

The son of Kadalundi River who wiped the tears of thousands with his touch of solace.....

I dedicate this collection of essays to the memory of the luminous personality of Shihab Thangal, the guardian of secularism who carried the message of peace to Kerala, the man who offered the light of life to scores of people like me and whose lives he touched with his gentle humaneness.

Destiny

English Essays

Dr. Puthur Rahman

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Translated by:

Asha Iyer kumar

Cover Design And
Production Controller:

Ammar Kizhuparamb

lay out & Graphics

Faisal puthalath

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pageindia@gmail.com

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About the Author



Dr.Puthur Rahman

Born on May 15th, 1958, to Puthur Palliparamben Moidu Musaliyar and Puthur Vaakyath Alavikutty's daughter Mariyam, both from Kottakkal, Malappuram district.

Earned the Afsal-UI-Ulama and BA degree from the University of Calicut. Served in the Private Department of the Ruler of Fujairah at various levels and capacities. He is currently the Manager of the Private Department of the Ruler of Fujairah. He has a doctorate degree in Islamic Studies from the Global International University of Florida.

Entered public life after being made the Taluk level president of Tirur MSF. Following this, he became the District secretary of MSF in Malappuram, Secretary of MSM and leader of MSF councillors at Calicut University. He also held positions as the President of KMCC, Fujairah, President of MES, and the President of Fujairah Art Lovers' Association.

He is presently the National Committee President of the Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre in the UAE, President of the Fujairah Indian Association, Chairman of Kottakkal Islamiya Charitable Trust, Director of the Arikode National Education Charitable Trust the chairman of which is Sadiqali Shihab Thangal, chief trustee of the Kaipamangalam Hira Educational and Cultural trust in Thrissoor, chief of the UAE- Gulf Malayali Co ordination Committee and the chief of Middle East Chandrika's governing body. He is also the Director of the amusement park in Valanchery and the Chairman of the NRI Co ordination Committee.

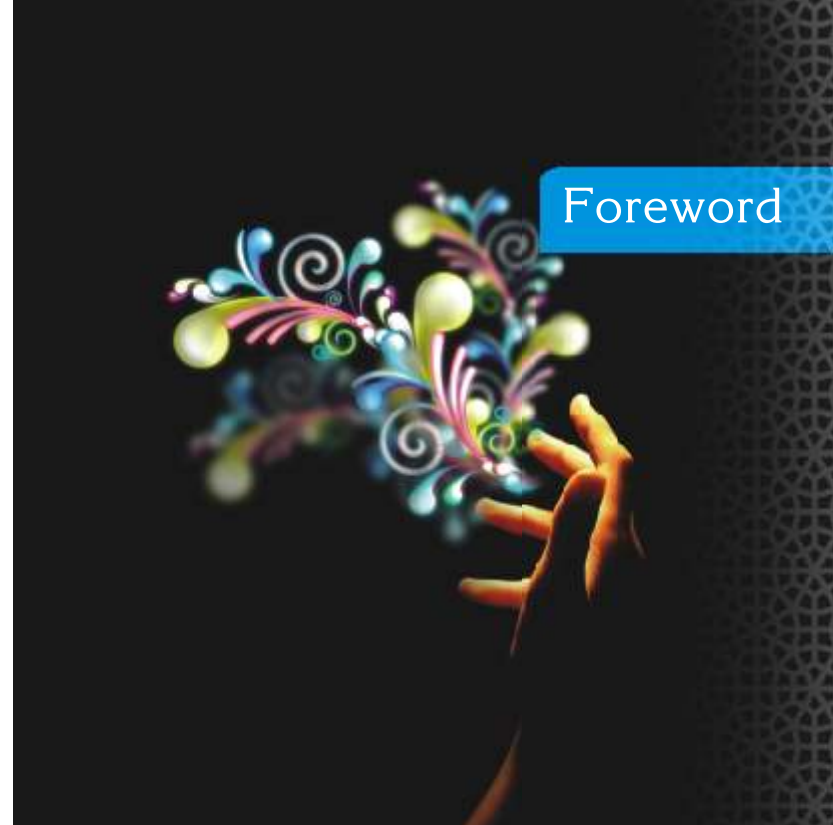
He has previously won the Thiruvananthapuram Sahridaya Vedi's award for the best social contribution by an overseas Indian in 2002 and the award for the best social worker in the gallop poll conducted in connection with the Dubai Festival in 2005. As a literary enthusiast, he also writes stories and essays for Malayalam and English periodicals.



Photo.Sabna Abdul Rahman

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Foreword

The invisible expressions in "Destiny..."

I first met Puthur Rahman six years ago during a visit to the UAE. We met at his residence in Fujairah. The little desert city is in its afternoon siesta. Puthur is conducting his official duties from home. There are constant calls on his phone. He answers each of them. At one point when there are calls on two different phones, he answers them separately and gives instructions with the skill of an able and intelligent executive. I watched the spectacle with great amusement. In the meantime, he also gives me and my friends a hospitable welcome and attention. Puthur was conducting his duties by imbibing lessons from modern social sciences. I wondered how this man from Malappuram with no degree or certificate in Human Resource Management or Public Relations had picked up such intelligent lessons in diplomacy and negotiation. My surprise doubled when I heard more about him from friends later. My understanding grew into reverence when I learnt that the management and public relations skills that he exhibited were a natural, inborn part of his character.

Sometime later, as part of my work as a journalist, I met him in Malappuram along with a friend. Puthur had then come home on a short visit. He was returning to the UAE in two days. From his busy official duties in Fujairah he had shifted to attending to the problems, concerns and needs of his friends, relations and other acquaintances back home. He equally attends to everyone who has

come to meet him, with the same proficiency that I saw in Fujairah earlier. He also gives answers to our questions along side. He talks about the political activities in his youth, the police case and the circumstances that led him to leave his native place. He looks back on his past with a gentle sense of humour. He explains how a football match changed his life and how it happened to mark a beginning to his official years in Fujairah and thereafter to determining a new position. He fondly remembers his friends. He judges his political leaders with respect, he analyses political ideologies that he does not subscribe to without getting overly emotional and with his inherent sense of humour. In between he talks of Indian expats too.

I saw here the same Puthur that I had seen in Fujairah. They weren't two. The things he spoke on the two occasions were similar too - his personal experiences, politics, Muslim League leaders, memories of friends, expats. Surprisingly, the Puthur who approached me now with this book "Destiny..." is not a different man either. This book is a compilation of about 23 essays written by him. The arrival of "Destiny.." by chance in my hands, and my discovery (as I comb through its contents) that the personality of the Puthur that I know has oozed into the words here in, makes me look on him with wonder. The first thought that occurred to me when I read this collection of essays was that the naive and unique Puthur that I had seen and heard of had appeared in the form of a book. His talks and writings expound his strong, deep rooted personality. He reiterates that his personality is made up of these - his world, his experiences and his thoughts.

"Destiny..." has essays on his personal life experiences. He writes about the football match that brought about a momentous change in his career and about the persecution he suffered during the Arabic Language strife. He talks about his late friends and colleagues with a special, personal fervour. Veteran journalist Rahim Mecheri, Aslam, the young man who rose to becoming the most prominent among the personal staff of the Ruler of Dubai, the leader of expat Malayalis, Madathil Mustafa are among those who he mentions with a zeal inspired by his personal bond with them. He gives a thumb nail picture of their personalities with his words.

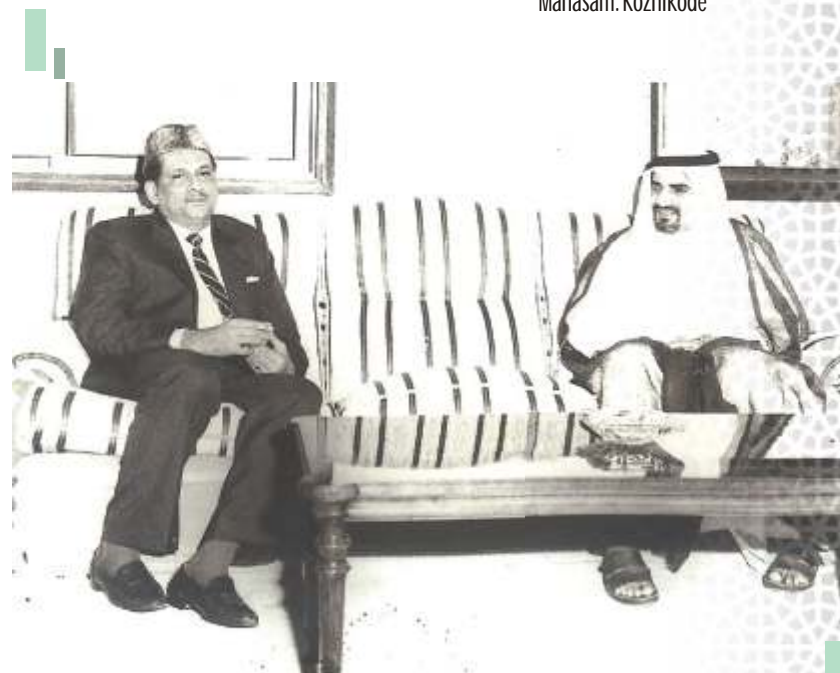
He writes about the Arab countries that made him what he is today, and about the problems that expats face in these countries. He examines the development of the UAE, the growth of Fujairah and the exceptional leadership qualities of the father of the nation of UAE, Sheikh Zayed. His writings have the touch of a mature journalist. Yet when he talks about Malayali expats he becomes their representative, their leader. He puts forth guidelines and suggestions concerning their voting rights and repatriation and when he condemns their ostentatious and wasteful nature, the critic in him emerges in full view.

The other essays pertain to his political thoughts. He presents his leaders with great reverence. The readers come to know where Shihab Thangal, the political leader meets with Shihab Thangal the spiritual leader. The political dexterity of K. C. Abubaker is described in another piece. Some essays are based on contemporary social and political events. His disapproval of the statement by PDP leader about the insignificance of Muslim League, his reaction to the questions raised over the

spiritual leadership of the Aryadan Mohammed Thangal family, his disagreement of the Marxist party's new posturing towards Variyam Kunath Haji depict him as a die-hard Muslim League worker and sympathizer. When he raises voice against Pinarayi and VS, he becomes the representative of the UDF. When he examines the political aspects and significance of the Marad report and the Sachar commission, he is a journalist who recognizes the plight and problems of the backward communities and when he censures the ADB treaty, he fulfills the moral responsibility of a social activist.

There will be a lot of people who will support and many who may condemn the views expressed in Destiny & Even as person who has strong objections to many of Puthur's political thoughts, I find realms that I can completely identify with and understand. His observations about Indian expatriates in the Gulf are a study in social science. Destiny stands apart in its successful depiction of a man who can involve himself effectively in multiple activities. In the book, Puthur Rahman records his thoughts and ideology wrapped in his innate simplicity. His writings about people and experiences that have contributed to the development of his personality help us to know the invisible expressions in destiny. It reveals itself as a document of a personality created by circumstances; as an open book about the ordinances of his destiny.

N. P. Hafiz Mohammed
Manasam. Kozhikode



Shiab Thangal with The Ruler of Fujaira



Shihab Thangal –

an enduring link in Indo- Arab cultural relations

The connection between Malabar and the Arab world goes back to centuries. They share a long history of cultural and trade relations. The role played by Shihab Thangal in fostering and cementing this age old bond is very significant and we take immense pride in telling the Arabs that our state president is a contribution of the world renowned Al Azhar.

Sheikh Hamed Bin Mohammed Al Sharqi, the Ruler of Fujairah, Sayyed Ali Hashmi, the former Minister of religious affairs of UAE, Sheikh Kazragi, the former Awkaf minister were among the close friends and acquaintances of Shihab Thangal. He is probably the only Indian politician to enjoy such exclusive association with the national leaders of UAE.

Shihab Thangal, who can converse in Arabic with the clarity and typical native accent of the Arabs, is an unbreakable link in the Indo- Arab cultural chain. There is no political leader from India so well known as him outside the country. It wouldn't be wrong to say that he is probably the most renowned Indian political figure that

the Arab world knows of after Indira Gandhi, and Sonia Gandhi.

While Indira Gandhi is known in her capacity as former Prime Minister, and daughter of Nehru, and Sonia Gandhi for her family ties with the Nehru family and then as the leader of the Indian Opposition, Shihab Thangal, who even without holding the position of a Panchayat Board member, was a well known figure by dint of his strong personality.

It was with great interest and amusement that the Ruler of Fujairah listened to the lucid and unassuming speech of this beloved progeny of Al Azhar. Once, the Ruler who had a scheduled ten minute meeting with Thangal, did not call for ending the meeting for up to half an hour. Had it not been for the protocol officer's intervention indicating the ruler's appointment with the Ambassador of Somalia, the meeting would have continued for hours more. A series of subjects including the advent and growth of Islam in Kerala, the strength of Muslim population in Kerala, the beginnings of Indo- Arab relations and the influence they had on each other were discussed during the meeting.

When Thangal referred and narrated the historical instances of Cheraman Perumal's conversion to Islam, his Haj pilgrimage and his consequent demise on his way back in Salalah, the Ruler listened with the rapt attention of a student of history. Thangal's commentary on the tradition and heritage of Muslims in Kerala and their glorious achievements in various fields was absorbed by the Ruler with great interest. Every time Thangal visited the UAE, he was received and hosted by the ruler. He held meetings with the rulers in 1988 and in 1993 as well.

