



# ELDERS' VOICE

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

FEBRUARY  
2023

*News Bulletin of*  
Senior Citizens' Forum Kottayam

*Editor*  
Pushpa Mathew

## President's Message

**Dr. Joseph Cherian**

Friends,

The wonderful events of songs and festivities coordinated by John and Lissy Kunnath made our annual Christmas event glitter. Manoharan's red-cheeked and cheery- visaged Santa Claus was a veritable treat. The abundance of the feast which followed, made the Christmas celebration complete. We can now only look forward to another year to go by to have such a wonderful celebration. As someone remarked, our group of elders presented a very cohesive facade of fellowship and friendship in these Christmas celebrations.

A big thank you to each of the choir members, who did an excellent job of singing the Christmas carols, despite having had very little practice. Also the solos rendered by George Isaac, Elizabeth Philip and Lissy Kunnath deserve special mention. Much appreciate the message by Rev Koshy Mathews and the closing remarks made by John Kunnath. A gracious acknowledgement to Rev Koshy Mathews for his Christmas tree and Maya for her beautiful quilted decoration, which added to the festive appearance. Special thanks are due to P I Mani and V G Shyam, who scouted around for a much needed audio system and procured one with collar mikes, which will make our future meetings more audible.

An environmental tragedy of unprecedented scale is being visited upon the Uttarakhand town of Joshimath perched on the Himalayan foothills. Over seven hundred roads and buildings have broken up. The local administration has evacuated scores of families to temporary shelters. Thousands of the

local people and entrepreneurs are staring at an uncertain future. ISRO using satellite imagery has shown that the entire area is subsiding. The Federal Government has stamped Joshimath, a "land slide subsidence zone".

Joshimath has been a disaster waiting to happen. Its population rose by nearly 50 times in the last century, increasing the pressure on land, leading to uncontrolled construction activities. Successive governments ignored warnings by experts and continued to push big 'development' projects which include highways and hydro-power schemes, without considering the environmental vulnerability. Joshimath is also an entry point for pilgrims to Himalayan holy sites. Besides, it is on the way to the Valley of Flowers- a UNESCO World Heritage Site- and is near Auli, a popular skiing destination.

In 1976, a committee headed by the then Garhwal Commissioner M.C. Mishra prepared a detailed report which recommended examining the stability of the site mandatory for any major construction in the area. The committee also prohibited digging or blasting in the area. It recommended plantations in vulnerable stretches and emphasized a blanket ban on collecting construction material from within the township. But all of these were ignored. Construction of a 520 MW hydro power project, cutting into the mountains to build a 12-km long tunnel was the proverbial last straw. The impending disaster has woken up the state government, and it has ordered all private and public construction in the town to stop.



Prayer song  
by George & Soosy Isaac



Solo by  
Lizzy Kunnath



Closing remarks by  
Mr John Kunnath

# Editor's Musings

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

We all enjoyed an exceptionally entertaining Christmas programme on 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023. A singularity of this meeting was that the ladies, who attended, far out-numbered the gents! A beautiful Christmas tree lent by Rev Koshy Mathews and a gorgeous quilted Christmas tree by Maya Cherian, set the tone for the day's festivities.

The programme began with a beautiful prayer-song by our singing couple – George & Soosy Isaac, followed by an inspiring message from Rev Koshy Mathews about experiencing epiphany in our lives.

Then followed a series of music and songs. Kudos to Lissy John, who selected appropriate songs and circulated them with their music and lyrics, so that

everyone could practice by themselves at home. The result was a melodious performance by the singers, all colorcoordinated, despite having very little group practice. Thank you, Lissy and the entire choir.



There were also some terrific solo performances by George Isaac, Elizabeth Philip, John Kunnath and Lissy John. And during the last carol, in walked Father Christmas himself with his distinctive "Ho-ho-ho", winning thunderous applause from all the members! Congratulations to versatile Manoharan, who made a very entrancing Santa!

Finally, Mr. John Kunnath made the closing remarks saying that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ, just as we celebrate the birthdays of Mahatma Gandhi, Shree Narayana Guru etc. He suggested that instead of the word, Christmas, which has Latin origins, we could call it Shri Yesu Jayanti.

After the Vote of thanks and National Anthem, everyone enjoyed a sumptuous dinner of soup, fried rice, chili chicken, vegetable korma and Christmas cake. About 50 members participated in the day's festivities and were all impressed by the excellent arrangements made by the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer to ensure that everybody had an enjoyable time. Three cheers for the three of them!!!

Until next time then,

Answer to last month's quiz "Guess who is this?":

**Mr George Isaac.**

## Guess who is this?



The Carol group



Vote of thanks by A M Mathew



Elizabeth Philip with Maya's quilted X'mas tree in the background



Father Christmas



# A JOURNEY TO SEE 7 SISTERS - PART 2

Rani Mathew

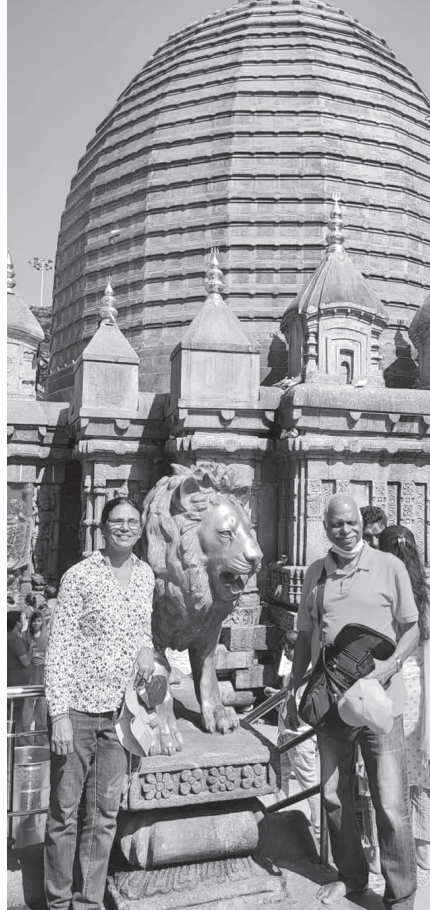


On arriving Guwahati airport from Chennai, we were welcomed by the guide arranged by the tour company. After dinner, we had a peaceful sleep. Next day morning we got ready to start the tour. A special bus was ready for us. As per the schedule, we had to finish touring Assam in two days.

