank account of Rs. 2, 00,000 was opened in the name of Visalakshy. Necessary medicines and medical care was made available. CDS provided her books and periodicals to read. It is also proposed to buy a TV set for her. Visalakshy feels relieved. The CDS too.

Sulaikha Pulakkattu from Nannampura panchayat of Malappuram district was a destitute; her husband had left her two decades ago. She has many ailments. Her only source of income was the earning her son, a 6th standard student, who did

sundry jobs in a nearby hotel on the weekends. She was living in a make shift shed in the government land. When a meeting was convened to form the NHG, Pulari, in ward 9 of Nannampura panchayat, 14 women and CDS office bearers noticed a woman standing at a distance from the venue of the meeting. Though she was asked to join the meeting, she was reluctant, and said that she had no money to pay as monthly installment for thrift programme. But the NHG made her a member. CDS decided to find out a secure place of residence for her. Her husband's brother agreed to make a thatched one -room shed for her, attached to his house.

Sulaikha was selected as a beneficiary of the Ashraya project of the panchayat, following which she got a house, food, and goats. This bettered her conditions, and she became an active member of the NHG. When the sitting president put in her papers due to personal reasons, Sulaikha was unanimously elected the new president. The new position brought out the organisational abilities in Sulaikha. Pulari soon became one of the best NHGs in the panchayat. Sulaikha

found herself relieved of many health problems also. In the 2010 panchayat elections, she contested from ward 9. She defeated the sitting member, whose political party had been winning the seat for the past 35 years. Sulaikha, who was once a beneficiary of Ashraya, today has brought hope to many a destitutes. She makes frequent interventions in the functioning of the Ashraya programme, and suggests corrective measures. After 21 years of desertion, the husband returned to Sulaikha.

This social intervention of Kudumbashree and equipping its members to be strong pillars of support to the most needy and poor and even enabling them to evolve as leaders at local level through Ashraya, as in the case of Sulaikha, is one of the most remarkable interventions of Kudumbashree.

It was found during the ADS- CDS experience sharing sessions that there are many needy poor who are not given any credit, and who continue to rely on the informal structure in the most exploited manner. They were asked to save from their scarce resources needed

for consumption investment. The provision of insurance, in this context, means that they are also being asked to bear the risk of their poverty. Despite the rhetoric of human rights and democratisation, Kudumbashree workers observed that there was no coherent agenda for addressing unequal power relations at national and international levels that caused this poverty. Ashraya, a welfare programme of Kudumbashree, evolved as a result of this insight and perspective of social justice and human rights.

Genesis

Kerala State Planning Board (KSPB) formed working groups to evolve the development strategy for the 10th plan. There was a working group for poverty eradication and social security; its discussions focused on the ways to evolve strategies for developing a new programme to protect destitutes. The working group in their discussions came to a consensus that the prevalent programmes and projects for destitutes seldom reached the really needy, because the poorest among the poor did not come

under the yardsticks meant for such programmes. IRDP programme applied scientific methods for identifying the poor families as daridrar (poor) and sudha daridrar (extremely poor). But the group felt that this process of identification had its limitations. It was observed that the better among the poor tracked down the projects and availed their benefits. Moreover, the bureaucracy was more interested in achieving the targets and not in identifying the really needy.

Meanwhile, meetings with the Kudumbashree women at the NHGs also started giving a new picture of the poverty at the grass root level, especially of the destitutes. A crucial factor to be taken care of in poverty eradication was the issue of destitutes, who constitute 1-2 percent of the population in Kerala, and who are voiceless, powerless with zero access over any form of resources. A close look at the destitutes also indicates that majority of them are women. 10-15 years of age gap between husband and wife that forces a woman to lead lonely lives after the death of her husband; desertion of the wife and





the physically or mentally challenged child or children; or the sudden demise of the husband, if he happens to be the single earning member of the family, were all indicated as reasons for women to be counted as majority among the destitutes. The evaluation reports from the NHGs and the CDSs revealed that most of the destitutes were not included in the voters list, and hence could not avail any form of government benefits, and were devoid of any form of social support system either from the family or state or any institution. Kudumbashree, being a poverty alleviation programme, thus decided to give importance to these destitutes, irrespective of their gender. Ashraya was the response to such an initiative. Instead of making those who could walk, run, this initiative aims to make somebody who cannot move, walk.

Ashraya evaluates all the necessary requirements needed for a destitute family to come out of its impoverished condition, and provides all that is necessary to move forward. Ashraya aims to capacitate the destitute family to cross more than one critical hurdle.

Operationalising the Convergence

Poverty eradication would remain a myth unless people at the grass root level become part of the decision-making process. It could be easier for those in the marginalised rungs to identify those who are more marginalised than them. That explains why Kudumbashree women succeeded in effectively conducting the survey with social responsibility to identify the most needed beneficiaries for the Ashraya project.

There is a seven- point index as the BPL eligibility criteria. Kudumbashree evolved eight more indices to locate the beneficiaries for Ashraya project. They must fulfill the seven criteria of the BPL index and one from among the eight criteria, making it 7 +1.

Ashraya was a concept of convergence initiated by Kudumbashree by facilitating and filling the gap, wherever it comes. There are a plethora of programmes and schemes meant for the welfare activities at the state and central level. But the problem was the convergence and integration and sectoral linking of the programmes

to make them meaningful exercises to effectuate the desired change.

Towards this, Kudumbashree convened meeting of people who work in the area, and took their views into consideration. Persons from different line departments, who are the concerned implementing officers and who are enthusiastic about their work, were pooled in. Meeting of such officers from all districts were convened for evolving guidelines, which were given to district missions for their comments. A group of resource persons were trained at the state level who, in turn, trained the CDS chairpersons and two or three more CDS members. They asked the NHGs to identify the beneficiaries as per the modified guidelines. ADS has to inspect of the list of beneficiaries at the ward level. The risk index and other eight indices are analysed at this stage. ADS evaluates whether the beneficiary lists made by NHGs include the right persons. The challenge is to ensure that the most eligible are selected. After assessment of the needs at ADS level, it is given to CDS, where it is cross checked with the guidelines. Project is finalised at the CDS level.

The service package that can be provided under the Ashraya programme includes: survival needs - food, health care, clothing, pension education; basic needs—land, house, drinking water, hygiene; development needs – Job, technical knowledge etc; psychological needs – the social support to interact with other communities with self-confidence; and special projects – aiming to help those who face physical and mental challenges and ostracisation.

Madikkai Panchayat: A Model of PPPC Partnership for Ashraya Programme

The ways in which the panchayat and CDS had pooled in the money through different sources, both from departments and through philanthropy is interesting. For instance, in Madikkai gram panchayat in Kasaragodu a meeting of the panchayat was convened to find money for the Ashraya programme, that exemplifies Public- Private- Panchayat- CDS (PPPC) partnership. All the

panchayat members, including the president, agreed to deposit their sitting fees for one month, in three installments, in the account opened for Ashraya. When the members expressed their readiness to donate their honorarium, the panchayat staff also volunteered to donate one day salary; in some cases, up to Rs.2000. Besides this, employees of schools, PHC, homoeopathic hospital, agriculture office, ayurveda hospital, banks, and cooperative and public sector undertakings expressed their readiness to donate one day's salary to the Ashraya programme. In addition to the panchayat fund earmarked for Ashraya, the panchayat went on a donation spree from the general public, and made arrangements to collect, as donation, small amounts from those who came to panchayat office for other services. The idea got good support from the staff and the public. Thus, Madikkai panchayat also became one of the first 100 panchayats to do the Ashraya programme. The block and district panchayats also helped the initiative. During the first phase, the

panchayat could rehabilitate 60 out of the 72 eligible families.

Mapping Experience

The Perinjanam CDS in Kerala has introduced a unique integration of the Ashraya program with a pain and palliative care unit. This innovative approach has been made possible through the collaboration with Alpha, an experienced NGO in the field. Volunteers from the CDS and ADS (Area Development Society) actively participate in the pain and palliative care unit, offering their services to those in need.

