



ELDERS' VOICE

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

JUNE 2023

News Bulletin of
Senior Citizens' Forum Kottayam

Editor
Pushpa Mathew

President's Message

Dhanya Gopinath

Hello Friends,

Thank you all for turning up at our meetings in adequate numbers despite the sweltering heat.

Global Warming & Climate Change have become a reality, so we have to make our adjustments.

Our Secretary Kochu Rani Mathews & her spouse are away on a short visit to Vietnam & Cambodia. Joint Secretary Minnu John, who is officiating on her behalf seems to be enjoying her new role & is extremely serious in her attempts.

The Editor of our news letter, 'Elders' Voice' will also be away with her spouse. They are going on a trip to Spain & Portugal. Here also the Asst. Editor has taken full charge & is committed to bringing out the next issue on the first of the month itself.

While the above mentioned couples will be back soon, our Governing Board member Prof. Babu Joseph has gone to the United States of America & will be returning only by the end of August.

In a recent interview in the Indian Express, George Santosh Kulangara acknowledged that he has taught Keralites to dream & start travelling.

Until a few years back, seniors travelling alone was considered a western phenomenon. Seniors in Kerala are not far behind. The Travel Bug has bitten us all. To top it all, it is happening in all strata of society. According to reports given by travel agents,

senior travels have gone up by 15%.

First it started with seniors joining together & visiting pilgrimage spots in groups. This pattern has also undergone a change. Seniors are becoming more adventurous & are travelling for fun & pleasure or just to see the world.

Just remember the story, of 71 year old K.R. Vijayan & his 69 year old wife Mohana. (newspapers carried their story) They manage a small tea stall in Kochi & make use of their savings to travel. Their first visit outside India happened to be Israel. Since then they have been to other foreign countries like Britain, France, Austria, Egypt, U.A.E. the U.S. & more places.

What is heart warming is that, NGOs like Help Age India, who are working towards providing quality & dignified life to elder citizens, have started realising that the elderly too have a lot of unfulfilled desires. In 2022, this NGO had sought the help of the Kochi corporation to organise an air travel for a group of 27 elderly women from Kochi to Kannur.

People have started realising that their Second Innings begins after 50.

Travel is not only wonderful. It gives rewarding experiences to anyone that partakes of her delights.

You are never too old to travel. Believe in life & have the eagerness to savour it to the full.



Mr C P Roy being presented with a memento "The Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson



At the meeting with Prof C P Roy

Editor's Musings

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

The new all-women team is firmly in the saddle and the Forum's programs are moving on as efficiently as under the previous leaderships.

Being the summer holiday season, several of our members are going on vacations outside Kottayam. Our Secretary, Rani Mathew has gone to Vietnam and Cambodia and Minnu John has adeptly slipped into that role. This month (June) I propose to go to Europe and Prof Santhakumari will take over as Editor of our newsletter.

On 28th April we had Joseph Alex, Founder and Managing Trustee of Signature Foundation, speak to us on "Care for the Aged". Since it was a topic close to the hearts of all of us, he was listened to, with rapt attention.

Then on 12th May, we had Prof C P Roy speak on "Geoethics & Development". Though the topic sounded rather complex, Prof Roy broke it down to how each one of us could contribute to enriching

the green cover around us. For every tree that is cut down to widen roads or to enable new construction, he has vowed to plant two trees in its place. The trees in front of our District Hospital, along the Erayilkadavu – Manipuzha Road, and the Cement Kavala – Thiruvathukkal Road have all been planted by him. He invited members to become part of his "Green Leaf" drive and contribute saplings for his venture.



He also explained the Mullaperiyar controversy in a new way. Building a second dam behind the present one is not possible. Instead, since Kumily is 1300 ft. above Tamil Nadu, he recommended implementation of the Supreme Court Order of 2014 to lower the level of the tunnel pipeline, thereby ensuring the safety of Kerala as well as the water requirements of Tamil Nadu.

How many of you able to guess the identity of the boy in last month's "Guess Who?" It was our Treasurer, V G Shyam at the age of 19! Do you know how immensely talented he is? Apart from scrupulously maintaining the Forum's accounts for so many years, he regularly takes part in Kathakali performances and we have had some pictures of him as Shri Krishna at the Vasudeva Temple in a previous newsletter. He is also a super artist and recently received a Certificate for it from Artist Sujathan of the K S School of Arts.

This time we have a picture of another popular couple of our Forum for the "Guess who's this" Keep guessing . . .

Guess who is this?



Answer to last month's quiz "Guess who is this?":
V G Shyam



At the meeting with Prof C P Roy



V G Shyam receiving the Certificate of Merit from artist Sujathan at the K S School of Arts

A JOURNEY TO SEE 7 SISTERS

Part 5 (Manipur)

Rani Mathew



Known as the ‘Switzerland of India’, Manipur lies in the deep corner of the northeast part of India. It is bordered by the Indian states of Nagaland to the north, Assam to the west, and Mizoram to the southwest and by Myanmar to the south and east.



Manipur is called “A Jewel land” of India because it is surrounded by nine hills with an oval-shaped valley at the centre, a naturally made Jewel. It was once described by Jawaharlal Nehru as “Jewel of India”.

The state capital is Imphal, located in the center of the state. It has an airport also which is connected to other areas of the country by daily flights.

