



ELDERS' VOICE

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News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

Editor: Pushpa Mathew

President's Message

Dhanya Gopinath

Dear Friends,

On October 27th, when the Kottayam SCF had its second meeting of the month, many of our members were caught in a traffic block. It took the police nearly two to two and a half hours to restore normal movement on the roads. Fortunately most of our members managed to reach the SEERI Auditorium, after taking many a diversion, albeit a bit late of course.

It has now become commonplace to hear of giant roadside trees falling onto the roads. Last year on the 28th of June 2022, nearly 150 trees got uprooted at Ahmedabad. This year, in May, there was a report from Madurai that 560 trees had got uprooted. Around the same time, nearly 250 trees got uprooted at Nagpur. In July some 14 trees got uprooted at Delhi. On the 3rd of September, more than a thousand trees got uprooted in Shimla. Although only five trees got uprooted at Puducherry, more than a hundred vehicles got damaged, as it had taken place at a car park. Extensive damage was also reported from Bengaluru.

This is not a typical Indian phenomenon. We hear of such tree-caused damages from advanced countries like the United States & the United Kingdom. Singapore, a city known for its greenery, has also reported such cases.

We all know that tree planting is good as the leaves of trees let out oxygen & absorb carbon dioxide.

Every year, during Gandhi Jayanthi, schools, colleges & other institutions working both in the non-governmental & government sectors engage themselves in tree planting exercises. After that, we casually drill nails on trees without realizing that fungus gets into the trunks of trees through these tiny holes.

Along with slogans that promote the planting of more trees, let us include another slogan, "First take care of existing ones, while also planting new ones."

It is a myth that giant trees do not require regular upkeep. Ageing trees also require water. As vehicles clog our roads & road widening becomes imperative, trees are either felled or preserved near the edges of roads. In 2013, the Green Tribunal had restricted the concretization of roads within one metre of the trunk. It is more than ten years now, but who listens to the orders! Concrete restricts available space for the roots of the tree to expand & grow. The resultant soil compacting around the tree hinders the growth of roots.

Another advice which is not followed, is the need to supervise when the tree is planted. It is not advisable to plant on shallow dug-up spaces. When a minimum of 5 feet is dug, it is possible to find loose soil. Loose soil helps the tree roots make strong connections with the earth and withstand the ravages of weather.

Tree planting & tree preservation is a science. There are tree doctors who are called arborists. When such people are employed, they look after the daily care, remove diseased

trunks & prune the leaves to prevent the tree from becoming top heavy.



The National Parks Board in Singapore is a government entity that has been created to look after trees. This department is in charge of all tree planting activities.

Trees & parks are what make our cities livable & breathable. It is high time, we consult such agencies & make a long-term plan for our trees.



Dr Jeevan Joseph being presented a memento during the SCF meeting on 10th Nov

Editor's Musings

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

Christmas is round the corner and our President and Secretary are planning an exciting Christmas party for all members. So please put on your creative, thinking hats and suggest items for the programme. We have a lot of talent amongst us and request all our members to come forward with items they can perform, to make it an enjoyable and entertaining day for us all.

Our meeting on 27th Oct was dedicated to paying tributes to our late member, Mr. George Isaac. Many of our members like Dr. Mathew Parackal, Mr. P I Mani and

Mr. A M Mathew recollected fondly, their long association with Mr. George Isaac.

Even members like Dr P I John and Prof Shivshankara Pillai spoke on how much Mr. Isaac had impressed them, in spite of their limited association with him. Prof K M Varghese's Vote of Thanks was also dedicated to Mr. Isaac.

On 10th November we had Dr Jeevan Joseph, eminent Diabetologist speaking on "Diabetes and the Senior Citizen". The talk was well appreciated by all our members.

I had contacted most of our members, who were being sent the "Elders' Voice" by post and the unanimous response was that the new format, being easy to read on the smart phone, they do not need

physical copies sent to them by post. Nevertheless, we'll be printing a few

copies and those who want printed copies can approach any of our office bearers and I'll arrange to post it to them.