Assam is a charming state in North East India, with a population of more than 3 crores. The official language is Assamese. Assam shares inter state boundaries with Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal. The Capital of Assam is Dispur since 1973. Dispur is a suburban locality of Guwahati. Earlier, Shillong was the capital, until Mizoram was carved out of Assam.

Assam is known for its wild life, tea plantations and paddy fields giving scenic beauty. Recently cultivation of rubber also has been started there. There are beautiful hilly areas, waterfalls, places for river rafting, kayaking, trekking, rock climbing etc.

Generally, weather is good with cool winds blowing from



At the Kamakhya temple

Himalayan foot hills. Assam is also known for wild life and arche-

ological sites.

Guwahati is the largest city in Assam. There are many famous temples like Kamakhya temple, Umanada temple and more. Kamakhya temple is dedicated to Devi Kamakhya and is on top of Neelachal hill. Umananda temple is located on a beautiful island called peacock island surrounded by the mighty Brahmaputra.

Guwahati is located on the banks of river Brahmaputra and also in the foothills of Assam. The river flows with abundant beauty. For the local people it is a sacred river. Ancient temples, the scenic beauty of the Brahmaputra, and its unique culture make this place one of the best tourist places in Assam. Assam is also famous for its tea and silk.

Assam is a land of great wild life. A holiday in Assam will not be complete without visiting the world famous Kaziranga national park with the presence of great Indian one horned Rhinoceros. Kaziranga national park is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites in India. It is 300 kms away from Guwahati.

We travelled through the park in a special Jeep provided by the forest department. During the tour we were lucky to spot Rhinos at a distance. Elephants and other animals were also seen at different places.

Our Assam tour ended there and we all returned to the hotel for the next day tour.

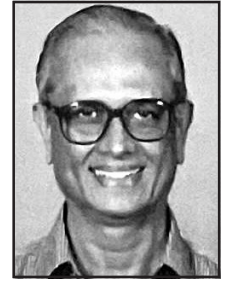
(To be continued)



Message by Rev Koshy Mathews

# STREET DOG MENACE - PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO LIVE PEACEFULLY

M. Gopinathan



We cannot get away from the problem by shutting our eyes from it. This problem has been with us for a very long time. It cannot be a problem unique to Kerala. As the conditions in which we live are not very different, the proliferation of street dogs & the problems arising from it, should be there in other states also.

But how come, Kerala dogs are catching the national attention all the time? The answer could be the high literacy levels here, which contributes to the awareness of our people, on all issues, including the canine menace. Secondly, we are quite aware of our rights & the duties of the govt. towards the problems faced by the citizens. Hence, the decibel levels are quite high, here; unlike in other places, where the poor common citizens have given up. Here, in Kerala,

people are fighting back & pointing out the failings of the state. They will not rest until the authorities wake up & attend to their problems. This is a good example of Democracy at work.

It is reported that more than 9500 people in Kerala have been bitten by dogs during the last eight months. Around 20 people have lost their lives, too! Statistics show that India accounts for 36% of deaths from rabies. There are around 1.6 crores stray dogs in India, of which about 3 lakhs are in Kerala. It is said that in the year 2021, nearly a lakh of people were bitten by stray dogs. I know cases, where people on a morning walk have been bitten by stray dogs. One theory is that street dogs are perennially hungry & are constantly searching for food, which results in attacks by packs

of dogs on infirm, old people & little children. They are most dangerous when they are in packs. We must remember, that these dogs are the descendants of the wild dogs in the forests. So, they naturally have that instinct to attack for food.

Have you ever thought, why in a forest, the numbers of any animal is not beyond, what it can accommodate? When the number increases & food becomes scarce, they die. Moreover, all animals have natural enemies, who attack & kill them. Even the cheetah has a natural enemy in the lion. Thus nature balances everything, through its own process of elimination.

In our town & cities, we do not have a natural process of elimination. We have celebrities & dog lovers, who step in when a dog is hit by a passing vehicle. If they feel so sorry for the stray dogs, why are they not coming forward to adopt them or provide dog shelters? No, that is a lot of work. Giving advice is easy! Feeding the street dogs without providing them shelter is not the right way. No civilized society allows dogs to stray on the streets. They are caught & kept in pounds for adoption. If no one adopts them, they are humanely put to sleep. Should we not look for solutions in a civilized & humane way?

Let us not stray away from street dogs. It is a real serious problem.

## WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY

*May your birthday and every day ahead be filled with the warmth of love, the joy of good health and blessings in abundance!*



Prof Santhakumari	2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb
Molly Benjamin	4 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Dr. K J Mathew	5 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Marykutty Varghese	5 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Molly Ipe	13 <sup>th</sup> Feb
M Gopalakrishnan Nair	13 <sup>th</sup> Feb
P C John	19 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Omana Abraham	20 <sup>th</sup> Feb
K S Kesavalier	21 <sup>st</sup> Feb
Kochashima Thomas	21 <sup>st</sup> Feb
John D Kunnath	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb