



Gitanjali 2013

An Ohmkaram Publication



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(Kerala cultural organization based in St Louis, MO)

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CONTENTS

Gitanjali
2013 Issue (6th Edition)

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Editorial	5
President's Message	7
Cover Description	9
Lord Krishna	11
Story of Sree Ayyappan	12
In Search Of ...	17
Luck	19
Coconut Oil Miracles	23
MILD	27
Pazhamchollukal (<i>Malayalam Proverbs</i>)	28
Lord Ayyappa Bhakthi Movement in North America	31
Year In Review	
Anniversary	32
Vishu	33
Onam	34
Picnic	35
Red Cross Blood Drive	36
Ambala Aacharangal (<i>Temple Customs</i>)	37
Word Puzzle	41
Legend of Goddess Hemambika	42
Showcasing Art Through Ages	44
Kid's Beautiful Mind	47
Why I Like Cub Scouts	49
Car Racing	51
Jeevitham Ormagallilude (<i>Life through Memory</i>)	52
Pachakam (<i>Recipes</i>)	54
Mazhatullikal (<i>Rain Drops</i>)	61
Malayalam School of St Louis	62
Ohmkaram Office Bearers 2013	63
Ohmkaram Member's Directory	64

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Best Wishes

**Madhavan Natesan Manchira
& Family**

EDITORIAL



Gitanjali, an Ohmkaram publication, provides a window to the rich Kerala and Hindu culture. Gitanjali, strives to preserve and promote the invaluable Kerala Hindu tradition & culture and to pass on this inheritance to the next generation. It also provides a platform to express ones views and a showcase of creativity of its members and their family.

Though an honor, it was a challenge for the editorial team to keep up the high expectations. We are thankful to the entire team for their dedicated effort and time despite their own busy schedules to complete the task in a timely manner and make it a success. We wish to thank all the contributors of articles and other materials.

We are committed to improve the standard of Gitanjali every year and most of it depends on the contents contributed by our members. So we strongly encourage everyone to contribute. We are especially thankful to all parents who encouraged their children to contribute.

Thank you
Suraj Alakkassery (*Co-Editor*)

I would like to thank all the contributors for their articles, art works, poems, recipes, etc. Every contribution big or small has made a major difference to the magazine. The submissions are as varied as their authors - our youngest being a three year old kid, and the oldest being, well, there's no limit on age. The submissions, all distinct and versatile, express thoughts of the budding, evolving and seasoned members of our group.



That said, I do hope you enjoy this year's edition. I also hope that you will continue with your contributions to make the future editions of Gitanjali as successful as this one.

Thanks,
Kavita Menon (*Co-Editor*)

Thank you for your generous support and help

Binu Chakkamparambil (*Associate Editor*)
Rajagopalan Unni (*Advertisement Team Leader*)
Vinay Menon (*Sub Editor*)
Vinod Menon (*Executive Editor & Advisor*)



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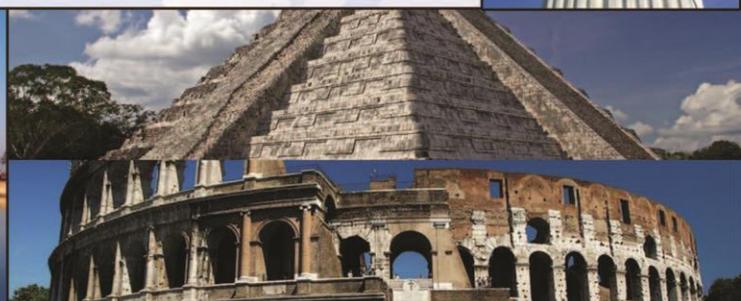
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President's Message



Dear Members of Ohmkaram,

It was an honor and a privilege to be the president of Ohmkaram for the second time in 2013. I want to thank all committee members for their voluntarism and hard work. I also want to thank all the members without whose efforts we will not be such a strong organization as we are today.

I say we are a strong organization today because of our membership, and various activities we do. You can see information about these various activities throughout this souvenir. The publication of this souvenir in itself, for 6 years with full color in last couple of years, is a good indication of the commitment of our members.

Ohmkaram was started over 8 years ago to fill a void, where some of us felt that we need an avenue to meet occasionally, to discuss our common interests, promote our culture and heritage, and to translate some of these to the next generation of our children growing up here. Looking back, I can say proudly that we have achieved many of these original goals over the years. As with any organization, we also had our share of growing pains. Irrespective of all short comings, I believe we can stand tall, as a young organization, with many achievements under its belt in such a short time.

Ohmkaram is a membership based organization, and we always welcome anyone interested in our activities to become members. I urge members to be active participants in some of our activities; with the range of activities we do there is always something of everyone. For me, volunteering for Ohmkaram is a relief from our daily grind at work. There should be more to life than just work or making money. According to Isavasya Upanishad, doing things without attachment or expectation of a return will make one a complete person - 'Kavir Manishi Pariboo Swayambo'. I believe, Ohmkaram provides members with many opportunities for doing such activities.

I want to thank again all members who volunteered this year for the success of Ohmkaram. I wish Ohmkaram further success in the coming years.

*Sincerely Yours,
Sudhirdas Prayaga, Ph.D.
President
12/14/13*

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- Headaches secondary to neck problems

Front Cover ... Kerala has some of the most ancient and unique Hindu temples. With its traditions, customs, rituals and offerings, many have been mentioned in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Gitanjali strives to preserve this time immemorial and invaluable Kerala Hindu traditions, culture and to pass on this inheritance to the next generation. Every year Gitanjali depicts a new aspect of Kerala heritage through its cover. Gitanjali 2013 is dedicated to the Gods and temples in Kerala. This beautiful cover page was designed by Vinay Menon.

TEMPLES IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

contributed by Vinay Menon

The cover displays some of the famous temples from **God's Own Country** - the state of **Kerala**. Visiting temples early in the morning is a special experience for every Hindu. Starting top left on the Cover page is the **Chottanikara Bhagavathy Temple**, left center is **Vadakkumnathan Sivan Temple**, and left bottom is **Ambalappuzha Sree Krishna Temple**.



Chottanikkara Bhagavathy Temple

The Chottanikara Temple is located in the Ernakulam district of Kerala. The Bhagavathy known as **Rajarajeswari (Adiparasakthi)** is worshipped here in three forms - **Saraswathy** in the morning, **Lakshmi** at noon and **Durga** in the evening. There is an Idol of Mahavishnu on the same pedestal and so the Deity is called Ammenarayana, Devinarayana, Lakshminarayana & Bhadrenarayana. Along with Lakshmi & Narayana there are idols of Brahma, Siva, Ganapathi (Ganesh), Subramanya and Sastha on the same pedestal.

(Source: www.chottanikkarabhagavathy.org/home.html)

Vadakkumnathan Shiva Temple

The Vadakkumnathan Temple history dates back to over 1,000 years, and is one of the largest and ancient **Shiva** temples, situated in Thrissur district of Kerala. It is believed that the temple was built by **Parasurama**, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu and the legend creator of Kerala. **Thrissur pooram**, which is celebrated here every year in the month of Medam (mid-April to mid-May), witnesses millions of devotees from all over the world. Thrissur town gets its name from this ancient Lord Shiva Temple. The real meaning of the name Thrissur is the **'Town with the name of Lord Shiva'**.



(Source: www.vadakkumnathantemple.com)

Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple

The Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple is believed to have been built in the year AD 790 by the local ruler Chembakasserry Pooradam Thirunal-Devanarayanan Thampuran in Ambalappuzha, Alapuzha district of Kerala. The idol at Ambalappuzha is likened to Parthasarathi with a whip in the right hand and a Shankhu (sacred conch) in the left. This temple is directly associated to the **Guruvayoor Sree Krishna Temple**. During the raids of Tipu Sultan in 1789, the idol of Sri Krishna from the Guruvayoor Temple was brought to the Ambalappuzha Temple for safe keeping.

The **payasam** served in the Ambalappuzha Temple is famous among Hindu devotees. This sweet pudding made of rice and milk has an interesting mythological legend behind it. It is believed that Guruvayoorappan reaches here daily at the time of Palpayasa Nedyam to have it.

(Source: Wikipedia)



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Lord Krishna

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Smiling face so dear,
Amidst chaos of cruelty
Sorrows and fear

Music of thy flute
Noon, day and night
Peaceful lilting song
Serene, calm and quiet

Cradle to youth
Tales of adventures with beasts
O' Destroyer of evil
Harbinger of peace



O' Krishna, Krishna
We pray
Deliver us happiness and joy
Sorrow, grief, nay, nay

O' Krishna, Krishna
We say
Peace onto this world
Where your subjects stay

For Lord is peace
And peace is Lord
Kind, generous
Our God

Banish the evil
Wars, riots that resist
Peace onto thy world
Where morals persist.

Jaya Menon

STORY of SREE AYYAPPAN

by Kozhikal Sudhir Padmanabhan

As an ardent devotee of Lord Ayyappan and having made a few pilgrimages to Sabarimala, I feel a sense of duty to sing Swami's praise and spread his awareness to others. With Ayyappan's grace, I wish to present a version of his story that is becoming extinct, where there is no mention of Mohini (female **avatar** (*roopam*) of Maha Vishnu). In our **Puranas** (*ancient Hindu hymns of various deities*), Ayyappan is said to be the offspring of Shiva and Vishnu in the form of Mohini. This does not necessarily have to be the only version related to the birth of Ayyappan.

So who then, is Ayyappan? Let's take a historical route to trace him.

Dharma Shastha was a very famous deity in southern India, especially in the region of Kerala. As a matter of fact, the shrine at the Sabari hill was originally built for Dharma Shastha. Ayyappan is a human incarnation of Dharma Shastha, who took birth in Kerala sometime after Adi Shankaracharya (788 CE - 820 CE), during the Pandya lineage of kings who ruled Pandalam.

Unfortunately, there is no written documentation or historical facts about Ayyappan. But there are folk songs like **Vavarangam**, **Pandala Sevam** etc to describe the story of Ayyappan, and his superhuman adventures. These folk songs are also almost extinct now.

After the decline of the Kulasekhara empire, there was anarchy across the kingdom, especially in the area between Erumeli and Pandalam. There was widespread looting and plundering by robbers, headed by their chief Udayanan. Having built forts in the mountain tops of Thalapara, Inchipara and Karimala, they descended and attacked at will and returned to the summit with their loot. They did not even spare the devotees of Dharma Shastha trekking to Sabarimala.

Encouraged by the overall state of anarchy and the helplessness of the devotees, Udayanan proceeded to plunder the Dharma Shastha temple. Not satisfied, he also broke the temple idol and murdered the priest as well. The murdered priest had a son, Jayanthan, who was grief stricken by this incident and vowed revenge. Unfortunately he couldn't gather enough strength to launch a crusade. Disappointed, Jayanthan lived in seclusion in Ponnambalamedu, contemplating on Dharma Shastha.

Meanwhile, Udayanan grew in strength and in wanting to produce an offspring from royalty, abducted the daughter of the Pandalam chieftain. The chieftain, a great devotee of Dharma Shastha, was helpless and could only pray for his daughter's safety.

Dharma Shastha appeared in Jayanthan's dream and asked him to rescue the Pandalam chieftain's daughter and accept her as his wife. Jayanthan was also told that Ayyapan himself will be born as a son of this union, and will help him to fulfill his vow of revenge against Udayanan.

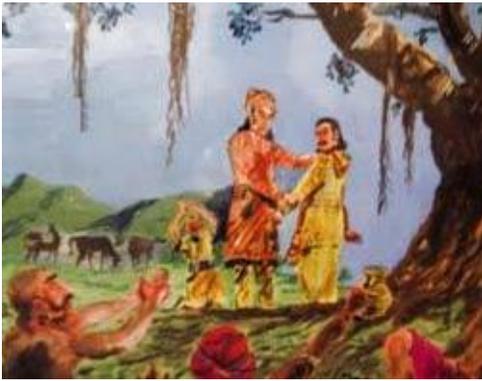
Encouraged by this divine guidance, Jayanthan went to Inchipparakota, which was one of Udayanan's hiding places. He impressed Udayanan with his **jaalavidya** (*illusion; knowledge of, tact*) and the latter accepted Jayanthan as his accomplice.

At the right moment, Jayanthan escaped with the chieftain's daughter and they settled in Ponnambalamedu. To this couple was born a son whose radiance was equal to that of the Sun. They named him Ayyappan ('ayya' - revered and 'appan' - father), since Dharma Shastha is also fondly called as ayya and appa.

Ayyappan was a valorous kid with tremendous strength. At about 12 years of age, a local chief of Poonjar by the name of Manavikraman, was waylaid by robbers in the jungle of Vandiperiyar. When he prayed for help, Ayyappan appeared mounted on an elephant and chased the robbers away and saved the chief.

Ayyappan gave the chief a **churika** (dagger) and **chooralvadi** (cane) (*gifts of weapons as protection from future attacks - Editors*) and escorted him to the chief's palace. The descendants of the chief's family still preserve these weapons to this day, at Poonjar.