So eminent is Thangal's position in the social map of UAE that once when he was on a private visit to Dubai, Ali Hashmi, advisor of religious affairs to the president of UAE met him at the hotel that he was staying in for a discussion. His circle of distinguished friends includes among others, UAE's Information and Technology Minister, HH Sheikh Mubarak Bin Nayan, Minister of Foreign affairs, Sheikh Dawood Al Asoodi etc.

There is no political leader from India so well known as him outside the country. It wouldn't be wrong to say that he is probably the most renowned Indian political figure that the Arab world knows of after Indira Gandhi, and Sonia Gandhi.



A life transformed by a foot ball match

I am a man who believes in destiny. My life is replete with coincidences. I am sure everybody experiences such incidents in life. I can say that in my life these coincidences have pushed the gates open and barged in. But for these incidents, where would I have been? I would probably have been getting by in life cleaning nuts and bolts in a workshop.

It happened when I was 22. I was then the secretary of the Malappuram (Dist) MSF. It was the time when the Nayanar government was attempting to make the peaceful protests into bloodshed launched by Muslim League against the black laws of the government seeking to prohibit Arabic, Urdu and Sanskrit. I spent many months in Manjeri hospital and then in Kozhikode Medical College after being shot at by the police during the protests. In the meanwhile, the Nayanar government was waiting to arrest me when I get discharged from the hospital, implicating me in the death of a policeman during the clashes. The death which

was caused by a heart attack was called a murder and I was accused in the case. My destiny begins with my decision to flee the state and go to the gulf with a visa organized by a friend, after spending days in hiding at my sister's residence.

Upon reaching the Gulf, an interesting, life changing incident took place. I first got a job as a mechanic in a workshop. I had to toil in the dark interiors of the workshop for a year amidst oil, grease and petrol. As I was looking for a way to escape the drudgery, a friend suggested that I meet the Sheikh. I accepted his advice and decided to meet him. On a Thursday afternoon, I went to the football ground adjacent to the farm house of the Sheikh, where the royal family went to watch the game on Thursdays. I was praying that I get an opportunity to meet the Sheikh who would be taking a rest after the match.

(The workshop that I worked in was owned by Sheikh Saleh Bin Mohammed Al Sharqi, brother of the Ruler of Fujairah). The match was about to begin and when the two teams lined up on the ground, the team playing against Sheikh Saleh's team was short by one player. I warily accepted Sheikh Saleh's invitation to fill in the vacant place in the opposition team. It was a moment when I felt that the time spent in the fields of Puthur playing football hadn't gone in vain. I walked into the ground without losing confidence. The match began. I did not let go my first opportunity to score a goal.

The team playing against the Sheikh's team was a good one. However, I was not aware of the unwritten rule that one could not score a goal against the Sheikh's team. It was considered an affront to the Sheikh and his team. My team members censured me for scoring the goal and warned that if I scored again, I would be kicked back to India like a football. Realizing the gravity of the situation, I apologized to the Sheikh, who congratulated me and asked me to continue playing.

After the match, when we were exchanging pleasantries, I mentioned to the Sheikh, who was the owner of the workshop, that I was not familiar with mechanism and that I was a graduate in Arabic language. I requested him to help me by offering a job commensurate with my qualifications. The Sheikh considered my request and offered me a clerk cum secretary cum cleaner's job in

his newly established shipping company. The rungs on the ladder of my growth began from here.

Apart from me, there was only an English man called Ross in that office. He was everything from the company's general manager to accountant. It was he who motivated me to learn typing and telexing in my leisure time. In those days, the computer and the fax hadn't gained so much popularity as today. Telex was the only mode of communication available then. Within a year I gained expertise in typing and telexing. A book titled "How to type" given to me by my friend Ahmed was my only source of reference. Later, as the company grew in stature, I grew along with it too – from a clerk to an accountant to an accounts manager.

In 1984, I became the accounts manager in Fujairah Farm, a company owned by the Ruler of Fujairah. In 1989, I took a new step with the Ruler, Sheikh Hamad, appointing me as assistant to George Bajk, who headed the Ruler's newly formed private department. George Bajk showed me how one could scale heights under an efficient boss. My subsequent rise to the position of a manager and then the director of the company now seems like a dream. But there is no doubt that behind all this was the hard work and sincerity that I put in through these long years.



With Fujaira Ruler Sheikh Hamed Bin Mohammed Al Sharqi



Fujariah Gift from Almighty..

Like a demure village belle waiting for her beau on the shores of Hormuz overlooking the Arabian Sea, the young, pretty emirate of Fujairah is waiting to take off into the skies. The desert does not have just molten dreams at the core. The green patches of a reverie too make the parched stretches surreal and fantastic. Like life itself that offers refreshing spurts of hope amidst barren wastelands, they are islets on the vast expanse of sand.

The above metaphor would aptly fit the description of Fujairah, one of the seven emirates of the UAE. Spread across an area of over 1500 sq. km., this emirate offers enchanting views of mountains, hills and beaches. Nature's splendour that invites onlookers, a centre of attraction in the tourism map of UAE. The semblance that Dibba, a small place in the verdant land of Fujairah situated adjacent to Oman, is like Kerala and well known. The views of lush green mountain valleys, hill sides abounding in canopies of

coconut trees, mango trees and date palms, roads flanked by tapioca plants are simply fascinating.

Snuggling close to the sea like Kovalam is Dibba - green and fertile - and rising from its peak is the Le Meridian Aqah Beach Resort that has become a favourite destination for tourists from Europe and Africa.

It is the proficient governance of Sheikh Hamad Bin Mohammed Al Sharqi, the Ruler of Fujairah and member of UAE's supreme council along with generous aid from Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, former President of the UAE, and the support and co operation of the rulers of other emirates that has led to this phenomenal growth of Fujairah. This author still remembers what Sheikh Hamad had said to Vijay Mallya, Indian business baron and Chairman of UB Group when he visited the ruler a decade ago. 'We don't like to build buildings on sand. We like to build strong structures that will serve as examples to the future. And for this reason, the growth of Fujairah won't be meteoric. It will be slow.' Today we are witnesses to that firm vision espoused on that day.

Like an Arabian princess resting in the valleys of the Hajar mountains (that also borders Oman), and caressed by the Strait of Hormus, Fujairah is waiting for her visitors. A beautiful land presented to us by the sea.

The current century is seeing the reverberation of the "Return to nature" slogan in the international tourism circles. The scope for tourism in the 21st century is greater in places where there is no air pollution, atmosphere or sound. In this backdrop, Fujairah has already secured a place in the world tourism map as the cradle of eco tourism. Only Fujairah can claim to have the unique combination of natural beauty and infrastructure in the Gulf. Add to this the rich culture and vast collection of Arabian antiques that is in Fujairah (considered the gateway by sea to the Gulf), and what visitors get is a unique opportunity to dive into the history of Arabia. No other place in the Gulf can be at par with Fujairah when it comes to hospitality. The people of Fujairah are the friendliest of all people in the Gulf. The young cityscape of Fujairah has seen many changes come over it in a short span of time. Several multi-

storey buildings have come up. One can witness scenes of festivity here almost every day.

The 48 storey Fujairah Tower, the tallest building in the East Coast that harbours a shopping mall, over 200 residential flats and 100 offices is a major business centre. The newly built Century Mall, Lulu Centre and other commercial centres nearing completion bear testimony to the recent growth of Fujairah.

The Fujairah international airport and the Fujairah seaport are busy centres of international trade.

The source of perennial waterfalls at Wadi Wuraya and Wadi Twayiba render those who visit these places mesmerized and speechless with their natural beauty.

The Fujairah International Marine Club is a centre of water sports that attracts both local and foreign enthusiasts. The various international power boat competitions and other regional sporting and cultural competitions that take place in the Marine Club have given it an International status.

On Fridays, thousands from all over the UAE gather to witness the bull fight in Fujairah, an event that can be compared to the bull fights in Spain. The Museum that displays culture, heritage and growth is the pride of Fujairah.

With the completion of the 75 km road route from Dubai, a large number of people from other emirates are expected to move to Fujairah. A quiet life away from the bustle of the cities, lower house rents and an efficient transportation system are the main reasons for the shifting of people to Fujairah. Also, the new road will help one reach Fujairah in just 30 - 40 minutes. This route that winds its way through the mountains and tunnels will firm up the tourism prospects of Fujairah, including regional and local tourism.

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Zayed – the oarsman who turned a desert into an emerald island

The United Arab Emirates is stepping into its 33rd year of inception today. It is the anniversary of a nation that has caught the attention of the world. It was on December 2, 1971 that the seven emirates of Abudhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Ajman and Umm Al Quain came together under one umbrella and became this great nation. It is the national day of the land that offered solace and hope to the life of a dejected and disheartened Malayali.

Thirty years ago, on this day, a new nation called the United Arab Emirates found its place in the world Atlas under the presidency of His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who caught the attention of the world community with his remarkable insight and towering personality. This Arabian Gulf nation that shares its border with Qatar, Oman and Saudi seems as if it is peeking into the Indian Ocean with its hand rested on the shoulders of neighbouring Oman. This dream land occupies a total area of 83600 Sq.mts. The progress this small nation has made in the fields of health, education, technology, economy, industry and sports within these thirty two years is incomparable. Despite being a

country that depended solely on oil, the UAE made quick strides in these fields. It has seen an amazing growth in the tourism sector too.

When the ripples of the WTC attacks in New York affected the Arabian shores in totality, the foreign policy adopted by the government of UAE under the circumstances was praised by the international community, which greatly assisted the UAE to break free from the adverse effects of the WTC attacks.

In the Palestinian and Suez Canal issues, Jawaharlal Nehru's India stood by the Arab Community.

By the time Indira Gandhi came to power in India, the ties between the two nations grew stronger.

The fondness and cordiality that Indira Gandhi showed towards the Arab nations including the UAE made her a favourite among the Arabs. These relations were continued during the period of Rajiv Gandhi, V. P. Singh and Narasimha Rao too. During his recent visit to the UAE in October this year, President APJ Abdul Kalam added new wings to this friendship between UAE and India. He once again cemented the bond with his three day official visit to the UAE.

There are thousands of Indians working in the UAE, a majority of who are from Kerala. The role played by the NRI community in nourishing the economy of the state of Kerala is considerable. The puzzling discovery made by some that the foreign currency coming in from the Malayali community in UAE is the root of all evils in the state is an absolute folly. This will be become clear if one examines the social history of Kerala.

The only respite we have even as the prices of our agricultural produce tumble in the aftermath of globalization and joblessness among Keralites becomes acute, is the employment sectors in the Gulf region. Even though nationalization is gaining ground in these countries, the doors of employment are still open to Malayalias. Although getting new visas or renewing old visas to unskilled workers is becoming difficult under new labour laws, and people are returning home in huge numbers, the Gulf States still play a huge role in supporting the economic structure of Kerala. This is one reason why the national day of a country like UAE is celebrated with gratitude not only by expats from Kerala but also by those living back in the home state.

In the past 32 years, UAE has made great progress at all levels of its people's everyday life. Its success in the educational sector is notable. Educational centres like the Academic City, Al Ain University, IT Academy, Higher Colleges of Technology, the Dubai-Sharjah American

university, Ajman university, Sharjah university and info- tech centres like the Media City and Internet City stand tall as the towers of progress in the country's skyline. Significant progress has been made in the field of women's education too. In the global monitoring report of the UNESCO, the UAE has been recorded as one among the 15 nations where girls are more educated than boys. It is recognition for the country on global level for the importance it gives to women's education.

Since lack of education often prohibits and deters women from contributing to the social progress of a nation the government attaches great importance to their education. It has given approval for the setting up of over 50 establishments that support and aid the upliftment of women and their educational levels. These organizations are successfully functioning in all the emirates of the nation with the support of their respective rulers. From a country with a mere ten percent of literacy in 1970 to a population with a literacy rate of 90 percent, the UAE has created history in the field of education. The government also encourages its youth to seek education abroad and gives them immense support for this purpose.

The UAE looks forward to building a future generation that deserves to lead a modern life in all respects. It is with this hope and objective to establish a contemporary society that the country is moving ahead in the fields of education and technology.

The touch of technology imparts the vibrancy and vitality of modernity to the people's lives in the UAE. It has made great strides in the industrial and commercial sectors. Dubai has in fact become a major centre of global trade and business now. It was the venue for the conference of the heads of the IMF and the Global Bank. Trade fairs like the Dubai Shopping Festival and Info-tech fairs like the GITEX make this desert nation a major attraction among the world community.

The UAE has been able to secure significant achievements in the sporting world too. The government offers aid to several sports clubs for the youth. The UAE won the Asian Cup football championship held in Thailand in September this year. In 1999, the Abu Dhabi international bowling centre hosted the international bowling championship. In 1998, UAE's bowling champion, Mohammed al Qabbasi won the world title in the championship held in Mexico. The Sharjah cricket stadium ranks among the largest cricket stadia in the world.

The UAE made great progress in the field of public health care too in these years bringing it on a par with health care systems in the west.

