



ELDERS' VOICE

March 2024

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

Editor: Pushpa Mathew

President's Message

Dhanya Gopinath



Today is the first of March & we are just a week away from International Women's Day which is being celebrated every year, all over the world, on the 8th of March.

The Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum celebrated Women's Day last year & it was grand, too.

The Chief Speaker, that day, was an empowered woman from Kottayam; somebody who was selected for the post of Independent Director of a well-known company. She spoke on the subject, "Unlocking the Power of Women".

This year, we plan to get a woman from the legal field. She will be talking about "Woman & Law".

The concept of setting aside a day for women came about in the early 1900s. However, the credit for giving Women's Day a global colour must go to the United Nations. This organization started celebrating Women's Day in 1975. In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8th as an official UN holiday for women's rights & world peace.

In 1996, it was decided to have a theme for Women's Day. As years go by, themes keep changing according to the changes taking place in the world.

The theme for 2024 is "INVEST IN WOMEN: ACCELERATE PROGRESS."

The aim is not to use gender equality & women's empowerment as buzzwords. On the other hand, it strives to see that women are provided with the opportunity to compete at an equal level in the world.

The rapid evolution of technology has been one of the biggest shifts in the modern world. We are now in the 21st century & have moved from an industrialised society to a digital or information society. The impact of technology on women's development cannot be ignored. Thanks to technology, the barriers to mobility & growth have been weakened. As it is now possible to access information even while sitting at home & managing children, women can achieve academic & professional growth faster.

Women must be in a position to take their rightful place in the digital innovation process. They need to use technology freely & fearlessly to increase their employment chances by developing marketable skills.

That is the reason why the UN Women decided to make the theme for 2024, "INVEST IN WOMEN: ACCELERATE PROGRESS."

Coming to the Indian context, the population growth in India is supposed to surpass China's record shortly. Despite this upward trend, women remain under-represented in our workforce. Female workforce participation in India

dropped from a peak of 33% in 2000 to 23 % in 2021. Mahesh Vyas, Director of the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy has this to say," The lack of good quality jobs could also be the reason why women are keeping out of the workplace. They or their families may see more benefit taking care of the home or children, instead of toiling in low paid work."

Therefore the challenge for India is not merely to increase female participation in the labour force but to also ensure that they have access to quality jobs that give them equal opportunities for upward mobility. A large percentage of Indian girls in the lower strata of society are school dropouts & lack employable skills. They then get into low-skill, low-paying work that gives them neither social protection nor job security.

Both the pandemic & the new normal have speeded up digital technology. This has upended the demands of the market & transformed the world of work. Skilling needs to cope with the transformations of the digital age. An aptitude test conducted on women to measure employability indicated that more than 50% of them were employable. This proves without doubt that women are a vast resource pool that must be utilized. **(Contd on the last page)**

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

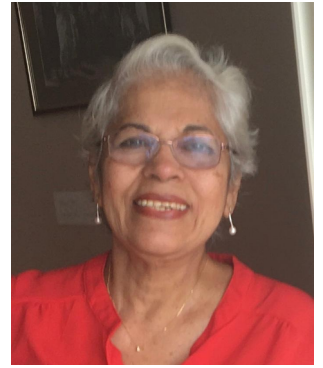
We had two consecutive meetings (on 26/01/24 and 09/02/24) with our own members being the main speakers. On 26th Jan, Mr. Gopinathan spoke on the significance of Republic Day and on 9th Feb Dr Markose Arackal spoke on Healthy Aging. Both topics elicited a lot of responses from our members.

In my last newsletter, I omitted the names of Maya and Dr Joseph Cherian, who had spent considerable time and effort in sprucing up the SEERI hall with decorations for our Christmas function on 13th Jan. A big, belated thank you to you both.