How many of you were able to identify the couple in last month's - "Guess who's this?" It was yours truly with my hubby and our older son. This time we have another regular couple of our forum for you to guess.

Until next time, then..



Our trip to Spain and Portugal

Joseph Mathew

From Lisbon, we went to Porto. Porto is on the bank of the river Douro, which flows into Mediterranean. We had a memorable boat ride on the river and a fabulous fish meal in the restaurant. Do you know what is the favorite food of the Portuguese? Sardines (our matthi,) boiled and served on bread with salt! There are several beautiful bridges across the river Douro. One is a steel structure done by the same engineer, who designed the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Other newer bridges are of concrete but look similar. Porto is the centre of Port wine production and we visited one of the oldest Port Wine wineries there. They treated us to the white Port wine produced there. After tasting it, I thought it was exquisite.

From Porto, we went back to Madrid taking a mountainous route, through the "Pyrenees" mountains that separate Portugal and Spain. En route we stopped at the city of Salamanca, which is considered a University town with a beautiful Town Square, surrounded by and eating joints. Many concerts are held here.

From Madrid, we took the bullet

train to Barcelona, which is 650 km away but it took us just 2 hours! In Barcelona, the main attraction was the La Sagrada Familia Basilica, which is still under construction for the last 180 years. It is a magnificent masterpiece of the architect Antoni Gaudi. The church interiors are full



La Sagrada Familia Basilica

of paintings done on the stained glass windows. The construction is still going on and the marvelous architecture is expected to be completed by 2026. We also visited the Park Guell which was another dream project of Gaudi.

From the top of this hill, you get a full view of Barcelona city. You can also

see a number of cruise ships docked in the port. The largest statue of Columbus is also located in Barcelona which is 60 meters tall. We took a walk in the famous Ramblas street which is full of restaurants and shops and places to sit and eat in the middle of the road. It is the main tourist place in Barcelona. We had our farewell lunch there with local food and a glass of Sangria.



At the Belem Tower, Lisbon

ധ്യാനം: എന്ത്? എന്തിന്? എങ്ങനെ?

John B Kunnath

Part 2

എന്തിനാണ് ധ്യാനം?

വിചാരങ്ങൾ, അവയെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയുള്ള വികാരങ്ങൾ, ആഗ്രഹങ്ങൾ ഇവ മൂന്നും മനുഷ്യ മനസിന്റെ ഭാഗങ്ങളാണ്. ഭ്രാന്ത് പിടിച്ച കൃതിര കളെപ്പോലെ അവ നമ്മെ പലവഴിക്ക് വലിക്കുന്നു. അവയെ നിയന്ത്രണത്തിലാക്കുവാൻ ധ്യാനം നമ്മെ സഹായിക്കുന്നു.

ഉൾക്കണ്ണ് എന്ന് നാം കേൾക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. നമ്മുടെ ഉള്ളിൽ ഒരു കണ്ണ് ഉണ്ടെന്ന് സങ്കല്പിക്കാം. നമ്മുടെ ചിന്തകളും വികാരങ്ങളും ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളും എപ്പോഴും അതിനെ മുടിയടിക്കുന്നത് കൊണ്ട് നമുക്ക് കാര്യങ്ങൾ യഥാർത്ഥമായി കാണാൻ കഴിയുന്നില്ല. ഭൂമിയിലെ ഒരു ടെലസ്കോപ്പിൽ നിന്ന് കാണുന്നതിലും വ്യക്തമായി ഹബിൾ ടെലസ്കോപ്പിൽ കൂടെ കാണാൻ കഴിയുന്നത് പോലെയാണിത്. ഒരു ടെലസ്കോപ്പിന് അന്തരീക്ഷത്തിന്റെ മറവ് പോലെയാണ് ഉൾക്കണ്ണിന് വിചാരവികാരമോഹങ്ങളുടെ മറവ്.