One beneficiary of this integrated approach is Mohammed Ali, a bedridden individual from ward 7. His wife is physically handicapped and suffers from multiple diseases, and they also have an elderly mother and two young children. The CDS provides nursing care through the palliative care center and supports them with food and medicine through the Ashraya program. Additionally, the CDS supports the family by covering the expenses for DNA tests, as recommended by the





doctor due to a history of paralysis.

In 2005, the gram panchayat, district cooperative bank, and Kudumbashree jointly organized a cancer detection camp with the assistance of the Regional Cancer Research Centre. Four individuals from the gram panchayat tested positive and were referred to the RCC for treatment. The CDS covered their travel expenses, showing their commitment to supporting community members in need.

Ramakrishnan, one of the beneficiaries diagnosed with cancer, faced financial difficulties as he could not make monthly installments to the bank and was at risk of losing his property. Sadly, he passed away in 2009. However, the CDS took the initiative to support his daughter by providing her with ornaments and cash for her marriage, ensuring she had a brighter future.

Since the establishment of the palliative care unit in 2009, jointly initiated by the PHC (Primary Health Center) and the panchayat, the Kudumbashree members have been able to identify patients who require care easily. Among the identified patients, there are

51 individuals with cancer, six bedridden individuals due to accidents, and others totaling 148. The CDS takes special care to visit those who live in seclusion and require additional support.

The Perinjanam panchayat conducted a comprehensive survey across all 14 wards, identifying 72 families in need of assistance under the Ashraya program. Their aim is to provide rehabilitation to 151 members from these families. Currently, the CDS provides free ration to 140 members from 62 families, offers treatment facilities to 32 individuals, extends educational assistance to 18 children from 13 families, and has provided housing and financial assistance for house repairs to several families.

The CDS's support extends to individuals facing different challenges. For example, Sarojini and her husband, who are blind and previously lived on begging, are now residents of Thanal, a geriatric home, with their daily meals provided by the CDS. Similarly, Mallika, a mentally ill mother of three children with unknown paternity, benefits from the Ashraya program, receiving food and

medicine support while her children are taken care of by Bal Ashrayam, a shelter for destitute children.

The interventions of the Kudumbashree CDS go beyond material support; they strive to empower the marginalized. The selection of Ashraya beneficiaries involves the active participation of Kudumbashree women, who belong predominantly to below poverty line (BPL) families. The Community-Based Organization (CBO) network of Kudumbashree, consisting of Neighborhood Groups (NHGs), ADS, and CDS, ensures the medical and educational needs of the families are met. NHGs even take the responsibility of cooking and providing food to Ashraya families in the most critical cases.

The intervention by Kudumbashree stands out from other agencies due to its deep emotional connection with the destitute individuals they support. The organic bond formed between CDS members and beneficiaries creates a unique and meaningful impact on both parties, challenging the historical silence surrounding women's lives and promoting gender-just development. ■

Women in Indian Budgets



Lekha Chakraborty

Economist

In the pursuit of gender equality, the concept of gender budgeting has emerged as a powerful tool within fiscal policy. By integrating a “gender lens” into budgetary allocations, we can address socio-economic asymmetries and promote equity and efficiency in public spending. This innovative approach recognizes the importance of recognising and correcting gender disparities in areas such as public debt, the care economy, healthcare, and the political economy, ultimately aiming to create a more inclusive and prosperous society.

Budgets prima facie look gender neutral. However, this gender neutrality can turn gender blind, unless we correct for the socio-economic asymmetries. While social mores cannot be changed by fiscal fiat, especially when prejudices run deep, state action is called for when they are blatantly oppressive. Integrating a ‘gender lens’ in the budget has both equity and efficiency dimensions. We need to analyse the role of fiscal policies to generate a better gender outcome, especially when gender discrimination starts ‘even before birth’.

Public debt is a feminist issue

Fiscal rules framework and public debt thresholds affect gender budgeting and other human development related spending if the path to fiscal consolidation is through expenditure compression than tax buoyancy. If there are



revenue uncertainties and taxes are not buoyant, government will go for expenditure cuts. Public debt is a feminist issue, from the perspective of how we identify the sustainable fiscal space for gender aware human development commitments.

Measuring the statistically invisible care economy

As per the Systems of National Accounts (SNA), GDP is calculated on the basis of paid and monetised work we do in 8 hours. However, in 24 hours, women and men contribute to care economy activities, which are statistically invisible including the activities relate to child care, elderly care and other household chores. If the fastest and smartest way to increase the GDP is to increase the labour force participation of women, we should think of designing a “comprehensive care economy package”.

In health economic policy, health care provider’s perspectives need to be incorporated. The care given to the chronically ailing close relative has many costs including psychic costs and this goes unmeasured and not incorporated in health policy of any country excluding Mexico. In Canada, ‘compassionate care benefits’ policy is there to support people who are away from work to take care of ailing close relatives.

In Northern Europe there was a public policy revolution to incorporate caregivers’ economy into the decision making, based on the acceptance that the real love and freedom happen in a society when people are fundamentally independent of each other. The Scandinavian countries top Human Development Index and Gender Development Index. The movie, ‘Swedish Theory of Love’ encapsulates this public policy revolution happened in Northern Europe.

Freebies debate and Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting is a long term Public Financial Management



We have moved ahead towards ‘Beyond GDP’ paradigm and ‘Leave No one behind’. If the role of public policy is to break the entry barriers and remove the “unfreedoms” of men and women, that is exactly the premise for gender budgeting.

(PFM) tool. It is not about freebies. Providing care economy infrastructure, targeted cash transfer in the hands of women, providing clean fuel to poor women, giving cycles to girls to go to school etc cannot be considered as freebies.

In the freebies debate there is a clear distinction between ‘participation income’ (women and men participate in the economy and earn an income) and ‘basic income’ (income in the hands of people in the form of ‘helicopter money’ or cash transfers). In times of crisis, pandemic, and war, when employment opportunities plummet, providing targeted cash transfers can avert livelihood crisis.

Finance Commission and Women

Over the years, Finance Commissions have incorporated ‘climate change’ in their Terms of Reference (TOR) to address the cost disabilities due

to climate change related risks and uncertainties. Similarly, 16th Finance Commission may consider gender as one of the criteria in intergovernmental fiscal transfers.

The political economy of gender budgeting

Finally, the political will is the crucial determinant for the sustainability of gender budgeting. Given Nari Shakti (Women’s Empowerment) as one of the priorities of the government, gender budgeting should get the fiscal space it deserves. Translating gender budgeting into better gender outcomes - by linking resources to results - is crucial. Fiscal marksmanship is all about the budget credibility. It refers to any deviation between what is promised in the budget and what is the actual spending. Usually, Fiscal Councils are the watchdog for analysing fiscal marksmanship and hope India will constitute a Fiscal Council.

The personal characteristics of Leaders and economic outcomes

The personal characteristics of leaders affect the economic outcomes. For instance, empirical evidence suggest that if central bank chair/governor is a woman might go ‘hawkish’(by increasing the interest rates). The personal characteristics of Finance Ministers affect the quality of deficits. Like that, the personal characteristics of Finance Commission Chair can determine the variables in tax transfers formula.

To conclude, gender budgeting is a promising fiscal innovation. Any innovation has four phases-knowledge building, institutional mechanisms, capacity building and accountability mechanisms. We have moved ahead towards ‘Beyond GDP’ paradigm and ‘Leave No one behind’. If the role of public policy is to break the entry barriers and remove the “unfreedoms” of men and women, that is exactly the premise for gender budgeting.

(From the lecture delivered during the annually conducted Dr.C. Pinto Memorial Lecture in Thiruvananthapuram)



The Resurrection of KPPL - A Success Story



Sruthi Sreekumar

Freelance Journalist

The Hindu printed its pages on Kerala produced paper at Kerala's own KPPL.", the headlines proudly embossed. The once sunken public sector ship has been revived in its former glory and is embarking on a proud and successful journey in the state of Kerala. While we soar high, we have to remember that we are making history!

It was solely because of the intent and direction of the Kerala state government that the central government took over the shuttered Hindustan Newsprint Limited for three years and established a new PSU called the Kerala Paper Products Limited.

The Government of Kerala and Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited (HPC), which was under the administrative control of the Government of India had entered into an agreement in 1974 for the establishment of a large-scale paper manufacturing unit at Velloor, Kottayam, in order to advance the industrial development of the state. The Government of Kerala promised to provide a specific amount of raw wood materials, water, and power, as well as to create the necessary infrastructure to make it easier to establish the unit.

