



# ELDERS' VOICE

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

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*News Bulletin of*  
**Senior Citizens' Forum Kottayam**

*Editor*  
**Pushpa Mathew**

## President's Message

**Dr. Joseph Cherian**

The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam, celebrated the International Women's Day on the 10th of March by completely handing over the charge of conducting the session to our women office bearers and having Mrs. Vimla Abraham as the Chief Guest. Mrs. Abraham is the past National President of the Inner Wheel in India and a former member of the International Board of Directors of Inner Wheel. She spoke of 'Unlocking the Power of Women' which inspired a lot of comment.

Thanks to Disney-Hotstar, the 95th Oscar event celebrated at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California on 12th March was available to several viewers. Film buffs amongst us were excited when 'RRR's vibrant and powerful song 'Naatu Naatu' won the Oscar for 'Original Song'. The cup of joy overflowed when 'The Elephant Whisperers' directed by Kartiki Gonsalves and produced by Guneet Monga won in the Best Documentary Short film category, making it a historic day for Indian filmmakers and the audience. The American absurdist comedy-drama action film, "Everything Everywhere All at Once" won seven awards at the Oscars including Best Picture and Best supporting Actors. Michelle Yeoh won the best actress category, making this year's Oscar event an Asian Celebration. RRR's catchy number 'Naatu Naatu' created history at the Oscars as it became the first song from an

Indian film to win the coveted trophy of Best Original Song at the 95th Academy Awards, held last week in Los Angeles, United States.

The fire at the Brahmapuram dumping yard in Kochi is a reminder to us that the un-scientific approach to waste remediation can have disastrous consequences. The dump has been accumulating biogenic and plastic wastes over years and it is very likely that the bio-decomposition of the organic matter and the consequent Methane generation must have led to spontaneous combustion and the disastrous fire that followed. The residents in and around Brahmapuram were subjected to face the hazardous smoke from the fire at the waste dump yard. The experts and politicians have called for an independent probe into the fiasco to unearth the cause of the blaze and find the shortcomings in the yard's operation. With advanced techniques like waste to energy conversion by incineration and gasification being practiced by many municipal corporations, it is surprising that the Kochi authorities have been inactive.

I am happy to report that a new team of office bearers has been constituted and they are likely to be sworn in sometime in the month of April. Let us hope that the vigour and vibrancy that we have built up in the functioning of the forum will continue to be maintained in their able hands.



Dhanya and Rani felicitating the speaker,  
Vimla Abraham



Women's Day celebration

# Editor's Musings

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

March 8<sup>th</sup> is observed internationally as Women's Day to honour the achievements attained by women and at the same time to confront the discrimination faced by her in societies across the world. We, at the Senior Citizens Forum, observed the day on our first meeting in March - 10th March by having the day's proceedings entirely conducted by women. We had Dhanya Gopinath (the incoming President from April) take the chair as President and Rani Mathew (the incoming Secretary) perform the functions of the Secretary.

The guest speaker of the day was also a lady – Mrs. Vimla Abraham, who spoke on "Empowering Women". She said that the first step towards empowering women is to empower men and make them feel confident enough to permit women dream beyond their domestic roles. Several male members like Dr. Parackal and Prof P C Varghese spoke on how women can play a complementary role, along with

their male counterparts, for the betterment of the family. One member felt that religion played a crucial role in keeping women sub-servient and designated them to a secondary role in the overall human canvas. An extreme case of this is Talibanism.



At our meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb, one of our members, Mr. Gopinathan spoke on "Moonlighting and Changing Work Ethics". During Covid times, the system of 'work from home' was established. People found that considerable commuting time was being saved. While some used this time to up skill, others took up a secondary job. Many IT professionals began free-lancing and recently Wipro, IBM and Infosys began treating such moonlighting as cheating. Software was installed by these organizations to monitor the output of employees, which affected employer-employee relationships. Many of our members contributed instances from their own work experiences e.g. Joseph Mathew narrated how expensive software purchased by the parent company was often misused by employees for moonlighting elsewhere.

We are giving a break to our series on "Visit to the Seven Sisters" this time and will continue it next month with Meghalaya.

Did you guess the couple in our last issue? It was our very own President, Dr. Joseph Cherian and Maya! This time we have another couple. See if you can guess who they are.

Until next time, then.

## Guess who is this?



Answer to last month's quiz "Guess who is this?":  
Dr. Joseph Cherian and Maya



Gopinathan adorning Dhanya with the Presidential collar on the Women's Day celebrations

# ARE WE REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT ROAD SAFETY?

Joseph Mathew

I believe neither the government authorities nor the people are concerned about the unprecedented increase in road accidents and death in Kerala. The media is good at sensationalizing accidents and YouTubers are making money out of it.

Who are responsible for this unfortunate situation? Three entities are mainly responsible.

