



ELDERS' VOICE

DECEMBER 2018

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

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The President's Message

P. I. John

We had an eventful week, with the assembly elections in five states. Elections bring out the dynamism of the Indian democracy, with the crowds, crackers and the chaos characteristic of a vibrant democracy. The results were equally fascinating. The Modi magic is appearing to be fading. This is a very good sign.

Noted English writer Amitav Ghosh has been honoured with this year's Jnanpith Award, for his "outstanding contribution towards literature".

In his novels, though set in historical settings, Gosh finds a connection to the present. His academic training as a historian and social anthropologist, renders an extraordinary depth and substance to his books.

A very readable work is the Ibis Trilogy (Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke and Flood of Fire). The novels chronicle both the indentured labour transported to Mauritius and the Opium trade between India and China.

Speaking about books, I came across a very interesting paper titled **How books in adolescence enhance adult literacy, numeracy and technology skills** by Joanna Sikora of the Australian National University. The study is available on the [Social Science Research website: \(www.elsevier.com/locate/ssresearch\)](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ssresearch)

The study suggests that homes with ample libraries can give children skills that persist into adulthood. The data came from 160,000 adults from 31 countries, including the USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Turkey, Japan and Chile. The average number of books in participants' childhood homes was 115, though this varied from country to country.

Across the board, however, it seemed that more books in the home was linked to higher proficiency in the areas tested by the survey.

The effects were most marked when it came to literacy. Growing up with few books in

the home resulted in below average literacy

levels. Being surrounded by 80 books boosted the levels to average, and literacy continued to improve until libraries reached about 350 books, at which point the literacy rates leveled off. The researchers observed similar trends when it came to numeracy; the effects were not as pronounced with information communication technology tests, but skills did improve with increased numbers of books.

Our Intuitive belief that an environment of books is good for children is proved in this study. However, it does not say why this correlation between the exposure to books at childhood and adult literacy exists. Further research is needed to determine precisely why exposure to books in childhood fosters valuable skills later in life.



The Union Minister of Civil Aviation and Commerce & Industry, Suresh Prabhu, and Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Jayant Sinha launched the upgraded version of AirSewa 2.0 web portal (<https://airsewa.gov.in/>).

Editor's Musings

Dhanya Gopinath

Hello!

We are meeting once again on the pages of the Elders' Voice.

Starting on a positive note, let me share something that I read recently about some sports persons, who have achieved wonders at ages when they were expected to retire.

During the first week of December, I was amazed to hear news of the remarkable feat of Mary Kom. This is what the New Sunday Express had to say of her, "From barely getting recognition after the 2002 World Championship to Gold, to being celebrated as the only Woman Boxer to bag six world championship golds, MC Mary Kom, is yet another example that age is not a hindrance in achieving dreams, as long as there is passion. In 2012, she became the first Indian woman boxer to win an Olympic Medal."

Through sheer will and crunching punches, this young lady from Manipur has made a cricket-crazy nation like India sit up for once and think of a game like Boxing.

Although a celebrity today (She is a Rajya Sabha MP, who

has attended more than 50% of the sessions and participated in 5 Debates. She is somebody, who has a biopic about her) this thirty five year old mother of three, has been able to keep her hunger for medals intact and is eyeing her next gold at the world championship. "My preparations for the Tokyo Olympics begin tomorrow", said she immediately after winning her sixth gold.

The names of five other sportspersons figure in the list of people, who have withstood time and age and given the best performances of their lives.

Our master blaster, Sachin Tendulkar, is one of those, who gave his best performance at the age of thirty six.

Take a game like basket ball and we have Michel Jordan, who scored his best at the age of thirty six.

Serena Williams, the greatest women's tennis player of the modern era is also around thirty seven and has won a couple of Grand Slams after the age of thirty five.

The greatest swimmer of all time, Michel Phelps had a career

spanning sixteen years.

We also have the example of Muhammed Ali, who went on to lift world titles even after crossing the age of thirty seven.

These examples may sound ludicrous in a news letter like the Elders' Voice, but could be stretched to encompass the reach of a positive and determined approach at any age. (I say this after meeting an amazing ninety six year old man a few days back). Nothing is impossible in this man's dictionary.

The year 2018, will soon be referred to in the past tense. December is the last month of this year and we have lost yet another friend.

Mr. Joy Jacob was an active and sincere office -bearer of the Senior Citizens' Forum and has rendered his services selflessly.

May his soul rest in peace.

Before I sign off, let me wish you all a merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.



Computer Tutorial

This is the first of a series of short notes on computer use, highlighting useful, free Windows Applications.

Evernote is a note taking application that lets you collect resources in one place and work on projects or tasks. You organise your Notes into Notebooks and use Tags to categorise different Notes into common topics.

Evernote can be downloaded to your computer from <https://evernote.com/download>.

You can also download the Evernote Web Clipper from:

https://filehippo.com/download_evernote_web_clipper/.

With the web clipper, you can clip webpages and turn them into Notes. Or you might choose to save just a link or an image from a page. These will be stored on the Evernote app that you downloaded on your computer and can be accessed any time. You can use the Evernote app on your smartphone or desktop to capture audio notes.