Our member, Kottayam Baburaj was presented the Merit Award of the Malankara Orthodox Sabha for 2023 at a function organised at the Sashthamkota Mar Elias Chapel on 26/01/24. Baburaj is the recipient of the Sahitya Shrestha Award 2023, besides appearing in the URF World Records, the Limca Book of Records and the India Book of Records. He has also been awarded the Sarva Sahitya Puraskaram and the Katha Prasangam Award. Three cheers to Kottayam Baburaj!!!

Our financial year is drawing to a close on 31st March. Those members, who have forgotten to pay their dues from April 2023 to March 2024 are requested to do so at the earliest. Our Treasurer, Mr. Shyam, who was away on a

holiday, is back and will accept all



payments either in cash or by Google Pay/ PhonePe etc. to mobile no 94970 87860.

Were you able to recognize the couple in last month's "Guess Who?" They were none other than Mr. and Mrs. A M Mathew, some of the oldest members of our Forum. This time we have another couple for you to identify - pretty easy this time.

Until next time, then.



Kottayam Baburaj was presented the Merit Award of the Malankara Orthodox Sabha for 2023

Last month's couple were Mrs and Mr A M Mathew

Identify this couple!



Maya's Christmas Decorations!



A Memorable trip to Rohtang Pass in the 80s

Joseph Mathew

We got a new Fiat Padmini sometime in the 80s, after a wait of 2 years and in the excitement, decided to make a road trip to Rohtang Pass along with another family. Our two boys were small and they too had two similar-aged boys, as well as a new Fiat.

The drive from Delhi to Chandigarh was not very exciting except for one incident. It was a 2-lane highway in those days and we were driving at around 80 kph, following our friends in the other car. Suddenly a Sardarji driving behind us decided to overtake us. Before I could react, I saw a truck coming from the opposite direction! The Sardarji, without hesitating, simply drove his car to the right, off the road, and onto the field on the side, at the same speed and then got back to the road, ahead of us! I was in a state of shock but the kids were very impressed with the brave Sardarji!

That evening we decided to break the journey at a place called Sundernagar. There was no online booking in those days. Fortunately, the father of our friends was a Sr. IAS officer and after she dropped a few names, we got a place to stay

in a Dak bungalow. The place seemed right out of some old Hindi movie with an old caretaker but he served up a fantastic dinner with paranthas, dal and subzi.

The next morning, we continued our journey via Mandi and Kulu to Manali. This was an interesting drive, as we drove along the bank of the Beas river, stopping en route to have a dip in the ice-cold water. Fortunately, the drive was uneventful, except whenever a bus came from the opposite direction, we had to reverse our car. Pushpa would get off and give directions and sometimes place a brick behind the rear tyres as the hand brake of the car was not very effective!

We stayed at a Himachal Pradesh tourism bungalow in Manali, just below the Hadimba Temple. The place was full of apple orchards and we could pluck as many apples as we could eat there.

The next day we left for Rohtang Pass, which we reached around 10.30 am. It was a beautiful, large hillock, covered with grass with a lake on the side. There is a small brook coming out of the rocks, which is the origin of the Beas River. It was very cold and the wind-chill factor added to it. But you could see some yogis doing tapasya there, clad only in a

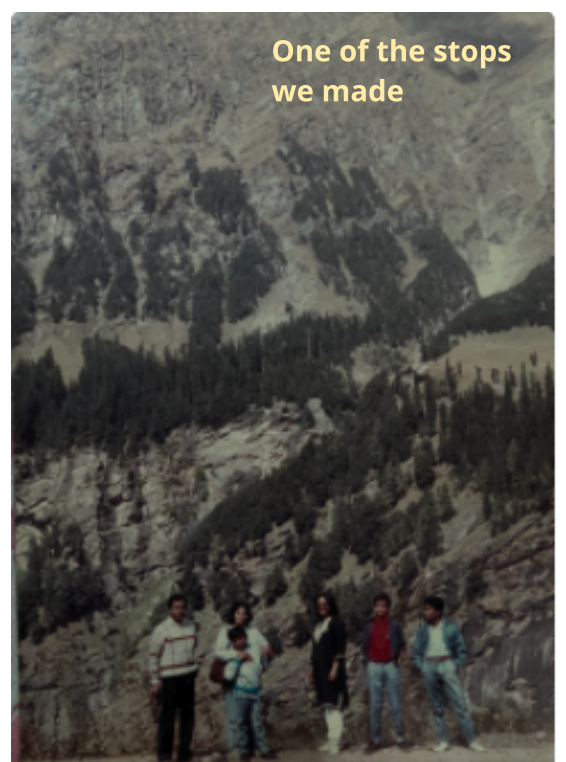
loin cloth! Tibetan nomads were giving fur coats on hire and we quickly took some. We walked towards the lake and touched the glassy surface, which was a sheet of ice. We were panting by the time we reached there. On our return, we faced a shower of hailstones, the size of small oranges. We waited till it stopped and then drove to a place called Madi. We were so famished but there we had the best aloo paranthas we ever had!