The nation plays a major role in the global political scene too. It has a significant presence in all Arab-Islamic nations' forums. It raised its voice and concern for the persecuted population of Iraq and Palestine at international forums. When Iraq attacked Kuwait in 1990, Sheikh Zayed was the first Arab leader to condemn the attacks and pledge support to Kuwait. The UAE government spent millions of Dirhams in aid for the resettlement of displaced Palestinians and rebuilding of the Gaza strip. The country offers a huge financial support for nations like Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Yemen and Morocco. It was the UAE that took the initiative to bring the factionalized Gulf states to the common table of the AGCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) and it was the efforts and the far sightedness of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan that laid the ground for the 2001 Arab Summit in Jordan. He generously supported and helped the struggling millions in countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan, Somalia and those displaced in Bosnia after the Serbian attacks on the Muslims of that country. The global community even today regards his initiative to send aid to the hassled people of Iraq as a bold one.

From an ancient population that depended solely only on agriculture, fishing and coral trade for its subsistence, had only camels, horses and donkeys as modes of transport, Sheikh Zayed took the nation to the realms of a contemporary world. As the architect of modern UAE, he is hailed as one of the most noted strategists the world has known. It was nothing but his diplomatic prowess that united the seven emirates. He strung them on a golden thread of oneness into a string of pearls and made a great nation that UAE is now. He nurtured and protected it with utmost care.

The UAE continues its progressive stride into the future in the reverent memory of the father of this nation.

(This essay was written by me in the year 2004)

The UAE looks forward to building a future generation that deserves to lead a modern life in all respects.



The Muslim community preserves its identity in London

It is heartening to see that the Muslim community has succeeded in keeping its identity intact in London more than in other progressive nations. I was amused as well as pleased to see young girls in head scarves and older women in traditional veils while ambling through the crowded city lanes of London. This was not what I had heard of London, after all! Among them were women from Africa, Asia and even native British.

When I saw the Muslim students of the well known Holland Park Government School (that my compatriot Olakara Mohammed's son went to) in complete Islamic attire, I wondered if I was standing in front of an Islamic school

Is there any restriction on dressing in this school, I asked the Principal with surprise, to which he said eloquently, "About 50 percent of students in this school are Muslims. The law here stipulates that the students wear the attire commensurate with their religious and traditional beliefs. Muslims can wear their dress, the Sikh can wear theirs and in private schools they can cover their head too."

In the evenings, one can see girls in head scarves scampering in and around the street parks of London. One can see veiled women in Hyde Park, Kensington Park and Holland Park as well.

I cannot forget the Jumuah prayers that I went for with two of my acquaintances - Mohammed of the Grand Mosque at Regents Road in Central London, and Rehmanka from Kondotty who has been in London for more than two decades. When I saw worshippers spilling over the mosque ground even before the prayer call and later performing the Friday prayers in an atmosphere filled with pure devotion, it felt as if I were in the 'Saruni' mosque in Dubai. After the prayers, thousands took part in the Mayyith prayers offered in memory of friends who had passed away recently. Behind the mosque there were special arrangements made for women to offer their prayers.

In the second week, I chose the Al Manar Masjid in the Aklam road of Central London for my Friday prayers. When I reached the mosque that stood high against the skyline of Central London with its Minars designed and carved in the ornate Persian style reminding one of mosques in Morocco or in Rabat, half an hour before prayer time along with my friends Kunhi Mohammed, Beeran Kutty, Rahmanka, Yusufka and shanavas, the inner courtyard had filled and was over flowing with people.

The mosque built with the support and help of Marhum Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid and other rulers had a huge collection of Islamic texts and publications. Arrangements are also made the entrance of the mosque to guide worshippers coming to the mosque. My friend handed me a calendar indicating the variation in prayer timings that changed as per the seasons.

If the Magrib prayers are at 6.23 on the 1st of January, it is at 5.14 in March and 3.10 in June. Similarly there is a significant difference in the timings of all other prayers of the day depending on the time the sun set in each season.

It is astonishing to witness Muslims finding time for Jamaat in the mosques even in the midst of their busy schedules and while living in the city of London caught in the vigours of a western lifestyle.

When one walks through the lanes of Bayswater and Edgware in Central London, it feels like walking along the roads in the Gulf. It is full of people speaking Arabic. I saw the names of stores like Haman Restaurant, Shamaan Saloon, Sharqul Ausath Fashion Centre, Casablanca Salon, Baiti written in Arabic. It is amusing to hear the prayer

call from the Bychapel in East London. The synagogue in the Brick Lane that the Jews had used for over 500 years is now a mosque. It seems the Eid prayers here take place in three stages.

Although immigrants of an older generation who came from India, Pakistan and other Persian countries are committed to conserving its identity, whether the new generation can escape the mesmerizing grip and influence of a modern western world is a moot question.

In the country side of Kent, I saw the remains of a church that was built in 1810 and was later bombed by Germany during the Second World War. The government has striven to conserve the traditional style in most urban parts of Central London. Its effort to preserve the remains of the old buildings that were destroyed during the world war, its initiative to introduce and familiarize the new generation with the old monuments, preserve the identities and symbols and its far sightedness in this regard is exemplary.

It is promising and encouraging to see the formation of the the Malayali Muslim Cultural Welfare Association by a group of young men with the objective of imparting Islamic insights and knowledge to the Muslim community. This organization that aims to give Islamic education to young Muslim girls and boys needs to be patronized. Such social organizations can contribute much towards conserving and safeguarding the Muslim identity.



Shihab Thangal And hyder Ali shihab Thangal with K.M.C.C. Leaders



London Clinic - A poignant page in my London trip

For the past six years, I am on treatment under the supervision of Professor Williams at the London Clinic. I was advised to see Prof. Williams, who is the best and the most renowned specialist in the world by my friends Dr. Azad Moopen and Dr. Sabu Antony.

I have been visiting Prof. Williams every year for my treatment and for a general check up of my condition. Dr. Sabu Antony has been kind enough to take leave from work and accompany me to London every time I came here.

This time I reached London on 9th October 2011. After touching down at London, when I was proceeding towards Hilton Park Lane Hotel, where my stay was arranged, I felt a shooting pain in my back. I was very much in pain by the time I was moved to the hospital in an ambulance the next day. The doctors pronounced that I had Salmonella infection in my spine and advised an immediate surgery.

I felt as if all the pain in the world had come together in my body to torment me. As I writhed in pain, I thought of my Mum. I felt the same as she had when she was in the advanced stage of cancer.

Having born, one has to die some day. But why this ordeal, my heart mumbled sadly.

The surgery was performed within two days. After the surgery I was kept under observation in the ICU for 24 hours. When I regained consciousness, I was lying attached to a computer and unable to move. It was with great amusement that I watched the computer record every throb in my body, every shift in temperature and give out a printed report every half an hour. The computer also has a system which helps in administering pain killers based on the twitches in the body. Sitting close by, monitoring the readings is a nurse of African origin.

I remember Umma telling me when I was a child, “It is not enough if you eat the bread. You must eat it with love. Only then will the hunger be satiated.” It is not enough that you take medicines.

You must take it with love and faith. Only then will the ailment be cured. The affection, care and confidence with which the nurses administer the medicine motivate the patient to take the medicine happily and this in itself can cure him partially.

In the ICU, I was looked after by nurses Rebecca, Kathy and Ahamed. When I was moved into the ward, Head Nurse Joanna, sisters Siobhan, Rose, Leena and others tended to me like a mother would tend to her child. They live in my heart as angelic representations of love and care. Mr Afshar who performed the surgery, Prof Williams, my consulting doctor and head of the department, Dr. Niklai, who found time to visit me every day for a checkup are all perfect examples of dedication.

I am reminded of an experience at a well known private hospital in Kerala where I had gone for a blood test. The nurse had to attempt twice or thrice to find the right vein to take my blood. After the blood was taken when I asked her for a tissue to wipe the blood on my skin, she said that there was no need to do that and that it would stop on its own. When I asked for a small plaster, she asked if they were running a store that sold plasters. It is with the casualness of injecting cattle that the medical staff in our country pierces our body. If you protest, they accuse you of wrongly comparing a country with a population of one crore (where I live) with a country of a billion and more people. It is not a question of population; it is the difference in attitude and approach that is exposed here. The best thing that I liked about this country (UK), the thing that impressed me the most is the attitude of hospitals and hospital staff towards patients. The doctors and nurses treat a patient like a new born child. They empathize with the patient's pain and consider it their own. They tend to him like a mother tends to her little one. During the days I spent in the hospital there were moments when I have wished that the

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medical fraternity in our country learned a few lessons from the people here.

I had to spend about three months in the hospital. Since strong antibiotics were not to be recommended due to their adverse effect on my liver, I was given pediatric antibiotics. This extended the healing time and the pain took longer to subside completely.

From being an active person, always on the move, surrounded by friends like the sun encircled by planets, I have now become a prisoner of loneliness. I feel restless lying smothered within these walls of isolation. But for the frequent calls from my boss, I would have become a note of remembrance long ago. He felt the pain of a colleague and made it his own. He showed me what a true boss should be like.

And the people who come running to console and comfort me—Yusufalika, Theruvath Khadar, Abdul Rahman Randathani, Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahmed, Hamza, my compatriot Kunhi mohammed who sometimes brings rice ball porridge for me, Nazar who brings Kozhikode Biriyanis on Sundays, Beeran Kutty who comes shivering in the London rain and snow, members of KMCC (London) who visit with their pleasantries, Ashraf and Mujeeb who with their official chitchat keep nostalgic thoughts about home at bay and take efforts not to allow the energy in me to drain.

They comprise my new world; a world that I can never forget. I am deeply, immensely grateful to them all!



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The darling of Indian Expats

Mecheri is now part of history. The man who was a luminary presence in the literary world for four decades left the gates of life and walked away, leaving everyone teary eyed.

Rahim Mecheri was an exceptional person in whom the far sightedness of Quaid-e-millath, Seedhi Sahib's wisdom, the genius of CH, and the immaculateness of Shihab Thangal came together in a rare confluence. The scribe who bid farewell to this world resting on the pages of the Chandrika that he so loved. He was an extraordinary man of letters and strokes. He was the custodian of a golden pen who with the power of his thunderous expressions disarmed his adversaries and imparted comfort to his fellow travelers. He was a guide to our generation. A leader. A close companion. A representation of spotless, selfless politics that never hankered after rank or fame.

He trained and inspired many people like me who were uninitiated in literary writing to write. He filled in me the

determination to turn a collection of words into a readable piece of writing, no matter what it took – correcting, rewriting, returning and reworking entirely. My loving mentor who imparted hope and knowledge unto me still lives on as an energy source in the pathway of the backward communities' fight for rights.

It was after imprinting his beloved “Chandrika” with his life blood that this naïve and selfless man passed away. What we lost in his passing away is a scribe and commentator who introduced nuances of new age journalism to an old generation, and a political teacher who taught the history of a glorious tradition of politics to the new generation.

Raised in the remote village of Olavattoor, he was a person who did not carry any urban baggage in his personality and possessed all the modesty and innocence of the country side. As a walking encyclopedia, he never grudged sharing the light of knowledge he had drawn from his broad association with books. Having had the opportunity to lead the life of an expatriate, he saw and realized the trials and tribulations of those who left home for a better life abroad. His speeches and writings resonated with his sentiments for the toiling expat.

The man who loved expats and the one whom they loved, Mecheri was a torch bearer for all.

He always took exception to the squandering and directionless ways of the expat and offered us invaluable advice whenever he found an opportunity. His dialogues always reflected the hopes and desires of a man well versed in history.

He was insistent upon KMCC assuming the responsibility of the centres in Gulf that would offer SSC, SSLC courses equivalent of secondary education, under the department of literacy. He had prepared the blue print for the scheme that was necessary for its implementation. Probably, what prompted him to take up such an undertaking was the membership he had in the literacy department.

He received numerous awards from the KMCC of Fujariah, Al Ain and Riyadh, and was honoured by the Abudhabi Malayali welfare association, and had also agreed to write a book for KMCC. He was in preparation for the same.

He spoke unceasingly about Shihab Thangal, with whom he had

an emotional association beyond description. I have personally and directly felt his strong sentiments for the Kodapanakal family.

The passages he has written in the book, “Karmaveethiyil Ara Nootaandu”, published in honour of Thangal’s completion of 25 years as the president of the Muslim League in Kerala, were drawn from the bottom of his heart. He described Thangal thus – “Here is a man who lives as a solace in the midst of any turmoil, a man who conquers human hearts with his charming and mesmerizing smile, a man who exists as a stream of tolerance, a tale of amity and friendship, a presence that reflects cultural finesse, carrying with him the fragrance of the roses and the coolness of the moon; a raw man who exists before us without airs or hypocrisy.”

Only a man devoid of hypocrisy and egotism can ever write such words!

Once when he was awarded the prize for the best political essay by KMCC, Fujairah, he declined it by saying that M. I. Thangal was more deserving of it than him. On another occasion, when he was invited to visit the UAE, he gave up the opportunity to Nadakavu, saying he had been to this place many times in the past and Nadakavu deserved a chance too. My regard for a man who shared opportunities so selflessly grew manifold at that time. I have often felt that not even his own people knew and understood the man who spoke of his colleagues only with respect. In October 1997, he came to Fujairah to accept the KMCC award. The political classes he conducted in Abudhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Al Ain, Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah were a new experience to me. His visits were covered with great importance by the newspapers in UAE and Radio Asia. It is my good fortune that I have received counsel and directions from him since those days in Raulathul Uloom Arabic College. Thirty years later, when I became the national committee president of KMCC, his advice flowed in to me in the same measure as before and that was my success.