Evernote basically allows you to build up a searchable library of documents, photographs and other web materials and contributes enormously to your productivity.

Evernote can also be downloaded from your Microsoft store.

Tax concessions for Senior Citizens.

This year, there have been a few tax concessions offered to senior citizens and it would be useful to be aware of them as we pay our income tax this year.

Under the Income tax act, a senior citizen is defined as an individual who attains the age of 60 at any time during the financial year, while an individual who is 80 years or more categorized as "very senior citizen". For senior citizens, income upto Rs.3,00,000/- is exempt from tax and for very senior

citizens income upto Rs.5,00,000/- is tax exempt.

Senior citizens whose income is derived from pension are also eligible for standard deductions of Rs.40,000/- like salaried class. besides no advance tax need to be paid by senior citizens.

This year no income tax is payable for interest earned on savings bank and Term deposits up to Rs.50,000/-

Deduction under Sec.80D for medical insurance has been raised

to Rs. 50,000/- and medical expenditure for critical illnesses has been raised to Rs.60,000/- under section 80 DDB.

Apart from the above one useful tip while withdrawing money from ATMs is to press the "CANCEL" button twice before inserting your card. If anyone is trying to steal your card information this act will cancel anything, they may have set up to do so. Make this a habit as part of your transaction process for your safety.

Pushpa Mathew

November Meetings

The first meeting of the SCF during the month of November was held on the 9th.

The Pillays were formally inducted as members of the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum.

The Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Viswanathan Namboothiri, spoke on the subject, 'The Sabarimala dispute in the wake of the Supreme Court judgement regarding the entry of women in the 10-50 Age Group.'

He referred to the existence of

Acharams for every temple and said that the acharams of the Sabarimala temple were written in Sanskrit, hence the common man did not understand them.

Dr. Namboothiri stressed on the Equality of Man & Women but pointed out that one should not equate Acharams with Equality.

He lamented that Sabarimala had been made an issue and then given a political twist.

The 23rd of November was the day on which the second meeting of the SCF was held.

This meeting was organized differently as per the suggestions given by members.

There was no speaker on this occasion and members were asked to divide themselves into four groups. They were given time to acquaint themselves with each other before answering the questions of the Quiz master, Mrs. Molly Benjamin. The group with maximum correct answers was declared the winner.

Dhanya Gopinath

Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Centenary Oration

The first Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Centenary Oration was delivered by Prof. P. I. John on 18th December, 2018 in Indore. The event was organized by the Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Viswavidyalaya, Indore.

Prof. John talked about the emerging plasma-mediated technologies for converting Carbon Dioxide extracted from the atmosphere into hydrocarbon fuel. This fuel is Carbon neutral and hence sustainable. This will enable the vast hydrocarbon resources to be used in the future without further



Carbon addition to the atmosphere. This process, if powered by solar energy, will also aid in the solar energy storage by chemical means.

Work in this emerging field is progressing in Netherlands, Belgium and the US.

Mrs. Susy Gabriel

The Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum wishes to place on record sincere condolences to our member Mr. Joseph Gabriel on the loss of his wife Susy and to Mrs. Omana Abraham on the loss of her sister-in-law, who, in her own words was more than a sister-in-law to her. Mrs. Gabriel is survived by her husband Mr. Joseph Gabriel, children Elias and Sarah.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
THE PROUD GRAND
PARENTS!**



Aaron, the 16 year old grand son of Mrs. Soosy Isaac & Mr. George Isaac, has been awarded a 100% scholarship by Eton College, the most prestigious and distinguished school in the world.

This young boy who is currently studying in Westminster City School, topped his class in the General Certificate of Secondary Education. His favourite subjects are Mathematics Physics, Chemistry, English & History and his highest grades are in these subjects.

Aaron plays the Guitar & has passed Grade 5 of the Royal College of Music for the Violin.

His mother, Christina, who passed out from Baker Memorial School as it's best out going student and has a first class degree in Physics from the C.M.S. college, is his guide and motivator

Er. Joy Jacob

(19-05-1945 to 15-12-2018)



When we review the history of the Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam, we observe that Er. Joy Jacob had an indelible role. He served as Secretary of the Forum for Four years and Vice President for two years. With his experience as a very senior Administrator in the Rubber Board, he helped the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum to successfully host the FOSCAK Convention at Kottayam in the year 2012.

He is survived by his wife Lissie, son Deepak and daughter Darsana.

(Contributed by A. M. Mathew).

Gene-edited babies

A Chinese scientist surprised the world in late November by claiming he had created the first gene-edited babies, who at the time of the announcement were a few weeks old. Scientists and ethicists quickly responded with outrage.

In an interview with the Associated Press and in a video posted November 25, Jiankui He announced that twin girls with a gene altered to reduce the risk of contracting HIV "came crying into

this world as healthy as any other babies."

Many researchers and ethicists say implanting gene-edited embryos to create babies is premature and exposes the children to unnecessary health risks. Critics also fear the creation of "designer babies," children edited to enhance their intelligence, athleticism or other traits.

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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!**

Mr. Mathew Kurien ----- 6th December

K. K. Mathew -----10th December

Mrs. Jo Chacko ----- 19th December