When Ayyappan was about 16 years old, Jayanthan summoned his son and narrated all the atrocities committed by Udayanan and his vow to avenge his father's (temple priest) death. Jayanthan tied a bell around Ayyappan's neck as a reminder of his mission, named him Manikandan and sent him to the Pandalam palace. Pandalam's chief welcomed Ayyappan wholeheartedly knowing that he is his grandson and the heir apparent to the throne. But Ayyappan's true identity was kept a secret, to avoid Udayanan's wrath.



Jayanthan joins Udayanan



Dharma Shastha



Ayyappan

In those days, there was a flourishing commerce between Kerala and the Middle East. Arabs came in huge ships to trade. However, there were also Arab pirates disguised as traders who attacked merchants. Vavar (Babur) was the chief of the pirates and was well versed in martial arts.

Ayyappan went to the rescue of these merchants and fought against Vavar. This battle is depicted in **Vavarangam**, a local folklore. Ayyappan defeated Vavar but was impressed by his skills. Vavar on the other hand, was overwhelmed by Ayyappan's valor and martial arts skills. Realizing the divinity of the child, he requested Ayyappan to accept him as the commander of the Pandalam army. Ayyappan duly obliged.

While Ayyappan was away, Udayanan launched a surprise attack on the Pandalam kingdom. Sensing trouble, Ayyappan rushed back and with his **jaalavidya**, made his small army look huge. Udayanan was so frightened upon seeing such a large army and made a hasty retreat to Talapara.

To deter Udayanan's constant attack on Pandalam, Ayyappan decided to build a big army and requested one male member from every household to enroll. In the process of forming this army, Ayyappan found a brave youth by the name of Kochukaduthan, who was skilled in sword fighting. Also enrolled in his army were brothers Talapara Mallan and Talapara Villan, who were very well versed in archery.

To further enhance his own martial arts skills, Ayyappan joined the **kalari** (martial arts school) of Guru Cheramoopan at Cherthala. Under the guidance of this guru, Ayyappan learned new **Kalaripayatu** (Kerala martial arts) **adavukal** (techniques).

In time, Ayyappan prepared for the final assault on Udayanan and his men. Ayyappan's entire army was divided regionally; (as I understand it) the division to the north of Vaikom was called Alangat Yogam, the south of Vaikom as Ambalapuzha Yogam, and extreme south as Pandalam Yogam. Alangat Yogam and Ambalapuzha Yogam were under the command of Kochukaduthan and Vavar respectively. The Pandalam Yogam was under the command of the two brothers Mallan and Villan.

There is a side story when Ayyappan was in the **kalari** of Guru Cheramoopan.

The guru had a daughter who fell in love with, and wanted to marry Ayyappan. When the guru approached Ayyappan with a (marriage) proposal, he turned it down by saying that he intended to live his life as a celibate. The girl was dejected and requested Ayyappan to be her companion nonetheless. Ayyappan accepted this and gifted her with a bracelet. Later, he asked her to go to the Sabari hills and spend the rest of her life as a **tapaswini** (ascetic).

Ayyappan promises to marry her if they were no **Kanni Ayyappan** (devotees on their pilgrimage to Sabarimala for the first time) in a year (a scenario that has never happened, thus the two never marrying - Editors). Until then, she would reside in a separate shrine in the Sabari hill known as Malikapuram.

A ritual is conducted every year after **makara vilaku** (a seasonal Ayyappan festival where a celestial star is seen), in which a procession takes place to and fro between Malikapuram and an area known as **sharam kuttial or Saramkutti**.

"Sharam" - arrow, "kutti" - piercing, and "al" - banyan tree ... all first timers to Sabarimala place an arrow here. Today, there is no longer a tree, but it's still called "sharam kuttial"; banyan tree where the arrows are pierced.

Malikapuram is the shrine for Devi in Sabarimala.

(continued on page 15)

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(continued from page 13)



Kalaripayatu

Ayyappan was in overall command and marched the army through the forest mounted on an ox. Before proceeding, Ayyappan got down from the ox and tethered the animal to a tree. He then addressed his army with his plan. This place is also called and revered as **Kaalaketi** ('kaala' - ox and 'ketti' - tied). From here, they planned a three way attack on Inchipara kota, Talapara kota and Karimala kota of Udayanan. (*Kota* - fort).

Ayyappan's army emerged victorious and Udayanan was eventually killed by Kochukaduthan in a one on one battle. After the battle, Ayyappan's army came down to Pampa and celebrated their victory with a grand feast (**Pamba sadya**). In the morning, Ayyappan conducted rituals to honor all those who died in the battle.

The army proceeded further towards the Sabari hill to conduct the consecration of Dharma Shasta in the temple there. About two kilometers from the temple, Ayyappan asked his army to lay down their armors and arrows. This place is known as **Saramkutti**.

The temple was eventually restored and Ayyappan instructed 18 steps to be built (*leading up to the temple - Editors*), indicating 18 surrounding hills, 18 different weapons used by the army and 18 adavukal.

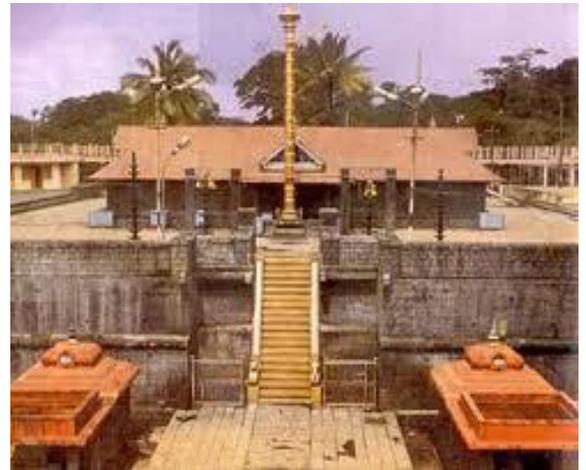
After this, Ayyappan declared that he will merge with the main deity Dharma Shasta at Sabarimala. However, the deeply saddened Pandalam chieftain was not willing to allow Ayyappan to attain **Samadhi** (*final stage of intense concentration; transcendental stage - Editors*). He offered Ayyappan to jointly rule Pandalam with him. Ayyappan explained that the **avataram** (*incarnation*) was necessary, and instead granted a wish that every year during the Malayalam month of **Makaram** and star of **Utharam**, he would appear in Sabarimala. The chieftain can ordain Ayyappan as a King for one day and celebrate **makara vilaku**.

Accordingly, every year the **Thiruabaranam** (*ornamental sacred jewels*) is carried from Pandalam to Sabarimala during **makara vilaku** to decorate Ayyappan. It should also be noted that the **Karnavar** (*head of the family*) of the Pandalam should never visit Sabarimala, because on seeing the Karnavar, Ayyappan will stand up and show respect, which is not desirable.

The idol of Ayyappan is consecrated in Yoga nila (*yogic form*) squatting on a **pitta** (*stool*), with **chin mudra** (*hand gesture*) and **patta bandam** (*band around the knees*).

Thus is the story of Ayyappan without any reference to Maha Vishnu or Mohini. Sree Krishna is widely accepted as Maha Vishnu's incarnation born to Devaki and Vasudevan. Similarly, we should also be able to accept this particular story of Ayyappan.

The debate whether Ayyappan was born out of a divine or human confluence is immaterial to a true devotee. There are no words to describe the pure bliss we experience while praying at the Sabarimala **sanidanam** (temple) exclaiming **Swami Saranam Ayyappa!**



Temple (Sanidanam) with 18 holy steps



*Author and
Ohmkaram
member,
Sudhir*

Bibliography:

- 1) My beloved Kumaran Balachandran Guruswamy (Kumaraasan)
- 2) Pilgrimage to Sabari by K. R. Vaidyanathan

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IN SEARCH OF ...

by Vimal Nair

As a Hindu I was always interested to know if the concept of Rebirth was true. Various Hindu literatures have numerous references on rebirth. Even modern western literature mentions about life after death and previous births. My curiosity led me to Vaithesawaram Kovil in Chidambaram (Tamil Nadu) where the "Naadi Jyothsayam" text is available. "Naadi Jyothsayam" or "Naadi Astrology" is based on the belief that the past, present and the future life of all humans were foreseen by Hindu sages.

Vaithesawaram Kovil is located around 250 Kms from Chennai. We travelled by car and the drive was very comfortable. The Highway was very well maintained but we were not able to go at high speeds because of two reasons – the hill sized speed bumps and occasional cattle straying through the road. Wish they had the "Cattle Crossing" road sign like the "Deer crossing" sign we see here. Anyway, we left at 8AM from Chennai and reached after noon at Chidambaram. Once at Chidambaram, it was easy to find the many "stores" that provided the "Naadi" reading services. Without prior appointment, it would have been difficult for us to pick one provider from another. The appointment with the reader itself was a personal affair; he took me to a small room filled with agarbathi smoke/smell and images of various gods and goddesses. There were no chairs and we sat crisscrossed on the floor. The tricky part was to remember your exact date and time of your birth. In my case, my mother did not remember this immediately and had to discuss with my father regarding the events that happened that day and then finally guessed a time. The "reader" then asked me a series of questions until he almost ran out of the palm leaves that had those questions. He had to go to the Naadi Library to get additional palm leaves that had more questions – at least that is what he said. He came back with another bunch of questions until he was able to locate my "naadi leaf".

Once he found my leaf, he turned on the tape recorder and starting reading my past-present-future in a very poetic form that I wished would go on and on. He would occasionally stop to translate the poetic Tamil to something that I could understand. After the whole session I only wished that my "present" was as interesting as my past or future. According to my leaves, my previous birth was in a place situated somewhere in present Orissa and my next birth would be in a place that is somewhere close to current Sri Lanka. For the first time in my current life I was proud of my past and was looking forward for my future. The things he said about my present life were not very true though there are few things that only time will tell. Overall, the whole experience was like reading and being part of a very interesting novel - living and interacting with Kings and learned men, being part of a dangerous game where my folks get killed and finally able to see my own death. Proud of my previous birth and dreaming about my next birth, we left the "Reading Center". We then stopped by one of the most beautiful temple – Chidambaram temple before returning back home.

Once home, my interest and curiosity shifted to the future of my present life. That is when I heard about the company "23 and me" that does DNA testing and Genomics using saliva. Of course it will not tell my future but it just reads my DNA and would tell me my ancestry, my genetic information and the disease that are hidden inside me. I was almost ready to provide my saliva when I heard about the FDA ban on such tests which is when I delayed this leg of my journey to find my "present" future. I hope to continue my self-discovery process travelling through the path of science, astrology and through the eyes of my dear and near ones.





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LUCK

by Gopal Menon

We often hear people talking of luck – “just my bad luck”, “that guy is very lucky”, “she is always lucky when it comes to house”, “wish you best of luck” and so on.

What do we mean by “luck”? Is it something which is specific to the occasion or it is something that a person has within himself / herself? We generally assume that “lucky persons” have had “good luck” in the past and are expected to continue having “good luck” in future also. Let us analyze what we actually mean by “luck”.

First of all, we need to know something about probability. Probability is the chance of something happening. Let us take the example of tossing a fair coin. There are two possible outcomes – head and tail. There is an equal chance that the result would be either head or tail. So the chance, or probability, of head turning up is 1 out of the total of 2 possible outcomes. Hence, we say that the probability of the outcome being head is $\frac{1}{2}$ or 50%. Similarly, the probability of the outcome being tail is also $\frac{1}{2}$ or 50%.

We will now take another example of throwing a fair die. There are six possible outcomes – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. There is an equal chance that the result would be any of these numbers. So the chance, or probability, of 1 turning up is 1 out of the total of 6 possible outcomes. Hence, we say that the probability of the outcome being 1 is $\frac{1}{6}$ or 16.667%. Similarly, the probability of the outcome being any other number from 2 to 6 is also $\frac{1}{6}$ or 16.667% in each case. The total of all the probabilities is $\frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} = 1$ or 100%.

Now take the case of getting a number 7 when we throw a fair die. The outcome can be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. There is no chance at all that we would get the number 7. Therefore the probability of getting 7 when a fair die is thrown is 0 out of a total of 6 possible outcomes. If the probability of occurrence of any event is 0 then the event will definitely not occur and its probability is 0%. If we take the case of getting any number between 1 and 6, both inclusive, when a fair die is thrown we can see that the chance is 6 out of a total of 6 possible outcomes since any possible outcome (between 1 and 6, both inclusive) is acceptable and hence the probability is 1 or 100%. If the probability of occurrence of any event is 1 then it is sure to happen.

We toss a coin once and get, say, head. Let us call each toss a trial. We toss the coin again. The fact that the outcome of the first trial was head does not have any bearing on whether the outcome of the second trial would be head or tail. The outcome of any trial does not depend on the outcome of the earlier trials if the outcomes depend totally on chance or random factors. It does not affect the outcome of subsequent trials either.

Many of the occurrences in our life where “luck” is involved can be compared loosely to tossing a coin or throwing a die. Consider a lottery where 1000 tickets are sold (1 each to 1000 persons) and one ticket out of the lot is selected. In a fair deal, each number has an equal chance of being selected, the chance being 1 in 1000. No particular ticket has an extra chance of being selected. The person having this ticket is the winner and is therefore considered by the others to be “lucky”. We should understand that one ticket has to be selected and out of the 1000 people who have bought the ticket one person has to be the winner. If the lottery was conducted fairly, the person who became the winner could not have influenced the draw in any way and it was sheer chance that his ticket number was selected.