No one can substitute the man who carried in him the traits of Quaid-e-millath and CH. What do I say about his loss? May the Almighty grace his heavenly life!



Aslam, your memories return time and again

When did Aslam vanish from the sight and sphere of all those who loved him immensely? One finds it hard to calculate the exact time of his exit. There was only a space of two hours between our last teletalk and the deafening news of his demise. He had called me on the 2nd of June around 8 O Clock in the morning. He spoke excitedly about the grand success of the reception given to P.K. Kunhalikutty Sahib, the State General Secretary of the Muslim League and about the supplement issued by “Middle East Chandrika” on that day. We shared many things, both trivial and serious, during the conversation. We bade goodbye after deciding to meet the following Monday to discuss a few important matters. When I called him a little later to speak of something I had missed earlier, his phone rang for long before falling silent. I decided to try later after completing my duties for the day or expected Aslam to call back upon seeing my number. Alas! What came instead was another call that announced my close as a brother, Aslam’s

departure into death's world of no return. I wonder how many calls like mine might have gone unanswered that day, ringing against his silent heart!

My heart refuses to accept his going away even after all these days. It continues to suggest that Aslam is somewhere around, hustling between tasks and too busy to take my calls. The heights that Aslam reached within his young age of 37 years is something that no Gulf Malayali or Indian can ever dream of. The most robust Malayali in this desert land who had the supervisory charge of the royal palace of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The foreigner who won the seamless affection of the nationals. As a token of this affection, he was even awarded the citizenship of this Arab nation. The pride of place he enjoyed in this country made the heart of every Indian swell with pride. He became an indispensable presence in every gathering that took place in this world class city of Dubai.

Whenever Aslam was unable to attend functions amidst his busy schedules, one could hear his name being specially mentioned both in the welcome and valedictory speeches. How rapid had the growth to heights of this young man from Malappuram Dist has been!

Through my eyes that doesn't stop welling up, I see the ten year old, thin bodied Aslam that I first knew running up to accompany his sister, Rukhiya. Peechi master, leader of the Muslim League called him, "Aslam, quickly change and go with Rukhiya." Circa 1978. The M.S.F. that advocate P. Habib Rahman took over is rewriting its old habits. It was a time when M.S.F had members on the University Union Councilors only from Titurangadi PSMO and Taliparamba Sarsayid. The unification of the college unions of Arabic colleges was the concept of Habib Rahman to reaffirm the strength and influence of M.S.F in the in the Calicut University Union.

We had approached Rukhiya, a student of Valavannur Al Ansar College and a member of M.S.F to help find representatives among women students in Mongam Arabic College and others. Since that day Aslam had accompanied Rukhiya on all her trips associated with the activities of M.S.F among girls. After those student years,

I met Aslam, who worked for M.S.F even before he took an official membership to it, much later in Dubai. He was working in the Zabeel palace along with his elder brothers then. It was in 1981, the year that I came to Dubai that I met Aslam. Since then his status grew gradually along with his age.

One could see in him the happiness and fulfillment of working in the palace. He soon became a favourite employee of General Sheikh Mohammed. The man with a quiet, amiable personality and impressive stature towered over all Malayalis in this land. The same principles by which Peechi master lived his life throbbed in Aslam's veins too. The Muslim League and the Mujahid institution became an indispensable part of his everyday life. Even amidst his busy schedule and duties in the palace, he found time to make at least a few calls to the associates of these organizations. His commitment towards these organizations and his inclination to spare time for its cause whenever possible earned him the affection of Panakkad Mohammed Ali Shihab Thangal. Thangal's bonding with Aslam was evident in their conduct. He always stayed and hovered around the fervour called Thangal. Not a day passed without pleasantries being exchanged between them. Similarly, even Kunhalikutty always found time to meet Aslam on his trips to Dubai. Once when the meeting did not happen, Kunhalikutty made several calls to express regret over his inability to meet. The calls went unanswered. The last call that he received as he took off from Dubai on that visit was the one that carried the news of Aslam's passing away.

That Aslam was the soul of Malayalis in the UAE is a fact that non can deny. The one thing that any Malayali would say when in distress or trouble is that he could call Aslam for help. He had a solution to all their problems. We could call him at any unearthly hour of the night. He was a youngster to whom assisting and helping people was an obsession. The man who found no time for his own private needs could always spare time and convenience to resolve others' difficulties. Amusingly, Aslam himself was not aware of the status, respect and acceptability that he enjoyed among the people who knew him.

It was only by his efforts that the KMCC got its recognition in

Dubai. But for him, the International Educational Seminar organized by MES in 2001 under the patronage of General Sheikh Mohammed could not have taken place. He even donated land and building to start the Islahi Centre. He was also trying hard to get KMCC its own piece of land. That his magnificence pervaded every movement and influence of KMCC is vouched with uncontainable whimpers by leaders like Khalid Haji, Yahya Thalagara, Eletil Ibrahim, Hamsa Haji, Razak Al Wasl, KHM Ashraf and hundreds of other members of the organization.

Aslam was the energy behind “Middle East Chandrika.” He carried the pride and zeal of having Chandrika published from Dubai in every breath of his. As one who has endured the pain of losing his father to Cancer, Aslam took great interest in helping patients afflicted with the disease and participated in related schemes. He established a rehabilitation centre by the name of CH Centre, in association with Regional Cancer Centre, Trivandrum to help poor patients and had been donating a huge amount every month to the CH Centre linked to the Kozhikode Medical College.

The interest free corpus called “Thanal” and the home for destitute called “Darul Masakin” were all Aslam’s own concept and initiative. Innumerable people have built their lives with his support and assistance. Scores have been touched and saved by his immeasurable love and kindness. He stood by them, giving them his advice, sharing his heart, expressing his disapproval and giving them a life.

On the 5th of March, at twilight, this adorable son of Gulf Malayalis touched down at Karipur airport in a regal manner. Many of us accompanied him, as brothers and friends. Many eminent personalities like Panakkad Hyderali Shihab Thangal, Kunhalikutty Sahib, Khadar Theruvath and others waited at the airport to accord the prince his final reception. Aslam was arriving to his native land, triumphant and glorious!

The vast area around the playground in Valavannur Islamic College is over flowing with people who refuse to disperse. They are waiting to catch one last glimpse and bid good bye. Two sleepless nights in the panchayats of Kalpakancheri and Valavannur. There is an Aslam in every house; a lamp lit by



Receiving the dashing young Sheikh Maqsum Hamad Al Sharqi on his return after his Military Academy graduation

many lives. No pillow in these places would have gone without being wept into those two nights.

Here, in Dubai, the city is brimming with sorrow. Where did you vanish so quickly after lavishing everyone with so much affection and assistance? No matter where you might have gone, Aslam, your memories will continue to sweep back into this desert land time and again.



Dr. Puthur Rahman discuss with Shihab Thangal



Majeed, Rahman, Kunhippa

An eternal struggle for rights

Yet another 13th of July arrives as a fervent, throbbing memory - the memory of the days when the youth of Malappuram wrote a heroic tale by spilling the blood from their heart in a battle for rights and privileges. The memory of our three brothers, Majid, Rahman and Kunhippa, who are alive even after they are gone; the three martyrs who cannot be forgotten by the Muslim league establishment of Kerala. The beloved sons of Kerala who reached the pinnacle of immortality by sacrificing their lives for a cause.

The very memory of it sends shivers down my spine recreating and enlivening the horror of that day.

Three of our colleagues sprang into the battle field along with us two decades ago in a battle for our rights. But Alas! What we came back with from the battle field of Munduparambu were their still, lifeless bodies. That was all their parents, wives and siblings received in return. It is impossible for me and those who participated in that movement to reminisce that day without getting

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our eyes moist.

It was on an unarmed mass of scores of young Muslim League workers that the Nayanar Government's brutal forces showered the bullets. Hundreds of Muslim League members were injured in a heinous act by the Nayanar government against a group that was carrying out a peaceful protest march. It can only be described as a Jalianwala Bagh that Kerala witnessed. The incident in which three people were killed, hundreds others were injured and over five thousand Muslim Youth League members were falsely implicated returns to the mind as a reminder of the Nayanar government's monstrosity.

The picketing on that day was a part of the state wide agitation against the black laws declared by the Nayanar government against the Arabic language. Hundreds of people sanctified by the fasting ritual of Ramzan assembled at Kotappadi at 8 O'clock to participate in a peaceful picketing at the office of the District Collector of Malappuram. From there, they marched towards the district headquarters chanting the taqbeer. Their slogans were in no way provocative. I was then the district secretary of MSF in Malappuram. Majid, the State General Secretary and flag bearer of the agitation had entrusted me with the responsibility of regulating the traffic on the road in front of the office of the Collector.

The picketing, which began at 9 O'clock, went on till 11 O'clock. Actually, until the Dy. SP and his thugs charged towards the office of the Collector, everything was peaceful. There was perfect understanding between the League workers and the policemen who were segregating the striking men into groups of 25 and taking those who courted arrest to the police head quarters in their van even as A. P. Ibrahim, who now works in Saudi Arabia, cleared the traffic ahead in his pilot jeep.

I remember the moment very well. It was when the bus from Manjeri to Tirunavaya reached the gates of the Collector's office that the Dy. SP and his men rushed in their jeep to use force on the League workers. I was standing a little away along with P.T.K. Kutty, Paravanur Rahman and Adattil Kunhappu. What we saw next was a brutal assault by the policemen on the picketing men. We could only watch helplessly as the then Chairman of

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Malappuram Municipality, P. K. Kunhalikutty, MLAs N. Soopi and K.P.A. Majid come under the lathi charge and collapse.

It was only when the policemen appeared (who were until now hiding behind the Collector's office with their rifles) that we realized that we had fallen into a well planned trap set by the Dy. SP and his men. Amidst the blinding intensity of the tear gas, the Youth League workers scrambled for their lives. As they ran, some fell to the ground and Nayanar's men spared no effort to persecute them further. They put their boots into the falling men and punched them with their rifle butts. The unaided League workers who were under the influence of the tear gas could barely figure out the police action.

Across the gate when my close friend Majid sank and fell, I did not realize that he had been shot at. I moved towards him as he pleaded for some water. At which point, a bullet from the rifle of a policeman hit my lower abdomen. I ignored the pain that I felt and made a futile attempt not to fall from the impact of the lathi that fell on my head from behind. When I fell, the policemen battered me with their boots, stamping on my chest and abdomen. As I tried to get back to my feet, my feet failed, the police men dragged and dumped me in a jeep, with the casualness of heaving in a grain sack.

There were about ten other injured men in the jeep, calling for water and they were responded with more blows. I remember being assaulted till I lost consciousness. When I regained my consciousness I found myself in the Manjeri Government Hospital. How can I forget the day when I uttered fervent prayers for my kith and kin, leaving everything in Allah's hands and lay in the delirium of being a part of a war of righteousness? The memory of it can never die. Some of those who had lead that battle later became a minister, MLA or a Panchayat member. There are yet others who took part in that just war taking blows and shedding blood, with no expectations of a reward or compensation. They still carry shards of bullets in their body and exist as living martyrs. The ailments in their body still stand testimony to the violent exploits of the police force.

Neither the Arabic teaching community nor a democratic Kerala

can ever forget those men who rewrote the black laws with their blood, which were unleashed against the Arabic language.

The memory of that moral war gets immortalized on the 30th of July every year.



ISC presenting an award to HH the Crown prince of Fujairah





Marad Commission Report – a Marxian falsehood

Those media entities that accuse the Muslim League in the background of the Marad Commission report haven't understood certain realities. The commission which is striving to give the Marxist party which was behind the massacre and bloodshed in Marad a clean chit has maintained silence on the role of the BJP and RSS in the incident. Nor does it speak anything about those innocents who abandoned their homes and fled. Given this, how does one blame someone who says that the Marad Commission report, which is attempting to defend and keep a suggestive silence on those hateful bodies that are hounding the victims of the incident returning to their homes, attacking and destroying their domestic possessions and showering expletives on a section of the society in full view of television cameras, is nothing but a deliberate falsehood woven by the Marxists?

Marad was a peaceful place. People of different castes and religions lived harmoniously according to their faiths. The love

and amity among them shone like a full moon on the sea shore. It was by dint of the votes from the Araya community that a Muslim League candidate even won the previous Municipal, Panchayat elections for the first ever time. The Muslim League and the Hindu Samaj always existed here as a symbol of unity. In a place where the Muslim League had no influence, the Marxist party and the BJP were the only major political parties. There have been incidents of

violence when members of the two parties defected and joined the other, but those clashes were never communal in character. Although the regional leaders of the Marxist had tried their best to communalize these incidents, they did not succeed.

The geo political map of Marad suggested the strange fact that those who were Marxists by the day became NDF and RSS cadres by the night. About 75 percent of Muslims in Marad are comrades belonging to this category - dual faced comrades. For the same reason, as far as those outside of Marad are concerned it will not be difficult to convert this into a communal clash. It was in December 2001 that the episode that marred the peace of Marad took place. A New Year party that led to a series of sad and far reaching tragedies lapped up the tranquility of a land.

