



# Gitanjali 2020

An Ohmkaram Publication



ഒഹ്കാരം 1195-1196

(Kerala cultural organization based in St Louis, MO)  
[www.ohmkaram.org](http://www.ohmkaram.org)



**In Fond Memory  
of**



**Vinod Menon**

**August 1969 - November 2020**





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## From the desk of Gitanjali's Editorial team...

Hello Everyone,

Wish you all a Happy and Safe New Year!!

As always, it's been a pleasure to present the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of Gitanjali. A big thanks to the members and kids for their contributions to the magazine.

Covid-19 is still in everyone's thoughts and that is reflected in the cover and the articles and artwork that is presented in the magazine. The pandemic has wreaked havoc in every person's life in this world and is expected to impact all of us in the near future.

The cover features presented provides good information about the steps needed to take to reduce the chances of catching the disease and the food choices to fight the disease. Please read the features Fighting Covid with Food and Health is Wealth – Surviving the pandemic. Our little authors have also chimed in with their thoughts on how to stay safe from the disease and how they have adapted with the at-home learning through their articles and artwork.

The pandemic also prevented us from conducting some of our regular programs and so we didn't have enough pictures of events. However, we were able to conduct Onam and Special program online. Visit the photo pages section to see the details.

Gitanjali provides a unique opportunity for Ohmkaram members to express their creative skills in literacy and artistic talents. All the articles and artwork are extremely valuable to us. Gitanjali also provides us the opportunity to solicit advertisement, which is important for our organization. It takes quite a bit of effort to solicit articles, contacting sponsors for advertisements, editing, proof-reading and printing. All those takes a lot of efforts and it's extremely gratifying to see the outcome.

We also wanted to thank our sponsors for their support and contributions to Ohmkaram. Their contributions are critical for Ohmkaram. Do not forget to utilize the services of our sponsors when in need.

It's been a great pleasure working on Gitanjali this year. Thanks for the opportunity.

Enjoy reading Gitanjali!

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**Dear Ohmkaram Members,**

It's an honor and privilege to serve as President of Ohmkaram for the year 2020. As a member of the executive committee and the board on multiple occasions, I had the opportunity to see first-hand the capabilities of the organization and the opportunities that lie ahead. Ohmkaram is very visible and respected within the Indian diaspora and consistently represented in the larger community events. These are made possible by the dedication and continued participation of our members and I take this opportunity to thank you all for that.



Needless to say, 2020 was a difficult year for all of us, both at the personal level and organizational level. Covid-19 had wreaked havoc across the world with illness, death and poverty. On the bright side, our members followed the required guidelines and stayed safe and healthy during this time.

Ohmkaram joined Sewa International to deliver PPEs and foods to the needful within the St. Louis area. Ohmkaram also raised funds for the effort. Our youth members from Ohmkaram Engage did a cookie baking session to raise additional funds for the effort.

Since the anniversary celebrations, we were not able to meet or conduct any in-person events as the pandemic prompted nationwide lockdown. We had to cancel Vishu, Kalakriti, Picnic and Vallomkali events and we met virtually to keep our members engaged. We conducted our first virtual special program "St. Louis Express" orchestrated by Kalamandalam Ramakrishnan. This program was brought live from Varikkasseri mana in Ottapalam, and made possible by grants from Missouri Arts Council and Regional Arts Commission. The event was live streamed in Facebook for our members as well as various other organizations across US and was a great success.

We raised funds for Scholarships during this event and were able to sponsor additional student for their education. I take this moment to thank the members of the scholarship committee in selecting the ideal candidates for the scholarship. I also wanted to thank Mr. Pradeep Valsan for sponsoring an additional student on behalf of Ohmkaram.

The dedication and resilience of our members were very apparent during our virtual Onam program where members performed live from their homes. Executive committee distributed Onam Sadya to members' homes to add to the excitement. I wanted to thank all the members for their efforts to make the event a great success.

I want to take this opportunity to remember Vinod Menon, who passed away due to health issues, couple of months back. Vinod was an active member of Ohmkaram and was instrumental in key initiatives of Ohmkaram. We all certainly miss him.

I also encourage our members to step up and join the Executive Committee next time and provide your leadership and valuable ideas to strengthen the organization.

On behalf of the Executive committee, I wanted to thank the Souvenir committee for their efforts to put together this amazing publication. I also wanted to extend my thanks to the board of directors and the audit committee for their recommendations. Big thanks to our youth members of the Ohmkaram Engage for their ideas to strengthen the organization.

Lastly, I wanted to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their support and guidance, as well as the wonderful and creative ideas they brought to the table to serve the organization.

Sincerely,

**Sunil Krishnan**

**President 2020**



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# Fighting Covid with Food

By **Dr. Suresh Krishnan**

Every day, your body makes it possible for you to think, dream, breathe, rest and move. Getting the right nutrients makes it easier for your body to support you. There are three pillars of health.

- Sleep is the first pillar of health.
- Food is our second pillar of health for a strong immune system.
- Exercise is our third pillar of health.

As one of the "three pillars of health," nutritious food helps to support your immune system. Proper nutrition helps you fight the coronavirus.

## **Eating healthy:**

- Helps you fight all diseases effectively – not just COVID-19.
- Won't magically prevent or cure COVID-19.
- Improves your mood and energy level.
- Reduces anxiety and depression.

## **What it won't do is the following:**

- Can't substitute for social distancing or wearing a mask around others.
- Can be a lifestyle, rather than a strict diet or counting calories.

Every little bit of healthy eating helps your body fight disease more effectively. Read on to find out why some foods help your body fight invaders and others don't.

## **Inflammation: a cry for help**

- Looks and feels like redness, swelling, heat and pain.
- The body regulates inflammation through the immune system. Your immune system can sound the alarm (cause inflammation) even without invaders around. This overreaction can be harmful. Eating foods that reduce inflammation ("anti-inflammatory" foods) helps your immune system.
- "Short term localized inflammation is beneficial for self-healing," especially for acute conditions. "Long-lasting inflammation can increase your risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and obesity."
- Too much inflammation limits your body's ability to fight invaders like the coronavirus. Try these foods to reduce inflammation and help your immune system.

## **Foods that help your immune system:**

Try new veggies and fruits. Specific veggies and fruits that reduce inflammation are apples, berries, tomatoes, celery and onions.

Add fermented foods. Fermented foods have "good bacteria," a.k.a. probiotics that help your immune system. Eating more fermented foods also reduces gas, bloating and diarrhea.

Sauerkraut, yogurt and kombucha are all great sources of these mighty microbes.

Drink more water. Water helps your body naturally remove toxins and also carries oxygen to your entire body. You don't



have to drink eight glasses of water a day to notice a difference in your health. A little extra hydration every day helps a lot.

Get some omega-3s. Salmon, walnuts and chia seeds have omega-3 fatty acids, which reduce inflammation. These omega-3s are also perfect for construction. When creating new defenders, your body uses omega-3s as essential "building blocks" in cell membrane.

## **Foods to avoid to feel your best:**

Limit processed foods. Salty, processed foods can limit your body's ability to fight infectious diseases effectively. No need to cut out everything unhealthy or start a strict diet. Try scaling back just a little – replace chips with carrots for a crunchy snack.

Minimize sugar. Sugar is okay in moderation, but too much sugar may weaken your immune system.

Decrease high-fat foods. Your gut doesn't like a lot of red meats or fatty foods. The mighty microbes in your gut prefer leafy greens, fiber and other nutrient-dense foods that are easier to break down.

## **Can supplements prevent COVID-19?**

No single food, nutrient or supplement can prevent coronavirus infection, but eating healthy helps your body fight disease. It's all about balance. Supplements (like vitamins and minerals) can be helpful, but only if you're not getting enough of those nutrients regularly.

Supplements can actually be bad for you if you take too much at one time. Everything is best in moderation. If you have underlying or chronic health conditions, check with your primary care provider before taking them.