In order to operate this proposed paper manufacturing unit, Hindustan Newsprint Limited (HNL), which was primarily



designed to produce high-quality newsprint in order to lessen newspaper establishments' heavy reliance on imported newsprint, the state government purchased and leased roughly 700 acres of land in the year 1979. These philanthropic endeavours by the State of Kerala were the beginning of Kerala's entry into the domestic paper production market as the leading newsprint manufacturer, in terms of quantity and quality. The facility was commissioned and operations began in the year 1982. The company's performance, which had a glittering track record for the first three decades, began to deteriorate during the following decade for a variety of reasons. The activities halted in January 2019.

At this point, the state government declared its intention to acquire control of the company, turn it around, and keep it in the Public Sector as the primary beneficiary and important stakeholder. The NCLT Kochi Bench started the Corporate Insolvency and Resolution Process

KPPL has taken advantage of these new prospects by launching the Capacity Expansion/Product Diversification Programme and selectively entering the Packaging and Paper Board segments with a view to long-term sustained survival.

(CIRP) in 2019, as a result of the Indian government's failure to heed the plea. Expressions of Interest (EOI) from potential Resolution Applicants were requested as part of the CIRP. The Kerala Infrastructure Development Corporation (KINFRA) submitted its Resolution Application on behalf of the Kerala Government.

After the NCLT, Kochi Bench accepted the KINFRA resolution plan, the state government acquired control of the business. Following the company's name change, Kerala Paper Products Ltd (KPPL) was incorporated with the approval of the Registrar of Companies (RoC), who also issued the Certificate of Incorporation on December 20, 2021. Following the takeover, the government immediately started taking the required actions to revive and restart the business on a top-priority basis. A thorough strategic plan was also planned for implementation in four stages to ensure the long-term sustainability of KPPL. As a new year's present to the State of Kerala, the company was reopened and the basic steps to begin operations were started on January 1, 2022.

The resurrection of the former HNL, which was previously under the administrative control of the Government of India, and was on the verge of liquidation and extinction, as Kerala Paper Products Limited represents a significant improvement for the state's industrial landscape.

The Minister for Industries and the Minister for Forestry convened to assure enough availability of wood raw material for the KPPL's activities. The government approved the allocation of 24,000 MT of wood raw material at a discounted rate after a proposal for KPPL's immediate requirement was presented to the cabinet. As part of the Government's clear resolve to turn around the business while keeping it in the Public Sector, it also permitted the free distribution of wood raw materials from the captive plantation of the former HNL to KPPL. Also, the government issued directives for the collection of waste paper produced at all government offices, institutions, and agencies throughout the state for the production of recycled pulp at KPPL.

The e-commerce industry, online retail, FMCG, pharmaceuticals, food & beverage, etc., as well as the expanding restrictions regarding single-use plastics rise, domestic and international markets for packaging and paper board are seeing fierce expansion. KPPL has taken advantage of these new prospects by launching the Capacity Expansion/Product Diversification Programme and selectively entering the Packaging and Paper Board segments with a view to long-term sustained survival.

The resurrection of the former HNL, which was previously under the administrative control of the Government of India, and was on the verge of liquidation and extinction, as Kerala Paper Products Limited represents a significant improvement for the state's industrial landscape. This unmistakably represents a different approach to industrial development and sends a strong statement to the entire nation. This is a historical, "one of a kind" moment because the industrial sector of the nation experiences few "come backs" of this nature. With the anticipated start of commercial scale production, the KPPL site in Velloor is poised to become one of the nation's leading centres for paper manufacturing. ■



Let's Together Eliminate MR



Dr. Anju Angel Alex

Department of Health Service

The success and safety of Measles-Rubella Vaccination have been scientifically proven time and again, through precise tests and experiments. With the success of the MR campaign held in previous years, Kerala is implementing this phase of MR Elimination as part of Nava Kerala Karmapadhati.

MR elimination at zero clinical cases in a defined geographic area for more than 12 months thereby also ensuring Kerala's contribution to India's success in achieving MR Elimination. The health department of Kerala is taking a multipronged approach to tackle MR elimination this time also, with the support of other government pieces of machineries.

It was the year 2017 Asha, an RBSK (Rashtreeya Bal SwasthyaKaryakram) nurse went about her work with the team from the Primary Health Centre near Aluva, Ernakulam vaccinating all the kids who had lined up for MR1 -Measles-Rubella vaccine. They had 18 schools to cover. It hadn't been easy to convince the parents and school authorities that the vaccine was not a new one. That was the first phase of the Measles-



Rubella Elimination program, Circa 2023. It was 3 pm and yet Shamseer, the sole junior health inspector in a major government institution (name changed for anonymity) in one of the larger districts of Kerala was yet to have his lunch. He had been busy completing the documentation that followed when a case of fever with rash was reported. The serum and urine samples from the child were to be sent to the State Public Health Laboratory in Thiruvananthapuram. This was part of the routine work ever since the new phase of the Measles-Rubella Elimination campaign had begun. A week ago one such sample from a child less than five years old had tested positive for Measles. There was a case that tested positive for Rubella, otherwise called German Measles, as well, in that month. “Among what comes under the guise

of fever, a sizeable portion turns out to be common cold”, says Dr Sunil P. K, paediatrician, Taluk Hospital Fort Kochi allaying our concerns to an extent.

“But, rashes, seizures, tiredness, pain in muscles, excessive diarrhoea, or vomiting in the setting of fever or fever going beyond two days need medical assessment or re-evaluation,” he warns, breaking the bubble. The caution with which one needs to tread over ‘fevers’ resonates in the words of Dr Asha K. K, DMO in charge and District Surveillance officer, Ernakulam- “Though a good number of cases reported as ‘fever’ turn out to be viral fevers, one cannot trivialize any illness. We have seen Influenza cases developing into encephalitis”. She insists that effective pre-monsoon cleaning activities and clearing away weeds is detrimental. So is consuming prophylactic tablets

like Doxycycline in adherence with the guidelines issued by the Health department in case of Leptospirosis. “Apart from seeking medical attention and following the treatment advised, adequate rest, plenty of fluids and nutritious foods are imperative for a healthy convalescence ” Dr Sunil says leaving no stone unturned.

As we enter another monsoon, the diseases doing the rounds seem sundry. And yet, since most of them are known devils, the appropriateness of implementing the established preventive measures cannot be undermined. One such tool to aid prevention is vaccination; it is fortuitous that we are in yet another phase of MR Elimination. This time it involves achieving a target of more than 95% coverage with MR1 and MR2 vaccines in children under 5 years of age. With the impetus gained from the success of MR campaign held in 2017, Kerala is implementing this phase of MR Elimination as part of Nava Kerala Karmapadhati which aims at zero clinical cases in a defined geographic area for more than 12 months thereby also ensuring Kerala’s contribution to India’s success in achieving MR Elimination. The involvement of sectors like Kudumbasree, Ayush, LSGD, Medical colleges, Tribal welfare department, Urban affairs machinery in government, Fisheries Department, ASHA coordinators, Women and Child Development Department, PEIDcells, ESI, Medical bodies like IMA, IAP, Labour Department, Education Department, WHO, UNICEF UNDP has been called for. Since Surveillance is quintessential to Elimination, notification and testing of fever-rash cases is mandated. Thanks to the modus operandi that Kerala has, with the will for the collective effort being our forte, this is no Herculean task for us.

With this multipronged approach, amidst fevers, queries and worries, we shall overcome, this time too!