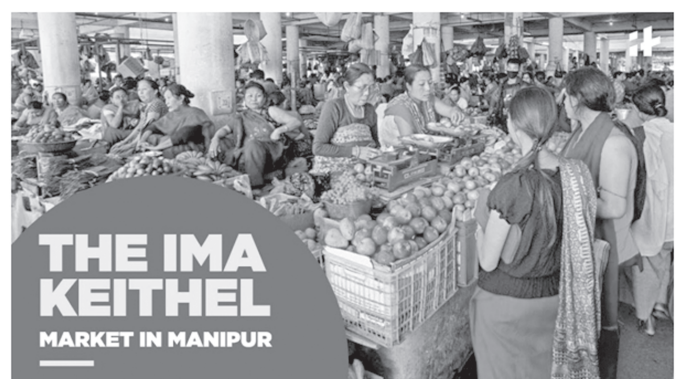
The state’s economy centers around agriculture and forestry. But trade and cottage industries also are important. Pineapple is the fruit that is most produced in Manipur, Manipur is famous for bamboo forests. It is one of India’s largest bamboo producing states and is also a major contributor to the country’s bamboo industry. Manipur has the highest number of handicraft units and the highest number of craft persons in the entire Northeast region. Manipuri bed covers, silk and cotton saris, scarves and shawls are all unique in their own style and make an enchanting collection.

Manipuri language, is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken predominantly in Manipur. Smaller speech communities also exist there. Manipuri dance is famous in India.

Some of the famous personalities of Manipur of the present time are boxers Mary Kom and Dingko Singh Majority of the Manipur population belong to Hinduism (41.39%) and Christianity (41.29%) and Muslim is 8.40% Christianity is the predominant religion among tribals of Manipur and the tribal Christians make up the vast majority (over 96%) of the Christian population in Manipur. In the 20th century, a few Christian schools were established, which introduced Western-type education.

We had a full day tour of Imphal city and suburbs. The tour ended with a visit to a very different shopping place where women dominate everything. The market is called Ima Market or **Ima Keithel (Mothers’ Market)**. It is a market in the middle of Imphal city, run entirely by women. Inside the market, male shopkeepers and vendors are not allowed to sell anything.

It was established in the 16th century, following the imposition of the labour system, which required male members of the community to work in distant lands or serve in the army. As a consequence, women had to support their households by



cultivating fields or weaving textiles and selling the products in improvised markets. The market now hosts around 5,000–6,000 women vendors who sell a variety of products, such as vegetables, fruits, textiles, toys, fish, spices, utensils etc.. It is the largest all-women market in Asia.

After the shopping in Ima market, everybody returned to the Hotel for a good sleep.

(To be continued)

ON VOCATION

Rev. Koshy Mathews



Manju, our daughter, came home for a weekend to get away from the rigors of school and to have mom's home-cooked food. It was the spring semester of her sophomore year at RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), one of the top schools in Engineering. She wasn't her bubbly self when we started talking about her course of study. Since she was doing rather well in her subjects, I was puzzled about the cause of her moodiness. Typical of any parent, I was concerned and asked if I could do anything to help overcome her sadness. I assured her she had nothing to fear; I only wanted her to be happy. She said engineering was not something she wanted to pursue as her vocation. Though she was doing well in her studies, the profession this study may lead her to was not something that would make her happy or fulfilled.

She was expecting me to react

the way the parents of some of her Indian friends would. Initially, we, too, were concerned. But when we considered our daughter's future being unhappy in a profession that she didn't like for the rest of her life, we concluded that it would be best to change. Soon she changed her course of study to sociology and passed out in the same year as her friends. Taking a break from further studies, she did two years of voluntary work with City Year, a federally funded National Service Organization. It allowed her time to discern her future and a vocation she would be good at and happy with. Once she finished her work with City Year, she enrolled in a Master's degree program in Clinical Social Work at Columbia University and graduated two years later. Now she happily works as a Social Worker in California. Getting up in the morning to go to work is not a

drag for her; instead, she looks forward to it with much delight.

Our true north is where we find meaning and purpose in our lives. Frederick Buechner, a great theologian in the West, defined vocation as the place God calls you to, where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. And Catherine of Sienna, a thirteenth-century mystic and activist, challenged people, "Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire." This may require letting go of deep familiarities, mindset, lifestyle, tradition, or perhaps your field of study.

In retrospect, I am glad we didn't throw a temper tantrum at her when Manju dared to reset and realign herself. Pulling oneself off the beaten path to begin a new in a different way though unknown and unfamiliar, can be a dizzying experience. It reminded me of Kahlil Gibran's famous words, "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself." Yes, following our lives based on 'Life's longing for itself' is neither without risks nor hardships, but not attempting to follow our calls would be a life of utter desperation like a big fish in shallow waters struggling to breathe through its gills.

Do we succumb to tradition and security, or do we dare to buck them and have a purposeful life? The choice is ours to make.

WISH YOU ALL 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!



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| Laly Mathew | 1st June |
| Rani Mathew | 1st June |
| Joseph .J Manooparampil | 3rd June |
| P K Kurien | 3rd June |
| M M Thomas | 5th June |
| Dr. Markose Arackal | 30th June |