## **How food affects health?**

The foods you eat help your immune system. Inflammation is a natural alert to fight invaders. But, if it goes on too long, it can hurt you and your ability to fight disease effectively.





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#### **Foods to help you reduce inflammation include:**

Apples, berries, tomatoes, celery and onions (veggies and fruits)

Yogurt, sauerkraut and kombucha (probiotics)

Salmon, walnuts and chia seeds (omega-3 fatty acids)

No matter your shape or size, your body is beautiful. It's okay if you've been eating more comfort food than usual. See if there are ways to mix these invader-fighting foods into your lifestyle. A great first step would be adding a few new foods to your shopping list.

## **Cooking in the time of Corona**

**By Amritha Navjith**

As March 2020 rolled in and coronavirus fears brought in orders to shelter in place, I was relieved in many ways - I was fed up with the busy routine and was looking for a way out. I was happy to set goals for the family to regroup and spend quality time together. I always had a long list of dishes/ desserts I had wanted to try cooking but never had time for earlier. I felt like this would be the perfect opportunity to be motivated to cook. This way I could also engage in my favorite pastime



of baking without guilt. So instead of ready-made foods that would be necessary to bode through these uncertain times, I was hoarding up on what they are made up of.

It started with a lot of enthusiasm - I had everything set up right, there was a lot of encouragement on the internet with tips and recipes and well, my family was hungry. I was cooking up dishes in my list, mostly in the form of desserts, soups, loaves of bread, biryanis, curries, and so on and we were all enjoying the time together. Kids were involved in the process and it was all working out as planned. As dalgona coffee was trending over the internet, I couldn't keep from trying our version of it. So did banana bread, parotta, sourdough bread catch my fancy. I missed having a jackfruit tree near me when I was seeing all of its parts being used so well in recipes from Kerala on social media.

As days went by, responsibilities at home started increasing. In addition to feeding the hungry household and office work, the mundane housework and kids' school-work started taking their toll and things started sliding down. Holiday mode was over, and it didn't help that my ingredient list started dwindling and we weren't as free to go about procuring them. I became increasingly aware it was not just about the cooking but also the planning required, the food prep, clean up after and so on that seemed tougher and more time-consuming. Thus, it became another chore. My interest started waning and the ever-hungry kids would often complain of there being nothing to pick up for a quick eat.

Thankfully lockdown relaxed just in time and we started feeling more at ease to buy from restaurants. I also learned my lesson - cooking for leisure is not the same as cooking on demand. Now I appreciate the occasional breaks I can afford from having to cook by myself. I am thankful to the restaurants that are open, my family who have learned to cook when I have a bad day or if I just choose not to cook for the day. I am grateful I have been privileged enough to stay home and that my family has been safe throughout this trying year. As 2021 comes in, I am ready to go out and pray the world will be able to live past the coronavirus.



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# Kids' Art

## Fighting Covid



Lalithambika G J , 4<sup>th</sup> grade

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## My hometown, Kerala

By **Rama Alakkassery**, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

I would love to tell you about Kerala, because I like to go there and meet my grandmother on my dad's side of the family and other relatives. I have my relatives there, most of them have sons or daughters with whom I like to play with. I like to run around in the yards of my relatives. I like going to temples with my grandmother. I like the trip to India and the trip back to America. I like to take baths in ponds. I want to tell you

more facts about Kerala.

We speak Malayalam in Kerala. We have many temples but I mostly go to Vishnu temples. We celebrate Onam. Onam is the day when Vishnu fulfills Mahabali's wish. We also celebrate Vishu. Vishu is our harvest festival, on that day we also wear new dresses. We eat a big feast called sadya on every festival. The main diet in Kerala is rice and fish. The traditional dress is called mundu which is a long cotton cloth draped on the waist and below, the ladies also wear Kerala saree which is bordered by gold threads. The oldest known martial art in the world called Kalaripayattu originated in Kerala and is practiced there. Kathakali, is the famous dance form of Kerala. Kerala is also famous for its boat race called Vallamkali.

Kerala is also the main exporter of spices, and its backwaters and hill stations are the main tourist attractions. I love to visit Kerala and I am sure anyone who visits Kerala will love it too.

## A day full of Surprises

By **Prarthana Rajesh**, 5<sup>th</sup> grade

"Tweet Tweet!" The cry of the birds woke me up. I stretch and step my foot onto the wooden floor. I realize that it is as cold as ice! I slowly walked toward my sock drawer and saw that I had no socks there! My feet are almost FROZEN! I don't have time to think. But I also don't want to be loud either because my parents and sister are still sleeping.



Lucky them, I thought. They have no school that early. Dad gets to sleep in because his work starts late. Talking about school, I look at the time and see that it is already 8:15 am. Class starts in 15 min. I speed walk to the stairs and go down. The stairs felt so good because it was carpet. Right next to the staircase, there is an oval shaped window. Every morning I look outside and see the same old thing every day. But today, things are different. My eyes grew wide open.

The snowflakes falling on the porch caught my attention. Further looking, our lawn was completely covered in snow. All the rooftops and the car tops were covered in white, as if



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a white carpet was laid down. I am thrilled. My heart is racing to go out and play in the snow. Would kids at school get to play outside? I wondered. Then I remember school.

I look at my watch. 10 more minutes until class starts. I go brush my teeth, open the curtains and quickly sit down for class. I sighed in relief. Just then, the doorbell rings. I just went through all this coldness and I was relaxed not even for a millisecond and now the doorbell? I put on my winter slippers and open the door. I see a huge packet that was labeled "HAPPY BIRTHDAY".

What is the date today? I thought. That's when I realized that today was my special day! And I silently thanked God for the snow on my birthday.



## Be Safe

By **Anvika Malugu**, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Today we are in a pandemic! It is very important to keep safe and healthy during this time. Don't go out as much during this scary time. There are many people who are suffering very badly from this virus.

There are many illnesses that may have symptoms that are very similar to covid-19 and you should get tested if you have the symptoms from Covid. Also, if you don't get tested then you might be carrying the

virus around and you will not know it until it spreads to many people. You might just think that it is cold or allergies, but during this time, you should get tested.

Do not go out with your friends a lot or go to your friend's house. I know you might be thinking "I haven't seen my friends in several months, I can't just leave them!" That is why we have Zoom! For example, on Saturday I used zoom to call my friend instead of going to their house and I kept safe. Also, If we use zoom then that will help us stay socially distanced and it will help our economy stay safe and healthy. Zooming certain events helps reduce the number of people in a confined space, hopefully reducing exposure to COVID. Meetings and other business can still be conducted that may not have been because we have zoom and that is good for the economy.

Wearing masks will also help a lot because Covid-19 is airborne, so, if we wear masks and talk then our droplets will not spread and we will not suck it in. I know that you might be thinking that it can be uncomfortable but if you just choose the right one then it can all be fine and you will be safe and happy. Also, if you wear masks then it will help reduce the spread of Covid.

Do not use a lot of things because we might not have enough when it gets way worse and we cannot go anywhere to get it and have to order everything online and it might be out and also other people would not have it.

I know that it can be hard just staying home all the time and after you come home with the groceries you have to sanitize them. You have to clean everything, and some of it has

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to be quarantined and it can get really frustrating, but that is what we have to do to keep safe, healthy, and happy. I have been trying to keep busy by drawing, coloring, listening to music, baking, and writing stories. School is also really helping me learn and keeping me busy throughout the day. Also, we have online games and board games that we could play with our family and friends online with a safe distance. There is also nature!



We could always go for a walk in the park maybe, and stay socially distanced. There are so many things to do that could be very fun, safe and relaxing! We don't have to go out and get exposed to many things, do you want to see people struggle every day and stay in a pandemic and not be able to go anywhere and see your friends? No! That is why you should be safe! Also, over 350K people have died from covid! Would you want your loved ones to suffer? No! That is why we should be safe during Covid. I think that all people should be safe and happy and healthy because I don't think that is fair to see people suffer very badly and not be able to live a happy life with their family.