Winning the first lottery does not, in any way, affect the outcome of the second lottery. In the second lottery also, the winner of the first lottery has the same chance as the losers of the first lottery (1 out of 1000) – neither more nor less. This is the same chance of winning that he had in the first lottery. It is therefore not correct to state that the winner of the first lottery is lucky and therefore stands a greater chance of winning the second lottery. The same is the case with subsequent lotteries also.

It is possible that the winner of the first lottery can win the second lottery too. The chance of winning two successive lotteries is $\frac{1}{1000}$ in the first case multiplied by $\frac{1}{1000}$ in the second case

(Continued on Page 21)

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LUCK

(Continued from Page 19)

equaling 1/1000000. It is therefore not impossible to win two lotteries in succession but the chances are far lower than winning the second one having won the first lottery. It is very important to distinguish between predicting that a particular person will win two lotteries in succession (before the outcome of the first lottery is known) and to predict (after the result of the first lottery has been announced) that the winner of the first lottery would win the second one also. In the first case, the probability of the same person winning two successive lotteries is 1/1000000 whereas, in the second case, the chance of the known winner of the first lottery winning again is 1/1000.

What we see from this is that it is possible for a person to win two lotteries in succession without possessing any special intrinsic qualities though the probability is very low. If a person wins two lotteries in succession it only means that the 1 in 1000000 event (assuming that exactly 1000 tickets have been sold in each case) has taken place – it has nothing to do with the intrinsic nature or quality of the person.

Therefore we can see that when we use the word "lucky person" what we actually mean is that there has been an outcome of an event (for which the probability was perhaps quite low) which was favourable to that person. We can thus call a person "lucky" after the event is over. We cannot declare a person to be lucky before the event since we would not be able to predict the outcome of the event. The event being favourable to that person in one case does not mean that the outcome of a subsequent event with the same, or a different (other than 100%) probability, would be in his favour since being "lucky" in the past cannot guarantee "luck" in the future.

We can now make the following statements in reference to "luck":

1. "Good luck" means a favourable outcome of an event in which the outcome is not certain.
2. "Bad luck" means an unfavourable outcome of an event in which the outcome is not certain.
3. We can talk of "luck" only with respect to events that have already taken place and whose outcome we know.
4. "Luck" is directed to the past (after the event is over) and cannot be projected to the future.
5. A person who has been "lucky" in the past need not necessarily be lucky in future.
6. "Luck" is not an intrinsic property of a person.
7. "Luck" is involved only with respect to events whose outcomes depend only on random factors, which cannot be influenced by the person. Events whose outcomes can be influenced by the person (such as by studying harder, putting in more efforts, working for a longer period, spending more money, influencing others, etc.) should not be considered when we are talking about the "luck" of a person.

Next time you talk of "luck" or call a person "lucky" you may like to bear in mind the above points.

.....

CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE...

A man and his ever-nagging wife went on vacation to Jerusalem. While they were there, the wife passed away. The undertaker told the husband, "You can have her shipped home for \$5,000, or you can bury her here, in the Holy Land, for \$150." The man thought about it and told him he would just have her shipped home. The undertaker asked, "Why would you spend \$5,000 to ship your wife home, when it would be wonderful to be buried here and you would spend only \$150?"

The man replied... Long ago a man died here, was buried here, and three days later he rose from the dead. I just can't take that chance...

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COCONUT OIL MIRACLES

by Dr Sudhirdas Kumar Prayaga

I hail from Kerala which means the 'land of coconuts', where coconut oil is used on a daily basis for many uses. Mainly as edible oil used in cooking and in many Ayurvedic medicines. What prompted me to write this article is the bad wrath or negative publicity coconut oil has received during last few decades from the west. I have heard comments such as 'coconut oil is full of cholesterol' or 'coconut oil is all bad saturated fat'. This article is my attempt to give an over view of our current scientific understanding of coconut oil and its many health benefits.

Since 1950's coronary heart disease (CHD) was becoming the primary cause of mortality in the adult population in United States. The main cause for this was due to the changes in the diet habits especially to high meat content and fast foods. In 1954, researcher David Kritchevsky published two scientific papers demonstrating that feeding cholesterol to rabbits leads to the formation of blocked arteries and thus contributes to potential heart disease. Subsequently he showed that consuming polyunsaturated fatty acids from other oils such as corn, soybean, safflower and sunflower seeds results in the lowering, at least temporarily, of cholesterol in the blood. This led to 'lipid hypothesis', that saturated fat and cholesterol raise cholesterol levels in the blood, leading to possible deposition of cholesterol and fatty acids as pathogenic plaques in the arteries.

During the following years, the substitution of saturated fats with polyunsaturated gained acceptance - pushed by soy bean oil and corn oil (which are mostly made up of unsaturated fatty acids) industries which profited immensely, overshadowing science. This conceptual change in the eating habits of Americans have negatively influenced and changed the dietary regimes of many societies around the world, most that were not even affected by America's style diet habits. During 1960s, fats and oils supplied Americans with about 45 percent of their calories; with about 13 percent obese and only 1 percent had type-2 diabetes. Today, Americans take in less fat, getting about 33 percent of calories from fats and oils; yet obesity has ballooned to 34 percent of US population and about 8 percent have diabetes. Didn't we learn anything from this?

Saturated fat craze of the past several decades effectively banned coconut oil into oblivion. So far there is no direct evidence that saturated fats increases heart disease. On the contrary, there are many scientific studies attesting to the beneficial effects of coconut oil on human health. Population studies have shown that regions where coconut is a staple, who consumed large amount of coconut regularly, are among the healthiest on the planet with no sign of heart disease. People of Kerala also have a longer life expectancy, if you adjust for the mortality due to infectious diseases. It is reported that people from Kerala has a higher cholesterol base line in their blood than international average.

Coconut oil is made of about 90% saturated fat and rest mono or poly unsaturated fats. It does not contain any trans-fats (which are made during the hydrogenation process of some oils) or cholesterol (which is an animal derived fat). Unlike saturated fats in most other oils, cheese or meats, which are long chain fatty acids, the saturated fats in coconut oil is mostly made of medium chain and short chain fatty acids. The majority of saturated fat in coconut oil is Lauric acid, which is far more nutritious and beneficial than corn, peanut, soy, safflower and many other edible oils. Coconut oil also has significant amounts of monounsaturated omega-9 Oleic acid and polyunsaturated omega-6 Linoleic acid among others. Many studies are pointing to the health benefits of these short and medium chain fatty acids. Linoleic acid, for example, is an essential oil need to be obtained through diet, lack of which can cause skin scaling and hair loss.

Lauric acid is shown to increase both the good cholesterol (high density lipoprotein - HDL) and bad cholesterol (low density lipoprotein - LDL). Most of the increase is in HDL or the good cholesterol and hence the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL is lower, indicative of reduced risk for heart disease. Multiple clinical studies have reported that coconut oil not only do not impair lipid profile in people but actually help reduce abdominal fat and reduce body mass index (BMI).

(Continued on page 25)



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(Continued from page 23)

COCONUT OIL MIRACLES

Lauric acid is naturally present in breast milk and sebaceous glands of the body, indicating an essential role for these fatty acids in good health. It is an efficient source of energy, quickly taken up in the intestine processed in the liver for energy. It is demonstrated to be an efficient anti-microbial against many pathogenic bacteria and fungi.



General aging is due to oxidation and peroxidation of various macro molecules in your body. As you age the skin becomes more wrinkled because it loses its elasticity mostly due to damages to membrane macromolecules such as proteins and lipids. Coconut oil is a strong antioxidant with tissue protective and anti-aging properties. Antioxidants protect tissues by neutralizing the damaging effects of reactive oxygen and free radicals. Use of coconut oil on your hair and body on a regular basis probably can slow greying of hair and wrinkle in your skin. Lipid oxidation is found to be involved in aging of brain including in Alzheimer's disease. Recently it was shown that UV light induces peroxidation in unsaturated fats, but not saturated fats. Coconut oil probably is better than most anti-ageing cream you can buy in the market now. Coconut oil application on skin can improve moisture retention and lipid content leading to slowing of skin elasticity and wrinkling and can relieve itchy and dry skin. Coconut oil based skin messaging is a standard procedure in Ayurveda. On hair and follicles it helps to protect from oxidation. Some studies have reported that coconut oil can also work as a sun screen blocking up to 20% of sun's UV radiation!

Coconut oil probably has the most short and medium chain fatty acids than most other vegetable oils. These are oils essentials for brain functions and beneficial to human health. Many scientific studies have indicated its probable role in protection from Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Many people report 'oil pulling' with coconut oil in your mouth as a great way to whiten teeth and remove harmful bacteria.

So, I believe that the benefits of coconut oil out weights any pitfalls it may have. Or among a choice of edible oils coconut oil may be one of the best you can choose. It helps you lose weight, lowers cholesterol, reduce your risk of heart disease and other metabolic or digestive disorders, boosts your daily energy, rejuvenates your skin as a moisturizer and protect hair from damage, protect from some bacterial and fungal infections, prevents wrinkles and improve brain function. What else can you ask for? It really is a super food!

**This article is a modified version of an article published in my blog 'Prayaga Principle' titled 'A Case for Coconut Oil'.*

'The Malayali Lady with Mundu and Neriathu'

by Arjun Madhavan.

"Mundu" and "Neriathu" is an old traditional dress of the Keralite women. This outfit consists of two pieces of cloth: A "mundu" that is wrapped on the lower part and the "neriyathu" that is worn on top over the blouse.





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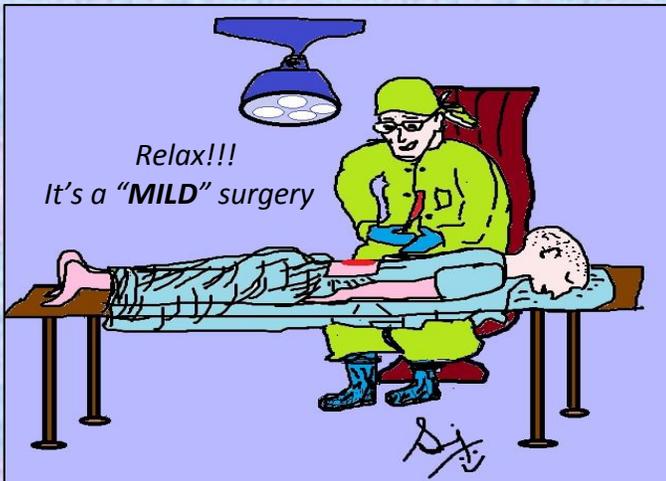
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MILD

by Dr Suresh Krishnan



Have you seen people as they grow older walking slower and bending over as they try to walk further and further? Have you seen older people walk for a short distance and then try to sit for a few minutes and then try to walk again? Have you noticed older people always wanting to use a shopping cart to support them to do their shopping even though they do shop for one or two small things which can be easily carried in their hand?

The answer to these questions is that they are suffering from a condition called **Lumbar Spinal Stenosis**. Now what is Lumbar spinal stenosis? It is a condition which develops as you reach the age of 60 and above. It is a progressive narrowing of the spinal

canal due to slow constriction of the boundaries of the canal. The boundaries of spinal canal is bony and ligamentous. When these build up and grow inwards they reduce the space within the canal. As a result, the blood supply to the spinal cord is compromised. When you start to starve someone by not giving nourishment they start to feel weak and become nonfunctional. In a similar way when the blood supply to the nerve is decreased the nerves too start to feel the same way. The weak nerves loose energy and cannot send strong electrical signals to the muscles. So they cannot make the muscles of the leg function well. This also causes pain in the lower back and the legs start to go numb and weak as the person tries to walk more and more. So they stop and sit down after walking some distances or bend over more while standing. These people do not have much problem when they lie down and do not need pain medications at that time.

A very common factor seen in this condition is called Ligamentum Flavum hypertrophy. In simple terms it means that the Ligamentum Flavum, a thick tape like object inside the spinal canal, which holds the vertebrae (bones that form the spine), together becomes thicker and starts to push into the spinal canal. When this happens the spinal nerves are squished together along with their blood supply. When worse, it essentially becomes like a kink in a straw. This kink in the blood vessel is the reason why the blood cannot get to the nerves to give them the nutrition they need.

When someone develops a kink like this what they do automatically is to bend over. By the act of bending over, the ligamentum flavum is slightly stretched and gives some extra room for the blood to flow. This results in more nourishment for the nerves and gives the person the ability to walk further.

MILD, which stands for **Minimally Invasive Lumbar Decompression**, is a procedure that ameliorates pain in such patients. MILD is a very safe and effective procedure with success rate of 99.01 % without complication. This has been a much better alternative to an invasive long surgery called lumbar decompression which is done by performing a laminectomy or removing the portion of the spine which forms the back of the spinal canal and a subsequent fusion which may be needed to stabilize the spine.