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Addresses American Malayalis at Time Square in New York



Chief Minister Addresses The Malayali Expatriate Community at Loka Kerala Sabha America's Regional Conference



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel

Loka Kerala Sabha American Regional Conference





The Maverick Among Producers



For K. Ravindranathan Nair aka 'Ravi Muthalali', a successful Cashew exporter from the Vendor Group Kollam, movie production was not just a joke or a time pass. A very soft-spoken introvert with deep and wide reading experience, he decided to invest for the film *Anweshichu Kandethiyilla* (1967) directed by P. Bhaskaran, only because of his conviction towards the plot of that novel written by Parappurath. As a producer, he ventured further in few more movies knitted in the typical commercial formulae, like *Lakshaprabhu* (1968) and *Kattukurangu* (1969) all directed by Bhaskaran but written by noted litterateurs, Malayattoor Ramakrishnan and K Surendran. With his affinity towards literature, Ravindranathan Nair was ready

Memoir



A. Chandrasekhar

Film critic and Journalist

K. Ravindranathan Nair, known as 'Ravi Muthalali,' was a visionary film producer who made significant contributions to Malayalam cinema. Through his production house, General Pictures, he not only introduced commercial successes but also championed art house cinema and demonstrated exceptional social commitment, leaving an indelible mark on the industry.

produce them and beyond that, he did not intend to make any profit from his production house called Genera Pictures

Achani (1977), directed by A. Vincent, became path breaking, not only because of its huge commercial success but also for rechristening him as "Achani Ravi!" The 4-lakh project fetched him a profit of 14 lakhs out of which Ravindranathan Nair mooted the proposal to establish a Public Library all for Kollam. After many efforts with the help of the then ministers T K Divakaran and Baby John, he succeeded in finding suitable land within the Guest House complex in which he constructed the Kollam Public Library building along with the Sopanam Auditorium and Art Gallery. Much before Kerala was exposed to terms like Corporate Social Responsibility, General Pictures Ravi created history through this unparalleled initiative, that illustrates



his social commitment.

It was his exposure as an exporter with contacts all over the world that transformed him as a movie producer with an insight to take Malayalam movies to the global circuits. It was at this juncture, he did get a chance to watch Utharayanam, the debut venture of G. Aravindan. Pattathuvila Karunakaran, its producer wanted him to undertake its distribution and hence invited him for its preview. Ravindranathan Nair was highly impressed with the movie and distributed it for free. While during its promotion he listened to the director complaining that independent filmmakers like him could not pursue their dreams as they couldn't find any producers to invest in and patronise the arthouse genre. He called Aravindan and offered him to produce his next movie, Thampu (1978). Following that he did produce four movies at a stretch exclusively directed by G Aravindan, including Kanchanaseeta (1978), Kummatti(1979), Esthappan(1980) and Pokkuvayil (1981).Thampu, which won National State Awards for Director, State Awards for Second Film and Cinematography. Kummatti won the State Award for Best Children's Film and an honour at the London Film Festival. In 1980, Esthappan won the state award for best film and director, and Pokuvayil won the national award for second best film and the state award for director.

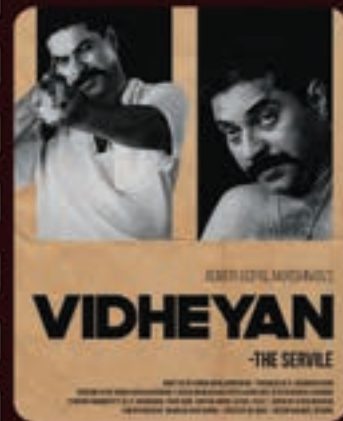
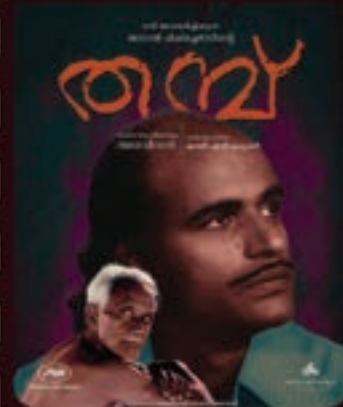
It was in 1981 Ravi joined hands with maestro Adoor Gopalakrishnan for his masterpiece Elipattayam which won national award for the Best Malayalam Film and Audiography and won the British Film Institute Award. It was the beginning of a long-standing teamwork. In 1982 after producing M T Vasudevan Nair's Manju, he produced

all movies of Adoor till 1994. Adoor's Anantaram (1987) won the National Award for Malayalam Film and Sound Script and five state awards including Best Director, Mukhamukham (1992), won the National Award for Best Malayalam Film, Screenplay and Sound Screenplay and five state awards including Best Film, and Vidheyan (1994) won the National Award for Best Malayalam Film and Actor and the State Award for Best Film.

"He is a producer of a rare breed, who is concerned about getting someone who knows the medium. Once the plot is pitched, he will absolutely trust them and leave it to them. He didn't even bother to pay a visit to his production sets as he had that kind of a conviction about his directors."Adoor Gopalakrishnan's words clearly identifies the personality of Ravi, the producer.

He has been the member of the Kerala Film Development Corporation as well as the Central Board of Film Certification as well as in the jury of the National Film Awards and IFFI. Apart from getting 18 National and State Awards for his movies, including the ones for Best Film, he was bestowed with the prestigious JC Daniel Award for outstanding contributions to Malayalam Cinema by the Government of Kerala in the year 2008. Usha Ravi, Ravindran Nair's wife, was a playback singer having sung in movies like Thampu (Kanakanu Pennu Chembarathi) They have three children, Prathap, Preetha and Prakash.

It is of no doubt that K. Ravindranathan Nair is the one and only producer from Kerala who is entitled to be called as the Doyen of Arthouse Cinema. And his banner 'General Pictures' will be engraved in golden letters, in the history of Malayalam Cinema.





INDIA - the Most Populous Country



Dr. M. Kuttappan

Former Director of Economics and Statistics

India, with an estimated population of 1.4286 billion, has surpassed China to become the world's most populous country. This milestone reflects India's significant population growth over the years and poses challenges and opportunities for the nation. Understanding the factors influencing fertility rates, such as socioeconomic disparities and educational levels, is crucial for addressing population control measures and harnessing India's demographic dividend effectively.

According to the United Nations World Population Report, the estimated population of India by the middle of 2023 is 142.86 Crore as against 142.57 Crore in China. As Such on-World Population Day on 11th July 2023 India emerged as the most populous country in the world pushing back China to second place. The World Population Prospects of 2022 released by the U.N projected the world population to reach 800 crore in November 2022 and expected to reach 970 crore in 2050 and 1040 crore in 2100. The theme of the World Population Day of 2022 was to limit the world population to 800 crores for a resilient future for harnessing opportunities and ensuring rights and choices for all.

Population Growth and Control Measures

Even though India is the first country which launched a state-



sponsored family planning programme in 1952, the population of India during the three-decade period from 1951 to 1981 increased by 90 per cent from 36 crores to 68.5 crore. At the same time, the population of China during the three-decade period 1950 to 1980 increased by 79% from 56 crore to 100 crore. The family planning programme of

India, now named as Family Welfare Programme is voluntary and is a prerogative of the clients to choose a method best suited to them as per their reproductive right realizing that the excessive population growth retards economic development, China strictly implemented the One Child Policy from 1980 and a result the population of China during the three-decade period 1980 – 2010 increased only 34% as against 77% in India. Thirty-Five years after the implementation of the One Child policy, China reviewed the policy in 2015 and found a significant increase in the elderly population and a decrease in the labour force. Therefore the Chinese Government relaxed the one-child policy in 2016 and allowed couples to have two children. But this change failed to elicit the desired impact. According to the 2020 census, the population of China was 141 crore, an increase of only 5% from the 2010 census. At the same time, the elderly population of 60+ increased by 5.3% and the

working-age population of 15 – 59 decreased by 6.8%. To avoid the crisis of an ageing society and shrinking workforce the government in 2021 amended the two-child policy to three-child policy and announced many policy measures to increase the birth rate. As India deferred the scheduled 2021 census due to COVID – 19 pandemic, the Government of India constituted a Technical Group to prepare the population projection for the period 2011 to 2036. According to the Report of this Group, the population of India in 2021 is 136.6 crore registering a decadal growth of 12.5% as against a 5% increase in China. In January 2023 the National Bureau of Statistics of China announced that the country's population during 2022 decreased by 8.5 lakhs which reveal that the majority of couples have not responded favourably to the changes in the policy. It is in the above background that India emerged as the most populous country in the world. Here it is important to note that India's workforce in the age group of 15 – 59 constituted 63% of this population and the demographic bonus has to be converted into an economic dividend by providing respectable employment opportunities to the working-age population.