## Under Cover Heroes saves Lava Lamp Town

By Souparnika Nambiar, 4<sup>th</sup> grade





## What Really Matters

By Hritika Malugu, 7<sup>th</sup> grade

As I opened my eyes, very slowly, of course, I saw rays of light coming down onto my face. It had to be a great day! After making my bed, I headed downstairs for breakfast and after that I started getting ready for school.

I ran out the door while grabbing my backpack heading towards the bus just to hear my mom scream, "MCKENZIE, ARE YOU PLANNING TO BRING YOUR LUNCH?"

"Yeah, mom, give me a second," I set my belongings on the ground and run towards my target. As I'm running I thought of all the bacteria getting on my backpack and shiver. "Thanks, mom," I said.

"Don't forget to go to the dance studio right after school," she says right out of earshot.

Once I got on the bus I sat down next to my best friend, Ally. As we got to the school, I waved goodbye and told her that I'll see her in science today. As I was walking down the hall, I noticed something. My mind stopped for a second. Is that what I think it is? I walked towards it shyly, as if it'll bite.

"No way, Ally. It's my time to shine now!" I exclaimed as we both were laughing. We both look at the poster. It's the school spelling bee. The event I've been waiting for since forever and it's finally here.

Just as I got home from school, my mom was waiting outside the door, "Guess what Kenz, the school spelling bee is finally here!"

"I know, mom, I'm going to go study now," I replied with a slight indication not to bother me.

"Well, not before your homework. I know you want this really bad but this is extracurricular and homework isn't." I rolled my eyes and gave a loud, emphasized sigh.

The next few days were simple. School, homework, study for the spelling bee, and then go to bed. With some obvious minor things like eating in there.

In the middle of the night, I heard a ding, it's from my phone. I got up as quick as I could.

Finally, after that situation, I checked my email to see what popped up. Dance auditions? When is it? I thought. June 4? That's the day of the spelling bee.

Worried, I went to bed. My alarm woke me up this morning and I went back to check my email, "Shoot, it wasn't a dream. I really have to pick between two of my most favorite things in the world. This can't be good," I thought with immense fear in my voice. I quickly got all my stuff and got on the bus.

"Hey, Ally. You know, how, for the past few weeks, I've been studying really hard for the spelling bee. Well, guess what?" I asked her.

"What..." she said while having suspicions about me.

"I have big dance auditions the same day as the bee," I replied with some type of enthusiasm.

"Oh no, Kenz. I feel so bad," she admitted sympathetically, "Which one are you going to do? Or wait, maybe you can do both, I know it sounds crazy, but we all know you can conquer anything you wish with your willpower."

"Thanks, but I need to pick one to focus on, or else I'm gonna lose both."

"Okay, let's think. These dance auditions are coming up in about a month and a half," she started explaining.

"Well, so is the spelling bee," I interrupted.

"True, but you've already studied a lot for the bee and not for the auditions," she continued.

"Okay, good point. And I do have to say that it is weird that they told us only a month and a half in advance," I agreed.

"So remember, it's your choice, but choose what's best for you."

"Thanks a lot, Ally. You really are the best friend anyone could ever ask for," I said with a smile on my face.

Every second throughout the day, I was thinking about which one I would choose. They both would benefit me in so many ways, but I still needed to pick only one. I weighed my choices: something which I have practiced for weeks and something which I haven't practiced for yet and still need a lot of practice for. With this mindset, my choice was obvious. I am continuing to demolish the spelling bee. It's my one and almost only chance, plus I still had a month and a half to practice and ace this.



As I promised myself, I practiced, and practiced, and practiced, till I was tired, literally.

\*Beep Beep\* rings my alarm.

I wake up as fast as I can with my heart pounding. It's the day. The day, (as I've said many, many times before) that I've been waiting for, for like forever. I rush out the door onto the bus studying any last-minute notes very carefully. As the bus stops, I take a very deep breath and am ready to perform.

"You good, Kenz?" Ally asked while walking up to the assembly hall.

"Well... I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT AND IT IS FINALLY HERE!!! But, I am pretty nervous," I replied with excitement mixed with nerves.

"You'll do great!" she said with a great, big, smile.

Once we got to the assembly hall, I walked up the stairs to the stage and sat on my assigned seat. Number 4. My lucky number. Once the competition started, it got fiery.

Finally, it was the last three competitors. Me, a sixth-grader named Gianna, and a seventh-grader who no one really knew.

We each had to spell one word to win, and as long as everybody got theirs wrong and I got mine right, I could win.

"Gianna, here is your word," Mrs. Ferry, the principal, said, "Spell interdisciplinary."

"Okay, I-N-T-E-R-D-I-S-C-I-P-L-I-N-A-R-Y," Gianna spelled.

"Good job, Gianna! That is correct. Why don't we give you a round of applause? Now, let's see, if Thomas and McKenzie both get their spellings right then we will do another round but otherwise, you will be the winner. Let's move on," Mrs. Ferry said.

Everyone in the whole school claps and a few cheers come in.

As the claps settle down, Mrs. Ferry starts talking again, "Hello, Thomas. This is your word: Acclimatization."

"Uh...okay, wait. What's the meaning of that word?" so-called, Thomas asks.

"Acclimatization is the process or result of becoming accustomed to a new climate or new conditions," Mrs. Ferry replies.

"A-C-L-A-M-I-T-Z-A-T-I-O-N, obviously," Thomas spells with utmost arrogance in his voice.

"Oh, Thomas, I'm sorry but that was not correct. I know sometimes we get too confident and get ahead of ourselves, but we really need to slow down and think about it. Let's give Thomas a round of applause for making it to the top three! And a reminder to the contestants, please don't comment on the word before you spell it," she replied eyeing Thomas.

Thomas storms off the stage wanting a redo as the applause lowers due to his unfriendly sportsmanship.

"And last, but certainly not least, we have McKenzie! Remember, McKenzie, not to put too much pressure on you, but if you get this correct then you and Gianna will go face to face in more rounds till we find a winner, but if you get it wrong, the win goes to Gianna," Mrs. Ferry concluded.

I step forward knowing this is my last chance to shine. I can either make it or break it.

"Your word is aerodynamical," she told me with confidence in her voice.

"Um, can you give me the language of origin, please?" I asked Mrs. Ferry.

"Of course. Let's see. The language of origin for the word aerodynamical is Greek," she replied with more confidence in her voice.

"Okay..." I stuttered, "Give me a second please." I was sweating on the spot with no way of knowing how to spell this word. Come on, think, I told myself.

And right then and there I saw what I never wanted to see. The worst of my nightmares. Something that, since first grade, I've always hated. No matter what comes up with it, literally. It was vomit. Some weirdo sixth-grader had puked his breakfast all over the assembly hall floor. I couldn't concentrate at all. I was about to throw up, myself. The sliminess plus the pure devilish smell made everyone evacuate.

"Calm down everyone! Someone call in the janitor, but we need to finish the spelling bee. McKenzie, please spell aerodynamical," Mrs. Ferry said with clear annoyance.

"A-E-R-O-D-Y-N-A-M-I-C-A-L-L," I paused just in case I got it wrong. Mrs. Ferry was intentionally holding suspense. I couldn't take it anymore!

"Um, okay. I am so sorry Kenzie. That was incorrect," she finally said.

My shoulders drop. My face hardens into a look of absolutely nothing. My throat closes. I swallow my last bit of saliva left. I can't even get a word out, but somehow I said, "Mrs. Ferry, why exactly is my spelling wrong?"

"The correct spelling has only one 'L' at the end. Just a small mistake," she replied.

Continued on Page 30 . . .











## Ohmkaram during Covid-19

Hardly had the world welcomed year the 2020, when Covid-19 took us all by surprise. Times got challenging with people learning to deal with a new way of life where masks & hand sanitizers, lockdowns, online school and online work became the new normal.

As more & more information about the coronavirus got out, we rushed to adapt to it. During these scary challenging times, people learnt to be creative and innovate. We learnt to be appreciative of our family and friends, be thankful for what we had. And when we had extra, despite the food and supply shortages, we helped those who were not so fortunate.