MILD is done as an outpatient procedure and has relatively little down time. After the patient is brought to the operating room and made comfortable with mild sedation, an epidural needle is inserted and a dye is injected into the epidural space. This will mark the boundary above which the work needs to be done. Then a small incision approximately 3-5 mm is made. Through this, a needle-like device is inserted and brought up to the level of the vertebra of interest. Then through this needle first a bone sculptor and then a tissue sculptor are inserted and small amounts of tissue are taken out. The procedure is deemed complete when the dye flows below the level unobstructed indicating that the stenosis is decreased and blood can flow better than before. Then a small band-aid is placed and patient is discharged to their home. People will need a couple of days of rest and then continue to do their routine work at home and gradually do more heavy lifting after 3 months. This does not mean all their problems are solved. They still might have some issues with the back that needs to be treated.

MILD has helped thousands of elderly people have a better quality of life.

PAZHAMCHOLLUKAL (*Malayalam Proverbs*)

Pazhamchollukal is yet another reflection on the richness of the Malayalam language. These proverbs are handed down from generation to generation. Like Aesop fables, proverbs are often used by elders while imparting wisdom to youngsters. An entertaining way to convey the moral of a story. It is a testament to a way of thinking, a snapshot into cultural ways, and a colorful narration of an advanced language. – **contributed by Vinod Menon.**

Aana vayil ambazhanga

(A small fruit in an elephant's mouth)

Too small an amount for a very large need.

Ariyaatha pillakku choriyumbol ariyum

(The ignorant child learns when it itches)

People don't realize the magnitude of a problem, until it hits them.

Aanakaaryam pareyumbol aano chenakkaryam?

(When discussing about elephant matters, why bring up yam matters?)

Do not bring up small issues during major problems.

Araante ammakku branthu pidichaal kaanaan nalla rasamanu

(When somebody else's mother goes mad, it is a pleasure to watch)

It is always enjoyable to make fun of others tragedy till it actually hits you.

Eliye pedichu illam chudaruthu

(Fearing rats do not set fire to the house)

Don't go too extremes to solve a problem.

Ikkaraiku akkara pacha

(From one bank other bank appears greener)

Grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

Kaakka kulichaal kokku aakummo?

(If crow baths, will it become a crane?)

An ugly incident cannot be made to look good.

Kakkakkum than kunju pon kunju

(Even for a crow, its own baby is a golden baby)

All creations are beautiful, even though it may appear ugly to some.

Kupayil kalanjalum, alannu kalayanam

(Even waste should be measured and discarded)

Waste not, want not.

Kurangande kayil poomala

(Garland in the hands of a monkey)

Rewarding the undeserving person.

Kurakkunna patti kadikilla

(Barking dog seldom bite)

One might act brave, but is in reality a coward.

Muttethe mullakku manamilla

(The jasmine in your front yard has no fragrance)

We seldom recognize the value of people near to us OR We do not value the things that we already possess.

Moothavarude vaakum muthu nellikayum aadhyam kaykum, pinne madhurikkum

(Elder's words and ripe Indian gooseberries are at first sour, later it will be sweet)

An elder's advice is like gooseberries; at first sour then sweet.

Mookilla rajyathu murimookkan rajavu

(In the land of people with no nose, the half-nosed man is King)

Similar to "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king".

Minnunnathellaam ponnalla

(All that glitters is not gold)

Something may look good on the surface, but in reality it is not.

Mathan kuthiya kumbalam mulakimo

(If pumpkin is sown, will cucumber sprout?)

Trying to do the impossible.

Nallathe ariyo nayike

(Does dog have the knowledge of good things?)

Someone who don't understand, can't appreciate.

Onam vannaalum Unni pirannaalum korante kanji kumbilil thanne

(Be it Onam, or the birth of a child, the layman gets only gruel)

Whatever be the occasion, there is no advantage for poor people. Poor people remain poor.

Onnukil Aashante nenjath, allenkil Kallarikku purath

(In Kerala martial arts practice, the trainee is either flinging himself at the chest of the instructor or landing outside the arena)

Dabbling in extremes is not helpful.



Othu pidichal malayum porum, Othillenkil Malannu Veezhum

(With combined effort, even a mountain can be moved. With differences, you would fall flat)
United we stand. Divided we fall.

Paashaanatthil krimi
(Worm of the poison)

One who survives poison, must be poisonous themselves (used to address someone inimically)

**Palam kadakkuvolam "Narayana Narayana"
Palam kadannal "Korayana Korayana"**

(While crossing the bridge, praising the lord, once crossed, castigating)
After getting what you want, no longer needing to pray.

Pinnem chankaran thengel
(Still repeating the same type of mistakes)
Lessons not learnt.

Pattikku muzhuvan thenga kittiyathu pole
(Like a dog that gets a whole coconut)
Rewarding someone with something they cannot use.

Papi chellunnidam paathaalam
(Wherever sinner goes its hell)
Said of those who seem to bring all the bad luck wherever they go

Pen chollu kettavanu peruvazhi aadhaaram
(He who listens to a woman will end up begging on the street)

Said to any man who is so enamored by a woman that he does not bother to use his own judgment, but blindly agrees to her wishes.

Payyethinnal panayum thinnam
(Eat slowly; you can eat even a palm)
Take your time, you can complete anything.

Pala thulli peru vellam

(Many drops of water make an ocean)
Little drops of water make the mighty ocean.

Poathinoadu vedham oadheettu karyam illa

(Playing the flute to a buffalo ... is a waste)
Tailor your speech to your audience.

Rogi ichichathum palu, vaidyan kalpichathum palu

(The patient wanted milk and the doctor prescribed milk)

This is what you say when things turn out fine under circumstances expected to be harsh.

Thanikku thanum, purakku thoonum
(You are for yourself like pillar is for house)

Similar to the saying that when in need, the most support you will get is from within you, just like the pillars within the house is its best support.

Thala irikkumbol, valu-attaruthu

(When head/leaders are present, tail/followers should not wag)
Let the wiser ones solve a complicated matter.

Thala marannu enna thekaruthu

(Don't forget the head when applying oil to your body)
Always remember the favors done for us ... don't forget the past.

Velukkaan thechathu paandaayi

(Excessive washing to get fair, may result in white splotches on the skin)
Overdoing something will result in an unwanted consequence.

Vinasha kale viparetha budhi

(When your destruction is near, your thoughts and actions will also fail you)
Nothing can be done to alleviate what is fated.

Vaadi prati aayi

(Plaintiff becomes the culprit)
The accuser becomes the guilty one.

Vadi koduthe adi madikkuka

(Getting hit by the stick you provide)
In trying to help, one becomes the victim.

(Gleaned from public domains)

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LORD AYYAPPA BHAKTHI MOVEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA

by Unnikrishnan K. Nair

It all began in a dilapidated Russian Orthodox Church that was then later replaced, by the present Maha Vallabha Ganapathi Temple, Flushing, New York.

In 1973, Shastha Preethi was conducted by Sri T. S. Balan (from Tripunithura, Kerala) and supported by Sri Upendra Panicker (from Kollam, Kerala), and K. Unnikrishnan Nair (from Changanacherry, Kerala). Dr. Dasan Potti (from Vaikom, Kerala) volunteered his services as a priest. Perhaps this effort was the first ever known initiative in the entire North America.

Dr. Potti proposed to continue this initiative as a regular pooja during the Mandala Vratha period - 1st of Vrischikam until 1st of Makaram of the Malayalam era. I offered to create community awareness by contacting the limited number of families within reach. Initially there was a lukewarm response. Sometimes, there were only five in attendance for these rituals. Then, Dr. C. S. Pichumani helped to spread the word. As volunteers, I, along with my wife and two young daughters in tow were entrusted with daily cleaning and arranging of pooja samagris even during heavy snowstorms. Other times, I served as a chauffeur to devotees who did not have a car.

Sri T.S. Balan, Sri Upendra Panicker, Dr. Dasan Potti, and I continued the pooja and bhajana during Mandala-Makara Vilakku period from 1974 to 1977. At times, Dr. Potti traveled four hundred miles from Buffalo to conduct the pooja.

I remember him training Shantha Ram to oversee essential rituals to avoid interruption. Dr. Potti even entrusted Sri Gopala Sundaram to officiate in his absence, to maintain continuity. When Dr. Potti moved to Cincinnati, Swamy Athmananda took over. I was actively involved during all these transitions.

It has to be especially noted that the Hindu Temple in Flushing only held weekend bhajans and poojas at that time. The combination of captivating traditional poojas by Dr. Potti; melodious bhajans rendered by Mangala Balan, my wife, Sarasamma, and others; and Ayyappa Sharana Ghosham by Sri Balan, Upendra Panicker and me transformed the solemn omnipresence of Lord Ayyappa. Over time, this initiative generated a palpable enthusiasm and a strong flow of funds followed towards the construction of an authentic temple. We are grateful to those early devotees who regularly attended despite inclement weather. Dr. Potti initially sought donation \$25 for poojas and \$6 for Archanas for Temple construction fund. These remained fixed for a long time - even after the construction of the new Ganesha Temple was completed.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Dasan Potti proposed a Dr. Sabari to be a "Periyaswamy" or a "Guruswamy." At the time, Dr. Sabari was doing post-fellowship research in Pediatrics on Long Island. However, he had done the Sabarimala pilgrimage for 31 years continuously...since his first birthday. The proposal was rejected by then Sabarimala Thanthri and Sri Gopalakrishnan, son of veteran Melshanti of Sabarimala, Late Shri Kuttan Potti. They stated that a "Periyaswamy" is not appointed by any temple, and only serves as a leader and a guide during the pilgrimage from Kettunirakkal to Sabarimala Swamy Sannidhanam. Even elderly devotees living in New York, with whom we consulted, shared the same opinion. They conjectured that a Kettunirakkal to Sabarimala pilgrimage was highly impractical due to the problems in observing Pancha Shudhi, which is the cornerstone of the pilgrimage. A Mudra (Irumudi or Pallikkettu) is treated as a holy item. When it is placed down and lifted up, an arati has to be offered. It would be improbable during the sojourn. Also, during check-in and stowing of baggage inside the aircraft, the Mudra (Irumudi) would be screened and stuffed alongside other baggage in the overhead bin. The pilgrim would not be able to clean himself (including the essential morning bath). Non-vegetarian food and alcohol would be served in his company. He would come in contact with female passengers while traveling. Hence, the "Guruswamy" or "Periyaswamy" position outside of India is irrelevant and absurd.

On this occasion, I sincerely thank Dr. Dasan Potti, Sri T. S. Balan, Sri Shantha Ram, Sri Gopalasundaram, Dr. C.S. Pichumani, Dr. Alagappan, Swami Atmananda, Sri Upendra Panicker, Smt. Jalaja Potti, Smt. Mangalam Balan, my wife, Sarasamma, and numerous devotees for making the Ayyappa Bhakti movement in the U.S. a guiding light for numerous expatriate Hindus.

SWAMY SHARANAM!!!

Year In Review Anniversary



Vishu



Onam



Picnic



Red Cross Blood Drive



... words of encouragement by eight time donor - **Rajagopalan Unni**

രക്തദാനം സർവ്വദാനാൽ പ്രധാനം
കൊടുക്കും തോറും ഏറിടും
ചിലവ് തീരെ ഇല്ല താനും
പിന്നെ നാം എന്തിനു മടിക്കണം

... adapted from Malayalam saying...

വിദ്യാധനം സർവ്വധനാൽ പ്രധാനം
കൊടുക്കും തോറും ഏറിടും

... Blood donation is the most important donation of all. It will regenerate every time you donate it. Also, there is no expense to the donor at all. So why are you hesitant to donate blood?

...Wealth of Knowledge is more important than all other wealth. The more it's distributed, the more it grows.

AMBALA AACHARANGAL (Temple Customs)

* compiled by Binu Chakkampambal

(* various Internet sources)



Cleanliness

All devotees are expected to bathe and wear fresh clothes while they visit the temple. It is considered auspicious to have a bath at the temple pond as it is believed that the water is a *sangamam* of all the holy rivers, Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswathy, Godaveri, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri. And also at times the idol is immersed in the water and so the energy of the idol is mixed in the waters. In the past everyone used to enter the temple after having a bath in the temple pond and in wet clothes. Now only the priests enter the temple wearing wet clothes.

Using flowers in the temple

Not all flowers are considered holy for offering to the deity. Some are used for all deities like *Thulasi (Ocimum sanctum)*, *Thechi (Ixora coccinea)*, *Asoka (Saraca asoca)*, *Thamara (Nelumbo nucifera)*, *Brahma-saka or Chamata (Butea monosperma)*, *Mandaram (Bauhinia acuminata)*, *Mulla (Jasminum sambac)*, *Pichakam (Jasminum grandiflorum)*, *Arali (Nerium odorum)*.



Some deities have a preference for the flowers being offered.

Lord Shiva - *Koovalam leaves (Aegle marmelos)*, White flowers of *Erikku (Calotropis gigantean)*, *Mandaram (Bauhinia acuminata)*

Lord Vishnu/ Sri Krishna - *Thulasi (Ocimum sanctum)*

Goddess Durga/Bhadrakali - *Thamara (Nelumbo nucifera)*, *Mandaram (Bauhinia acuminata)*, *Nandiarvattam (Tabernaemontana divaricata)*, *Mulla (Jasminum sambac)*, *Pichakam (Jasminum grandiflorum)*, *Thechi (Ixora coccinea)*, *Kumkum flower (Crocus sativus)*

Lord Ganapathy - *Thamara (Nelumbo nucifera)*, *Thechi (Ixora coccinea)*, *Chembarathy (Hibiscus rosasinensis)*, *Karuga (Cyndon dactylon)*

Lord Subramaniam - *Chembakam (Michelia chempaka)*

Lighting lamps

The common ritual of lighting a lamp, preferably with ghee or gingelly oil is the tradition. It signifies auspiciousness, health, wealth, prosperity and destruction of darkness/ignorance. As a general rule at least one lamp in front of the main deity would be a ghee lamp.

