



ELDERS' VOICE

SEPTEMBER 2019

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

Editor: Dhanya Gopinath

The President's Message

P. I. John

I have been reading a very fascinating book by Tony Joseph: "Early Indians". It is the story of how recent genetic studies have established how the early series of migrations from Africa began to populate the Indian subcontinent to create the palimpsest of Indian Civilization.

An organism's complete set of DNA, including all of its genes, is called the genome. Each genome, made up of more than 3 billion DNA base pairs, contains all the information needed to build and maintain that organism. There is a copy of the entire genome in all cells that have a nucleus. In this, there are sequences called genetic markers. Millions of these markers have been discovered. By mapping the appearance and frequency of genetic markers in modern people, we can discover connections between temporally and spatially distributed populations and create a picture of when and where their ancestors moved around the world. From such records, we know that the first Homo sapiens appeared in Ethiopia, around 200,000 years ago. From this parent group some started to leave Africa between 60,000 and 70,000 years ago. Some of them came to India. We are their descendants.

What is abundantly clear is that we are a civilization drawing its cultural impulses from contributions from different sources. Our traditions and practices are drawn from a variety of lineages and migration histories. The pioneering, intrepid

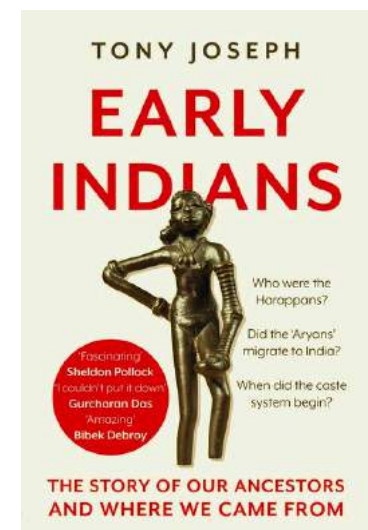
explorers discovered this land originally and settled in it. Their lineages still form the bedrock of our population. Those who arrived later with a package of farming techniques built the Indus Valley civilization. Their culture and conventions enrich much of our traditions today. Then, there are those who arrived from East Asia, probably bringing with them the practice of rice cultivation. Another group came in 2000 BC with a language called Sanskrit and its associated beliefs and practices and reshaped our society in fundamental ways. Finally some came even later for trade or for conquest and chose to stay. All these groups mingled over time and contributed to the Indian civilization. We are, in that sense, all migrants.

The book shows that Indian culture is not synonymous with, or identical to, 'Aryan' or 'Sanskrit' or 'Vedic' culture, though this was an important stream that contributed to creating the unique Indian civilization as we know it today. By no means was it the only one. There were multitude of other streams that have contributed equally to making Indian civilization what it is. 'Aryan' culture was most likely the result of interaction, adoption and adaptation among those who brought Indo-European languages to India and those who were already well-settled inhabitants of the region".

The different Indian groups that form this palimpsest are demogra-

phically not very large. The degree of genetic differentiation among even groups living together is typically two or three times higher than the genetic differentiation between northern and southern Europeans. Thus, the truth is that India is composed of a large number of small populations.

The closing remarks of his book are applicable to the entire South Asian population: "We are all Indians. And we are all migrants."



"Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent"

Victor Hugo

Editor's Musings

Dhanya Gopinath

Dear Friends!

Kindly permit me to take a little of your time to dwell on the positive side of human beings, try and imbibe something if possible & think how best we can serve the society better.

Here, I thought I should share with you a few things that have left a deep impact on me.

In a short span of 35 days from the 20th of July to the 24th of August, this year, we have lost three outstanding politicians. While Sheila Dixit, one of the longest serving chief ministers of Delhi passed away on the 20th of July, Sushma Swaraj passed away on the 6th of August & Arun Jaitley on the 24th of August.

These three politicians had one quality which is increasingly disappearing from the public figures of the day. They did not mistake dissent for enmity. They had the uncanny ability to reach out to the members, who had differing views from their own & have an objective dialogue. They always remained on opposite sides but maintained warm personal relations with their political adversaries.