Ohmkaram Youth Group, through its program Ohmkaram Engage did an online fundraising in May 2020 to collect money for Seva STL, St Louis chapter of the nonprofit Seva International.

The Youth group voted on and decided to make cookies. They finalized on a recipe, and all youths along with their siblings baked cookies as a group while staying connected online. The experience was a fun way of bringing all kids together, establishing a sense of camaraderie among them, a feeling that all was ok despite the pandemic.

Also as a part of that activity, every child that participated decided to donate some money to the charitable cause. The Youth group collected \$105 & handed it over to the Ohmkaram Executive Committee which had conducted its own separate fundraising. The total amount donated to Seva STL by Ohmkaram combining individual, youth and group contributions came to around \$1000.

In June 2020, a Special program featuring participants from the renowned dance troupe Natya Geham, was organized virtually. This was a way to help performers and artists who earned their income from such shows and had been hit hard by lack of opportunities due to covid-19. This event also showed us that virtual programs can be as successful and well-attended as regular ones in theatres. The troupe also performed at the well-known location Varikkasseri Mana in Kerala making it a memorable performance.

Below are few pictures from some of the virtual events conducted in 2020.





## My FTC Journey

By **Vaibhav Menon**, 8<sup>th</sup> grade

FTC stands for First tech challenge, First is the brand that sponsors FTC, and every year they provide a new tech challenge. Most teams have 10-12 people, but they're sub-teams. These sub-teams include engineering, programming, and documentation. Each sub-team has its essential parts and makes the team complete. FTC works with robots, so we have to build the robot from just motors and pieces of metal to a machine that can lift or fling an object into a goal. We control the robot by using a gamepad controller, which the programmers have coded every single action. Say if you want to move the right joystick, they have to program it to go to the right.



Let's talk about what engineers do and the process we have to go through before building anything. As an engineer, you must first understand what each part does and what it can be used. And you have to know how the robot works. You first need a base, which is called a drivetrain. When an engineer builds a drivetrain, they learn about the parts and what they do. The drivetrain is what you build on, so this is where you would put a claw or a shooter. Before an engineer can build anything, they first have to make an engineering drawing. An engineering drawing is used to help guide you through whatever you are creating. It's kind of like an instruction manual, but you make it, so it is your design. You have to draw multiple angles like a birds-eye view and left and right angles. You have to show how the mechanism is powered and the measurements. Also, have various solutions to your problem. When you figure out how far from the ground it should or where it needs to be placed, you can go on to the building. Even after figuring that out might have to go back to the drawing board and fix something.

Next, we talk about the team members that are part of the sub-team documentation. Documentation is essential and is what collects all of our notes. They keep all of the engineering drawings. That is another reason why engineering drawings are so important. They help the engineer with their thought process. They also can show the judges, so they understand what method we had to go through to get the robot to work. They also need to take pictures of the process to show failures and success. If you are familiar with FLL (First lego league), there were never sub-teams and especially no documentation. Due to COVID-19, we were not able to go on any field trips. And in FLL, going on field trips was the right way for documentation. So, when we moved on to FTC, we had to come up with more solutions. We have been working on creating a website to show off our work and broadcast your work to places that don't have FTC teams.

Last but not least, I want to talk about the programmers. Without programmers, the engineer would not be able to use the machines. The programmers have the task of telling the robot what to do. The programmers work on two types of programs—one for Autonomous and the other for teleop. Autonomous is when the robot drives by itself. In FLL, you would write a program, and then the robot would carry out the program, whereas in Autonomous, you program inputs on a gamepad controller, and then a driver uses the buttons to move and position the robot in the desired area. Since this is our first year, there were many learning curves like understanding how Java and blocks work. Programming is all about trial and error, then understanding what the problem was and improving on that.

These three sub-teams build an FTC team, but the units also have another part we all do together, which is known as outreach, where as a team, we try to spread the word about FTC to everybody participating in FTC. Examples being FLL teams, places where FTC is not common, or schools. Outreach is hard to accomplish during this pandemic team because it is hard to travel and meet other people. FTC has a variety of thinking involved, from learning how engineers work with problems and the process they have to reach their desired solution. Also how to use Java and block programming and learning new techniques and making the driving of a robot smoother. And when documenting, you have to manage everybody and make sure you get the pictures and create a team profile. This sub-team also includes money management so that we can plan trips accordingly. FTC is a great way to try out new ways of thinking and find out if you are interested in STEM.

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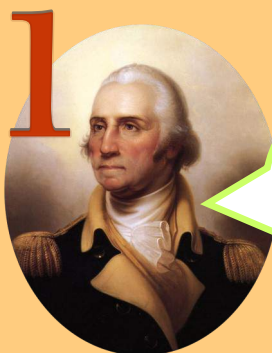
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# 4 Ways How the Battle of Saratoga Affected the Revolutionary War

By Dhruv Menon, 8<sup>th</sup> grade

The Battle of Saratoga was a turning point in the Revolutionary War. It proved to be a major reason why the Colonists won the war.

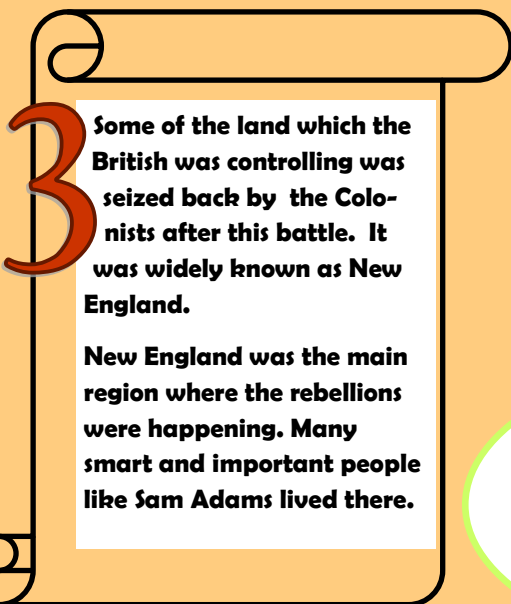


George Washington

After our Victory in the Battle of Saratoga, we were supplied with 12,000 troops from the French, Netherlands, and Spain... which really saved us! Our troops weren't as experienced as these new ones!

## What is the Revolutionary War?

This War was fought after the Colonists repeatedly felt like they were being mistreated by the British. They formally asked to be considered as a different and independent country, but the British declined. Thus, the Revolutionary War began.



**Some of the land which the British was controlling was seized back by the Colonists after this battle. It was widely known as New England.**

**New England was the main region where the rebellions were happening. Many smart and important people like Sam Adams lived there.**



Samuel Adams

Our soldiers were ecstatic with joy because of this win. No one expected us to win. This was a huge confidence boost to our troops!

This victory showed us how good a leader George Washington was!

This loss had a very bad affect on my troops. Everyone expected us to win, but we lost! Now we gave the Colonists hope for independence and more allies!



General John Burgoyne

The Battle of Saratoga thus heavily demoralized the British, because they lost an important battle that gave away valuable land while also giving the Colonists' allies from other countries with hope for a future without Great Britain ruling them.

## Fun Facts about the Revolutionary War:

1. Out of the 65 countries that claimed independence, 62 of those countries claimed independence from Great Britain. Amazing isn't it?
2. The British had 133,000 troops whereas the colonists had only 96,000 troops. That means the British had one-third more troops than the Colonists!
3. Around 2 million British Colonists lived in America during the war. 20% of these Colonists were still loyal to the British. And the British still lost the war.
4. Finally, the American Revolution lasted for a total of 8 years. That would mean more than 417 weeks or almost 3000 days. Can you imagine fighting a war for that long?

## School in 2020

By **Omkaar Alakkassery**, 9<sup>th</sup> grade

School is vibrant and energetic, a place where we would all go to interact with our friends and learn from our teachers; teachers would teach us, then give tests and after the tests everyone would discuss with their friends how they think they did. Then the next class everyone would be very excited to get their results and share with friends. Afterwards we would go outside and play with our friends and classmates. This year Coronavirus or Covid-19 spread throughout the world and changed everything.