The revellers who had gathered at the Marad beach to ring in the New Year of 2002 as one of love and unity would not have expected it to become a major tragedy. What triggered it all was the incidence of a young man from one community in his drunken, celebratory state molesting a young woman from another community. However, the problem was immediately resolved at the venue and the two groups parted amicably. But the Marxist party, with the intension to make the most of this opportunity to gain political mileage added oil to the fire. As a result on the 3rd of December, two Muslim and two Hindu youths who were friends were killed. On the 4th, a peace meeting was organized which was attended by all parties. Even as the meeting was under way, Abubaker, a local Marxist leader who was digging the grave for the two deceased men was murdered by the RSS. Upon hearing this, the peace meeting was stalled. There were more attempts to install peace, which the Marxist party strove to abort by all ways.

However, in the end there was some success in restoring peace.

That the family of the slain Marxist leader Abubaker was openly announcing their intension to avenge his murder and that they had declared this to Abubaker's younger brother, Moin Haji was informed to the Intelligence agencies and top police officials by Haji himself. He mentioned this again at the peace meeting of top police officials, including to the commissioner of Marad, Thomas P. Joseph and had asked them to take necessary precautions to avert any eventuality. Is this the only mistake that Moin Haji had made? It was his statement on the possibility of an act of revenge that led to the commission coming to the conclusion that Moin Haji was privy to this plot.

The Muslim League which relentlessly worked to contain and control the second wave of unrest that took place in May 2002 had made it clear that it was prepared for any kind of investigation. This fact was flashed in all sections of the media too. Why should the Muslim League, which was not a party to any of the happenings in Marad, instead had only been a mediator to resolve issues, be against a CBI enquiry? However, the Commission report says that Kunhalikutty had objections to a CBI level inquiry. The commission has not made any findings based on evidence. The legal department has to comprehend the fact that the Commission has cobbled together a report like a kindergarten student would do by merely assimilating the opinions of different people. The Commission's responsibility is not to codify accusations and newspaper reports, instead it has to ascertain facts on the basis of evidence and then prepare a report.

When Pinarayi and Kodyeri go up in arms against the Muslim League over the Commission report, may I ask, wasn't it Pinarayi himself who had announced in a press meet that the Crime Branch enquiry had been satisfactory and that there was no need for a CBI enquiry? Why didn't VS and his Marxist party that knocks at the doors of law for all and sundry reasons, approach the court if they had found that the enquiry into the Marad incident was not satisfactory? Does Kodyeri suggest that the Antony government should disregard the recommendation of Advocate General that it is unlawful to handover a case under investigation by an agency to

another and that it could lead to questioning in the court and also lead to sabotage and delaying of the case?

In the wake of the Marad commission report, most legal experts (a majority of who are leftists) have agreed with the suggestions of the Advocate General. Did the people who had submitted a petition asking for a CBI inquiry later withdraw their petition (when the high court ruled that the Crime Branch's enquiry was satisfactory) on the League's counsel? That the commission did not notice this might not have been a mere coincidence! The same people, who fooled the public by making the laws of self financing colleges, banned Cola without considering the pros and cons (knowing full well that they will be questioned in the court) are once again duping the public. There were 800 people accused in the first round of Marad riots, of which 500 were active members of the Marxist party. In the second round of riots, there were 139 accused of which 43 were workers and leaders of the Marxist party. Why were these things ignored by the commission? A majority of those who

were killed and were accused belonged to either the BJP or the Marxist party. And now, the League members who had no involvement in the whole incident but on the other hand scurried to maintain peace are the ones to carry the blame. Who is the commission trying to defend and save? The media units and other organizations that have social obligations should give this a hard thought!



Shihab Thangal with
Former U.A.E Labour Minister His Excellency Ahmed Bin Mohammed



NRIs – A neglected lot

The other day, the state and central Finance Ministers presented the budgets in the assembly and the parliament respectively with great fanfare. However, the budget that the Non Resident Indians all over the world were waiting for with great expectations was disappointing. During the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas last year, everyone from the Prime Minister of India to the Over Indian Affairs Minister, Vayalar Ravi had spoken about the welfare and concerns of the expat community. The role played by the NRI community in nourishing the Indian economy is undisputed and unparalleled, which is why the Prime Minister described them as the life source of Indian economy.

The NRI community has hoped that the government would suggest measures in the budget to repatriate Indians returning after a long stint abroad, some of them after losing all their earnings, instate insurance schemes to secure their future, cut airfares to reduce their travel woes, only to be utterly disheartened yet again.

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Once again, they have been left with just hopes. Every government that comes to power performs various tricks in their budget to hoodwink the citizens. That there is no such effort to even delude the NRIs with their efforts might be owing to the fact that the NRIs don't have the use of a vote. We NRIs, who fly in during the season like migratory birds, are mere milk cows belonging neither here nor there. And when the milk dries up and we are reduced to poor, shrunken creatures, we are sidelined and stoned by the ruling class that had exploited and sucked our blood as and when needed.

Not everyone who reaches the Gulf to live and help live is affluent. There are millions that struggle to make both ends meet in this desert land. The bureaucrat or politician who reads and knows only about the luster of the petro dollar is not aware of the anguish of the struggling NRI. No one has been able to comprehend or consider seriously the plight of the Indian community that helps others live by sacrificing their own lives at the altar of this arid land. They are a community that is destined to accept the whiplash of neglect and indifference.

There has been no author or poet who hasn't written about the migrant Indian, no singer who hasn't sung about them, or an orator who hasn't spoken their tales. There is no cultural centre or government institution that hasn't enjoyed the fruits of their toil or known the value of the sweat they shed. Yet, we have not seen one politician, one leader or one government that has shown fondness for them. The airfares from the Gulf to Indian destinations, especially those in Kerala, are three times of that to other global destinations. This is nothing but exploitation by the airlines. And the rude behaviour of the customs officials at Indian airports towards Indian expatriates, (an aspect that ranks worse than their grabbing acts), one wonders if they are anything but heartless sadists.

If there has to be an end to this plight of the NRIs, they must have voting rights for which they have been fighting for decades. The central and state governments had promised to grant them the right in 2006, but needless to say, it has yet to see the light of the day.

Like the governments of Lebanon, Philippines, China, Iraq and other European nations that have computer systems in their

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embassies and consulates to facilitate distance voting for their citizens, India could include the names of its overseas citizens in the voters list and employ the visa stamped passports as identity cards and allow them to cast their vote. If this requires an amendment in the constitution, it can be done too.

Recent events have convinced us that we shall be seen and heard only if the misconception of NRIs not being worth even a vote is wiped out. We must stand united to thwart the miscalculations of the political peddlers back home and let them know that we haven't lost our power to react and respond.

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The lessons learnt from Samavayam 2001

The Samavayam 2001 convention is viewed by non resident Indians as an initiative at the government level to aid in recognizing the NRKs and resolving their various problems. Cheers to the government for this excellent endeavour!

Based on a statement by the Central Minister, UNI had reported that an amount of 12000 crores had flowed into Indian banks from non resident Indians in 1999, 2000. The central and state governments have so far maintained a very casual attitude towards matters concerning the NRIs who are the guardians of India's economy. The main reason for this is that the expat community has failed in coming together as a single pressure group that can take matters to the government and get them resolved.

In a country where political parties with a mere thousand members and political phantoms with just one M.P. win their rights and privileges, why millions of expats who have been destined to sacrifice their lives in the scorching heat to support their kith and

kin have not been able to exert pressure on the nonchalant governments is a moot question. It is regrettable that even the diplomatic representatives appointed by the government to study and sort out their issues don't step out of their air-conditioned rooms and strive to get their compatriots their due from the government.

I regret to say that the Indian diplomatic bureau in the UAE does not show respect to even dead bodies.

To repatriate the dead body of an Indian, his passport has to be cancelled, for which taking the Indian Embassy's acknowledgment is mandatory. There have been instances where dead bodies have lain in the airport mortuaries owing to the negligence and apathy of embassy officials. Ours is the only embassy that charges money for the cancellation of its deceased national's passport. While the embassies of Asian countries like Philippines, Sri Lanka, China, Bangladesh and Pakistan involve directly in matters concerning its nationals, our embassy acts as if these were not matters of its concern at all.

Scamsters in India who recruit labourers with no proper labour contracts from the recruiting companies or a proper understanding of the visa status are destroying the labour sector in the Gulf.

Such fraudulent agencies have to be subjected to thorough investigation by the government. The practice of demanding emigration clearance from people on visit visa and letting the visa traders who don't produce even proper labour contracts go scot free has to stop.

While opportunities for unskilled labourers have decreased in the Gulf, opportunities for those who are skilled have gone up. It is the services of the qualified Indian that the UAE, now very much advanced in Information Technology, chiefly depends on. Even the nationalization of jobs doesn't hinder this growth of opportunities in the skilled sector.

However, the influx of workers from other Asian and Arab countries has made a dent to the position of Malayalis who had been ruling this sector for long. To be able to stay in the Gulf further and to find new, alternative pastures, Gulf Malayalis have to make better strides in the fields of education and technology. It is

necessary for the government to take steps to guide us and give us the training needed for this purpose. Such an initiative from the government is essential to stop the exodus of Malayali expats from the Gulf countries.

In countries like Philippines, China, Singapore and Egypt, the government facilitates special training for people going abroad in search of jobs. Their embassies in the UAE offer them special training and counselling too.

The government can try to find solutions to problems related to the repatriation of Indians through its embassies. It can create an insurance corpus for the reestablishment of returning expats by collecting the premium from the expats themselves. A cell headed by an IAS officer under NORKE can be set up for this purpose in the Indian consulates. Indian expats are eagerly hoping for major announcements in matters related to the exorbitant air fares between the Gulf and India, and harassment by customs officials at the airports too.

The KMCC in UAE, which has been running campaigns to resolve expat problems since years, is the only democratic organization in the Gulf that wields great influence and enjoys the support and acceptance of the people.

A team led by P. A. Abbas Haji, the Working President of UAE KMCC, and Moidu Edayur, Treasurer has also participated in Samavayam 2001 and presented their views on expat related issues.

Expats are singing the refrains of a new awareness of unity and solidarity created among them by the submissions and resolutions made at different periods in the assembly and parliament by leaders like E. Ahmed, P. K. Kunhalikutty, Samadani and K. P. A. Majid. Gulf Malayalis are utterly disappointed that activities of NORKE and Roots have come to a standstill and the organizations have become dysfunctional with the leftist government coming to power. NORKE and Roots were active during the rule of UDF, especially with activities like the Global Investor Meet that took place soon after that and Oomen Chandy's visit to Labour camps. If that dynamism has to return, nonresident matters should go out of VS' hands and things should be handed over to people who are more knowledgeable.



Sachar committee report and Muslim representation

The Sachar committee appointed by the Prime Minister to study Muslim representation in the government and public sector organizations of various states has found that there isn't sufficient Muslim presence in these as well as in the banking sectors in Kerala. It is not surprising that the Sachar committee, which examined the Narendran commission report, could learn about this gap in representation. Nevertheless, the recommendations made by the Sachar committee based on these reports to appoint commissions modeled after the Narendran commission to improve Muslim representation is something that offers hope and enthusiasm to the backward communities. Muslims, who comprise 24.7 percent of Kerala's population, have only 9.8 percent representation in these job sectors, while the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, who constitute 10.95 percent of the population, have 13.3 and 21.32 percent representation respectively. Ezhavas, who make 21.32 percent of the population, have 21.22 percent

jobs, while the forward communities who make 23.5 percent of the total population enjoy 40 percent.

Those 'apolitical' people to whom this truth is not palatable and accuse Muslims (who point out this anomaly in the distribution of jobs) of earning the positions undeservingly should study the Sachar committee report. It commendable that the report found and acknowledged this discrepancy and has recommended necessary steps to bridge this wide gap between communities in terms of job rights and distribution.

What the committee report points out are facts related to discrimination and denial of justice. Reservation is not the obligation that the government hands out to the backward communities. Instead, it is their fundamental right as enshrined in the constitution.

The government should therefore not hesitate to implement the suggestions and recommendations of the committee and should initiate action that will remove fears and doubts from the minds of neglected segments of our society.

It has to show its interest and intension to mete out justice to those denied justice for long. The Joseph committee, appointed by the Nayanar government to determine the upper limit for consideration, strived to establish in the supreme court that the backward classes enjoyed privileges not only through reservation quota but also on the basis of other considerations. When the case reached the Supreme Court, they had also sought not to appoint a lawyer.

It was unanimously agreed upon by the ninth and tenth Lok Sabha backward committees that there has to be a special recruitment drive to cover the backlog in reservation. The current Lok Sabha committee agrees to this too. In February 2003, it was made clear in the reply given to the resolution moved on this issue by Kutty Ahmed Kutty in the Kerala assembly, that there has been a consensus on implementing the Narendran Committee report. Speakers from various parties who spoke in support of the resolution, including K.K. Jayachandran, K.P. Rajendran, Neelan, K.K. Shaji, Johny Nellore and Thomas Unniyadan, had called for a special recruitment drive to resolve this issue of poor

representation. This was then declared as a consensual decision by the Chief Minister. That the government had no legal obstacle to implement the special recruitment to cover the deficit in representation was mentioned in the statement given out at the end of the discussion that the National Commission for religious and linguistic minorities had with the Chief Minister and the Education minister. This, along with the mention of a precedent wherein a constitutional amendment was made to award lost opportunities to the backward classes amply proved that there was no legal impediment to execute the provisions of the Narendran Commission report.