ചിന്താശക്തിയിൽ നിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തമാണ് ബോധം. കുട്ടികളെ കൂടുതൽ ചിന്താശേഷിയുള്ളവരാക്കി തീർക്കുകയാണ് നമ്മുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. എന്നാൽ മനുഷ്യന്റെ ബോധവികാസം നമ്മുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം ലക്ഷ്യമാക്കുന്നില്ല. മനുഷ്യരെ നല്ല മനുഷ്യരാക്കുന്നത് ബോധവികാസമാണ്. ബുദ്ധിവികാസമല്ല. മനുഷ്യന്റെ ബോധ വികാസത്തിന് ധ്യാനം വളരെ സഹായിക്കും. ഗൗതമൻ ധ്യാനനിരതനായിരുന്നത് നേടിയത് ബോധോദയമായിരുന്നു. ധ്യാനം ബോധോദയത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു.

ഒരു ചെടി വളർന്ന് പൂഷ്പിച്ചു കായ്കുന്നത് പോലെ മനുഷ്യനും വളർന്നു പൂഷ്പിച്ചു കായ്ക്കാൻ സാധിയ്ക്കും. അങ്ങനെ നമ്മുടെ ജീവിതം ഫലവത്താകുന്ന അനുഭവമാണ് ബോധോദയം. ജീവിതത്തെ യഥാർത്ഥത്തിൽ കാണാനും അർത്ഥവത്തായി ജീവിയ്ക്കാനും ബോധോദയം നമ്മെ പ്രാപ്തരാക്കുന്നു.



അറിയപ്പെട്ട ജഗദ്ഗുരുക്കന്മാർ എല്ലാം ബോധോദയം പ്രാപിച്ചവരായിരുന്നു. ശ്രീ ബുദ്ധൻ, മഹാവീരൻ, യേശു, മുഹമ്മദ് നിബി, ഗുരു നാനാക്ക്, കഴിഞ്ഞ നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ ജീവിച്ചിരുന്ന ശ്രീരാമകൃഷ്ണൻ, വിവേകാനന്ദൻ, അരബിന്ദോ, രമണമഹർഷി, ശ്രീനാരായണഗുരു ഇവരെല്ലാം ബോധോദയം പ്രാപിച്ച മഹാചാര്യന്മാരാണ്.

എങ്ങനെ ധ്യാനിക്കണം?

സൈക്കിൾ ചവുട്ടാൻ പഠിക്കുന്നത് പോലെ, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ നീന്താൻ പഠിക്കുന്നത് പോലെ, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ട്രൈപ്പിംഗ് പഠിക്കുന്നത് പോലെ നിരന്തരം ആഭ്യസിക്കേണ്ട ഒന്നാണ് ധ്യാനം. ഒന്നോ രണ്ടോ ദിവസം കൊണ്ട് ഫലം ഉണ്ടാകുമെന്ന് പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കരുത്. വ്യക്തമായ ലക്ഷ്യബോധത്തോടെ ദിനവും അഭ്യസിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്.

ആദ്യം ഒരു സെക്കന്റ് നേരം മനസിനെ വർത്തമാനബിന്ദുവിൽ നിർത്തുക. ക്രമേണ സമയം വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുക. ക്രമേണ മനസ് അതിനുള്ള കഴിവ് നേടുക തന്നെ ചെയ്യും. മനസിന് സംഭവിക്കുന്ന മാറ്റം നമ്മെ അതിശയിപ്പിക്കും.