Covid-19 is a highly contagious and deadly airborne virus. It started at the end of 2019 in a small town located in China. Since then it has spread to encompass the entirety of the globe affecting all seven continents and almost all the large countries. As a result of this global pandemic we have had to make many changes to the way we live. One of the major ones being that we can no longer get together in big groups to celebrate or even learn. School and most of the social gatherings are now online and this brings about a whole new set of activities and problems to solve.



For perhaps the first time in human history, school is completely online. The teachers have to learn a new way of teaching, with no paper handouts, no hands on activities and with all the students in their own home. This has been a particularly challenging time for them. One of the biggest challenges is teaching without any physical interaction. The easiest and most common solution to this is setting up individual meetings with the teachers and specifying times when kids could come into the zoom and talk one on one or in small groups with their teachers. This is what the teachers have found works. Teachers at my high school highly encourage the students to come in during the individual meeting times to answer any questions they have or even just provide feedback about the class.

Students are also having a completely new experience where even in middle and elementary school, students must be accountable for their own work and complete their own work on their own time. Even as young as third grade kids are having to manage a whole day's worth of schoolwork with minimal monitoring. This means that they must be very responsible and not fall behind if they want to keep up with the requirements and do well. This becomes even harder when we do not have anyone to watch over us and make sure that we do our work in a decent manner and do not waste time, unlike in school where classes are mostly scheduled and the assignments must be completed within a certain time frame. In higher grades there are issues such as plagiarism on papers and reports of dishonesty on tests has increased when compared to last year. These methods have become much easier, as on zoom it is very difficult to monitor what someone is doing. In our traditional school model we would all take our exams and tests while spread out in a large room and there would be teachers proctoring us to minimize the cheating. There are many different programs used by schools to monitor the students during tests, but none of them are as effective as having a physical teacher present to monitor.

Covid-19 and online classes gave us a once in a lifetime look into one of the potential models for future education. With education and schooling becoming increasingly computerized. An all online model of school is a definite possibility for future generations. Although as a result of Covid we get an early preview into what this model of future school could look like, it also gives us a great opportunity to work out issues and difficulties we might encounter in this model. I believe that online school is a great opportunity as it provides us, the future generation, a look into the education model for the future. This opportunity gave us a firsthand experience of the online school model, and using this experience we could work to make an improved experience for the future. This model of school that was first used in 2020 could revolutionize the education industry for years to come. This model of school that was first used in 2020 could revolutionize the education industry for years to come.



# Health is Wealth – Surviving the Pandemic

By Dr. Sudhirdas Kumar Prayaga

Diseases can be classified into four main classes viz infectious, metabolic, genetic and psychologic. Until about 100 years ago, infectious diseases were the major cause of death in human population. With the advances in medicine, the life expectancy has gone up significantly, especially in the developed countries. Now metabolic diseases have taken over as the major cause of death. However, when pandemic happens, everyone is taken by surprise. Here I attempt to out line about infectious diseases and how to survive one.

## Infectious diseases - a primer

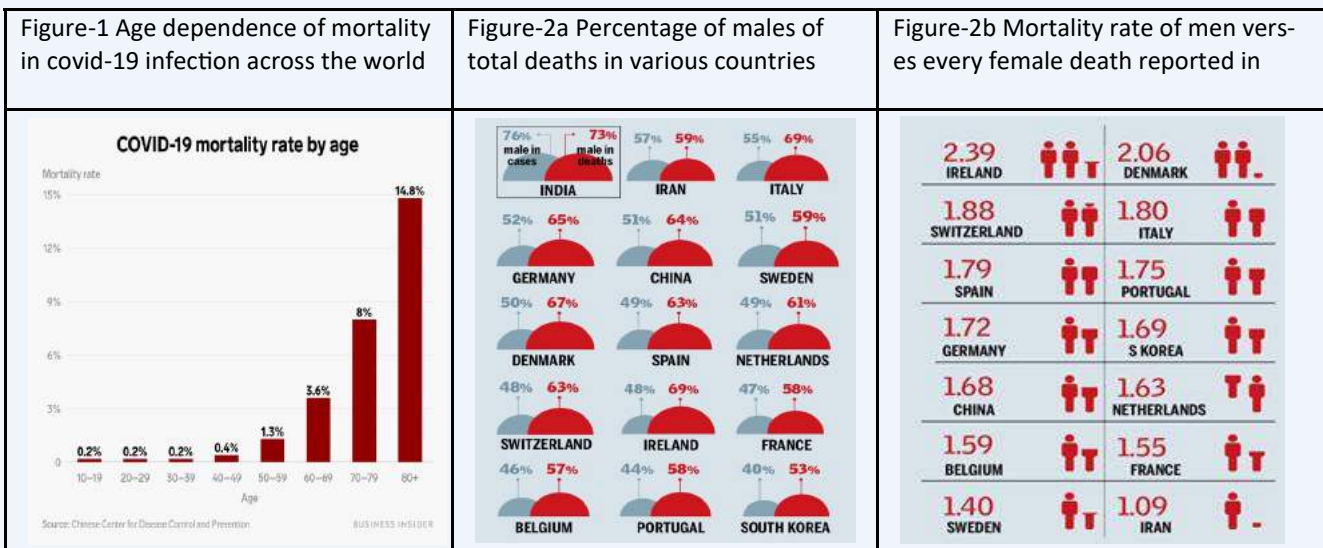
Historically, it is known that once in about 100 years some virulent form of a virus emerges, by changes in their genetic makeup, which causes worldwide infection and death or pandemic. The last major pandemic happened in 1918 which is estimated to have killed over 50 million people worldwide by the 'Spanish flu' or the Influenza virus. The Black Death or plague, which occurred during the middle-ages probably wiped out over 50% percent of population of Europe then.

Although the current outbreak of Covid-19 has affected millions of people around the world and will affect millions more, it will not be as deadly as previous outbreaks due to advances in medicine and technology. During the last century we saw major advances in controlling infectious diseases by way of vaccination as well as development of antibiotics. During the last 20 years or so we are also seeing emergence of immunotherapy and antibody therapies. We also saw hundreds of small chemical molecular drugs developed for various indications.

An 'epidemic' is the spread of an infectious disease, usually localized in an area called 'endemic'. While the epidemic occurring on a worldwide scale is a called a 'pandemic'. A basis for generation of diversity of life on earth was first explained by Charles Darwin in his eminent work on evolution 'The Origin of Species' in late 19th century. A genetic mechanism for natural selection and speciation was later developed by mutation theory popularized by Theodosius Dobzhansky and others. New viruses and variants emerge due to mutations and recombination of genetic materials of infectious agents.

## What is covid-19 and how is it different?

Covid19 is an infectious disease caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus -2 (SARS-CoV2). This virus is a newly emerged virus from its related species and is never found before. Unfortunately, this virus happened to be highly infectious to humans spreading quickly in the population through aerosols. Luckily, this virus is not as deadly as its predecessor SARS-CoV and related species MERS virus. Because of the high infection rate of this virus the actual number of deaths are higher with SARS-CoV2.



SARS-CoV2 genetically is from the Corona virus family. Some of the other members of this family caused deadly disease in humans in the past. The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus (MERS-CoV) had a mortality rate of about 25% but were less infectious and restricted to the Arabian Peninsula. Similarly, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus (SARS-CoV) infection in 2003 had a mortality rate as high as 8%. The current SARS-CoV2 also shows a significant age dependence on the mortality rate following Covid-19 infection has been established with majority of deaths seen in people over 50 years of age (see figure-1).

There is also a sex dependent difference in mortality following Covid-19 infection with as much as 50% higher mortality rate for males (see figure-2). In India males accounted for as much as 3 out of 4 deaths.