Is there then any use blaming the UDF government for not working out the recommendations despite the favourable conditions?

The central government has appointed several commissions to study the condition of the Muslim backward communities. This includes the Gopal Singh commission in 1983, the Bharat Raj commission in 1996 and more recently the Sachar commission, all of who had submitted their findings to the government.

The Sachar committee in their report has presented ground realities and facts. The fact that Muslims, who account for around 15 percent of the country's population, making them the second largest community, are behind other scheduled castes and tribes in all states except Kerala is a shocking discovery. Those who curry flavour with the Marxist Party, the self proclaimed protectors of the minorities, must realize that the fraction of Muslims in Bengal is less than two percent of the state's population. The open tirade against the comrades by Communist thinker and writer Irfan Habib in this regard should be gravely taken into consideration.

The government should not falter to implement the recommendations based on the report of the Sachar Commission. It is imperative to devise a firm, original system to remove the agony and fears of a completely neglected segment of our people.



The newfound love for Variyamkunnath – Communism's new face mask

The followers of CPM who were determined to paint Kerala red have ruled the state for decades before. Didn't they think of Variyam Kunnath in those years? Variyam Kunnath was not born yesterday, after all!

This distinguished man who had sacrificed his life for the independence of his country was not just the greatest revolutionary that Kerala has seen. He was the foremost advocate of secularism too.

Historical records note that there were more than a thousand Hindus in his army that marched to Tirurangadi on 20th August, 1921 to declare the final war against the English. But we hadn't heard of the red faction construct either a memorial or even name the roof of a bus stop after him so far.

On the other hand they had tried to mock the UDF government's attempt to build a memorial in his name.

The people who are building pillars and columns today in the

name of Variyam Kunnath Kunhammad Haji are the same who had ridiculed the UDF government for planning to make the spot in Kotta kunnu where this gallant soldier of Kerala was shot and martyred a befitting memorial by including it in the state tourism plan. They had even accused the Public Works Minister Munir of inciting communalism when he took the initiative to end the prolonged neglect of this warrior.

In January 2002, the great Shihab Thangal, while inaugurating the commemoration of Variyam Kunnath's martyrdom had said, "He was a popular leader who had believed that patriotism was an integral part of one's faith. He was a staunch believer and spokesman of secularism. He wasn't in favour of religious conversions. His ultimate aim was to send the British packing from our country.

We must read the real history of Variyam Kunnath. People who are keen and have a capacity to document his true story should come forward. That is what the period desires."

Watching the Deshabhimani paper that then had communalized Shihab Thangal's above words and had filled its column with accusations, speak patronizingly about Variyam Kunnath, one is tempted to ask, "Hey folks, why this shift? Where were you till now? Why this sudden fondness for Variyam Kunnath and the Malabar rebellion? It is not surprising that the followers of EMS who first described the Malabar rebellion as a peasants' uprising and later when they shared power with the Muslim League described it as part of the freedom struggle and then somersaulted by not speaking anything about it, the people who stand by the Ezhavas in Kollam and by Christians when they go to Kottayam should shift their ideologies! It is not surprising that such people capable of changing their principles are putting up pictures of Sri Narayana Guru, P. T. Chako and Aali Musalyar in place of Lenin, Stalin and Mao. If required they will put up posters and build pillars in red for the pope too. Why this unkindness towards the glorious, God believing martyrs who despised communism all their life?

"We mappilas wish not just a life, but also a death and a life after death of dignity. I have heard that it the practice of you English men

to chop the limbs and blind the eyes of those punished. I don't wish to receive such a humiliating death. You must shoot from me in my chest from the front. I wish to die like true man." The brave man who took bullets into his chest by speaking these words to the judge will not pardon you, comrades. The devout man who uttered the sacred words "Allahu Akbar" when bullets pierced his chest and attained martyrdom will never forgive you.



Shihab Thangal with Sheikh Ali Hashmi - The Advisor to the President Of U.A.E



With HH Crown prince of Fujairah



The Left coach derails

Like the triumphant Pandavas who romped home in their horse drawn chariot at the end of the Mahabharata war, VS too sprang in his chariot drawn by donkeys, (thanks to comrade Jayaraj for the donkey term), only to fall flat on his face within days. Although Minister Baby, who handled the issue of self financing colleges with utmost casualness tried in vain to escape by letting loose 'little monkeys' to vandalize the self financing colleges and to divert public attention by making them call names, the general public is very agitated over the games played by the government and the managements. People are demanding for the two concerned parties to come to a mutual agreement at the earliest and resolve the issue. Parents in Kerala are not ready to prolong the government's case by allowing a long drawn out legal battle in the Supreme Court.

The judges who blindly stand by the leftists are defenders of law and those who follow the constitution and precedence are law

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defiers! The media men who support this are fair and straight, and those who don't support the Left are dishonest and depraved! The Marxist government had the guts to even ask for a ban on the coverage of court room proceedings by newspapers!

What weird carnival songs did some policemen sing in the presence of reporters when they heard that somebody had tried to bind and detain the Sabarimala priest who had gone to Shobha's house to give blessings to Shantha! What mishaps would have happened had Home Minister Kodayeri himself not shunted the police officer who had approached the reporters with the news! Would the case been then registered in the manner it has been done now? Kodayeri saved Kerala and the priest.

Lal Salaam to you, Comrade!

Kerala is witness to ten cases of deaths in custody (cases are sub judice) and a dozen farmer suicides (the government has declared a compensation of Rupees 50000 to their families) within three months of the Marxist government coming to power. The UDF had made corruption charges involving crores of Rupees in the Maithri Bhavan Scheme and they had demanded an enquiry by the vigilance department against Minister P. J. Joseph too. When the VS government dismissed the demand for enquiry against Joseph and subsequently gave him a clean chit, the poor public which some time ago had applauded the Chief Minister's pronouncement there would be no corrupt members in his team, was deeply disappointed. Soon after this, as if it were a continuing scene in a TV soap, came the allegation of Minister P. J. Joseph having 'touched' or 'brushed' against the 'sensitive area' of a female co passenger on a Kingfisher flight to Chennai.

Those who declared that the history of Muslim League ends with 2006 elections are those who are not familiar with the history of the League. Even when accepting that the defeat in the 2006 elections was a sad experience, one can aver that those who declare this as the ultimate fall of the League are completely mistaken. In 1957, when the founder leader of the League had lost the elections, anti league campaigners had called for the dissolution of the party. This demand was repeated when P. A. Majid lost in Manjeri parliament elections. The League had lost all Municipal seats in Malappuram

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in 1995. League opponents had it written off at that time too. However, the same critics of the League fell silent when it won most of the municipal and panchayats in Kasargode district and more than half of panchayats in Kozhikode district in 2005 local polls. Victory will have several daddies, but defeat always remains an orphan (statement courtesy of Mecheri). Victories and defeats are not the yard sticks by which the value of a party can be assessed.

Some extremists groups have been trying on the sly for years to execute their hidden agenda of wiping out the secular tradition of Kerala (nurtured by the Muslim League) by destroying the League and thus turn the peaceful land of Kerala into a centre of extremist activities. They are imagining that after the Assembly elections, with the Lefists in power now, it will become easier to accomplish this motive. It was in the midst of this that the central government began to view SIMI with suspicion for its alleged involvement in the Mumbai blasts, and many Jamaat centres were raided. This action cast a shadow on the hopes and expectations of the extremist groups.

It was by forming an organization called People's Democratic Party (PDP) in South Kerala to fight the RSS in the aftermath of the collapse of Babri Masjid that Madani first entered the political scene. Sensing that Madani was on a dangerous, uncontrollable run especially armed with his extremist speeches and schemes that attracted the youth towards him, the Muslim League leadership adopted a strong stance against extremism.

Madani, who proclaimed slogans like 'blood for blood', 'tooth for tooth', had called Muslim League workers as eunuchs. When League made political moves against the man who called upon youth to take up arms for a direct entry to heaven, people in secular Kerala watched with bated breath the Marxist party openly coming to his aid.

At one point of time, the Marxist party had ridiculed SIMI, Jaamat-e-Islami and PDP as international terrorists (Deshabhimani, 31 June, 2003). They had also alleged in their newspaper articles that Karanthur Markaz was a terrorist centre and that Kanthapuram was behind the murder of moderate leader

Chekannur Moulavi (Deshabhimani, 25 March, 1999). It is amusing that the same people who had made those statements have now shifted stance and that too, so swiftly!

'Solidarity' is a new product launched in the market by the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) Students Islamic Organization (SIO).

The high power committee formed in Kozhikode to control the ISS led by Madani demonstrated the closeness between Jamaat-e-Islami and the extremist groups. That the Jamaat and ISS joined hands could not have been a mere coincidence. People were surprised when the Gulf edition of 'Maadhyamam' carried Madani's full page photograph in its supplement. With their togetherness, Madani and Jamaat, both of who spoke the same language, stirred up the entire community.

Jamaat took the initiative to rent a house of a Jamaat member in Masjid Road, Aluva for the use of ISS and then appointed their secretaries there. They organized the Chalakkal Islamic Boarding School camp for ISS members to gain athletic training too. The idea of Madhyamam newspaper was also hammered into Jamaat's head by the present leaders of NDF. One can see evidence to this in Prabodhanam, Jamaat-e-Islami special and the Madhyamam tenth anniversary supplement, all published in the 1990s.

The heading of the article that Kootil Mohammed, the president of Jamaat's youth wing, wrote in the 17th edition of 'Yuvasarani', the ISO's journal read, "ISS path – the right and wrong." It is mentioned in the article that if one does not employ one's right to defence, then his death is equal to suicide...How do the leftists give shade and shelter to the Jamaats who counsel the ISS that there is a long way to go before they can take on the RSS?

Jaamat-e-Islami today dismisses the paternity of the SIMI that propagated that India would be liberated through Islam. However, it is unlikely that Jamaat would depart from the fundamental ideology of 'Hukumat-e-Ilahi' (Islamic rule), on which it stands. This is very clearly recorded in the fundamental documents and treatises of the Jamaat. It might be on the basis of these records that the Marxists had initially addressed the Jamaat members as fundamentalists and extremists. Can the Leftists who won the

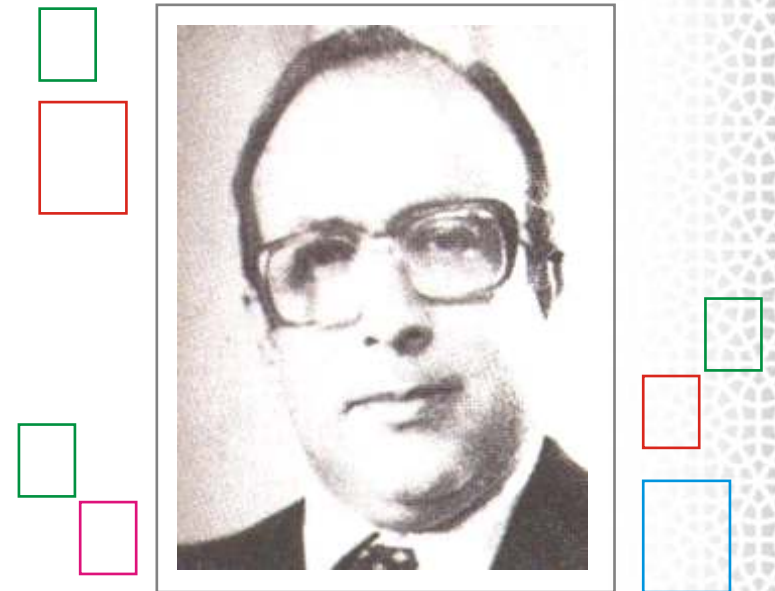
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elections with the support of the Jamaat who they once ridiculed, rest in their seats of power in peace? The people who were at the helm of SIMI when it was formed in 1977 are the same people who are distinguished leaders of Jamaat today. Many current leaders and sympathizers of Jamaat, including state committee members Sheikh Mohammed Karakunnu, T. K. Hakim, C. H. Rashid were leaders of SIMI. We haven’t heard any one of these either reject or dismiss SIMI.

Even as SIMI raised the slogan “India’s liberation through Islam,” the LDF twice made A. P. Abdul Wahab, SIMI’s state president, its candidate. K. T. Jaleel, who was appointed by SIMI as its chief campaigner, was made an MLA by the LDF. The Marxist party has always stood by such extremist organizations and leaders just because of its opposition to the League.

The books and records that were found at the Hira centre of Jamaat during a police raid sheds light on the close SIMI-Jamaat relation. The extremist ideas and activities of the Jamaat will be topics of heated political debate in Kerala in the days to come. There is no doubt that the current events that clearly demonstrate the significance of the Muslim League’s secular stance will give the Lefts an opportunity to ponder.

The leadership of Panakkad Kodappanakkal family that has made the distinct elements of a secular culture part of its life and has taught the society that service is a part of devotion is the foundation and spirit and glory of the Muslim League.



Madathil Mustafa – A light unto expats

The year 1980 was the period which saw the beginnings of the coming together of overseas Indians in the UAE. Madathil Mustafa Sahib was the first among expats to think about unifying them and took steps to create awareness among them about the need to co-operate as a group.

It was during his time that the KMCC began to gain prominence in the expat world and Madathil’s influential personality added sparkle to the image of the organization. He could represent the KMCC on any platform and could speak on any subject with authority. The vast knowledge he possessed was drawn from reading, a fact that was testified by the large collection of books he had. The collection included biographies of several world leaders.