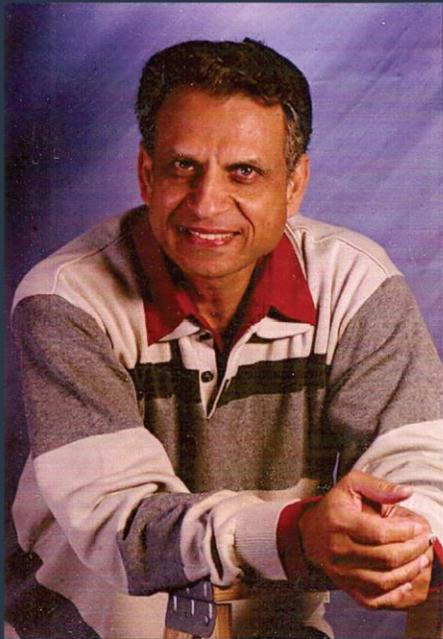
Performing *pradakshinas*

It means circumambulating around the main sanctum sanctorum, along the *pradakshina vazhi*, or even along the outer side of the compound wall and sometimes even along the perimeter of the whole temple including the temple pond. The word '*Pradakshina*' **pra** - give, **da** - granting of *moksha* (salvation), **kshi** - relief from ailments and **na** - prosperity.

Pradakshina is always done in a clockwise direction with the deity always on the devotee's right side, except in Shiva temple with only the Shiva linga, *pradakshina* is performed clockwise until the "*gomukhi*", the outlet for the abhisheka water to flow, and then to the other side of the *gomukhi* in an anti-clockwise direction.

(continued on page 39)

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(continued from page 37)

Shayanapradakshina is a form of *pradakshina* done in a *shashtanga namaskaram* position lying on the floor and circumambulating.

The number of *pradakshinas* is usually the choice of the devotees. According to the *smrithis*, there is a minimum number of *pradakshinas* for each deity: 1- Lord Ganapathy, 2 - *Soorya* 3 - Lord Shiva, 4 - *Devi*, Lord Vishnu, and 7 - *Arayaal* (Banyan tree). It's considered beneficial to do 21 *pradakshinas* in a day as per *swayambooga*.

It is ideal to enter the temple from the side of the *gopuras*. If we have to exit the temple through the same place as the entrance then one should ideally retrace their steps facing the deity without showing their back to the main deity. But if using a different exit, then there is no restriction.

Prasadam

The common *prasadam* offered to every devotee in the temples in Kerala is *theertha jala* (holy water), sandal paste and flowers. *Theertha jala* is always taken in the right palm and should not be spilled on the ground. Sprinkling of the *theertha jala* on the head is also considered auspicious. While applying the *bhasma* or sandal paste on the forehead, forefinger is not used. I remember my grandpa saying that use the middle finger for *bhasma* and the ring finger for sandal paste.

Vazhipadukal

These are offerings to the deity. The common types are *archana* or *pushpanjali* (offerings of flowers), *abhishekam* (oblations poured over the idol like water, milk, yogurt, ghee, honey, rose water, sandal paste etc.), *nivedya* (offerings of food), *vilakku* (offering of lighting oil or ghee lamps). These offerings are usually executed by the temple priest.

Some special and famous *nivedyas* are *Ambalapuzha Krishnan's Paalpayasam*, *Kottarakara Ganapathy's unniyappam*, *Cherthala thadi for Shastha* and *Cherthala iratti for Bhagavathy*, *kashayam* at Paravur Mookambika temple etc.



A little girl in the school was asked to give an example of how heat expands and cold contracts. She replied:
Simple, Sir, the days are longer in summer and shorter in winter".



A girl student came running from her parent's bedroom and said, 'Daddy, there is a female and a male spider in your bedroom.' The father was very impressed and asked: "Are you so good in zoology? I am really happy". The girl replied that it had nothing to do with zoology. The father asked: "Then how did you know which one was the female and which one male? The girl coolly replied, "Very simple, Daddy; one was on the whisky bottle and the other was on the dressing table"

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Word Puzzle by Dhruv Menon

Help King Bali find words listed in the puzzle below.
Words are listed across & down.



a	l	b	s	e	t	b	a	n	a	p	p	a	n
l	l	a	y	y	a	p	p	a	n	z	k	e	r
m	a	n	g	o	m	o	n	m	i	t	k	m	e
a	l	a	j	h	m	x	b	f	i	s	h	a	d
p	o	n	y	o	w	f	v	v	z	s	b	l	n
p	b	a	p	p	a	m	i	a	o	i	e	a	b
t	c	u	s	h	e	h	s	f	m	t	e	y	f
e	o	g	e	s	l	s	h	i	v	a	o	a	g
m	c	y	m	n	o	o	n	e	r	n	n	l	y
p	o	o	r	a	m	k	u	m	q	o	a	a	b
l	n	u	f	k	s	u	n	t	a	n	m	m	f
e	u	o	w	e	l	e	p	h	a	n	t	m	i
s	t	l	c	o	l	o	r	f	l	a	g	e	s
w	s	n	j	k	m	a	l	y	a	l	i	o	h

Appam Ayyappan Banana Coconut Elephant Vishnu
Malayalam Mango Onam Fish Pooram Shiva Snake
Temple Vaman

(Solution on page 43)

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS HEMAMBIKA

by Jaya Menon

This is a true story that I heard from my mother during my childhood days. The story goes on in this way. There was a divine shrine of Goddess Durga about some kilometers away from the present Malampuzha reservoir, in the inaccessible valley of the dense Vadamala forest.

Many many years ago there lived two holy Brahmin priests (also known as Nampoothiris) who used to visit this temple for worship. This shrine was very far from their village home. They used to walk the mountains on bare feet.

Many days passed, followed by many months and years. The Brahmins were getting old and started finding it difficult to walk so far. One of the Brahmins who was incapable of making the journey, felt very sad and disillusioned that he could not continue with the daily practice of worship.

That night the Goddess appeared in the Brahmin's dreams. She consoled him, and told him not to get dejected. She would appear in a pond near his house, and then he could worship



her there. After the goddess appeared as a statue, he could install her idol and build a temple. He could then continue with his poojas there. The Goddess also instructed him not to mention his dream to anyone.

The Brahmin woke up doubting his dream. He mentioned it to his friend. Early next morning the radiant devotees rushed towards the pond. To their great astonishment and joy, they saw the Goddess emerging – first the fingers, then the wrist. Slowly the enjoined hands palms facing forward appeared. The priest could now see the elbows. Seeing the two beautiful hands coming out of water from the middle of the lake, the Brahmin priest, in his excitement, jumped into

It is believed that four Ambika Temples - Goddess Balambika at Cape-Comerin (now known as Kanya Kumari), Goddess Lokambika at Loakanarkavu near Badagara, Goddess Mookambika at Mangalore and Goddess Hemambika at Palakkad were consecrated by Parashurama for the safety of Kerala, the Land recovered from the Sea.

Interesting Fact: It is said that the idea of using a palm as the symbol of the Indian Congress party was from the Goddess's enjoined forward facing palms following Indira Gandhi's visit to this temple in 1982.

the pond, swam up to the center and caught hold of the hands. Immediately, the hands turned into stone and became stationary. The Brahmin realized his error, but it was already too late. The Goddess stopped emerging from the lake. There was nothing he could do then.



lake. Thus, the lake was partially filled and the temple was constructed. And the divine hands were installed as an idol.

The present temple was constructed by filling the lake around those divine hands. The Five Ponds surrounding the temple amply prove that the temple was constructed on the land reclaimed from the lake. In due course, the Goddess Hemambika became the family deity of the Palakkad king. The Goddess is also referred to as Emoor Bhagavathy.

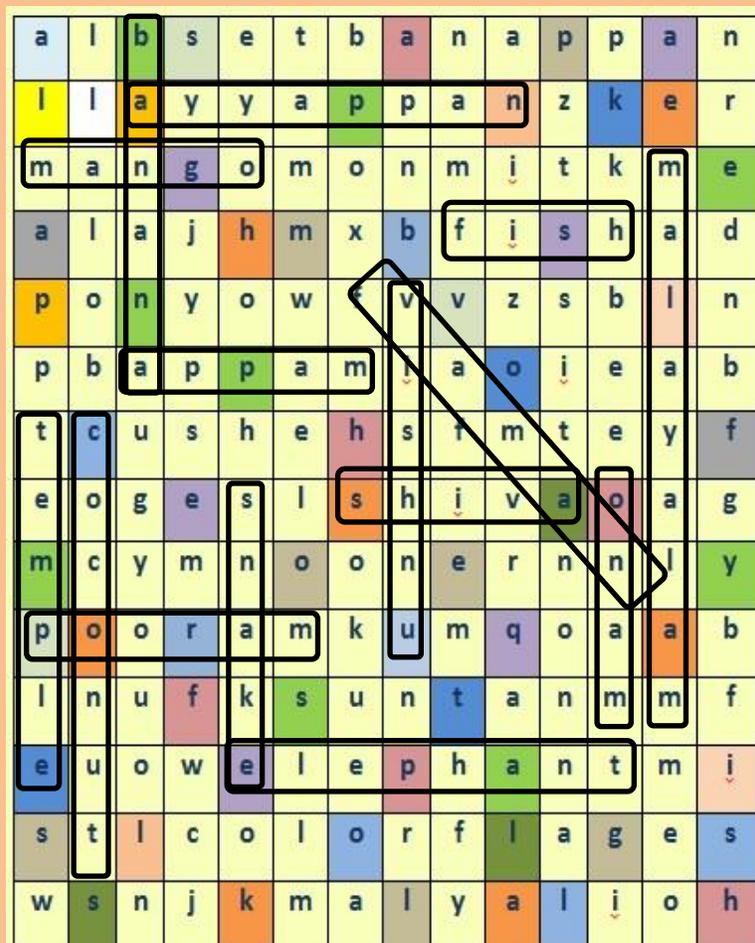
This place came to be known as Kallekulangara which is a combination of the elements of the story - kallu (stone), kulam (lake) and kara (bank). This Temple is situated few kilometers north of Palakkad town, in the city of Olavakode, Kerala.

Source: *The Emoor Bhagavathy Devaswom Board*

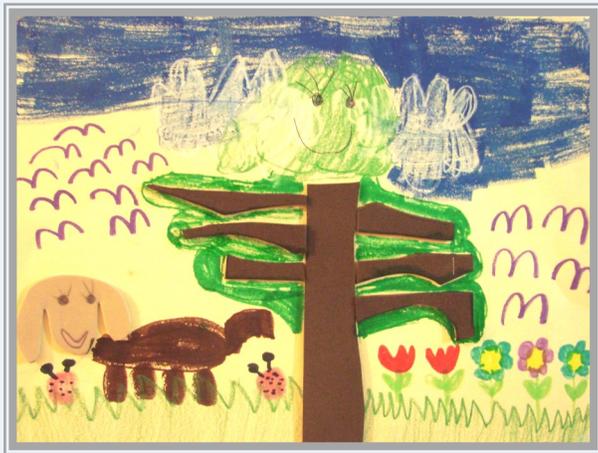
The Brahmin priest, with the help of his friend, instructed the local ruler, Shekhari Verma Valiya Raja of Palakkad to build a temple on the

Word Puzzle by Dhruv Menon (page 41)

SOLUTION...



Showcasing Art through ages . . .



Left: 'Nature'

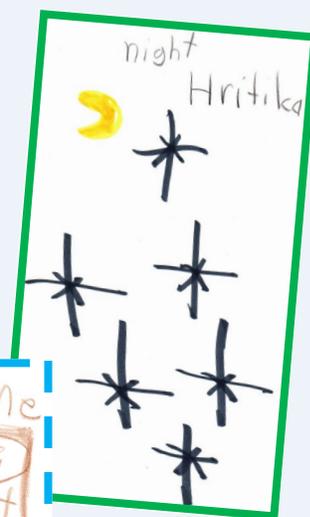
Right: 'Ice cream Sundae'

Both are by Arshya Pillai, age 6 years. Arshya loves to draw & color.



Center Right: Art by Pavithra, age 3 years, the budding artist.

Bottom: 'Baby & Me', 'Times of the Day' by Hrithika Malugu, age 5 years. Hrithika has used her imagination to draw the different times of the day. She has also drawn a picture of her with her baby sister age 3 years.





Left: 'Jungle Life' by Lakshitha Senthil age 7 years.

Lakshitha shows her love for art and color with this painting of different birds in the jungle.



Right: 'Dream A Dream' by Shruthi Punnachalil, age 12 years.

She has sketched a splendid profile of a young girl looking into future with lots of ambitions.



Left: 'Watercolor Art' by Devang Krishnan age 4 years.

Devang has painted 'a fish in the sea'.

Right: 'Abstract' by Aryan Pillai, age 6 years.

Aryan's painting won a prize in the Parkway schools district for one of the best abstract paintings created with objects assigned to kids in school.

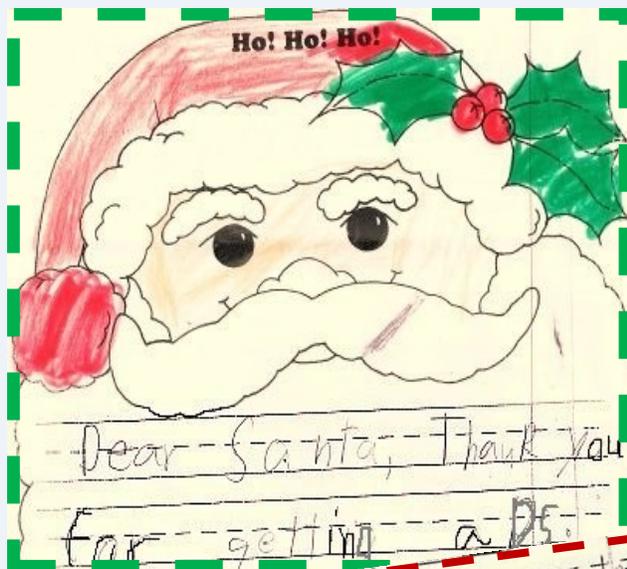




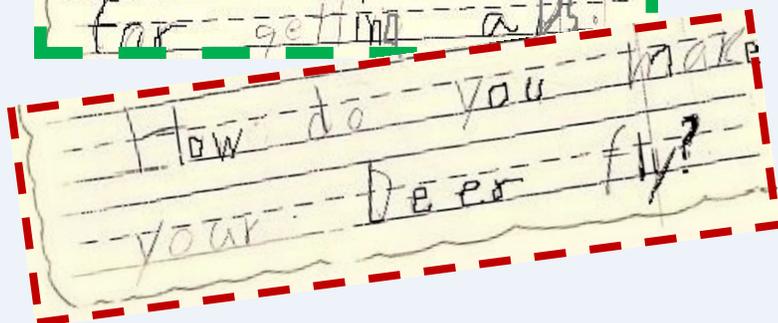
Christmas Art

Left: 'Christmas'
by Ankita Nair, age 6
yrs

Right: 'Mozart Tree'
by Siddharth Santosh,
age 8 yrs



Left: 'Thank you letter to Santa'
Shreyas Chandragiri, age 7
He also asks a question . . .



Right: 'A Vase with Flowers'
by Ananya Pillai, age 12 years.
She painted this when she was 9 years old.



KID'S BEAUTIFUL MIND

Believe

by: Ananya Pillai

ANANYA PILLAI, 12 years old

Encouraging words on **Believing in Self**

I think believing in yourself is a way to achieve anything no matter how hard it is. A person should have self confidence to stand-up for themselves. Don't get me wrong a lot of self confidence is sinful. Once you have a lot of self confidence you start to get side-tracked, you start bragging about yourself which makes people feel imperfect. Believing in yourself is the first step to success. Don't give up your dreams, goals or aspirations, you never know how right they truly are until you put them into action.

In my opinion a person can achieve anything with the correct mindset. Life is like a roller coaster and there will be many ups and downs, a little encouragement boosts your confidence. The effort you put into it is what counts and how to apply it in life.

At my swim meets if you don't believe in yourself you let yourself down. At meets my friends love to cheer our teammates on. One day I was swimming a 4-lap race and I thought I couldn't do it, but I proved myself wrong. I swam as fast as I could, from the crowd I could hear my mom and dad screaming "GO! GO! GO!" My teammates yelling "You can do it! Good Ananya" I ended up winning that race, I was very proud of myself.

Being forgetful

One day I was walking home from school. I had a lot of homework. When I got home mom told me to do my homework. Instead I played with my friend. I played until it was dark. I went inside. Mom was cooking dinner. I played Monopoly until dinner was ready. I ate chicken with mashed potatoes and corn. Then I went to sleep. The next day I went to school. My teacher asked for my homework. I had to sit in the corner.

The lesson is do your homework first

Add = 72-4
111+
5+8=16

SAMEERA SANKAR 10 years old

1. Consequences of '**BEING FORGETFUL**'
2. Creativity- Story of '**STAR the SUPERHERO**'



Star was on her towel sunbathing in Florida Pensacola Beach. Then she got a report from the Policeman. The Policeman said. "Superhero Star your Evil Sister (Moon) broke into the bank." "On my way." Said Star. She zoomed to the Florida Bank. She used her singing power to break the glass. Moon was stealing money! Moon was running out of the bank so fast that Star could not catch her. "You will never catch me!" Moon shouted. Moon ran to the Pensacola Beach. "Yes I will!" Replied Star. The Policemen wondered why Star was taking so long. The Policeman called Star. "Star what is taking you so long?" "It is already 6:00." "I am going to get her don't you worry." Star said. Moon hurt her leg. She could not move. "Help!" Moon cried. Star shot stars at Moon's hand and Moon dropped the moneybag. She called the Policemen and they came there. "The problem is solved!" Said Star. The Policemen sent Moon to jail and gave Star a hand shake. Star the superhero saved the day!"

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WHY I LIKE CUB SCOUTS

by Pranav Nair



Cub Scout is fun. It is one of the things which my parents have enrolled me into and that I have actually liked, unlike my Math class and other similar classes.

I like Cub Scout because it has various fun activities. Most of them are outdoors and every activity is different from the previous. Like, in one of our camping trip, we hiked and later we fought the Zombies when they attacked our scouts. Some of us even had (Nerf) guns to attack the zombies. We then became pirates and played in the pirate ship. We had to defend the pirate ship from the invaders and when we were not defending, we invaded the same pirate ship. We allied and pretended to be either invaders or defenders. After the grueling battle, we get to spend time in the tent.

My first overnight camping was through Cub Scouts. It was lots of fun. We got to stay in the tent at night, saw the stars and we walked in the darkness with our flashlights. When we started to get cold, we lit a large fire pit and saw the flames dance. We roasted marshmallows and made s'mores, but, I did not have any s'mores because I ate all the chocolates and you cannot have s'mores without chocolate. We took part in funny skits too. When it was time to sleep, I slept in my sleeping bag. I wore multiple layers because it was freezing cold and when I woke up it was time for us to leave. It was fun setting the tent and then pulling it down. I helped my dad by pulling the cart which had all our camping stuff, the cart looked very heavy but was surprisingly light. Some campers had heaters and hand warmers inside the tent, but not me.

That is not all that was fun, as part of the Cub Scout. We have travelled to many places, like the Recycling Center in St. Peters, the Art Museum and Monsanto. In the recycling center we saw how things got recycled. It was like going to a stinky place and seeing cool stuff like "glass mulch". I also met and spoke to scientist from Monsanto, a Traffic management engineer who told us about traffic lights, a reptile breeder, and a veteran.

Cub scouts help me hang out with my friends after school. Not just kids from my class but also with kids from other grades. We meet for swimming pool parties, BBQ parties, Pinewood derbies and other awesome activities. I have collected many pins too.

You should also join Cub scouts because – "Cub scout rules and math class drools".

CUB SCOUT PROMISE

I, (say your name), Promise
To do my BEST
To do my DUTY to GOD
And my COUNTRY
To HELP other people, and
To OBEY the LAW of the PACK

LAW OF THE PACK

The Cub Scout follows Akela
The Cub Scout helps the pack go
The pack helps the Cub Scout grow
The Cub Scout gives goodwill.

CUB SCOUT MOTO

DO YOUR BEST

The Cub Scout Promise, Law of the Pack, and Cub Scout Motto are used by Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts.



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CAR RACING

by Omkaar Alakkassery

I am very interested in cars and racing. Here are some interesting facts that I learnt and want to share.

The first gasoline powered car was invented by Karl Benz in 1887. Racing car tires are not threaded and have low ground clearance and run on smooth track.

FORMULA 1

- It is the FASTEST sport.
- Their top speed 300 Mph
- These cars have no fenders or top
- Racing track is mix of turns and straight ways.
- Cars are exclusive – Ferrari, Mercedes, Lamborghini, Porsche, Maserati, Aston Martin



NASCAR

- The cars are based on cars on the road.
- They have a roll cage.
- The track is a oval
- 3 brand cars in the race are Chevy, Ford and Toyota.



RALLY

- Only these cars have threaded wheels and wipers and may have a front passenger seat.
- They have a roll cage.
- They race on dirt track.
- Only race in which even SUVs can participate.



DRAG RACING

- Drag racing cars are SUPER FAST.
- They have 200 pound thrust shooting out the back!
- They use Nitrous Fuel.
- Cars on the road can do this on a drag strip.



THE LAMBORGHINI STORY

by Omkaar Alakkassery



Ferruccio Lamborghini's family used to live on a farm but he was better at fixing farm tractors than farming. He started a tractor company that was successful. Then he started heating and cooling company that was successful. Ferruccio Lamborghini became one of the richest men in Italy. Then he bought a Ferrari which was one of the fastest cars at the time. But he got so disappointed with the noise Ferrari made when he drove it fast. So he decided to go to the Ferrari headquarters and tell owner Enzo Ferrari to make better clutch. The two men disagreed. So Ferruccio Lamborghini decided to make his own car that was better and faster than a Ferrari. The company was called **Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A** He hired engineers that used to work for Ferrari. He found an engine builder who was working on a V12 engine. Ferruccio told him to build a bigger engine than any Ferrari engine. He built a 3.5 Liter V12 that made 450hp (horsepower). In 1963, Lamborghini's first production car **350 GT** was launched. It was a coupe - 3.5 L V12 with 270 hp. It made many models like Miura, Espada, Islero, Jarama, Urraco Countach Silhouette, Jalpa, Diable, Murcielago, Gallardo. The company was sold by Ferruccio Lamborghini in 1973. Since then it has been sold 3 times. It's now owned by **Volkswagen Group** through its subsidiary **Audi**. Now they only make **Aventador** – 6.2 L V12 engine with 691 hp.

ജീവിതം ഓർമ്മകളിലൂടെ...

... എം. എൻ. മഞ്ചീറ

സൂര്യകിരണം ചക്രവാളത്തിൽ
 ചന്ദനം വാരി വിതറുന്ന നേരം...
 ക്ഷേത്രക്കുളത്തിൽ മുങ്ങിക്കുളിച്ചു...
 അമ്പല മുറ്റത്തു ചെന്നുനില്ക്കും.
 മണി മുഴക്കത്തിൻ ദ്വാനിയിൽ...
 പുജാരി കർമ്മങ്ങൾ കണ്ടു നിൽക്കും.
 എല്ലാം മരണൽപം ശാന്തമായ് നില്ക്കുവാൻ...
 ഭൂമിയിൽ മറ്റൊരിടം വേറെയുണ്ടോ?
 ദീപാർച്ചന കണ്ടു കൈകൃപ്പി നിൽക്കുമ്പോൾ
 എന്തനം ശൂന്യമായ് മാറും.
 അമ്മെ... മഹാകാളി... ഭദ്ര... എനിക്കു...
 ശാന്തി നൽകൂ... എന്നെ ധന്യനാക്കൂ...
 ഈ എൻ മനസ്സിലെ സ്വാന്തനം ഒക്കെയും
 സന്തോഷമാക്കി മാറ്റ് ദേവി...
 കാറ്റിൻ തലോടലിൽ താലോലമാടുന്ന
 ആലിൻ നിഴലിൽ നിന്നിടുമ്പോൾ
 വാരിപ്പുണരുന്നു എന്നെ... ഒരത്ന്യാത ശക്തി...
 രോമാഞ്ചം അണിയുന്നു എൻ മനസ്സ്.
 ശങ്കുനാദത്തിൻ ദ്വാനിയിൽ...
 നാദസ്വരം, തകിൽ നാദം, കതിനാ വെടി...
 ധന്യമാക്കുന്ന ഈ ക്ഷേത്ര നടയിൽ...
 മന്ത്രോച്ചാരണം... മനം മയക്കുന്ന...
 ചന്ദന, കർപ്പൂര ഗന്ധം...
 ദീപാർച്ചന, പുഷ്പാർച്ചന...
 നട തുറക്കാൻ... ജനം... കാത്തുനില്പ്പു.
 സ്വർഗ്ഗം എന്നൊന്ന് ഈ ഭൂമിയിൽ ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ...
 ഇവിടമല്ലാതൊന്നു വേറെയുണ്ടോ?
 ആരാധകരുടെ ആൽമവിശ്വാസത്താൽ
 സമ്പന്നമാകുന്നീ പുണ്യ ഭൂമി...
 വിശ്വാസികളുടെ സ്വർഗ്ഗമാണീ നട...
 വേദനിക്കുന്നോർക്കു ഒരു ആശ്വാസവും...