### **How to keep healthy and what does it means?**

To be healthy or to keep healthy means to keep all arms of your immune system in good working order, which will protect you from any infection. Covid-19 is an immune dysfunction associated disease, where mortality is linked to people with impaired immune effector response. It is commonly heard, 'boost the immune system', especially by companies selling some food supplements. In reality we don't need to boost the immune response, which could lead to unwanted immune responses like allergy and asthma. What we need is a balanced immune response for an optimum health. Our immune system is like the defense system of a country, for comparison. Just like a country's defense system consists of army, air force, navy, etc., our body's defense system is also made of several arms which need to work together to protect our body from infection.

As we age, some of the defense mechanism of the body deteriorate as normal part of aging. If we understand what has become defective in our body, we can try to improve that. There are many biochemical tests available to measure the functions of various systems in our body. A recent report indicates that people who develop an antibody response within 2 weeks of Covid-19 infection are protected from disease, while people who get sick do not develop a robust antibody response quickly, indicating poor immune health.

To keep healthy means to make sure your immune system is in good working order. If you not sure about your health status, request your doctor to do a panel of biochemical clinical tests which includes hormones, vitamins and many biological markers related to health of many important organs in your body. These should include cholesterol, vitamins including vitamin-D, steroid hormones including testosterone, melatonin, etc. These results should give good idea about health condition. Take required supplements to support your health.

### **6 ways to survive this Pandemic**

- Maintain optimum immune health. Nothing is more important than keeping good physical health and immune health. Follow the ways discussed above.
- Use physical personal protective equipment. Rigorous use of masks and sanitizers will cut down infecting ourselves and others by over 90%.
- Anti infection cocktails. The commonly available Ayurveda based mix of ginger, turmeric, lemon have shown to be effective to some extent. Some companies have also come up with lipoprotein based anti infective solution.
- Get vaccinated to generate memory immunity. Finally, the vaccines are here and shown to be effective over 95%. If 2/3 of the population are vaccinated, infection will be under control. We may have to wait till later this year for this.
- Passive immunotherapy. If you are already infected, request passive immunotherapy of either a convalescent serum or human monoclonal antibodies.
- Antiviral drugs. There are few anti viral to Covid19 are available, although their effectiveness is questionable.

Let us hope this pandemic will come to an end soon, later this year. But beware, even though we may be able to bring it under control, but it is here to stay. We may see sporadic small bursts of this virus infections in the future. Also, we do not know the how long the vaccine will be effective. Wishing all a healthy and happy 2021.

Continued from Page 21 ...

## **What Really Matters**

By **Hritika Malugu** 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

Yes, a small mistake indeed. How could I make such a large yet small mistake, I thought. Such a small mistake tore down my self-esteem in a matter of seconds. My mind was still processing my loss just when Mrs. Ferry congratulated me and said, "Great job Mckenzie, you did amazing today! I really hope you continue to compete in these. Please give a round of applause to Mckenzie from Grade 7!" Mrs. Ferry announced, "And last, congratulations, Gianna!!! You've done a great job today!"

A burst of sadness rushed from me and I stood there, with tears coming down my eyes. Tears of joy, actually. I had almost accomplished my dream, the dream I've had since forever. All the studying was paid for and all those risks taken were worth it. This proved to me and many others that practice really can make perfect. Well not perfect, but close enough. I knew that I may have not won, but that's not what matters. What mattered to me was how much I dedicated myself to this and showed everyone who I knew that I could really, really, accomplish something if I put my mind to it. No matter where you get to in life, the only thing that really matters is how you got there.



## Remembering Vinod . . .



Palliyil Vinod Menon was born in August 1969 (a true summer of 69 baby!) in the small town of Keningau, in the state of Sabah, Malaysia to Bheemath Sethumadhava Menon (Chittur) and Kakkayur Palliyil Ambika Kumari (Kakkayur, Palakkad). He is the eldest of 3 boys, his siblings Vibin and Vimal are in

Kuala Lumpur and Livingston, Scotland, respectively. His parents were born in India, his father came to Sabah as a young 16 year old, and his mother followed suit upon marriage.

Shortly after his birth, his parents moved to Kota Kinabalu, the state capital of Sabah, where his 2 younger siblings were born. His primary and secondary schooling was done in Kota Kinabalu, at Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Tanjung Aru and Sekolah Menengah La Salle, respectively. As a student, Vinod not only excelled in his studies, but was also very actively involved in various extra-curricular activities. A strong debater, he took his love for the written word further in various part-time assignments with local newspapers, namely the Daily Mail (the Sabah version, not the more well-known UK namesake!) and Borneo Bulletin, while still studying and also during the long breaks following his exams.

Vinod left home at around the age of 19 to do his Pre-University at the Petaling Jaya Community College, Kuala Lumpur. Soon after, he proceeded to the US (his lifelong dream) to pursue a degree in Electrical & Electronics Engineering at the Southern Illinois University (SIU) at Carbondale, and later a second degree in Computing at the SIU at Edwardsville. A true town boy at heart, Vinod preferred to avoid the hustle and bustle of city life and spent all his years at the same apartment complex a stone's throw from where he did his second degree.

Vinod had a keen interest in politics – not just that of his adopted country, but also was always very much in touch with the latest developments in his home country.

Vinod was the most loving, caring, kind-hearted, jovial and bubbly person one could ever hope to meet. A simple person, with very strong values and regard for his roots. Being such a family oriented person, it is a shame (or perhaps, with his untimely passing, a “blessing”) that Vinod never met the match of his life to share in his

journey of life. Nevertheless, he was very much loved by family and friends alike the world over. Apart from his dear Mummy and 2 siblings, he leaves behind a sister-in-law, Rhitu, his 3 “dumpling sayangs” (as he always affectionately called them) – his nieces, Adhya and Ashta, and nephew, Virath (US Veliachan will always be looking over them, no doubt), as well as aunts, uncles, cousins and many, many other relatives and close friends to mourn his passing.

Rest in eternal Peace, dear Vinod. You will be very deeply missed, but never forgotten.

Fides et Opera  
Om Shanti

(As shared by Vibin Menon, Malaysia)

Vinod became a member of Ohmkaram in 2009. He was actively involved from the very beginning. His first contribution the Ohmkaram T-shirt (his design) with image of a Sun on the front and teachings from the Upanishads at the back was to raise money for the Scholarship program. He used to explain to non-Indians that teachings from the Upanishads were like the Ten Commandments. He helped with Gitanjali, the annual Souvenir magazine and was very particular, always aiming for high quality printing standards. He was also a real perfectionist.

In recognition of his quality of work and dedication Vinod was chosen to be an executive committee member with a portfolio of treasurer in 2011. He was instrumental in establishing several key portfolios such as Foundation Account (an investment account), and Scholarship Fund.

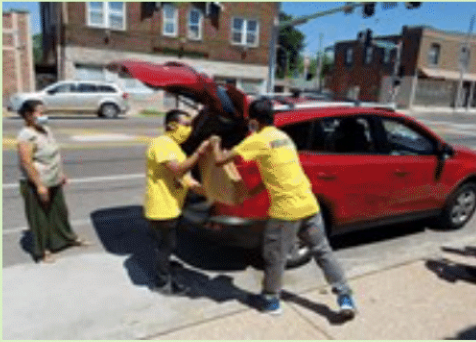
Vinod became Chairman of the Board of Directors in 2014. He provided valuable pieces of advice to the Executive Committee and members at large during his time as the Chairman. His contributions include but not limited to special annual programs such as Chendamalam, Shobana's Krishna, and Kerala Express. He was instrumental in helping get Ohmkaram registered as 501C(3) non-profit organization thereby enabling to apply for grants to raise funds for activities. He was also the Mahabali for several Onam programs. He was a good cook and used to cook several tasty foods for Ohmkaram feasts.

Vinod did a lot of qualitative dedicated work for Ohmkaram in his short time with us. We, at Ohmkaram, will always remember him for his ready smile, sociable attitude and friendly nature.