Madathil was the hero who gave the KMCC a face of gravity and reckoning. He was a leader who had made many foes and had lost many things owing to his nature of ‘telling it as it is’ to the face. I had the good fortune of getting acquainted with Mustafa Sahib

when I began to participate in the activities of Chandrika Readers' Forum in 1982.

One cold night in November 1982, a meeting of the Chandrika Readers' Forum was underway at the Dubai residence of Haris Haji who was the president of the Dubai committee at that time. The meeting was presided over by Madathil. In the middle of the presidential address, I stood up to ask a mischievous question. There was no change of expression on the face of the well built man. He maintained his seriousness and merely gestured to me to sit and continued with his address. At the end of the speech, he asked me to repeat the question. Feeling slighted and belittled, I had forgotten the question. He then smiled. The sudden smile that appeared on his grave countenance drew me towards him. The man who maintained personal relations with several people like me played a great role in our growth.

The other distinguished personalities who played leading roles in KMCC during the time of Mustafa Sahib included Haris Haji, Tahirkutty Sahib, Abdulla Master tenhipalam, Hanifa Sahib, Moideen Sahib Kottakkal, Dr. Ahmed Sharif and T.K. S. Pookoya Thangal. Among them, all except Dr. Sharif and Moideen Sahib have left us after completing their tasks.

Mustafa Sahib seemed to reel under some kind of disenchantment and depression in the days after he left the Gulf. He was seen to be sad. He stayed away from public life. The circumstances leading up to the departure of the man who had been a luminary in the social and cultural spheres of UAE were not pleasant. The fact that some colleagues whom he had considered as his siblings deserted him in the last moment had made him restless. Yet, there were thousands who loved him.

Madathil Mustafa was an embodiment of a lifetime dedicated to work and action. He reached Abu Dhabi in the early years of migration and was a rare source of knowledge and inspiration among the people who came in those early stages. He spent the better part of his life for the sake of expatriates and the community.

As an employee holding a high position in an American company, he could have kept his family with him and confined himself to a private life of his own. But he derived pleasure in setting aside his

high wages for the sake of the community and the under privileged.

The efforts he put in to resurrect the Abu Dhabi Indian Islamic Centre, which was also facing crisis and trouble like the KMCC, and making it an institution of great social significance have been recorded in golden letters. As vice president of the Islamic Centre, he liaised with various organizations and strove to make the activities of the Islamic Centre popular and well accepted.

He used to involve vigorously in the problems and difficulties of ordinary people and used to rush to be by the side of the ailing and the sick. It was he who used to enquire and learn about the ailment even before the relatives and then do the needful to help them.

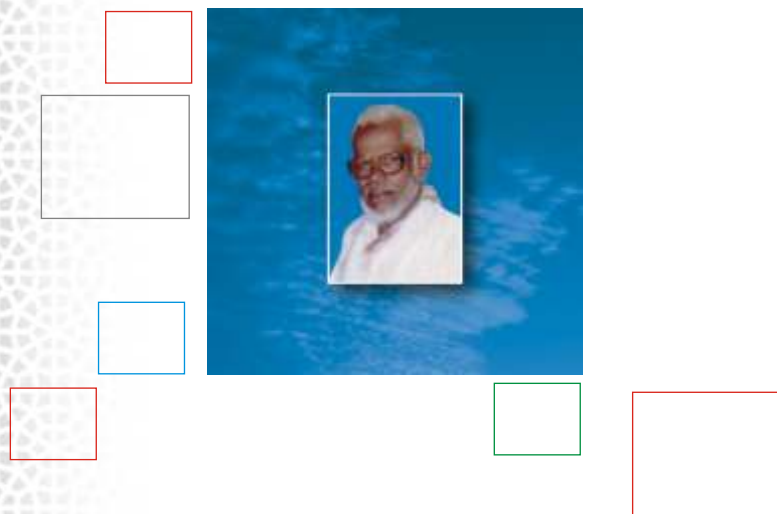
Even while parting at midnight after day long activities, there will be a circle of friends with him. Every night, the dinner was sponsored by him.

Even as people won many things through sycophancy and personality worship, he humbly refused to accept the various chairman positions that the Muslim League offered him lovingly. They were all positions that he truly deserved to hold.

Once when Muslim league leaders had come on a visit to Abu Dhabi, Madathil, who at that time was not holding any important position, had the daring to demand an apology from a business tycoon who had slighted and ignored him.

When he quit his job, he started a business in Electra, which failed. He then spent some time serving as the manager of Al Noor School, built by the management of the Islamic Centre which was established by his efforts and hard work.

Finally, after he left Abu Dhabi, he confined himself to the activities of Kannur Muslim Jamaat. Madathil Mustafa is a rare beacon of light who devoted his life to serving people selflessly even when he was surrounded by selfish men. He served the community to the maximum he could do in a lifetime and always held his head high. For more than a quarter century he was the Abu Dhabi Malayali community's pillar of pride.



K. C. – the wordsmith who receded into the shadows

The historical monument has withdrawn into the marquee of time leaving all those who loved him with loads of memories to fondle, love and remember. History is a mirror of the society and the historical personality of K. C. Abubaker Moulavi was a mirror of the Muslim community.

At a time when it was impossible to even dream of becoming a panchayat member, K. C. Came into the League and created thousands of Panchayat members and leaders without aspiring to become one himself. He departed without even stopping anywhere in the corridors of power. The uncrowned king who ruled the hearts of his people, the emperor of political satire relinquished his position after handing down innumerable stories of value and pride. Like fathers telling stories to their children, he used to tell stories about Seedhi Sahib and Quaid-e-millet to the League cadres and whip up their enthusiasm. The League members could sit for hours to listen to those stories wrapped in humour.

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My heart whimpers as I recollect the days when I used to go with my father to Paravannur Parammal and Mattathur to hear K.C.'s speeches. Quaid-e-millet's watchword of "a proud identity" and his physical proximity gave a sharp edge to K.C.'s words. He had always taken pride in the opportunity he had got to work closely with Seedhi Sahib, Baqali THangal, K. M. Moulavi and C. H.K.C. used to proclaim that the green flag would flutter in the ramparts of central governance in Delhi some day. The historical moment of E. Ahmed taking oath of office as the Minister of State for External Affairs was the realization of this great dream.

My heart strings had quivered when I read C. P. Saithalvi's article in Chandrika about the moment of embrace between the mentor K. C. Abubaker and the protégé, the new central minister from Muslim League as a moment that stood still on the banks of Chaliyar. My eyes had welled up. It was an indescribable moment in history that witnessed the silent salutations of thousands of people.

KMCC sought the opportunity to honour the great personalities who had made sacrifices for the sake of the community as part of the celebration of the IUML's golden jubilee in Perinthalmanna by the Malappuram district committee of League, only with the intention to show the immense love and respect KMCC had for K.C. I hold the opportunity I had to honour and present a mementoto K. C. Abubaker Moulavi in the august presence of State Muslim league President Panakad Sayid Muhammadali Thangal as one of the greatest fortunes of my life.

It was only because of K.C.'s sharp, witty oratory skills that could shoot down any criticism that arose against his cultural tradition and institution that communism failed to gain strong roots in Malabar.

The communists even staged plays which they used as shields against his satirical darts. He was a great figure who took the message of the Muslim League to every nook and corner of Malabar.

When the UAE national committee of KMCC decided to honour K.C., they assigned me with responsibility of carrying out the task. When I went with Syed Shihab Ali Thangal to K.C.'s residence in

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Areecode to present him the memento, K.C. was waiting at the gate to receive us along with Mecheri, C. P. Saithalvi, P. V. Mohammed Areecode, Vandur Hyderali and other Areecode League heads.

In the midst of reminiscing the past he came to me and pointed to my head and asked Mecheri, 'Is his hair coloured or real?' and stroked my head. The memory of that light moment makes my heart brim with emotion.

Mecheri left us early. His mentor, K. C. too departed within two years. He left behind an unfulfilled dream of seeing the Muslim League gain ground and strength in North India. Even during his last days, in his state of semi consciousness, he uttered the name of Quaid-e-millet and Seethi Sahib. The life of the man who imbibed the tenets of the Muslim league till his death is a glorious lesson to the new generation.



Shihab Thangal with KMCC UAE President Dr.rahman Puthur



Forfeiting a life in the Mujra delusion

Although there is no direct connection between the traditional Mujra and expat Indians, the 'record dance' that takes place in star hotels here in the name of Mujra has pushed many expatriates to the brink of destruction. Scores have fallen victim to this and have forfeited their lives as a consequence.

In many places the Mujra has been modernized. The record dance has been substituted by Indian Disco bands.

A Mujra diwana is one who offers a garland to his favourite dancer on the floor. When young dancers brought from Mumbai make luscious moves to the tunes of tapping Indian film songs, the poor Indian audience lavishes garlands, flower bouquets and currencies on them, not realizing that what they are losing in the bargain is their own lives.

Garlands and bouquets are easily available in the night clubs. They can cost up to 100 or 200 hundred Dirhams in some night clubs. When the dancer who receives the garland hands out her phone

number (cleverly concealed in her body) to the diwana, and the man gives her his number, the Mujra story enters the second level. It marks the beginning of a short lived romance and the devastation of a family in the background. A flurry of phone calls ensues and when the dancer invites the man to her shows every day, the poor diwana imagines to have conquered the world. He buys garlands for his momentary lover girl by borrowing, and selling his possessions.

Bars and night clubs exist in all the Emirates of the UAE. It is to cater the customers from Europe and Africa that the managements of these hotels have granted them a silent nod. However, it is an unfortunate reality that bars and night clubs mostly have Indian expats for customers.

What this society, eager to embrace a western culture by melding in the glitter of the Petro dollar, is forgetting is its own past. What they are destroying in the course of their thoughtless acts is the future of their own and their families. How many families have lost everything to this Mujra fad and left the shores of the Gulf tearfully?

The Mujras happen in venues that have images and pictures of eminent characters from Indian history and culture, and artwork depicting cultural centres like Nalanda, Thakshashila, Red Fort and the Qutub Minar. The organizers attempt to give this scam a cultural face and tone, so much so that even the names have a historical resonance. With names like Mughal-e-Majlis, Mughale-Darbar, even culture seems offensively marketed and sold.

There are three to four night clubs in every star hotel. They are segregated as European, African, Asian and Persian. It seems it is the Indian Mujra that attracts the maximum customers or 'prey'. The crowd of people streaming to these centres would remind one of herds of camels scrambling towards a water source in the desert. That could be the reason why a Mujra organizer cheekily said that the song 'saare jahan se acha hindustan hamara' by Iqbal might have been written with this in mind. How does one respond to this except with a prayer that the poet described as the 'Nightingale of the East' pardons them for their folly?

A friend from Palakkad was running a spare parts store of an Arab

in the Deira area of Dubai. Hooked to the Mujra, he initially spent his salary and commission on buying garlands for the dancers. Later he began to use the transaction money in the store for this purpose. When he ran short of cash to lavish the dancers with presents, he pledged many of his possessions. Eventually, when he realized that his Arab boss would take legal action and get him behind bars, he chose the easiest route to escape – suicide!

The incident related to the Mujra that took place in Fujairah was a hot topic of discussion for long.

Two Indian Mujra enthusiasts caught involved in a scuffle at a Mujra. One of them, a Malayali, was injured and admitted in the hospital and the other man, from Mumbai ended up in jail. What led to the brawl between the two men was this - Rugmini was the favourite dancer of the man from Bombay. Enticed by the tantalizing looks, moves and gestures of Rugmini, he became a constant fixture at her Mujra, thus becoming a permanent diwana. On the day of the fight, he saw the Malayali man garlanding his favourite woman, and unable to bear the sight and contain his emotions in his inebriated state, he struck the Malayali in the head with a whisky bottle. How many such dismal stories of self destruction, loss and ruin of family lives, thanks to the Mujra addiction!





The extravagant face of Gulf life

The Gulf is a play ground of absolute wastefulness. The spendthrift expat doesn't realize that the sands are shifting under his feet. Like a herd of camels moving aimlessly in the desert, the expat community too moves without a sense of direction or purpose.

While they are busy squandering the wealth they have made after sacrificing the best years of their life at the altar of toil, they do not realize the hard truth that their petro dollar fortune may not last forever. There are innumerable stories of men who have built mansions by painstakingly collecting even the smallest denominator of the currency and later when they have lost their jobs struggled to maintain those dream homes. Instances of such men having had to sell their property and going into financial ruin are plenty and the villages in Kerala are familiar to such unfortunate spectacles.

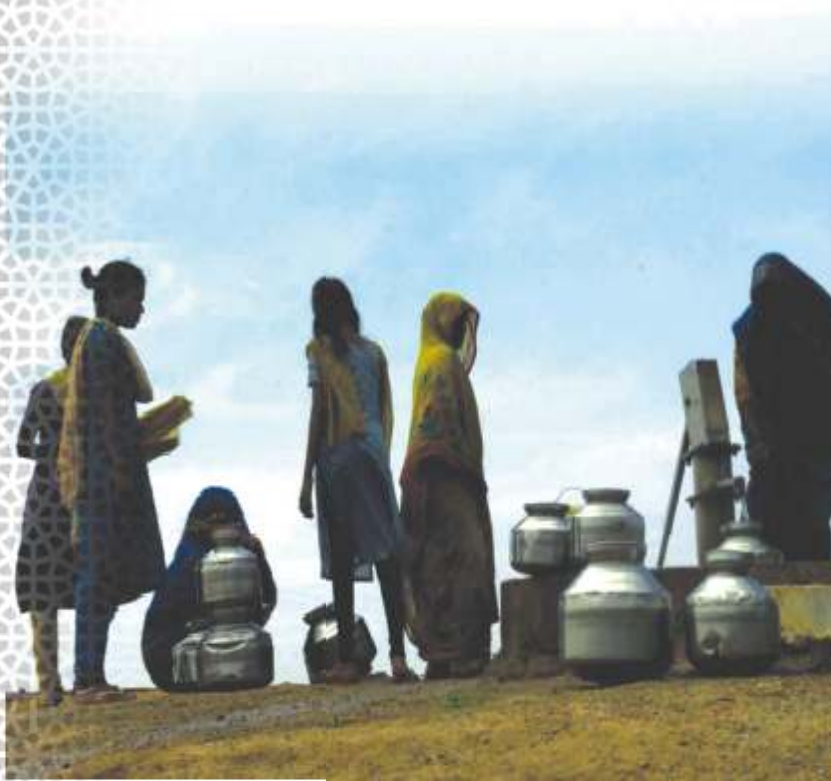
There are some Gulfees who consider not celebrating their

birthdays and wedding anniversaries in a grand manner a disgrace. They do not think twice before spending thousands of Dirhams on such celebrations that remind one of the wedding festivities of older times back home, where tents with elaborate decorations and illumination are put up and the occasion is celebrated to the din of loud music and partying. It is considered a slight to one's self esteem and image if the birthday cake is not ordered in from the bakeries of five star hotels. It is a part of 'diplomacy' to invite actors and Mullas to the parties hosted by these Indian expats.

These people who observe death anniversaries with the same grandeur of a wedding anniversary also try to get the event some newspaper coverage. Most women attend these anniversary parties as if they were at a fashion show. Many of them are in costumes that would remind one of beauty pageants and beauty queens. Their behaviour and private conversations often reveal their loatheness to even attend to their children who they consider a liability.

While on one side the affluent Malayali expats revel in their extravagance, hordes of Malayalis on the other side are leaving the shores of the Gulf. I look forward to a day when these spendthrifts who are living in the artificial shadows provided by the petro dollar return to the seething realities of life. When and if this shade of comfort that has nurtured the life of the Malayali is lost, Kerala, especially Malabar, will turn into an empty, arid land. But then, who has the time to reflect on these hard truths?

These people who observe death anniversaries with the same grandeur of a wedding anniversary also try to get the event some newspaper coverage. Most women attend these anniversary parties as if they were at a fashion show.



ADB, Lavlin and the Hawala

The left front is a representation of hypocrisy and paradoxes. It is strange that people when they are in power, spread the red carpet to any multinational, monopolistic corporate lobby and when they are out of power hold rallies against corporations and become ambassadors of working class affiliation.

Once, these people who had opposed computerization quoting the interests of the working class had fought against ADB during UDF rule. (Courtesy of Manjalamkuzhi Ali) How benevolently did they handle the issue of ADB loan when the same Achuthanandan and his party came to power! It seems the left is implementing a sanitized ADB contract by replacing the so called anti people foreign consultancy with the local consultancy of Kodiyeeri. What an act of cheating in broad day light this is!

It was the Nayanar government which had initially made a contract with the Asian Development Bank. It was on 15th October 1998, when Finance Minister Sivadasa Menon submitted a

proposal to the then Minister of Finance at the Centre, Yeswant Sinha that the first initiation was made for this at the governmental level. Based on this, a high level team from ADB had camped in the capital from 30th August to 1st September and had held discussions with Nayanar and other members of his cabinet. The concept document made on the basis of these discussions between ADB and the Nayanar government was recognized by the ADB with the recommendation of the Mentral Minister of finance.

Later, when the Antony, Oomen Chandy governments came to power and proceeded with the ADB contract, they discovered the Marxist party's double play strategy, which then started its fight against the ADB loan. DYFI activists held and manhandled the ADB officials in the same premises of the five- star hotel adjacent to the legislative building where the Marxists had hosted a dinner party some time ago.

It was before the quasi solidarity advocates (who went around explaining that they had voted for the Marxists only to stop the entry and emergence of corporates and dynasties) could even express regret over their pronouncements that the Left gave away the whole state to the ADB bank in which more than 50 American and European companies hold shares. Madhyamam, expressing its regret and displeasure over this in the editorial published on 27th February, 2007, had called for the Left to end its hypocrisy. It has to apologize to the public for openly admitting that the giant of ADB started by Nayanar government was completed by Achuthanandan and for supporting the injustice.

The Marxist party has always had a dual approach to multinational corporations. Outwardly they criticized the conglomerates to please labourers in the head load, bidi and fishing industries, while inwardly they took a soft, positive stance towards the followers of Ambani, TATA, Birla, Manjalamkuzhi Ali and their ilk. Many years ago, when industry minister, T. V. Thomas invited the Thapar group to set up an industry in Kerala, the CPM had incited the working class to fight the entry of the business group. Later when Nayanar became the Chief Minister, the same Marxists were at the forefront of bringing in the Thapar group.

It was during Nayanar's rule that Coca-Cola was given a red

carpet welcome to set up their plant in Palakkad. While they fight the company and go to court against their excess use and exploitation of ground water in Plachimada, the Marxist party conveniently forgets that they themselves had brought the company here and allowed them to set shop. The granting of the natural resources and the Chaliyar basin to the Birlas by the first communist government was also an aspect of the same double speak. The inside story of Buddadeb Bhattacharya's government in Bengal granting acres of land to the TATAs is not different either. The people who spread red carpet to any multinational when they are in power will oppose even their own countrymen when they are out of power. That is CPM's typical style!

Continuing with the same approach the government granted permission to contract Lavlin for the privatization of the hydro-electric plants in the state. The priority given was more to corruption and less to public good. The then Electricity Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had accepted all the terms and conditions of SNC Lavlin and the Canadian Development Agency. However, it was without considering the orders given by the departments of law and finance that the Chief Minister made the announcement to award the file no. 1081/B2/98 PD contract to Lavlin. It was on the 3rd of March that the cabinet decided the awarding of contract and the chief secretary accepted it – all in one day. Without getting into the details of the contract or the oddness of its execution, may I ask a question – as pointed out in a complaint to VSPB, where is the 100 crores that Lavlin had promised (as commission to the middleman) to Malabar Cancer Centre? It is when this question rises that the report carried on 23rd February by a newspaper from Dubai about a letter sent from the Kozhikode headquarters of the Enforcement Directorate to former Electricity Minister and CPM general secretary and accused in the cartridge case, Pinarayi Vijayan, Minister Thomas Isaac and Paloli Mohammed Kutty alleging that they have received close to 100 crores in hawala becomes relevant. The letter demands to know how the money that flowed into their accounts from various banks were channeled and distributed. It was when CBI was investigating the entry of about 770 crores of hawala money into Kerala that this discovery of Lavlin kickback

having come in through the hawala route was made. It was through the account of Centurian Bank in Mumbai that the money reached Kerala. The newspaper report says that money which came into the accounts of two Ministers was then transferred to Pinarayi Vijayan's account. It seems the bank accounts of CPM leaders are now under the CBI's scanner. The news report says that even the CPM's TV channel has received a portion of the hawala money.

It is the realization that there are powerful politicians behind the Lavlin graft case which incurred a loss of 375 crores to the state exchequer that has prompted the high court to order a CBI inquiry into the case.

We were a little late in realizing the truth behind the silence of the garrulous V. S. even before live cartridges were found in the bag of Pinarayi Vijayan, the man who was running a corrupt racket that could buy out the entire state.

What ceremonies are the ministers and their wives who do rituals to wash off their sins and thwart enemies going to perform to save this state? Thinking of the present day plight of the party once led by men like AKG, EMS and Krishna Pillai, one is glad that they are not alive to see the current goings-on in the party.



Shihab Thanga with Deputy Ruler SH. Hamad Bin Saif Al Sharqi and with the Govt Officials



Voting rights – a dream come true for Indian expats

Voting rights for overseas Indians has been a matter of serious political debate for decades now. The Indian government has finally been benevolent to Non Resident Indians after a long period of demands, protests, political interventions and waiting. Voting rights for NRIs is finally becoming a reality.

The central government has decided to issue a special ordinance soon after the current parliamentary session recommending a constitutional amendment of the representation of the people act, 1951, which would allow expat Malayalis to exercise their franchise in the next Lok Sabha elections.

What motivated the government to arrive at this decision, though belated, are the concerted efforts of the KMCC and various other NRI organizations in the Gulf States to win the rights for Indians living abroad. In August 2002, the Kerala assembly unanimously passed a private members' bill calling for an amendment to the Representation of People's Act 20 A, introduced by advocate K. N.

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A.Kadhar, at the behest of the KMCC. As a consequence, the central government was also recognizing the constant demand by the state government to allow overseas Malayalis their right to vote.

While Chief Minister Oomen Chandy feels the satisfaction of having fulfilled a promise that the UDF government had made to the Malayali expat community, the latter feels grateful to the government for the recognition.

This newly won privilege is being viewed by the Gulf Malayalis as a New Year present from the government. That the sons of our soil who were born in India, hold an Indian passport, have gone abroad to earn a living, yet return home regularly to spend time with their families don't enjoy voting rights in their own country is an incomprehensible oddity. The Indian who sweats blood in the other country to build cities in the desert, does it all for the sake of his mother land. The glory of our nation, especially of Kerala, is the outcome of his hard toil.

The right to vote is the privilege of the Indians who hold up the economy of India, not an obligation handed out by the government. The current law states that those overseas Indians who are citizens of the country can vote if they are in station on the election date. It amends the existing rule of allowing only those Indians present in the country at the time of tabulation of voters' list and instead proposes to add the names all Indians who have gone abroad to make a living in the voters' list.

In spite of adding the names, how many Indians can come to their constituency at the time of elections to cast their vote is a moot question. While we welcome this decision by the government granting us the rights, I would like to bring to the notice of those concerned that this by itself cannot entirely give overseas Indians a chance to express or register their fundamental rights.

What the Indians living abroad are hoping to receive is the right and convenience to cast their ballot from their country of residence. Either a postal ballot or a computer aided voting system with the support of the Indian embassies could be tried out. Countries like Philippines, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Russia,

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Indonesia and Iraq have successfully employed this method.

The UDF government, especially Chief Minister Oomen Chandy, Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahmed and representatives who always stood by the NRIs in their decades-long fight for voting rights have won them a glorious privilege fundamental to a citizen. The Indian expat community will gratefully remember this forever. Even as this dream becomes a reality, it will recognize those who maintain a tight lipped silence.



King's College Hospital – Unforgettable memoirs

24th February, a day I will forever remember, it's the day I received a call early morning from King's College Hospital to reach the hospital immediately. I was not expecting my liver transplant so soon and since I was put up in an apartment in Kensington, more than an hour's drive, I took a quick shower, and was on my way with my mind churning dangerously and speedily like the wheels of the car I was sitting in. Though the weather was cold, I was sweating and in some world of my own.

Fortunately my dear boss Mr. George Bajk was in London, an angel in disguise. Aruna informed him about the call from hospital. He and our London office in charge Mr. Harry with Mr. John, rushed to the hospital, leaving the meeting they were attending halfway.

As soon as I reached the hospital, the liver co-ordinator, Ms. Wendy who was waiting for me rushed me to the ward where the sister in charge took my bloods and prepared me for surgery. Prof Nigel Heaton who would operate on me sent me his team member to talk to me and prepare me fully for the coming surgery. He informed me that they have a cadaver

which is matching my liver size perfectly, and too small for the other on list patients. He explained to me the full procedure of the surgery and the risks involved. He said that every surgery has its own risks and especially in a major operation such as this the risks are great but he assured me I was in good hands. I signed my compliance to the surgery and soon my boss was with me who did not allow me to linger on my worries but changed the mood as he spoke about Fujairah and business. Till today I don't remember what we spoke about but he did say to me everything will be alright, I told myself as I cried inside that if I had a second birth, I will definitely be with His Highness and you again, this is my prayer. Soon I was taken to the theatre where my boss and companions left me. Professor Heaton, who is the best liver surgeon in the world, Professor O'Grady and their team with their magical gifted hands started the procedure to give me a second chance in my life with the grace of Almighty.

Now I am on my way to recovery and when my doctors visit me they tell me that I am very fortunate and recovering quite well without any complications and risks. When I heard this, I was thinking why not? Thousands and thousands of people are praying for me abroad and back home for my speedy recovery. I sincerely believe that my leaders, colleagues, friends and family are praying for me to get well and return amongst them. I do not know how to thank all of them for their prayers.

Prof.Heaton,Prof O'Grady,Dr.Patel and the nurses Sr.Haely,Helga, Nathaniel,Basheeru, Sharon and others who made entrance in my second life will hold a special place in my heart. There are no words to describe my thanks to each one of you. And especially to the donor's family who would like to stay anonymous and to whom I owe my life. THANK YOU!!!



With Hon' Foreign Affairs (State) Minister E Ahmed, during his visit to London