Delhiites will, no doubt, remember Sheila Dixit for the Metro, the fly overs, the better public

transport as well as the development on the health and educational fronts.

However, it is the human side of this lady that would be etched in the minds of people. This Congress leader showed that it is possible to be graceful in politics. Her inter-personal skills & her ability to iron out differences through talks proved to be her best qualities. She could have a heated debate with the opposition, yet remain friends with them.

One excellent example was Dixit's relationship with Sushma Swaraj. They were politicians from two different parties & espoused different ideologies, yet they shared a common trait, 'Fierce opposition to policies but warm personal relations with their adversaries.'

Arun Jaitley, is not only described as an endearing politician but also as a great strategist and a generous friend. He was also a man, who developed strong friendships with leaders across all parties. People from the other side of the political spectrum used to seek his counsel in resolving complex matters.

One could go on & on, describing the endearing qualities of these great political leaders.



Let me finish by narrating the experiences of two members

from our family circle, who benefitted from the personal touch of Sushma Swaraj. Both of them were running from pillar to post when their applications for passport renewal was being rejected on flimsy grounds. At last they decided to get in touch with the 'External Affairs Minister with a personal touch'. In no time, they got replies saying that action would be taken. Sure enough they got their passports renewed in record time.

Politicians may come & go but the names of Sheila Dixit, Sushma Swaraj & Arun Jaitley will be remembered for their approachability and helpful temperaments.

In this edition of the Elders' Voice, you will find the report of the meetings conducted at the Forum unusually long. This is so as the advice given by the two young speakers, during the two meetings conducted in August must be implemented by all of us, if we believe in healthy ageing.

Meetings in August

The first meeting of the Kottayam Senior citizens' Forum was held on the 9th of the month. The Chief Speaker of the day was Dr. Mrs. Vineetha Alexander. Vineetha, who is a geneticist, is the daughter of our Jt. Secretary, Mr. S. K. Paulose & Mrs. Mariamma Paulose. She talked on "Autism Spectrum Disorders & Cancer; an introspection on food habits & lifestyle of today."

She spoke briefly about how our cells have the ability to die a natural death, but sometimes they misbehave and have multiple mu-

tations causing cancer. Extensive studies, prove that there is a definite connection between Life Style and CANCER.

She advised the seniors to include plenty of vegetables & fruits in their daily diets. She also added, that it was possible to get rid of a major portion of the pesticide residues by soaking fruits & vegetables in water to which vinegar & baking soda is added.

Dr. Vineetha said that it was best to avoid processed meats that use nitrates & nitrites as preservatives. She also mentioned that sweets made with molasses

(Sharkara) were better for health than those that used white sugar as the sweetening agent.

Dr. Alexander said that that the curcumin content of turmeric was found to be an excellent cancer preventive.

She explained how the Pachamanjal could be powdered & that a quarter spoon of turmeric powder with a pinch of pepper powder in a glass of warm water taken on an empty stomach had been found to be a cancer preventive. Drinking lemon juice is

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also a cancer preventive. She also said that it was best to avoid shampoos that have a citric acid content and perfumes.

Dr Alexander spoke about the growing incidence of Autism in children from upper class families & said that this could also be linked to the changing life styles of expectant mothers.

The second meeting of the SCF was held on the 23rd of August. Dr Roy Philip, son of member P K Philipose was the chief speaker. Although Dr Roy is a paediatrician, his MBA degree in Health Care Management helped him give an

informative talk to the seniors on living a fulfilling life during the Golden Years.

He spoke about the need for preventing falls and gave tips like de-cluttering the house, using foot wear with a good grip, providing adequate lighting, attaching grab rails and the like.

Dr Roy Philip spoke about the availability of vaccinations that could prevent diseases like pneumonia, flu, herpes, tetanus etc. In the long run some of these expensive vaccinations may help seniors avoid costly and prolonged hospitalization.

The 23rd of August proved to

be a great day for Mr P K Philipose as his second book of poems, 'Smrithi Malarukal' was released at the meeting of the Senior Citizens' Forum, in the presence of family members that included his wife, daughter, son-in-law & son Dr. Roy Philip.