## Ohmkaram COVID-19 Relief Effort

By Jayadev Nair



As the pandemic raged across the US and cities started lockdown, Ohmkaram members joined Sewa International for the Covid-19 relief efforts in the Greater St. Louis area.

Our volunteers supplied PPE kits for first responders, hosted fundraising events and supplied food for the needful.

Our volunteers reached out to various organizations in the community offering PPE support and delivered 210 N95 masks, 105 KN95 masks, 2270 3-ply surgical masks, 90 hand sanitizers, 100 face shields and over 1000 cloth masks. Those include retirement homes, care clinics, private healthcare clinics and hospitals.

A drive through grocery event was also held to help 60 families in need of support for meals. Sewa for St.Louis delivered 4200 meals for those in need.

Additionally, Ohmkaram members raised funds for the efforts. Youth members from Ohmkaram Engage also raised additional funds using a cookie baking session.

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## കാത്തിരിപ്പ്

ശ്രീമണി രാജേഷ്

പ്രവാസജീവിതത്തിലെ ഒരു ദിവസം. അസാധാരണമായി അതിരാവിലെ ഫോൺ ശബ്ദം കേട്ടുണർന്നപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പകച്ചുപോയി. ആരായിരിക്കും?? എന്തായിരിക്കും അയാൾക്ക് പറയാനുണ്ടാവുക?? മനസ്സിൽ ഒരായിരം ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ മിന്നിമറയവെ മകൻ പോയി ഫോൺ എടുത്തു. "അച്ഛാ, നാട്ടിൽ നിന്നും വലിയച്ഛൻ ആണ് വിളിക്കുന്നത്. അച്ഛനെ ചോദിക്കുന്നു". മകൻ വന്നു പറയുമ്പോൾ എന്റെ ശ്വാസത്തിന് വേഗം കൂടി. ഇന്നലെ രാത്രി കൂടി നമ്മൾ സംസാരിച്ചതാണല്ലോ. ഇന്നു ഇത്രയും രാവിലെ വീണ്ടും വിളിക്കാനുള്ള കാര്യം എന്താവും? ഒരു ദീർഘനിശ്വാസത്തോടെ മനസ്സിനെ നിയന്ത്രിച്ച് ഞാൻ പോയി ഫോൺ എടുത്തു. അച്ഛന്റെ സഹായി രാമേട്ടനാണ് വിളിച്ചത്. അച്ഛനെക്കുറിച്ചു സംസാരിക്കുമ്പോൾ നൂറു നാക്കുള്ള രാമേട്ടന്റെ ശബ്ദത്തിനു എന്തെന്നില്ലാത്ത ഒരു പതർച്ച. എങ്ങനെ പറയണമെന്നറിയാതെ കഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന രാമേട്ടനോട് ഞാൻ ആദ്യം ചോദിച്ചത്. "അച്ഛൻ എണീറ്റോ" എന്നായിരുന്നു. ഒരു കരച്ചിൽ മാത്രമേ പിന്നെ ഞാൻ കേട്ടുള്ളൂ. അച്ഛന് എന്തോ സംഭവിച്ചെന്ന് പറയാതെ പറയുന്ന രാമേട്ടനെ ആശ്വസിപ്പിക്കാനാതെ സ്തബ്ധനായി ഞാൻ നിന്നു. നമുക്കിടയിലുള്ള നിശബ്ദതയ്ക്കു വിരാമമിട്ടത് മകന്റെ കളിവണ്ടിയുടെ ചൂളംവിളിയായിരുന്നു. ഇന്നലെ രാത്രി രാമേട്ടനോട് പിണങ്ങി അത്താഴപട്ടിണി കിടന്ന അച്ഛൻ രാവിലെ എണീറ്റില്ല. ഒരു ഭാഗം തളർന്ന് ഒന്നും സംസാരിക്കാൻ പറ്റാത്ത അവസ്ഥയിലാണ് അച്ഛനെ രാമേട്ടനും പുറംപണിക്കു വരാറുള്ള കുമാരേട്ടനും കൂടി ആശുപത്രിയിലേക്ക് കൊണ്ടുപോയത്.

വാർദ്ധക്യം എന്നത് രണ്ടാംബാല്യം ആണെന്നു പറഞ്ഞുകേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. അച്ഛന്റെ കാര്യത്തിൽ അത് വളരെ ശരിയാണ്. കൊച്ചു കുട്ടികളുടെ വാശിയും പിണക്കവും എല്ലാം വല്ലാതെ ഉണ്ട്. അച്ഛനെ എങ്ങനെയെങ്കിലും വേഗം കാണണമെന്നുള്ള ആഗ്രഹം എന്റെ മനസ്സിൽ ശക്തിപ്പെട്ടു. കൈയിൽ കിട്ടിയ ഒരു ബാഗും കുറച്ചു തുണികളും പാസ്റ്റ്പോർട്ടും എടുത്തു അതിവേഗം ഞാൻ ഇറങ്ങി. കാലുകൾക്കു എന്തെന്നില്ലാത്ത ഭാരം അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടു. വിമാനം കയറി നാട്ടിലെത്തി അച്ഛനെ കാണുന്ന നിമിഷം വരെ ഞാൻ എന്റെ ബാല്യകാലങ്ങളിലൂടെ സഞ്ചരിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു. അച്ഛനൊപ്പം ചിലവഴിച്ച ഓരോ നിമിഷവും, അച്ഛൻ പറഞ്ഞു തന്ന ഓരോ കഥകളും പാടാറുള്ള പാട്ടുകളും എല്ലാം എന്റെ മനസ്സിൽ ഒന്നൊന്നായി മിന്നിമറഞ്ഞു. അമ്മ ഇല്ലാത്ത കുറവ് അച്ഛൻ എന്നെ ഒരിക്കലും അറിയിച്ചിട്ടില്ല. അച്ഛന്റെ എല്ലാമെല്ലാമായ ഞാൻ, കൂടുതൽ നിറമാർന്ന ജീവിതം സ്വപ്നം കണ്ടു മരുഭൂമിയിലേക്ക് ചേക്കേറി. മുണ്ടകൻ പാടങ്ങളും വയൽകിളിപ്പാട്ടും നടവരമ്പുകളും കുളിർകാറ്റും പിച്ചകം മണക്കുന്ന നടുമുറ്റവും നാടിന്റെ നന്മകളും എല്ലാം കണ്ടില്ലെന്നു നടിച്ചു വിമാനമേറുമ്പോൾ ഞാൻ അറിയാതെ പോയത് എന്റെ പാവം അച്ഛനെയായിരുന്നു. അച്ഛന്റെ ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളെയായിരുന്നു. അച്ഛനെ രാമേട്ടനെ ഏൽപ്പിച്ചു മടങ്ങുമ്പോൾ ശരീരം കൊണ്ട് മാത്രമല്ല മനസ്സുകൊണ്ടും ഞാൻ അച്ഛനിൽ നിന്നും അകലുകയായിരുന്നു. വർഷാവർഷം സന്ധ്യകളും സൂര്യോദയങ്ങളും കൂടിയപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ മറന്നുപോയത് എന്റെ പ്രായമായ അച്ഛനെയായിരുന്നു.

ഇന്നിപ്പോൾ, ഞാൻ ഇവിടെ അച്ഛന്റെ തൊട്ടരികിലുണ്ട്. പക്ഷെ അച്ഛൻ എന്നെ തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നില്ല. പ്രായവും അസുഖവും അച്ഛന്റെ ഓർമകൾക്കുമേൽ നിഴൽ വീഴ്ത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. അച്ഛന്റെ തണുത്ത കരങ്ങൾ പിടിച്ചു ഞാൻ ആശുപത്രികിടക്കയ്ക്കരികിൽ ഇരുന്നു. മനസ്സിൽ കുറ്റബോധത്തിന്റെ ചുടുകാറ്റടിച്ചു. കണ്ണുനീർ പേമാരിയായി പെയ്തിറങ്ങി. അപ്പോഴും ജനലഴിയികളിലൂടെ കാണുന്ന വിജനമായ വഴിയിലേക്ക് നോക്കി ആരെയോ കാത്തിരിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു എന്റെ അച്ഛൻ - അച്ഛന്റെ ഓർമ്മകളിലെവിടെയും ഇല്ലാത്ത ഈ മകനെ .....!!!!