Factors Determining Fertility

The most important factor determining the size of the population is the Total Fertility Rate (T.F.R) which is the number of children a woman would have in the course of her life. The world average TFR in 1950 was 5.0 and in 2021 it declined to 2.3 and is projected to decline to 2.1 in 2050. The replacement level of fertility is 2.1 meaning two children replacing their parents. The TFR in India was 3.4 in 1991 and the same decreased to 2.3 in 2013 according to National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) it was 2.2 in 2015- 16 and 2.0 in 2019 – 20. The TFR in China in 1979 was 2.7

and now it is only 1.2. The fertility trends in European Countries and in most of the developed countries are far below the replacement level whereas in less developed countries are much higher. The TFR of Nigeria now is 5.2 and as such by 2050 it will be the third largest populated country overtaking the United States. Many viewed a droop from the replacement level of 2.1 as a sign of population stabilization. It is not correct. If only TFR is far below 2.1, a significant drop in the population is expected. The report of the 4th round of NFHS revealed that while women in the lowest wealth quintile have an average of 3.2 children, the highest wealth quintile has only 1.5 children. Similarly, the report also revealed that women with no schooling have an average 3.1 children compared to 1.7 children for women with 12 or more years of schooling. Besides the fertility rate, the size of the population also depends on mortality rate and migration.

Before concluding I would like to point out that the trend in the growth of population in Kerala during the last seven decades is similar to that of China. During the first three decades of 1951 to 81, the population of Kerala increased from 1.35 crore to 2.55 crore registering a growth of 89% compared to 79% in China. During the next three decades 1981 – 2011, the population of Kerala increased only by 31% compared to 34% in China and 77% in India. During the last decade (2011 – 2021) the population of Kerala witnessed an increase of 6.3% as against a 5% increase in China and 12.5% in India. While the lower growth rate of the population in China after 1980 is attributed mainly to the strict implementation of the one-child policy. It may also be mentioned that the decadal growth of the population during 2001 -2011 was only 4.9% and the slight increase during 2011 – 2021 may be attributed to the large number of migrant workers from other States in India to Kerala.



Minnu Bowls into History



Sanil P. Thomas

Sports Journalist

Minnu Mani, the 24-year-old cricketer from Wayanadu, fulfilled her long-awaited dream as she donned the prestigious Indian cricket team jersey. The pride felt across Kerala was palpable as Minnu showcased her talent, finishing her debut match against Bangladesh with an impressive performance of three overs, 21 runs, and one crucial wicket. The electric atmosphere at Mirpur set the stage for this opening T20 International clash.

From the outset, it was clear that Minnu was destined for greatness. In her very first over, she sent shockwaves through the opposition by dismissing the Bangladesh opener, Shamima Sultana, who fell victim to a sensational catch by Jamaimah Rodrigues. This remarkable feat marked a historic milestone for Kerala, as Minnu became the



The significance of Minnu's Indian T20 cap extends beyond her personal achievement, serving as a beacon of hope for a transitioning Kerala women's cricket team. It is a powerful symbol that has the potential to inspire a new generation of girls to pursue cricket seriously.

practice. Such unwavering commitment is truly inspiring.

Her impressive performances in the Challenger Trophy earned her a place in the Board President's XI against England, subsequently leading to her inclusion in the India A side. Attending the targeted players camp at the illustrious National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru further honed her skills. Minnu also showcased her talent in the inaugural Women's Premier League, representing the Delhi Capitals.

The T20 series against Bangladesh saw the Indian team introduce four new faces, including Minnu. In a testament to her capabilities, she was entrusted with the ball in the crucial fifth over, a decision that spoke volumes about the captain's faith in her abilities. Alongside the experienced Deepti Sharma, Minnu formed part of the spin attack, with the slow left-arm orthodox bowler Anusha Baredy also making her debut. The significance of Minnu's Indian T20 cap extends beyond her personal achievement, serving as a beacon of hope for a transitioning Kerala women's cricket team. It is a powerful symbol that has the potential to inspire a new generation of girls to pursue cricket seriously.

As Minnu continues to make waves in the cricketing world, the entire nation eagerly awaits the day she dons the Indian Test cap. With her undeniable talent and unwavering determination, it seems only a matter of time before she achieves this milestone. Minnu's journey is not just a personal triumph but also a source of immense pride for Kerala, a state known for its passion for sports.

first cricketer from the region to earn a spot in the Indian women's cricket team.

While Kerala had witnessed two cricketers born in the state represent India in Test and One Day matches during the 1970s and 1980s, Sudha Shah from Kannur and Susan Itticherya from Niranam, near Tiruvalla, their upbringing in Tamil Nadu overshadowed their Kerala roots. Minnu, on the other hand, hails from Ondayangaadi in Edappadi, Wayanadu, and has proudly embraced her Keralite identity since childhood. Her journey began in the paddy fields, where she fearlessly played cricket with the boys, utilizing plastic balls as her equipment. Eventually, she found her way to the cricket academy run by the Kerala Cricket Association while studying in the ninth standard. A naturally gifted left-handed batter and right-handed off-spinner, Minnu represented Kerala from the under-16 level onwards.

In a testament to her capabilities, she was entrusted with the ball in the crucial fifth over, a decision that spoke volumes about the captain's faith in her abilities. Alongside the experienced Deepti Sharma, Minnu formed part of the spin attack, with the slow left-arm orthodox bowler Anusha Baredy also making her debut.

Minnu's rise to prominence is all the more remarkable considering her humble background. Yet, fuelled by her love and passion for the sport, Minnu demonstrated exceptional courage in overcoming the challenges. Her unwavering determination saw her embark on a gruelling daily commute of approximately 36 kilometers by bus to reach the Krishnagiri Stadium for



the field of classical music. Her brother and her son were proud successors of this legacy. Her brother Mavelikkara H. Ramanathan was a well-known singer, music composer and scholar who worked in several government music colleges as professor and principal. Ponnammal's son Mavelikkara P. Subramaniam was also a very famous Carnatic musician. But he met with an untimely death some time back, plunging the world of aesthetes in Kerala into deep gloom. Subramaniam's son Harisankar is an up-and-coming singer of great promise.

Ponnammal was born in Mavelikkara on 17 December 1934, and began training in music at a very young age. In those days, Harikatha was an immensely popular genre of music. Thus, at the age of 12, even while she was studying music, Ponnammal entered the field of Harikatha performances. Cutting a different furrow, Ponnammal infused the style of Carnatic music into Harikatha. As a result, even aficionados of traditional music flocked regularly to listen to her Harikatha recitals. It was not long before she commanded the admiration of all music lovers throughout the state. The skill she displayed in imparting a Carnatic flavour to Harikatha music gave her recitals an inimitable quality, and soon it became a trend when a lot of young practitioners of the genre followed in her footsteps.

The person who encouraged her the most in the field of Harikatha was Professor M. P. Manmathan. Ponnammal also received support from Evoor Kesava Pillai who suggested episodes and composed poetic descriptions to be performed at her Harikatha recitals. Consequently, she reigned as an empress in the field for about 12 years. Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon, who heard her at a Harikatha recital, was so impressed with her finesse that

Radiance of Traditional Music



Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

Music Critic

Mavelikkara L. Ponnammal, the doyenne of classical music in Kerala, is a name that deserves to be remembered forever.

During a time when female presence was a rare phenomenon in the field of Carnatic music, Ponnammal made a mark in concerts as well as Harikatha performances all over Kerala. She also had a legion of students, including the famous Vaikom Vijayalakshmi. That she could draw nourishment from the rich musical tradition and impart it to the future generations was what made her artistic life a truly blessed one. Mavelikkara L. Ponnammal's father and her grandfather were active in

he invited her to perform at Kerala Kalamandalam. What Ponnammal presented on that occasion was the story of Mary Magdalene. Utterly mesmerized, the great poet gifted a gold pendant and gave her a citation. The factor that attracted Vallathol was her choice of subject, which reflected her belief in religious harmony, despite being raised in an orthodox brahmin family. Later when Harikatha morphed into the more secular form of Kathaprasangam, realizing the mass appeal of the new musical version, Ponnammal composed and performed the story of Mahatma

of Music, Trippunithura, that same year. The most prominent of Ponnammal's teachers at Swati Tirunal College were Kalladakurichi Harihara Bhagavathar, N. G. Sitarama Iyer and Parassala B. Ponnammal. As soon as she finished her Gana Bhooshanam course, Mavelikkara Ponnammal got a job in a Management school and soon thereafter in a Government school. She trained many students at various government schools in Kottayam district. After retirement, she conducted many musical concerts and continued to teach several students.

it was not possible for me to listen to their full-fledged Carnatic recitals. I listened to the shortened versions that were made for radio programmes, expanded them using my own creative imagination, and sang them in my mind. That was how I developed my musical talent in large measure. Today, it is possible for both boys and girls to train in music. That gives me great pleasure. I cannot but admit that with time, classical music has been taken forward in our society.