His poems show his keen observation of life around him. Without a trace of malice or bitterness he has expressed his views on contemporary life in Kerala. What is commendable is his desire to use the proceeds of the book sale for charitable purposes.

Dhanya Gopinath

Our Annual Picnic

Pushpa Mathew

14th Sept 2019. The date of the much anticipated picnic was here. At 9 am two Tempo Travellers waited for our members at the Public Library premises and we all hopped aboard.

As the bus drove past Baker Junction and Chungam and turned towards Aymanam, the landscape

totally changed! We drove through lush greenery, pools of water and fields of paddy - did not know such an idyllic rustic environment existed so close by!

Soon we were at Johnny Moose Backwater Farm, located on the banks of the Meenachil River, set in an area of 20 acres with a fish farm and coconut, banana and other fruit trees. It offered kayaking facilities too, which none of our members ventured to try, but a bunch of youngsters from another

group were having a whale of a time with the kayaks.

A covered area near the pool with a dais and ample seating arrangement was awaiting us and we all made ourselves comfortable, as each of us received a tender coconut. Once sipping the coconut water and relishing the sweet and juicy flesh was done, the meeting began.

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Scenes from Aymanam

Courtesy: Minnu John





A copy of "സ്മൃതിമലരുകൾ" being presented to Prof George Koshy



Shri P K Philipose talking about his book



Dr Roy Philip being presented with a memento

Picnic (Contd from p.3)

Our President, Dr P I John gave a short introduction after Mr. V G Shyam's prayer- song. Advocate, Sivamani Kaimal addressed the gathering on the significance of Onam. He explained the role of Vamana and the reason for the banishment of the good king, Mahabali, which was an eye-opener for many of us.

Now our emcee, Prof K M Varghese took over in his inimitable style. The day's programme began with an impromptu skit by Dr Rachel Kurian and Pushpa Mathew, followed by a wonderful duet by Mr. John Kunnath and Mrs Lizzy John. Little Angela, daughter of Mr John Joseph entertained the group with a charming dance and Mr P K Philipose read us some of his lively, breezy poems. Prof George Koshy then regaled us with some jokes and stories in his typical, unique style. Then came the highlight of the programme - a hilarious skit by Prof K M Varghese and Kottayam Baburaj, the latter attired like a lady, complete with the figure and jewelry of a woman (though he continued to sport his Prem Nazir style moustache!) and they kept the whole audience in splits! This was followed by Moncy's Musical group, who sang some popular songs in both Malayalam and Hindi.

By now, it was lunch-time and we all trooped to the adjoining dining hall for a sumptuous Onasadya, replete with all the Onam delicacies and payasams.



After lunch we got back for some more entertainment - songs by Susy Isaac and Elizabeth Philip, personal anecdotes by Omana Abraham and a quiz programme by Moncy, with our members vying for the prizes.

The picnic wound up after tea and snacks and we all headed back to the buses to return home. I am sure I am speaking for everyone when I say that we all had a thoroughly enjoyable day. A big thank you to Dr P I John, Mr. Gopalakrishnan Nair, Mr. V G Shyam, Mr. P I Mani and Prof K M Varghese, who worked hard to make sure that the picnic was a memorable one.

"When a sentence is made stronger, it usually becomes shorter. Thus, brevity is a by-product of vigor."
William Strunk, The Elements of Style

"Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell." **William Strunk Jr., The Elements of Style**

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!

- Dr. K. R. Harilal - 7 Sept
- Mrs. Rajalakshmi Nair - 9 Sept
- Adv. P. C. Chandramohan - 10 Sept
- Mrs. Sally Mathew - 16 Sept
- Mr. Alex Mathew - 18 Sept
- Mr. Dominic Mathew - 20 Sept
- Mrs. Lizzy Mathew - 20 Sept
- Prof. John Joseph - 20 Sept
- Dr. Mathew Parackal - 27 Sept
- Mr. P. V. Joseph - 28 Sept