(ഈ കഥയും ഇതിലെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളും തികച്ചും സാങ്കല്പികം മാത്രം)



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## Scholarship Program 2020

Ohmkaram supports many voluntary and charitable activities. In addition to supporting its own members Ohmkaram strives to help the needy who struggle with meeting the cost of an academic education. Ohmkaram scholarship fund was established to help poor and deserving bright students with financial need in Kerala.

There are two types of Scholarships - donor sponsored Scholarship & Scholarship provided by the general fund.

In donor sponsored scholarship, fund is fully generated or provided by the donor. So the donor can select a candidate for Scholarship and decide on the amount of award. Fund for the other type of scholarship is collected by fund raising or by member contribution.

Selection of the scholar and the amount of the award are decided by the Scholarship committee. You can be a part of this activity by volunteering to run the program or donating some money to the fund. For more information please check the scholarship tab in Ohmkaram.org

One of the scholarships offered this year was made possible by the contributions of general public during the special program "St. Louis Express". Another Scholarship (donor sponsored) was offered due to the contributions of Anupama and Valsapradeep Kolakkampadath.



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## Scholarship Program 2020

This year's Scholarship has been awarded to three candidates. We at Ohmkaram wish them the best to a bright & successful future!



"My father passed away two years back and my mother is the only earning member in the family. My internship will commence in the month of October and my mother is finding it very difficult to meet the financial needs. It is very essential for me to complete the internship program to prosper in the field of Optometry and take care of my family."

**- Soudha Ravindran**

Soudha Ravindran lives in Mannuthy, Thrissur district, Kerala and is currently pursuing an intership in Bachelor of Science (Optometry). She wanted to be in the medical field which was the reason she chose to graduate in B.Sc Optometry. She has a younger sister who is doing her graduation in Sanskrit.



"I am applying for this scholarship due to the present circumstances in our country. My parents no longer have jobs & are struggling financially and can't afford the studies of me and my brother."

**- Anusree Rajeevan**

Anusree Rajeevan passed 10<sup>th</sup> grade & Plus Two with high scores and earned herself a merit seat. She is currently enrolled in the College of Engineering, Thalassery, Kerala.

Her parents are daily wage workers and can't afford her fees. She has a brother who is also a student. She would like to be an engineer and innovate in the field of machine learning.



"Main source of our family income is through farming. My father Mr. M Giri Mithran is a small scale farmer and mother Mrs. Usha Mithran is house wife. I am their only child. In this time of COVID19 pandemic and loss of income due to associated lockdown, this scholarship would be a great help for me to complete my BTech."

**- Jagan Mithran**

Jagan Mithran is from Kazhakuttom, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. He is doing his final year of Bachelor of Technology at the College of Engineering Attingal.

His thirst for knowledge in the field of automation and advancing wireless communication inspired him to choose Electronics & Communication for his BTech. He also worked as the Vice Chair of Robotics & Automation Society (RAS) for a year, representing his college for the annual RAS meet.

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# മലയാളം സ്കൂൾ

## Malayalam School of Saint Louis

### Malayalam School of Saint Louis Entering 14<sup>th</sup> Year of Service to Community

Malayalam School of Saint Louis is entering 14th year of service to the community. Malayalam School of Saint Louis is a voluntary organization open to public and free to attend. It is an affiliate program sponsored by Ohmkaram, a nonprofit voluntary organization of Malayalees in St Louis, Missouri, USA. Malayalam School was started with the perception for the need to educate our next generation of Malayalees growing up in St Louis. But we also have some adults taking Malayalam classes.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Malayalam School of Saint Louis has been operating remotely, with classes and other activities conducted exclusively via Zoom. The school meet every Saturday and runs from August through May every year. All classes are run by dedicated volunteer teachers. Graduates of Malayalam School are proficient in reading, writing, and speaking in Malayalam.

Malayalam School of Saint Louis is a registered study center of Malayalam Mission, Government of Kerala since 2018. USA Missouri Malayalam mission offers courses of Certificate Course (KaniKonna), Diploma Course (Suryakanthi), Higher Diploma Course (Ambal) and Senior Higher Diploma Course (Neelakurichi). The successful completion of the Neelakurichi course will be awarded the 10th Standard equivalent certificate.

### മിസോറി മലയാളം മിഷൻ പ്രവേശനോത്സവം - ഒക്ടോബർ 11, 2020



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ഫ്ര. അ. വി. അ. പ്രയാഗ



റിവീൻഷ്യൻ  
ഫ്ര. അ. വി. അ. പ്രയാഗ



റിവീൻഷ്യൻ  
ഫ്ര. അ. വി. അ. പ്രയാഗ



റിവീൻഷ്യൻ  
ഫ്ര. അ. വി. അ. പ്രയാഗ



Anjana Prayaga  
Coordinator & Teacher



Kavitha  
Vijayaraghavan  
Teacher



Sona Prabhakaran  
Teacher



Seeja Rakesh  
Teacher



Sangeetha Santhosh  
Teacher



Sreemani Rajesh  
Teacher



Deepa George  
Teacher



Binu Suraj  
Teacher

More information about the school is available on its website.

<http://www.ohmkaram.org/MalayalamSchool.html>

Email: [malayalamschool@yahoo.com](mailto:malayalamschool@yahoo.com)

Call Anjana Prayaga at 636-293-1174



# OHMKARAM

...a nonprofit voluntary organization of Malayali Hindus in the Greater St. Louis area.

**Ohmkaram** is created with a **vision** to encourage active participation in the **Hindu culture**, foster **cooperation** and **unity** among **Kerala Hindus** throughout St. Louis and adjoining cities. In the midst of a collage of cultures, it is easy to forget and even lose track of many subtleties of our tradition that give a meaning to our identity. The **mission** of this organization will be to **rejuvenate** and **reinforce** the Kerala Hindu **traditions**. Participation and **Involvement** of our **youth** will be facilitated enabling them to appreciate our **cultural roots**. This Organization will also serve as a platform for effective **networking** of Hindus from Kerala or anyone interested in Kerala Hindu culture. This association will try to provide **Hindu cultural resources** not available through other sources in the Greater St. Louis area.

## 2020 Office Bearers

### BOARD of DIRECTORS

Sudhir Prayaga (Chairman)  
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Prashob Prabhakaran  
Sona Mukesh

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Ganesh Jayaraman (Vice-President)  
Kavitha Anish (Secretary)  
Amritha Navjith (Joint Secretary)  
Jaydev Nair (Treasurer)  
Vinod Vijayan (Assistant Treasurer)

## OHMKARAM MEMBERS BENEFIT

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Celebrate VISHU & ONAM TRADITIONALLY in full grandeur

Participate in **ANNUAL PICNIC** and other periodic **SOCIAL MEETINGS** and gatherings

**FULL ACCESS** to Ohmkaram **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS** and right to **ELECT** Board and Executive **MEMBERS**.

## **JOIN US**

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- **preserve & promote our rich culture**
- **instill traditional values in our children**
- **provide a cultural IDENTITY to our children**





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"I met, Jeramie Beechler, the owner of Signature Exteriors at the 2012 St. Charles Home Remodelers Show. I requested an estimate for gutter guards. A few days later Jeramie met me at my home with the gutter estimate. While he was here he inspected my roof for **FREE** and determined that I had **hail damage**. I had no idea! After handing me a detailed report of the damage, he advised me to file a claim. He met with my insurance adjuster and I was approved for a full roof replacement and a partial gutter and siding replacement. I have referred him to Vimal, Baiju, and Malamel, all of whom have been approved for a full roof replacement. I highly advise everyone to have their home inspected by Signature Exteriors."

~ Rajagopalan Unni

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