Blessings bestowed upon Ponnammal by Vallathol

Gandhi, much to the delight of her audience.

It was after her wedding that Ponnammal made a definitive entry into the field of Carnatic music. Her husband was S. Padmanabha Iyer, a musician himself by training. Ponnammal joined the Swati Tirunal College of Music for the four-year Gana Bhooshanam course but completed it in three years. In fact, the authorities, realizing her immense potential, had granted her direct entry for two years. Ponnammal notched the first rank. It was K. J. Yesudas who got the first rank at R. L. V. College

During her last years, Ponnammal admitted that her gender had come in the way of her achieving great laurels in the artistic field. "During my childhood, although a lot of music programmes were conducted close to my house, I was not allowed to attend them merely because I was a girl. Only the menfolk in the family could go directly to the venue, and enjoy the recitals. In those days, a lot of talented musicians used to perform in the neighbourhood. But the radio was the only medium that made it possible for me to listen to their music. As a result,

Although that is a matter of pride, there is another factor that saddens me. I become upset when I see that children, after having learnt a couple of keerthanams, egged on by their parents, join the rat race to earn fame that they do not deserve. They do not love music but rather use it. My only advice to them is that they should desist from this."

Although Mavelikkara L. Ponnammal is no longer with us, the present age reminds us that her advice has to be heeded at all times.

Four National Panchayat Awards Illuminate State's Excellence



Joby Baby

Freelance writer

Kerala has proudly clinched four awards at this year's National Panchayath Awards.

Cheruthana, located in Alappuzha, has been honoured as the best child-friendly village Panchayath in the country. Veeyapuram grama Panchayath, also in Alappuzha, has secured the top spot for its self-sufficient infrastructure. Malappuram Perumbadappu grama Panchayath has bagged the second position for its commendable efforts in achieving water sufficiency, while Thrissur Alagappa Nagar Panchayath has claimed the third position in the good governance category. Additionally, Meenangadi Panchayath has been awarded a special accolade for its outstanding carbon-neutral initiatives.

Dual Achievement for Alappuzha

Cheruthana and Veeyapuram gram Panchayaths have brought



Veeyapuram, Alappuzha

immense pride to Alappuzha district by securing the top positions for excellence at the national level. Cheruthana's well-deserved recognition stems from its initiatives such as ensuring electricity,

of ₹18.79 lakh to enhance the nutrition levels of children. Moreover, the Panchayath has taken numerous measures to improve the quality of education in local schools, including providing scholarships

been diligently dug, and the planting of bamboo and vetiver along the canal banks has further contributed to sustainable water management.

Alagappa Nagar Panchayath's Exemplary Service

The Alagappa Nagar Panchayath has achieved recognition for its effective and timely service to the community, leading to numerous accomplishments. These include the prompt completion of projects, provision of high-quality infrastructure facilities, efficient distribution of drinking water, and swift implementation of decisions made in the gram sabha. Their notable achievements have earned them several awards in the past, including the prestigious Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayath Sashaktheekaran Puraskar for being the best-performing Panchayath in 2022.

The evaluation of these Panchayaths was based on nine indices aligned with



Cheruthana Grama panchayath, Alappuzha

drinking water, nutritional food distribution in all Anganwadis, scholarships for mentally and physically challenged individuals, study rooms for Scheduled Caste children, scholarships for higher education, anti-drug awareness programs in schools, and hygiene awareness campaigns, among others. Veeyapuram has been consecutively awarded three times for its excellence in the MGNREGA Scheme. The village has also been bestowed with the Swaraj Trophy, Jaiva Vaividhya, Mahatma, and ArDRAM awards. Notably, their commitment to sustainable development has been a significant advantage.

Cheruthana Panchayath's Remarkable Achievements

Cheruthana Panchayath has successfully transformed into a self-sufficient entity through the provision of essential amenities such as water connections, electricity, child-friendly toilets, and recreational equipment. The local body has dedicated an expenditure

for higher studies. In collaboration with the Excise department, they have conducted impactful campaigns against drug addiction and alcoholism among students. Hygiene classes, supported by the Suchitwa Mission, have been organized, and students receive regular counseling to alleviate anxiety and stress.

Perumbadappu Panchayath's Water Sufficiency Endeavors

The Perumbadappu Panchayath, ranking as the second-best water-sufficient civic body in the country, has dedicated an expenditure of ₹2 crore in 2021-22 to construct and revive water bodies. This includes the construction of two ponds at a cost of ₹1 crore, as well as strengthening the embankments of Nooradithodu. Additionally, the Panchayath has renovated Valiyakinar, an open well of historical significance, with the support of the Archaeology department. Rainwater pits have



The new building for Perumbadappu Panchayath office

the Union Government's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

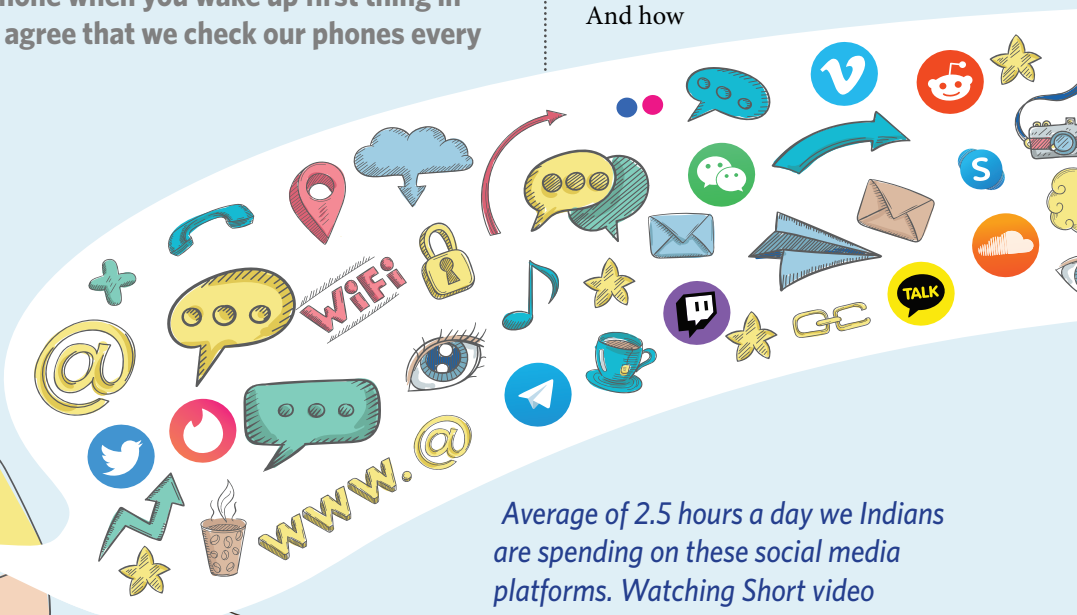
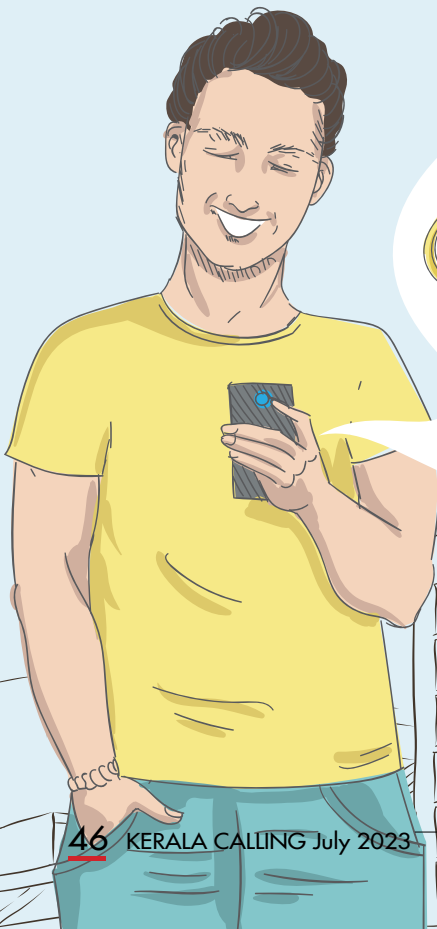
Social Media and Youth



Sandeep T.K.