ഇവിടം ആണീശ്വരൻ മാനവർക്കേകിയ...
 സ്വപ്നം വിടരുന്ന പുണ്യ ഭൂമി.
 സ്വർഗ്ഗവും നരകവും, നന്മയും തിന്മയും...
 എല്ലാം ഇവിടെ തന്നെ ഉണ്ട്...
 കണ്ടെത്താനുള്ള ഒരല്പം കഴിവ്
 നമ്മുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ വേണം...
 എത്ര മനോഹരമാണീ ഭൂമി...
 എത്ര വിചിത്രമാണീ പ്രപഞ്ചം...
 ആൽമസംതൃപ്തി നല്കുന്ന ഈ കാഴ്ച
 ഈ ഭൂമിയിലല്ലാതെ ഉണ്ടോ?
 അമ്പല പ്രാവുകൾ പാറിപ്പറന്നു...
 കണ്ടാസ്വതിക്കുന്നീ പരിസരങ്ങൾ.
 കൃഷ്ണപ്പരുന്തുകൾ കാർമേഘപാളികൾക്കുള്ളിൽ
 കയറുവാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചിടുന്നു.
 കാവിവസ്ത്രധാരി, നെറ്റിയിൽ ചന്ദനം,
 മീതെ കുങ്കുമം...
 ഭസ്മാപിശേക ഭൂരിതനായി.
 കൈകൾ ശിരസ്സിൻ മുകളിൽ ഉയർത്തി.
 നില്ക്കുന്നൊരു ദേവി ഭക്തൻ
 ഉത്സവമായി, ഇനി ഏറെനാളില്ല... എല്ലാം...
 കണ്ടു രസിച്ച് നടക്കാൻ...
 ആർത്തിരമ്പുന്ന ഈ ആൾത്തിരക്കിൽ
 ഉന്തിയും തള്ളിയും തട്ടിമുട്ടി... നടന്നു...
 ഉത്സവക്കാഴ്ചകൾ കണ്ടു രസിച്ച് ടാ.
 എന്നും, ഇവിടെത്തി, നിർവൃതി കൊള്ളുവാൻ...
 കഴിയുന്നവരാണ് ഭാഗ്യവാന്മാർ...
 മനസ്സൊരു തീർത്ഥാടകൻ,
 യഥാ വ്യാമോഹി, സഞ്ചാരി...



ജീവിതം ഓർമ്മകളിലൂടെ...

നിശ്ചലനായി നില്ക്കുക ഇല്ല.
 ചാടിപ്പിടിക്കുവാൻ തല്പരനാണ്,
 ഒന്നിൽനിന്ന് ഒന്നിലേക്ക്...
 പാറി നടക്കുവാൻ കേമനാണ്.
 പ്രളയ ജലംപോലെ നീങ്ങുന്ന മാനവർക്കിടയിൽ
 നിന്ന് ആറാട്ട് കാണുന്ന നേരം...
 ഒരാന വിരണ്ടോടി, കൂടെ ഓടി ജനം
 ഭയന്ന് ഓടി... പിന്നീടു ഒരിക്കലും
 ആറാട്ട് കാണുവാൻ പോയിട്ടില്ല.
 പിന്നീടു ഒരിക്കൽ നോക്കിനില്ക്കെ...
 വേമ്പനാട്ടു കായലിൽ ഒരു ബോട്ട് മുങ്ങി.
 നീന്തൽ അറിയില്ല... നോക്കി നിന്നു...
 പിന്നെ ബോട്ടിൽ കയറുവാൻ പേടിയാണ്!
 മറ്റൊരിക്കൽ ബസ് കാത്തുനിൽക്കുമ്പോൾ...
 ബസ് ഓടി വന്നിടിച്ചു പലരേയും...
 ബസ് കണ്ടാൽ ഇന്ന് പേടിയാണ്
 ഓടും പിന്നോട്ട് നോക്കിടാതെ...
 അക്കരെ, അക്കരെ... അറബിക്കടലിനും അക്കരെ...
 സ്വർണം വിളയുന്നൊരു രാജ്യം ഉണ്ട്...
 കേട്ടറിവല്ല, എൻ അയൽവാസി...
 ജോലി നോക്കുന്നതവിടെ ആണ്...
 കൊട്ടാരം പോലൊരു വീട് വെച്ചു... ചുറ്റും...
 സ്വപ്നം വിടരുന്ന പൂന്തോപ്പു...
 ഒന്നുപോയി നോക്കി നില്ക്കാൻ കൊതിയുണ്ട്...
 പക്ഷെ, ആന പോലുള്ള ഒരു നായയുണ്ട്!
 പണ്ട് മതിൽചാടി കയറിയ ഒരുത്തനെ
 തിന്നവനാണീ പട്ടി...
 മക്കളെ അങ്ങോട്ട് പോകരുത്...
 അമ്മമാർ മക്കളോടോതും...
 പക്ഷെ, കുട്ടികൾക്ക് അവനെ ഇഷ്ടമാണ്...
 വാലാട്ടി, നില്ക്കുന്ന പട്ടിയെ...
 കുട്ടികൾക്കിഷ്ടമാണ്...
 തെല്ലുപോലും ഭയം ഇല്ലാതെ കുട്ടികൾ

പാത്തും പരുങ്ങിയും എത്തും...
 കൈവീരൽ നക്കി, വാലാട്ടി നിൽക്കുമവനെ...
 കുട്ടികളു്ക്ക് ജീവനാണ്...
 അന്നൊരിക്കൽ കുട്ടികൾ ചെന്നപ്പോൾ...
 പട്ടിയെ മുറ്റത്തു കണ്ടില്ല...
 കാവൽക്കാരൻ പറഞ്ഞു... സാറു...
 സ്ഥലം മാറി പോയ്...
 കുട്ടികൾ പിന്നീടു ഒരിക്കലും
 ആ വീട്ടിനു മുമ്പിൽ പോയിട്ടില്ല.
 മറ്റൊരിക്കൽ അമ്മ കത്തയച്ചു... മോനെ...
 നീവരുമ്പോൾ കൊണ്ടുവരണം എനിക്കു ഒരു
 സീ.ഡി...
 പ്രായം അധികമായ അമ്മയ്ക്കുവേണ്ടി...
 നാട് മുഴുവൻ നടന്നു...
 സീ.ഡി. യുമായി വീട്ടിൽ എത്തിയപ്പോൾ
 അമ്മക്ക് സന്തോഷമായി...
 പാട്ടു കേട്ടിട്ടമ്മ... എന്നോട് ചൊല്ലി...
 എന്തിനാടാ ഈ പഴഞ്ചൻ പാട്ട്...
 ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് ഗാനം അവിടെ ഇല്ലെ...
 ഈ പാട്ട് എനിക്കു വേണ്ട...
 അമ്മാവൻ എന്നും പഴയവനാണ്...
 കാലം മാറുന്നതൊന്നും, ഇവർ അറിയില്ല...
 പെങ്ങൾ തൻ കൊച്ചുമോൻ ചൊല്ലുന്നു കേട്ട്
 നിർവ്വീകാരനായ് നിന്നുപോയി...
 സത്യമാണ്, നഗ്നസത്യമാണ്
 എന്നും പഴമക്കരനാണ്...
 വീട്ടുകാർക്കുവേണ്ടി ജീവിച്ചപ്പോൾ.
 മറന്നുപോയി... എല്ലാം... എല്ലാം...



PACHAKAM

These are a few of the time-tested recipes by our members. I hope you enjoy cooking and tasting them as much as I have enjoyed collecting them.



Corn Flakes Chivda *by Latha Unni*



4 cups cornflakes, slightly crushed	2-3 sprigs curry leaves
1 cup baked potato sticks	½-1 cup ground nuts, roasted
½ tsp mustard seeds	½-1 cup chana dalia or roasted chana dal
¼ tsp asafoetida	½-1 cup cashew nuts, roasted
½-1 tsp red chili powder	½ cup raisins
½ tsp fennel seeds	salt to taste
2-3 green chili, sliced	1-2 tbsp oil

1. Heat oil in a large sauce pan, add mustard seeds and cover the pan. When the seeds have popped, add asafoetida, green chili and curry leaves and stir for a minute.
2. Add nuts, dal and raisins and stir for 2 minutes.
3. Add chili powder and fennel seeds and mix well.
4. At low heat, add cornflakes and potato sticks, add salt to taste, stir for a minute and then turn off heat.
5. When completely cooled, store in an air-tight container.

Fish Cutlet *by Remya Prashob*



Tilapia - 1 lb / 1/2 kg fresh fish fillet (you can use any other boneless fish)	Fish Masala - 1/2 tsp
Potatoes: 2 (boiled and mashed)	Curry leaves - 2 sprig (finely chopped)
Onion - 1 (large, finely chopped)	Coriander leaves - 3 sprig (optional, finely chopped)
Green chilies - 2 (finely chopped)	Salt to taste
Ginger - 1 inch (finely chopped)	Egg - 2 nos
Garam Masala powder - 1/2 tsp	Corn Flour - a pinch
Turmeric powder - a pinch	Breadcrumbs as much as needed .
Black pepper powder - 1/2 tsp	

1. Cut the fish into big pieces and boil with turmeric powder, black pepper powder and salt to taste.
2. When the fish is cooked drain the water and shred the cooked fish fillets chunks into small pieces and set it aside.
3. Boil the potatoes; peel and smash well.
4. Heat oil in a pan/Kadai, sauté chopped onions until it turns to translucent.
5. Add chopped ginger, green chilies and sauté for couple of minutes.
6. Add garam masala, fish masala, chopped coriander leaves and salt.
7. Add the shredded fish pieces, mashed potatoes and combine well.
8. Remove from the fire and allow it to cool and mix well with your hands.
9. Make lemon sized balls out of it and roll into desired shapes.
10. In a bowl, beat the eggs with pinch of corn flour and salt.
11. Coat each patties in eggs and coat again with bread crumbs.
12. Deep fry it in oil and serve hot with tomato ketchup or any sauce of your choice and Enjoy!!

Chole (Chickpeas Curry) *by Latha Unni*



- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 cups chickpeas | 1 tsp cumin powder |
| ¼ cup oil | 1 tsp cinnamon powder |
| 2 large onion, finely chopped | 1 tsp turmeric powder |
| 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped | 2-3 tbsp chili powder |
| 4 fresh green chili | 1 tsp black pepper |
| 3-4 cloves of garlic, chopped | 1 cup yogurt, whisked |
| 1 tbsp chopped ginger | Salt to taste |
| 2 large tomatoes, chopped | Coriander leaves (cilantro) |
| ½ tsp cloves powder | |

1. Soak chickpeas in water for 6-8 hours, drain water and then cook well.
2. Finely grind ¼ cup cooked chickpeas, coarsely chopped onion, green chili, garlic, and ginger with ½ cup water.
3. Heat oil in a stock pot on medium heat and fry all of the finely chopped onions until dark browned.
4. Add tomatoes and all the herbs/spices, stir well, then simmer for 15 min.
5. Add yogurt, cooked chickpeas and salt, stir, let the mixture come to a boil and then simmer for 30-45 min.
6. Garnish with coriander leaves when ready to serve

Palak Pakoda *by Kavita Menon*



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Palak/Spinach leaves - 1 cup | Rice flour - 1/2 cup |
| Onion finely chopped - 1 cup | Ginger Garlic paste -1 tsp |
| Coriander leaves - 2 tbsp (chopped) | Chilli powder - 1 tsp |
| Green chillies - 1 (finely chopped) | Fennel seeds - 1 tsp |
| Hot oil - 2 tsp | Oil for deep frying |
| Besan /Gram Flour - 1 cup | Salt as needed |

1. Discard the stem and use only the spinach leaves. Wash the spinach leaves, drain the water and chop it finely. Chop onions finely and keep it ready.
2. In a bowl, mix together chopped onions and salt. Now add the chopped palak leaves, coriander leaves, fennel seeds, ginger-garlic paste, besan, red chilli powder and rice flour and mix well. Do not add water. The moisture in the onions and palak leaves are enough.
3. Heat oil in a kadai. Drop roughly shaped balls directly into the oil.
4. Fry until golden brown. Remove pakodas from the oil and drain them on a paper towel or colander.

Mussels (Kallumakkai) Fry *by Anju Prayaga*



- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mussels (Kallumakkai) – 500gm | 7. Turmeric powder – 1 pinch |
| 2. Shallots – 4 | 8. Coriander powder – 1 tsp |
| 3. Garlic – 3 flakes | 9. Garam masala – 1 tsp |
| 4. Ginger – a small piece | 10. Curry leaves – few |
| 5. Green chili – 4 | 11. Salt to taste |
| 6. Chili Powder – 1 tsp | 12. Oil – As required |

1. Clean the mussels well and allow it to drain.
2. Grind all ingredients from 2 to 9 for marinade.
3. Apply the marinade on the mussels and keep aside for 30 minutes.
4. Heat oil in a pan. Add marinated mussels and curry leaves. Add salt.
5. Keep stirring until the mussels are well fried.

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Mutton Curry by Savitha Krishnan



Red onion large 2
Ginger garlic paste 2 table spoon
Potato large 1
Tomato 1 chopped fine
Mutton 1 kilogram cut into pieces medium sized
Coconut oil 3 table spoon
Red chili powder 2 teaspoon
Coriander powder 3 teaspoon
Turmeric powder ½ teaspoon
Salt to taste

The following ingredients are to be fried in coconut oil and then blended into a fine paste -
Garlic cloves 4
Small onion (shallot) 3
Black Pepper whole 2 table spoon
Coconut grated 1 cup
Curry leaf 10 leaves
Cloves 6
Cardamom 2
Cinnamon stick 1 big stick broken into small pieces.
Coconut oil 4 table spoon.