We stopped on the way at Beas Kund Sulphur Springs, where they have cubicles with hot Sulphur spring water and cold Beas River water, which you can mix according to your comfort. It was very refreshing. I had a small cut on my leg, which had not been healing. But it almost disappeared the next day.

The next day, we drove to Manikaran, where the Parvati River flows. There is a major temple and a Gurudwara **(Contd on p 4)**

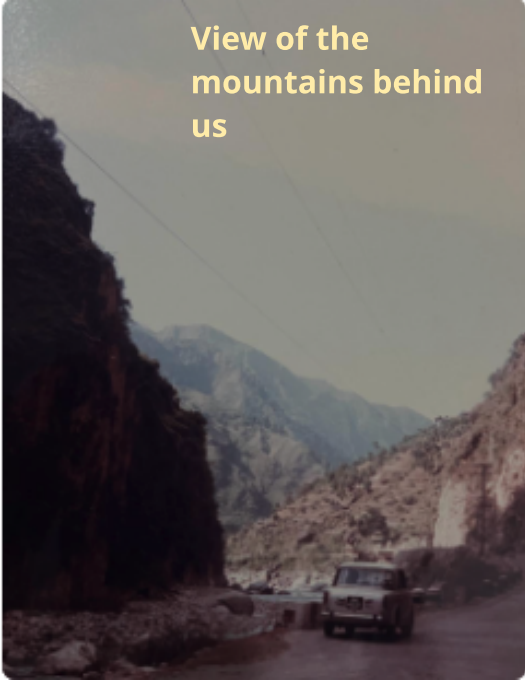


En Route to Manali



One of the stops we made

View of the mountains behind us



(From p 3) here as well as lots of sulphur springs. We could see people cooking food in vessels in the hot Sulphur springs.

From there we returned to Delhi via Kulu where we saw the Kulu Puja fair. Then we drove to, Bhakra- Nangal and Chandigarh and back to Delhi. A wonderful experience never to be forgotten. Nowadays there are four-lane highways and the A.cal tunnel to Rohtang Pass so the adventure of hill driving and the excitement of the hail storms on the way may

not be there. Also nowadays, the roads are very crowded during the season with miles of vehicles in waiting.

(From page 1) Given the opportunity, many more women in India could join the workforce. India must make use of its demographic dividend. Again there are highly qualified women, who find it difficult to get back to work after taking a break. Nowadays, progressive companies in India have realized that women who return to work, form a very strong talent pool. They are not only upskilled, facilities like creches & kindergarten schools are also arranged for them.

During India's G20 presidency last year, it had set the stage for women parity on the global stage, there is much more that needs to be done on the domestic front.

Wishing you all a very happy Women's Day.



**Wish you a Very
Happy Birthday!**

8th - Mrs Maya Cherian

16th - Dr George Kurien

18th - Dr P I John

25th - Joseph Gabriel

26th - Chackochen Manamel

1. Dr Markose on healthy aging 2. President & Secretary with Maya's Christmas decorations 3. Mr Gopinathan speaks on the significance of Republic Day 4. Birthday boys on 26th Jan - Bhasi and Mathew

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