



ELDERS' VOICE

April 2024

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

Editor: Pushpa Mathew

President's Message

Dhanya Gopinath



Dear Friends,

Thirty-six years have passed since some far-sighted citizens decided to start a Forum exclusively for the seniors.

Over the years, the Forum has been abiding by the constitution and makes it a point to have a new management team every year. Having new office bearers every year has many advantages. Besides developing a greater sense of involvement, a new team brings in fresh ideas and new perspectives.

Last year the outgoing president decided to celebrate Women's Day uniquely by getting the incoming president & secretary to take charge of the proceedings that day. This truly made it a celebration by the women, of the women and for the women.

During 2023-24, we have had the good fortune of having seven past presidents take active interest in the activities of the Forum. The three women on the executive committee have always felt free to seek their help, guidance and support.

To quote the words of Vivekananda, "Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems. It is not sympathy to women, but empowerment of women that is needed." We do hope that we have not let you down and have fulfilled the trust reposed in us.

At the fortnightly meetings of our

Forum, we have tried to invite speakers who are good communicators; people who take pains to prepare well and deliver useful information to the seniors. (We had a diabetologist & a dentist speak about problems faced by seniors)

Important landmarks of Independent India, like Independence Day and Republic Day, were celebrated at the Forum Recently, at our Woman's Day celebrations on the 8th of March, we had a lady advocate speak to us on the subject, 'Women and Law'.

We do have a storehouse of good speakers within our Forum. They have been used from time to time.

This year, we celebrated Onam at the TIES (Tropical Institute of Ecological Sciences) Dr Sarath P Nath delivered the Onam message. There was plenty of time for entertainment.

The Christmas cum New Year function of the SCF was held at the SEERI auditorium in January. We broke the tradition by having a daytime celebration this time. This ensured the presence of two super seniors with restricted mobility.

As the president of the Forum, I feel extremely grateful to the talented Kottayam Baburaj, who has been our guest at both the Onam and Christmas programmes. He is an asset for he never fails to provide solid entertainment.

I have no words to express my appreciation for the excellent work done by the Editor of our newsletter. I am confident that the new office bearers will build on the strong foundation that has been laid and take the Forum to greater heights.

May I use this opportunity to thank my team and all the members of the Kottayam SCF for the affection and cooperation extended to me?



**Womens' Day
Decoration!**

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

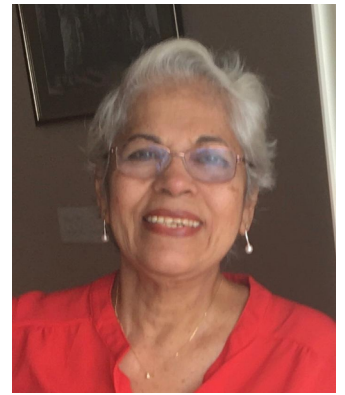
We had two extremely informative talks recently. On 23rd Feb our member, K K Mathew gave a presentation on "Kottayam - A 100 Years ago" He had painstakingly prepared slides of various aspects and locations of Kottayam, as it had been a century ago, which most of us did not know or had forgotten. That was an exceptional walk down memory lane.

We celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March, with a photograph of all our lady members together. Dr Joseph Cherian and Maya spruced up our meeting area with appropriate decorations. (Both pictures appear in this bulletin)

And on that day, there was an illuminating talk on "Women and the Law" by Dr Jaisy Karingattil, Vice-Principal at the CSI College of

Law. Taking up the theme of "Inspire Inclusion", Dr Karingattil explained various laws that specifically affect women e.g. Art 14 & 15, which give women equality before the law without discrimination, the Anti-Dowry Law, the Indian Succession Act, the Family Courts Act etc. Knowledge of these laws helps to protect women if correctly used. Dr Karingattil's talk was both enlightening and lucid and she gave crisp, appropriate responses to all the queries raised by our members. It was certainly one of the best interactive sessions that we have had.

It is now time to say goodbye. I have been Editor of the "Elders' Voice" since 2016 and it is high time there is a change of guard. I wish to thank all our members, who whole-heartedly supported me over the years, by contributing articles and searching in their old albums for photographs for the entertaining "Guess Who's This?" column.



A special thanks is due to Dr P I John, who painstakingly prepared the layout every month, using his unmatched computer skills. He also prepared a mobile version in an extremely easy-to-read format, which most members found convenient to handle.

I hope you all enjoyed reading the newsletter as much as I did, putting it together.

Mr K K Mathew will be taking over as Editor now. Here's wishing him all the best.

Over to the next Editor.



President presenting a memento to the chief guest Dr Karingattil who spoke on Women and Law



Maya with her decorations for Women's Day

Quality of Leadership in a Democracy

Prof Babu Joseph

Quality of leadership is a critical factor in a democracy remaining free, virtuous and prosperous. But such a leadership should be knowledgeable about the way a decent democracy should function.

1. First of all, the size of the govt is very important. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "a less governing state is the best govt". Shri E M S Namboothiripadu wrote, "After proper decentralization, Kerala requires only 6 ministers, including the Chief Minister". It is a proven principle that only a limited Govt can be an efficient one.