1. Roads: PWD- responsible for building roads
2. Government authorities and the traffic dept.- the enforcers of rules
3. People

## 1. Roads

In Kerala, minimum attention is paid to the construction, maintenance or upgradation of roads. Most of the existing roads are merely extensions of the old bullock cart ways. No thought has been given to the alignments, turnings or width. With the increase in number and faster vehicles, existing alignments are obsolete. Though the road surfacing has improved, they have not been modernized for better safety. In Kottayam most roads are narrow and winding. It is imperative to straighten them and provide signals at major junctions. Where small roads connect to main ones there should be some indication or speed-breakers before entering the main road. Footpaths, of course are non-existent.

The worst scenario is the provision of by-passes on the main roads e.g. the main M C Road, has a number of by-passes but no signage or amber light at most locations. A classic example is at the Cement Kaval. The PWD appears to have no process of

“HAZOP” review for reviewing the changing scenario to improve road safety.

## 2. Govt. authorities and the traffic dept.

Most dangerous is the casual attitude in issuing driving licenses. World over, there are strict protocols for issuing licenses that involves intense practice and thorough education. Here a learner's license is issued at random and a full license to drive is issued within 3 months. Licenses of repeated offenders should also be promptly cancelled.

Operational CCTV and speed cameras should be installed on all major roads and those speeding, changing lanes arbitrarily or not using seat belts and helmets etc. should be punished. Vehicles driven with full head lights on in the night, (which blinds the oncoming driver), should be punishable.

Pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked with flashing amber lights to catch the attention of the motorist and pedestrians. In Kottayam people nonchalantly cross anywhere and some drivers even speed up to scare them!

Thirunakkara junction is a pedestrians' nightmare, with limited parking facilities and no

footpaths. Big buses and heavy vehicles are permitted to take that round about, making it most accident-prone. If heavy vehicles take Aida junction, the congestion will reduce considerably. It is essential to do a study on improving the situation there, especially with the new bus stand coming up there.

## 3. People

Keeping to the right side of the road or facing the traffic is a norm globally, where there are no footpaths. But our pedestrians rarely follow this rule. Also wearing black clothes while walking on roads in the night is dangerous.

In our schooldays we were taught to look both sides before attempting to cross the road and to walk facing the traffic. It is essential that we give lessons to our young people on road usage and driving etiquette. Schools should have a classes on road safety especially with the advent of new motor vehicles that go at very high speed on our roads.

Unless the road engineers, authorities and people understand the need, we will continue to be the state with highest accidents.



Mr Gopinathan speaking on Moonlighting



# MILI, THE SAD DOG

Dhanya Gopinath



I met Mili recently, when I paid a visit to my niece's home at Bengaluru. Being fond of dogs, I asked Sangeetha for the name of her pet, so as to make friends with her. The dog's body language made me decide to wait & watch before making the first move. I waited in vain to see whether I could see the tail wag a wee bit at least. Later, when, Suresh, Sangeetha's husband, gave me a brief history of Mili & her entry into their house, many things fell into place.

Mili & her five siblings were orphaned when their mother was hit by a speeding lorry. A kind passer-by had taken the six pups to a Pet Adoption Centre, as he was unable to look after them. Sangeetha, who is a social activist had visited this place a few times with a friend. On one such occasion, she had spotted one of the pups sitting in a corner with a sorrowful face. She got curious & was told that this pup was the most reserved of the six orphaned pups. Sangeetha said, that

something in her made her spend a lot of time with this forlorn pup. Her young son, Siddarth & Suresh too, accompanied her during some of her visits to this Pet Adoption Centre.

'Why not give one of the pups a home?' said Suresh. Siddarth, said that he liked the sad dog the best & would like to make her his pet. He became very adamant about his choice, when he came to know that female Indi-Dogs rarely found a home. That is how, the sad-faced pup got her home & her name "Mili". Mili found her "Forever Home", when she was three months old, & is now almost two years old.

Sangeetha, felt that Mili must have seen her mother being killed & that could have left deep scars on her mind. Mili is now comfortable in her forever home but is reserved with strangers & scared to make friends with other dogs.

We see a lot of stray dogs roaming on our streets & they are all Indi-Dogs. While sterilizing them could reduce their numbers, constructive measures like providing rescue shelters & finding a home for some of them at least, could be a humane approach to the problem. Indians, generally, go for the pedigree variety, when thinking of keeping a pet. These Indi-Dogs are far more sturdy, have better immunity & are as trainable as the pedigree breeds

Mili, is one such lucky dog. May her tribe find acceptance in more Indian homes'



Vimla Abraham speaking on the Women's Day celebrations

## 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!*



Jacob George Ozhathil	3 <sup>rd</sup> April
Dr. T C Benjamim	5 <sup>th</sup> April
P J Isaacs	5 <sup>th</sup> April
Manoharan	7 <sup>th</sup> April
George Mathew	9 <sup>th</sup> April
Soosy Isaac	13 <sup>th</sup> April
Kottayam Baburaj	13 <sup>th</sup> April
Rev Dr Koshy Mathews	14 <sup>th</sup> April
George Isaac	16 <sup>th</sup> April
V G Shyam	23 <sup>rd</sup> April
Simon K Poullose	26 <sup>th</sup> April