മനസിനെ വർത്തമാനബിന്ദുവിൽ നിർത്തുന്നതിന് പല ഉപാധികൾ സ്വീകരിക്കാം. ശ്വാസോച്ഛ്വാസത്തിൽ ശ്രദ്ധ വയ്ക്കാം. സംഗീതം കേൾക്കുന്നതിൽ, ഒരു കാഴ്ചയിൽ, അങ്ങനെ പലതിലും. മനസിനെ ചിന്താവിമുക്തമാക്കുകയായിരിക്കണം ലക്ഷ്യമാക്കേണ്ടത്. ചിന്തയെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയാണ് വികാരങ്ങളും ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളും നിൽക്കുന്നത്. ചിന്തകളെ ഒഴിവാക്കാനായാൽ, വികാരങ്ങളെയും ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളെയും ഒഴിവാക്കാനാകും.

Christmas Message for Senior Citizens

The Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathews

At a time such as now, when the world is on edge, nations are at each other's throat, warring factions are engaged in each other's extermination, and Planet Earth, our island home, is warming ever so faster, causing catastrophic climactic conditions in the world, hearing once again the message of Christmas seems like an exercise in futility. The sense of dread is real and is not anything new. Since the beginning of time, our world has gone through such gyrations of existential crisis and chaos. Each time it happens, we feel the end is here, and we are doomed. We lose all hope; some become desperate and act in destructive ways, while others become numb and accept violent disorder as their karma.

The land where Jesus was born some two thousand years ago with the message of 'peace on earth and goodwill among people' is now under occupation and in extreme strife as at the time of his birth. Imagine people taking in on this message and staying calm in the present and confident about the future when evil appears to rise, chaos seems to prevail, and everything we hold dear and near us is on the verge of collapsing. It requires a mature faith that goes beyond the kinds of beliefs in religions we choose or the ones we may have been raised in. Mature

faith makes people more spacious, non-controlling, and waiting in awareness. It also differs from our belief in the norms we are brought up in, the values of the culture we belong to, or the disciplines our elders taught us. These norms may comfort our ego but give little comfort to the truth or even prepare us for the scary but wonderful coming of the realm of God. The faiths of the Jerusalem temple hierarchy and the Roman imperial powers failed to both recognize or welcome God's incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, God found mature faith in the young Mary as she willingly accepted her role in God's salvific plan for the world.

Jesus valued and praised this faith among the shepherds, lepers, Samaritans, and those outside the religious or political system. Even if it is as small as a mustard seed, this faith can do incredible things, like moving mountains. People of this faith are comfortable with the totality; they can hold contradictory parts together like Mary, who, as the Bible says, "treasured all these things in her heart." Having such faith enables us to give up our need to understand, analyze, and judge others or take sides. Instead, it would inspire us to mend broken relationships, build bridges, tear down walls, and repair breaches.

The Christmas message of God's birth as a human being through Mary, a poor Palestinian peasant teenage girl, made her sing the Magnificat, "My soul

magnifies the LordHe has shown strength with his arm; he has



scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty....." Its contents were so revolutionary and anti-status quo that Christians were banned from singing it during the British Rule in India. Mary's Magnificat and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount shook the foundations of human empires from ancient times and continue to the present.

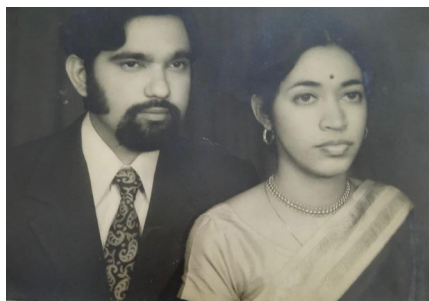
Today, more than ever, we need to hear and heed the Christmas message of hope, justice, and peace. It is primarily a message for the poor, the underdog, the downtrodden, and for whom the present system does not work.

This Christmas, we are called again to have faith that things will change in the face of injustice, chaos, hopelessness, and death. May God bless us to have faith like Mary, who consented, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word."

Have a Blessed Christmas!

Last month's couple were Pushpa and Raju

Guess Who?



WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

May your birthday and every day ahead be filled with the warmth of love, the joy of good health and blessings in abundance!

6th Mathen Kurien & 10th K. K. Mathew

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