*Assistant Professor and New media researcher,
Dept of Visual Communication, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham,
University Mysuru Campus*

Social media usage has become a daily routine for many in this digital era, and the internet has become fuel for them. How many of you check your phone when you wake up first thing in the morning? ...many will agree that we check our phones every morning after waking up.



Average of 2.5 hours a day we Indians are spending on these social media platforms. Watching Short video segments like reels and YouTube shorts is trending among youngsters.

A survey showed that 77% of people between 18 and 24 reach out for their phones whenever they have free time. The latest reports of Statista (2023) revealed that the number of active social media users has increased to 467 million by this March, and the number of internet users in the nation has crossed 900 million. After 2020 half of our population accessed the internet, and 67 per cent marked their presence on social media. The technological revolution and the drastic come down in internet tariffs were the driving force for this phenomenon.

It is observed that a few fascinating phenomena are associated with smartphone usage. It is noticed that the average attention span of a human being has now gone down drastically. 9 seconds. Just 9 seconds. And why is that? something it's linked to a phenomenon called instant gratification or instant happiness. And how

does that happen? A chemical called dopamine is released in the brain whenever we experience this instant happiness when we scroll down our phones. Vibrates getting notification if get a bit excited, don't you that momentary happiness you excited to see who it is it will be curious. That's dopamine being released in your brain. Dopamine is the same chemical released when you drink alcohol, smoke, eat good foods, take drugs, and many other things. In other words, it is highly addictive behaviour. And we see similar trends for smartphone usage.

Surprisingly, half of the 18 to 24-year-olds said they checked their phones in the middle of the night. 1/3 of UK adults check their phones within 5 minutes of waking up. India is at the top position in Instagram usage globally, with 229 million active users. Indian Facebook users' number is more than the entire population of America. Active Indian WhatsApp users have

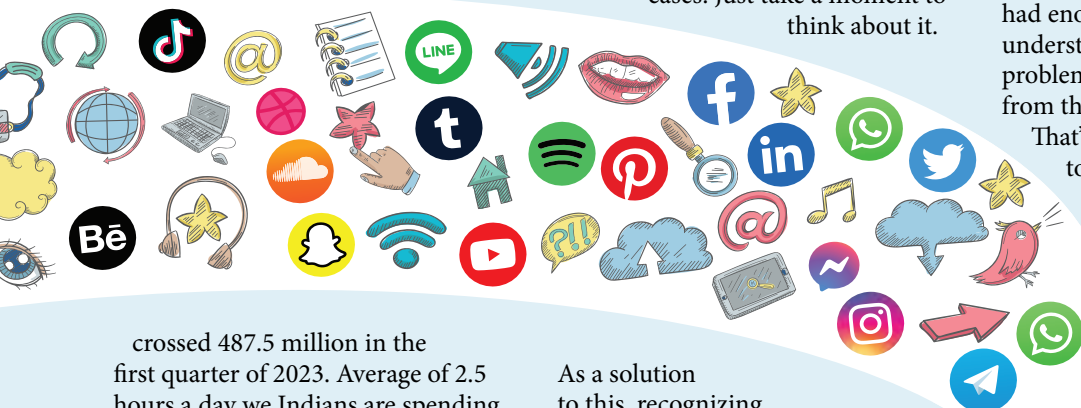
media apps as never to connect you to another. It was only to make you addicted and make money from this phenomenon. And we can see it happening everywhere, all around us. We are addicted. And this affects our mental health in ways that we don't realize. A report showed that social media increases anxiety, depression, and poor sleep. It also said that the rates of anxiety and depression had gone up by 70% in the recent past. If you are bored sitting in your room, and you decide to open Instagram or Snapchat and see what people are up to and all you see, all you see are just stories of people having a great time enjoying their lives with their boyfriends, their girlfriend, their friends, their family having fun. It might not necessarily be true. High rates of anxiety and depression are linked mainly to the overuse of social media. In the most extreme of cases can cause irreversible harm. Irreversible damage in the form of self-harm, sometimes even suicide cases. Just take a moment to think about it.

As a solution to this, recognizing this phenomenon, just understanding the problem, and realizing how smartphones can affect us is the first step toward making a positive change.

turn off the internet when we are not using the smartphone. Speaking technically, we can also modify and customize the app notifications with the apps. Pop-ups and push notifications play a critical role in screen addiction among users.

Another very important thing, most of us keep our phones by our bedside. When some notification comes to your phone, you spend the next three hours scrolling down your social media. And then, the following day, we wake up looking like a zombie because we haven't had enough sleep. We need to understand. That this is a big severe problem. We need to free ourselves from this addiction to smartphones.

That's the only way we can hope to move toward a better future.

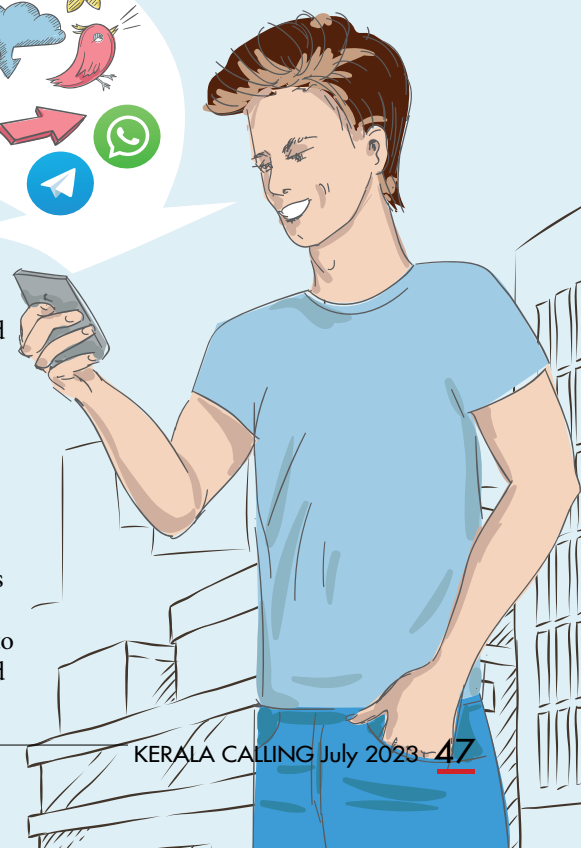


crossed 487.5 million in the first quarter of 2023. Average of 2.5 hours a day we Indians are spending on these social media platforms. Watching Short video segments like reels and YouTube shorts is trending among youngsters.

Nomophobia and this addiction are no coincidence. It is no surprise because all of these apps, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram, have carefully tailored algorithms that ensure we're hooked to our phones. Why? Because each minute you spend on these apps, these companies make big money through advertising.

The core aim of all these social

As a solution to this, recognizing this phenomenon, just understanding the problem, and realizing how smartphones can affect us is the first step toward making a positive change. Also, spread this awareness to your friends and family to pick two people you care about. And the key thing is moderation. We need to be moderate about our usage of our phones. When on public transport, go out with your friends at the dinner table, and keep your phones away. Another solution is to set gadget-free times at home. And



Beauty of the Periyar

An enthralling description of Periyar with a poetic touch



Johnny Thekkethala

Former Chief Engineer

land. The Periyar river also has a major contribution to the fishing sector, and internal transportation too.