1. In a dry skillet dry roast coriander powder for one minute just to warm the powder. Do not allow the powder to burn.
2. In a pressure cooker add one of the large red onions cut into big pieces, mutton, potato cut in pieces, chili, turmeric, coriander powder and salt. Add 2 glasses of water. Cook for 20 minutes and set aside.
3. In a separate pan heat the coconut oil add garlic, small onion, black pepper, curry leaves, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon and the grated coconut and fry until brown. The fried ingredients are then blended separately and kept.
4. In separate skillet heat coconut oil and fry the remaining large red onion which has been sliced thinly lengthwise until it is golden brown. Add the ginger garlic paste and tomato and continue to fry the mix until brown and oil starts to separate from the ingredients.
5. Now add the pressure cooked ingredients to the fried ingredients and continue to cook. After 2 minutes of cooking, add the blended mix to the pan.
6. Allow the contents to come to a boil for 5 minutes and turn off the stove. Add curry leaves for garnish and cover. Serve warm when ready to eat.

Kalathappam by Sona Prabhakaran



Sona masoori rice- 2 cups
Cooked rice - 1/2 cup
Melted and filtered jaggery syrup - 2 cups
Small Coconut slices - 1/4cup
Baking soda - 3/4 teaspoon

Cardamom powder - 1/2 teaspoon
Thinly sliced Onion - 1/2 cup
Salt - To taste
Oil - 2tbsp
Ghee - 1/2 teaspoon

1. Soak rice in water for 2-3 hours and grind it along with cooked rice by adding water just enough to grind. Make jaggery syrup by melting it with a little water.
2. Mix the jaggery syrup with the rice batter when it is warm. This mix should be the consistency of vellaappam. Add salt, Cardamom(Elaichi) powder and Baking soda and mix well.
3. Heat a pressure cooker, add oil and ghee, and fry the onion and coconut slices. Once it becomes golden brown, take the oil from the pressure cooker and grease the sides so that it will be easy to take out once it is done.
4. Add the rice and jaggery mix (which is still slightly warm). The onions and coconut slices will rise up.
5. Cook in high heat for 1 minute. Reduce the heat to low, close the lid and and cook for 15 minutes without putting the whistle. Let it sit for 3 minutes and check if it is done, by inserting a knife. It should come out almost clean.
6. If it is not cooked fully, cook it for an additional 1-2 minutes in low flame.

Naan: Indian Flat Bread *by Sunita Pillai*



All-purpose flour – 2 cups
Sugar – 1 tsp
Dry yeast – 1 tsp
Baking powder - 1 tsp
Plain Yogurt - 1/2 cup
Milk - ½ cup
Salt - 1/2 tsp (adjust to taste)

Butter – 2 tbsp
Topping (optional) - Nigella seeds,
poppy seeds or sesame seeds, or
chopped garlic and fresh cilantro
leaves.
1 tbsp butter, melted, to serve

1. To make the dough, sift the flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder into a medium mixing bowl.
2. In another bowl, mix together lukewarm milk and dry yeast. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour in the liquid mixture.
3. Slowly mix together the dough by working from the center and incorporating the flour from the edges of the 'well', to make smooth, soft dough. Knead well for 8 to 10 minutes, adding a little flour if the dough is too sticky.
4. Place the dough into an oiled bowl, cover with a damp tea-towel and leave in a warm place for at least 2-3 hour, or until the dough has doubled in size. Then knead the dough again, and divide and form into equal-size balls.
5. Preheat the non-stick pan to medium heat.
6. On a lightly-floured work surface, using a lightly-floured rolling pin, roll the dough balls into desired shape and brush a little water.
7. Sprinkle over your chosen topping (optional) nigella seeds, poppy seeds, or sesame seeds, or chopped garlic and fresh cilantro leaves, and press into the surface of the dough.
8. Place the naans facing the wet part onto the hot non-stick pan for just 1 to 2 minutes, or until lightly brown in color, and flip it over.
9. Brush the naans with the melted butter and serve hot.

Navratan Korma (Veg Curry) *by Sunita Pillai*



Carrots ½ inch cubes -2 medium
Potatoes ½ inch cubes-2 medium
Cauliflower-6-8 florets
French beans-5-6 ½ inch pieces
Green peas, frozen- ½ cup
Cashewnuts-½ cup
Cloves-2
Cinnamon- 1 inch stick
Green Cardamoms-2
Black peppercorns- 4

Boiled onion paste-1 cup
Garlic paste- 1tbsp
Ginger paste-1tbsp
Yogurt-½ cup
Green Chillies - 2-3(chopped)
Salt – to taste
Cottage Cheese (Paneer)- store small
packet (approximately 6-10 pieces)
Fresh Cream- -½ cup
Raisins-1tbsp

1. Soak half the cashew nuts in half a cup of warm water for ten minutes. Drain and grind to a fine paste. Chop the remaining cashew nuts.
2. Stir fry or Boil carrots, cauliflower, French beans, potatoes and green peas in three cups of boiling salted water till done and then refresh in cold water. Drain and keep aside.
3. Heat two tablespoons of oil in a kadai. Add cloves, peppercorns, cinnamon and cardamoms. When they begin to crackle, add boiled onion paste. Cook the onions for five to eight minutes till the raw flavor goes.
4. Add ginger-garlic paste, yogurt and stir well. Add chopped green chillies and cashewnut paste. Cook on low heat for five minutes.
5. Add mushrooms (optional) and boiled vegetables. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes and add salt and three fourth cup of water.
6. Add the fried paneer (cottage cheese) pieces. Stir and cook for half a minute.
7. Bring to a boil and finish with fresh cream. Serve hot garnished with chopped cashewnuts and raisins.

Cracked Wheat Payasam *by Anupama Punnachalil*



Cracked wheat - 1 Cup
Tapioca Pearls - 2 tbsp
Dark Brown Sugar or Jaggery to taste
Crushed Cardamom Powder - 1 Tsp
Dry Ginger Powder - 1 Tsp

Coconut Milk - 1 Can
Ghee - 2 tbsp
Thin strips of coconut pieces
Cashews - 10-12

1. Boil cracked wheat in a pot with enough water to cover it.
2. Rinse and add tapioca pearls when cracked wheat is partially cooked.
3. Add dry ginger powder and cardamom to the cracked wheat. Cook till it softens.
4. Add brown sugar or jaggery as needed. Stir till it is all mixed. Add coconut milk towards the end.
5. For garnish, heat ghee in a pan. Roast cashews and coconut till golden brown.
6. Pour garnish to the cooked crack wheat and serve hot or cold.

Sticky Toffee Pudding *by Dr. Likhith Alakandy*



Medjool dates chopped - 175gms
Baking soda - 1 tsp
Boiling water - 300ml
For Cake:
Unsalted butter - 50gm
Castor sugar - 80gm
Brown sugar - 80gm
Eggs beaten - 2
All-purpose flour - 175gm
Baking Powder - 1 tsp

For Sauce:
Unsalted butter - 115gm
Castor sugar - 75gm
Brown sugar or jaggery - 40g
Double Cream (Heavy cream) - 140ml

1. Cover the dates in hot water for about 15 minutes while the other ingredients are being measured.
 2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
 3. Sift the flour and baking powder.
 4. Beat sugar and butter until creamy. Add in the beaten eggs slowly.
 5. Stir in the flour and baking powder mixture.
 6. Now add in the dates soaked in water mixture. By now the dates would have softened and dissolved in the water.
 7. Mix the batter. Pour the mixture into 2 small loaf pans and bake for 45mins.
 8. Check for doneness by inserting a stick or knife that comes out clean.
- To prepare the sauce
1. Put all the ingredients in a sauce pan and cook over medium heat.
 2. After it starts boiling, let it simmer for 2-3 mins while stirring continuously. This can be stored after it's cooled for a long time in the refrigerator.
- To Serve:
- Slice the cake or bread into 1" slices and pour the sauce over the slice. Grill or microwave for 10 seconds and serve. Time for microwaving depends on if the sauce is cold or not. Microwave until the sauce melts over the cake slice.
- This recipe makes 2 loaf pan size cakes.

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ഒ.എൻ.പി. കുറുപ്പ്

മഴയ്ക്കെന്തൊരു ഭംഗി പറഞ്ഞു പതുകെ നീ
മഴത്തുള്ളികൾ വേനൽ ചൂടാർന്ന മണ്ണിൽ വീഴ്കെ
അതിന്റെ കുളിർമ്മ ആ മണ്ണിലേക്കാളും
നിന്റെ മനസ്സിൽ പടർന്നിട്ടോ, മഴയിലലിഞ്ഞിട്ടോ
അടക്കാനാവാതെതോ കൌതുകം തുള്ളുമ്പും പോൽ
പതുകെ പറഞ്ഞു നീ.. മഴയ്ക്കെന്തൊരു ഭംഗി!

തുള്ളി തുള്ളിയായ് പിന്നെ വെള്ളിക്കമ്പികളായ്
ആ കമ്പികൾ മുറുക്കിയ ശത തന്ത്രിയും മീട്ടി
മണ്ണിലേയ്ക്കിറങ്ങി വന്നു ഈ മഴ
ഒരു ജീപ്സി പെൺകിടാവിനെ പോലെ
മുറ്റത്തു നൃത്തം ചെയ്കെ
നിൻ മിഴികളിലേതോ കലിമ്പം
വീണ്ടും ബാല്യനൈർമ്മല്യം മൊഴിയിൽ
ഹായ് മഴയ്ക്കെന്തൊരു ഭംഗി..!

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കാണും മട്ടിൽ നീ ഇരിയ്ക്കുന്നു
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അതിനക്കരെ പോകാൻ കൊച്ചുകൂട്ടുകാരുമായ്
നീയും പാവം തെരുത്തേറ്റി പോകുന്നു
പൊടുന്നനെ വീഴുന്നു മഴ
പുഴയോളങ്ങൾ വെള്ളിക്കൊലുസ്സിട്ടു തുള്ളുന്നു ചുറ്റും
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നിന്റെ മുന്നിലാ മഴ മാത്രം
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contributed by Remya Prashob



MALAYALAM SCHOOL OF ST. LOUIS

by Anjana Prayaga

Malayalam School of St Louis, an Ohmkaram affiliate, is a voluntary organization that teaches and promotes Malayalam language to interested students in the St Louis area. This is the seventh year of service and the school runs efficiently because of the help from volunteers, who assist with various activities of the school. This includes middle school volunteers who were previous students of the school. Malayalam School meets on alternate Saturdays for two hours, from September through May, every school year. Classes are conducted at three levels. It also provides youngsters with volunteering opportunities. This year, our advanced level students had an opportunity to volunteer teaching the classes.

Malayalam School receives lots of help from parents and other volunteers. Volunteer teachers this year were Anjana Prayaga, Binu Chakkamparambil, Deepa Geroge, Sheena Konikkara. We also have student volunteers this year, Alita Sunil, Ashwin Prayaga and Rubina Thomas supporting teachers in the class. Special thanks to all parents for providing snacks and juices for the students.

Thanks also to Latha Sujeeth and Sheena Konikkara for booking rooms at Daniel Boone library, Ellisville and Middendorf-Kredell library, O'Fallon where classes are conducted. Sudhir Prayaga helped with posting information about our school with the news media.

Check our website for more information about the school.

Registration for 2014 will start in July through August.



Malayalam School 2013-2014

Contact: Anjana Prayaga

Website: www.ohmkaram.org/MalayalamSchool.html

E-mail: malayalamschool@yahoo.com

Phone: (636) 281-9778



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.

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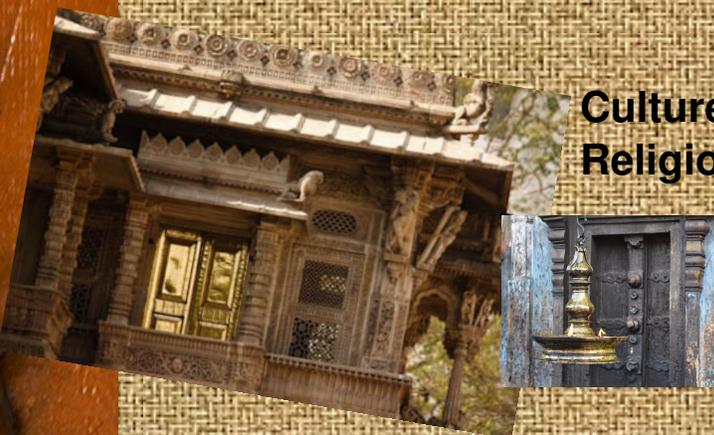


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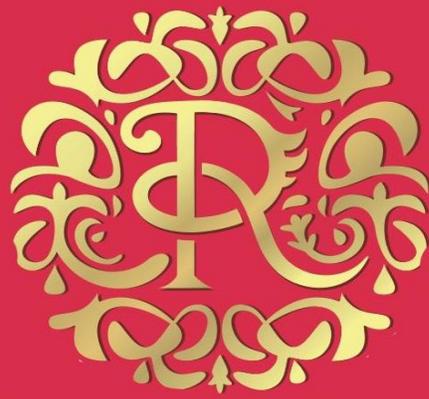
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