2. There has to be a proper distribution of powers among the Union, States and Local governments. In the U S, the federal govt

represented by the President deals with only 5 or 6 matters e.g. Defence, Common currency, Foreign affairs, Foreign trade etc. But in India, even after 76 years of independence, there is no clear distribution of powers.

3. Concentration of political and economic powers is bad for democracy because it may lead to an autocratic govt. killing fundamental freedom of individuals.

A true democracy has to have autonomous forces in society playing an adversarial role with the govt, if necessary and if circumstances warrant such a position e.g. a free press, an independent and fearless judiciary, a responsible and vibrant opposition, independent social forces like religious and educational institutions and an active and vibrant civil society. There is also a need for a police force, insulated from party politics. These are the elements that determine the quality of a



democracy.

Hence, merely having good leaders may not in itself make a good democracy and allow the essential elements to function. This lack of knowledge about the fundamental principles of democratic governance by the so-called good leaders, and the lack of proper systems and proper personnel to man those systems – all contribute to the ultimate killing of our democracy.



Mr K K Mathew speaks on Kottayam, 100 years ago.

Below: Our lady members celebrating the Womens' Day *One of the stops we made*



Hilarious Train Journeys

Dhanya Gopinath

To take a train moving opposite to your destination may appear ludicrous, but this is what happened to me some years back. As the caregiver of my mother, who was hospitalized in Kottayam & with my husband and our college-going children based in Chennai, I'm sure you will understand when I say that I was feeling stressed out shuttling between Kottayam & Chennai every fifteen days.

I was to board a long-distance train that would pass through Thrissur. A last-minute dash into platform no.1 of the Kottayam station, made me spot a stationary train. On enquiring with the porter about the name of the train, I realized that that it was indeed the train. Losing no time I boarded this train. No sooner had I entered the compartment, than I realized that the train was moving in the Thiruvananthapuram direction.

Fortunately, I had the good

sense to get down at the next station. The kindly tea-stall owner reassured me that I could board the pairing train that would halt in half an hour. This train did pass through the station & I did board the train to Thrissur. Needless to add, this created a lot of tension for Gopi, my daughter Vandana & other relatives waiting for me at Thrissur. Remember that this happened in the year 2000 when the cell phone was yet to make its appearance.

My hilarious train journeys did not stop with this one incident. The next one happened a few years afterwards. This time Gopi & I were travelling from Thrissur to Kottayam by the Venad Express. Having reached the station well in advance, I thought that I had plenty of time to visit the bookstall at the other end of the platform. Suddenly my ears picked the word Venad Express; so I lost no time darting towards the place where Gopi was comfortably seated. With bag & baggage, we rushed towards the train that had parked itself on the platform. Comfortable that we had made the bookings well in advance, we confidently got

into the bogie no. mentioned on our ticket & looked for our seats. All hell broke loose when we found others perched on our seats.

'Show us your tickets & we will sort it out for you,' said one of them.

Good sense dawned on us when we realized that we had got into the Eranad Express & not the Venad Express, as we had presumed, after hearing the announcement. Embarrassed, no doubt, we were forced to accept our mistake with a sheepish grin.

By now, I had become an expert at getting down from wrong trains & boarding the right ones. The next station was Alwaye & we disembarked there. In about 40 minutes, we were able to board the Venad Express & find our assigned seats & continue our journey to Kottayam.

Railway announcements are notorious for their monotonous & garbled pronunciations, but why the hell do the Eranad Express & the Venad Express have to reach the same station one after the other?

Wish you a Very Happy

Birthday!

3rd - Jacob George
Ozhathil

5th - Dr. T C
Benjamim, P J Isaacs

7th - M. Manoharan

9th - George
Mathew

13th - Soosy Isaac,
Kottayam Baburaj

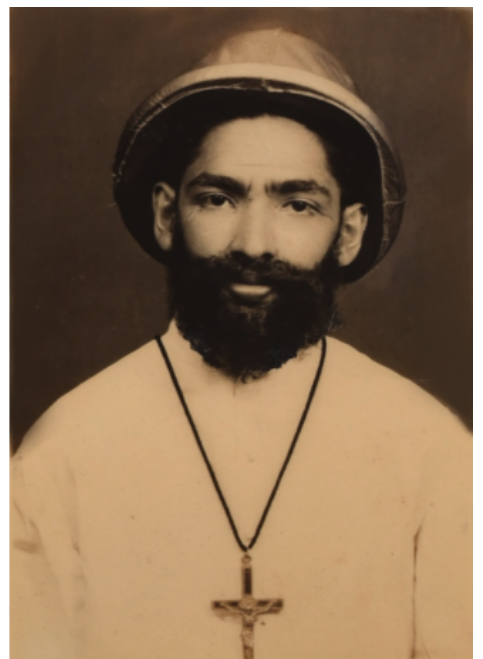
14th - Rev Dr Koshy
Mathews

23rd - V G Shyam

26th - Simon K
Poulose

**Guess
who?**

**Last
months
Guess
who were
K K
Mathew
and Rani**



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