The river drains parts of the Idukki and Ernakulam districts. During the rainy season, rain water from 5398 sq km of land reaches the Periyar. The river flows through the 23 km distance beneath Malayattoor in a meandering manner. Flowing through Kalady and Chowara, the Periyar finally reaches Aluva. After the big flood of 1341, the flow



The biggest and water-rich river of Kerala originates from the Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats which is 244 kilometres long. There are many tributaries and dams. The first dam of Kerala is Mullaperiyar near the confluence of Mullayar with Periyar. The first concrete dam in India is at Madupatti, in Muthirapuzha, a tributary of Periyar. A unique rockfill dam with a thick earthen core and rock shoulders, at Anayarankal near Munnar, is a sub-tributary of the Periyar river. There is no other dam in India, which is built on sand. The Idukki Arch dam which is known as Kerala's highest dam of 169 metres is also across the Periyar.

Some people call this river Poorna and on the other hand, some folks call it Poorni as well. Malayattoor church and Aluva Manappuram are the main river banks. Along with that, there are six wildlife sanctuaries and fourteen tourist destinations are part of river Periyar. The birthplace of Shankaracharya which is at Kalady, and Adwaitha Ashramam of Sree Narayana Guru also have their roots in the great Periyar river. The banks of river Periyar also witnessed around 250 industries including the fertiliser company F. A. CT.

The river bestows drinking water and electricity supply to more than 50 lakh people. The river plays a major role in the cultivation of 32,800 hectares of

regime of Periyar got altered to Mangala river and Marthandan river. The Mangala river flows into the sea and Marthandan river flows into Varaappuzha lake. In the imaginative mind of lyricist Vayalar Rama Varma, Periyar rose water from mountains and compares it to a shy Malayali girl walking out in the cold. Born in Myladum hill and raised in the henna forest, the shy village girl who has never seen a city is getting ready to go wearing golden waves! Guess for what? To participate in the festival at Malayattoor Church and to see Aluva Sivarathri. Poet also describes the distribution of pure water, singing folk songs, reaching sea, and meeting her lover.

Kerala @ Wimbledon

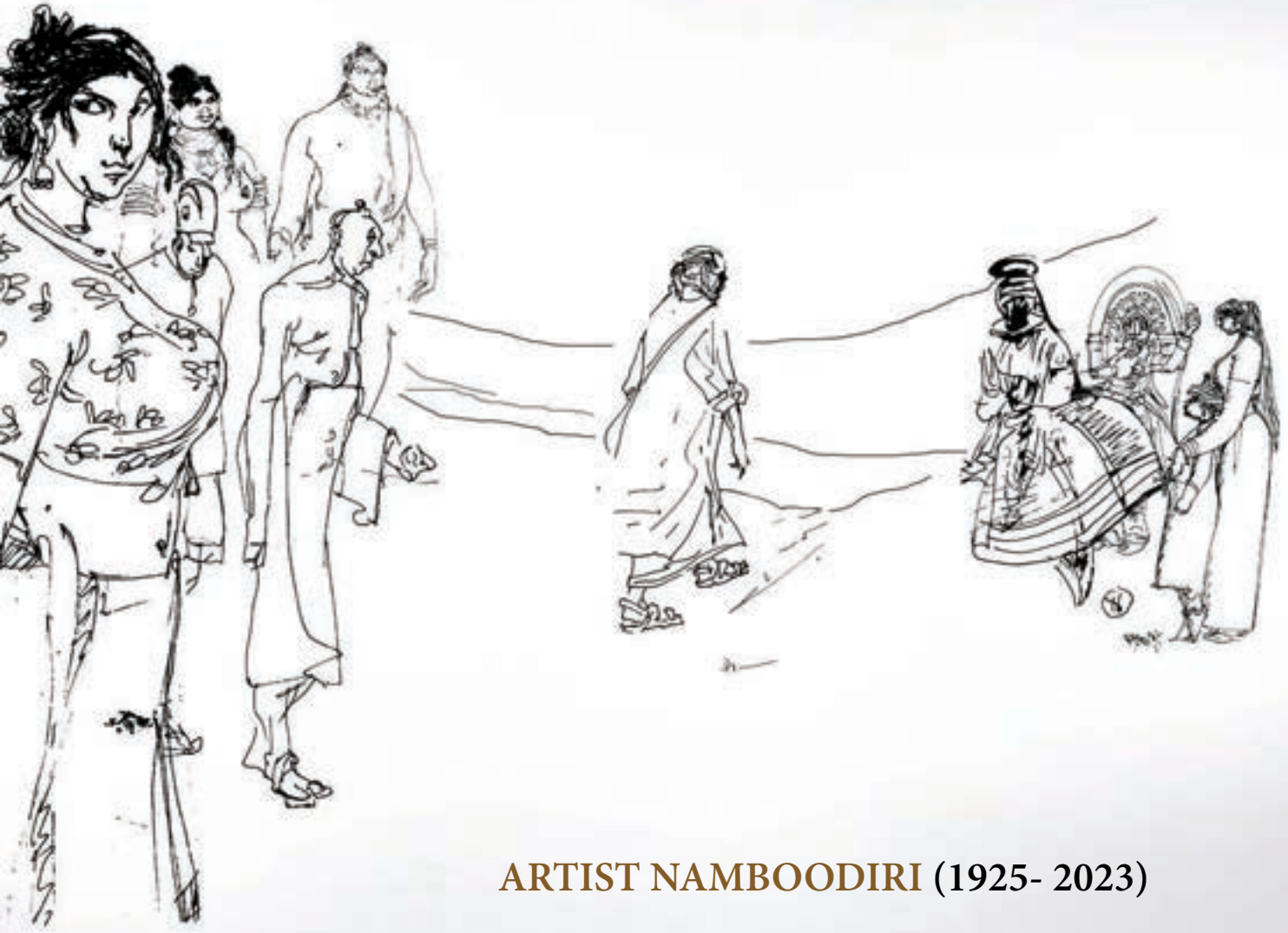


On 03.07.2022 the official Facebook page of the Wimbledon Tennis Championship posted a poster based on Kerala's world-famous boat race to promote the mighty Tennis gala. This was well received by the newspapers of Kerala. Both the leading English and Malayalam print media of Kerala published news on Wimbledon's Facebook post.

These newspaper clippings were collected and a banner was prepared by Prof. Vasisht, former Head of the department (History) of Malabar Christain College Kozhikode. The banner contains Wimbledon's original Facebook poster and the clippings of various newspapers. The banner will be exhibited in various schools and colleges in Kerala with the support of respective Tourism clubs. It is being done to highlight the potential and acceptance of Kerala tourism. The banner is prepared as a tribute to Kerala Tourism and Wimbledon.

Remembrance

Journey to Eternity



ARTIST NAMBOODIRI (1925- 2023)

The creator has departed, leaving behind his timeless characters for us, for future generations to cherish

*Courtesy to
Mathrubhumi, Kalakaumudi, Samakalika Malayalam.
Namboodiri's illustration: Prakash. V. S.*



നാടോടി മുറന്നോട്

ടി വി ചാനൽ	സംഭാഷണ സമയം
ഏഷ്യാനെറ്റ് ന്യൂസ്	ഞായർ 6.30 PM
മാതൃഭൂമി ന്യൂസ്	ഞായർ 8.30 PM 9.00
കൈരളി	ശനി 12.30 AM repeat ശനി 6.30 AM
കൈരളി ന്യൂസ്	ഞായർ 9.30 AM repeat ബുധൻ 3.30 AM
മീഡിയ വൺ	ഞായർ 7.30 PM 8.00
കൗമുദി ടിവി	ശനി 8.00 PM 8.24
24 ന്യൂസ്	ഞായർ 5.30 PM 6.00 repeat 1 AM-1.30 AM
ജീവൻ	ഞായർ 7.00 PM 7.24 PM
ജേഹിൻ	ബുധൻ 8.00 8.30 PM
റിപ്പോർട്ടർ	ഞായർ 6.30 PM 7.00 PM
ദൂരദർശൻ	ഞായർ 7.30 PM repeat തിങ്കൾ 9.30 PM
ന്യൂസ് 18	ഞായർ 8.30 PM 9.00 PM
കേരള വിഷൻ	തിങ്കൾ 6.30 PM 7.00 PM

To revel in the innocence of forests
and the wisdom of ancient ways,
to find answers in the
mystery of mountains and
strength in free, soaring lives.

HUMAN *by* NATURE


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God's Own Country
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