# DETROIT 

## MALAYALEE

## ASSOCIATION

## www．dmausa．org




Vol． 16 ｜Issue－ 02 ｜August 2023


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President＇s Message． ..... 02Sreekumar Kambath
จ๑พาตัวกา๒๓． ..... 03Saijan Kaniyodikal
கல゙ローロ。 ..... 05

 ..... 07
 ..... 11
 ..... 13


 ..... 14
ตேவிळ จ๐๕ะกั̆
 ..... 17

Fading Flowers A Collection of Memoirs． ..... 19
Rajeesh Vengilatt
 ..... 23

SECRETARY＇S REPORT． ..... 25
Praveen G．Nair
 ..... 29
கவி円 ..... 29
コしゃ๐30
33
Pavithra Manu Krishnan
THE BEST ACTOR． ..... 34
Chinmay Sujith Nair
ONAM COMICS． ..... 36
Vasudev Selvakumar


I'm really humbled and honored to write my message in the 2nd edition of this remarkable magazine "Dhwani". I'm really impressed with the dedication and all the hard work that goes into creation of each edition of this magazine which showcases the commitment to our malayalee community and fosters a sense of unity within ourselves. I really admire the talented writers who are from different age groups who share a wealth of information through their writings. I was really awestruck with a Onam comics put together by a young writer. It is awesome and you should not miss it. Our sponsors are listed in the magazine, requesting you all to support our sponsors and I would like to thank them for their generous support.

I'm at the risk of repeating myself from the 1st edition but it is really worth mentioning any number of times. I'm really honored to lead this great association which has been in the hands of great visionaries for the past 43 years. I take this moment to salute them all for their achievements.

One of the best aspect of our association is the commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of Kerala involving the next generation kids and the dynamic team of Executive Committee Members along with Women's Forum and the Youth Forum work hard throughout the year to conduct events like Picnic, Onam and Christmas there by bringing the Malayalee community of Detroit and suburbs together so that it creates a sense of home away from home for us.

This year we had a great star show "High On Music Extravaganza " with Vidhu Prathap as lead singer and the show was well received by the Malayalee community. We had a great Picnic and as you read this magazine you will be witnessing the much awaited Onam 2023 Poliga. There are more events to follow this year like Tech Day and Christmas. Requesting you all to participate and volunteer in our events. One of the aspects we the executive committee and women's forum unanimously agree on is the top priority we give for community outreach events. This year we have conducted a blood drive jointly with Versiti and Syro Malabar Church, our team participated in the Habitat for Humanity renovating a home at eastpointe in Michigan, Adopt a road event and also provided financial assistance to the needy both in this country and abroad. Also Women's Forum team organized a charity event at Pope Francis Center at Detroit serving for the homeless which is applaudable.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, Women's Forum and Youth Forum, wishing you all a very happy Onam and a blessed rest of the year.

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# ELERVDAY IUIVBH Buffel 



## Rajeesh Vengilatt

As usual, after school closed for the holidays, I returned to my village. The rain was pouring as if someone was endlessly sprinkling water from a jug. Enjoying and savoring the rain, I eventually had to return to Detroit, where a tiny sense of loss crept in. This time, I couldn't celebrate Onam in my village. The convenience of celebrating

Onam there faded as the school reopening dates coincided with the time I had planned to stay back.

When talking about Onam, one might say, "Onam... It's the grand fantasy of the Malayali community, a time
when we momentarily forget everything and eagerly await the arrival of King Mahabali. It is the beautiful dream of a prosperous utopia, as imagined by Malayalis... Today, all of that is hidden in the darkness of the past." A phrase heard long ago on a Tharangini Onam cassette, 'Everything is fading into the darkness of the past...' lingers in my mind, its fragments etched in memory."

These are the first words that come to mind every year when Onam arrives... The pattern hasn't changed, even today.

The childhood memories of running around and picking flowers in fields adorned with straw mats unfurl before my eyes. It is said that the colors of the green paddy fields and white skies are reflected in the flower arrangements.

This was taught to me by my guru, the king of artisans, Elayachan Raghupapan...

The flower competitions held every year without fail during Onam were always a source of excitement for us as children.

Preparations for them would begin on the first day of Onam, Avittam day.

Our friends, Anchan and Chitran, would figure out where to get more flowers for Onam.
"Hey, there are a lot of Thumbapoo (Leucas zeylanica
flowers) near Kumarattan's house next to the ration shop on the side street." - Anchan mentioned. This time, it seemed like we would have to plead with Naniyamma for permission to take some chemparathi
(hibiscus) flowers. "I don't think we can find them anywhere else," Anchan would chatter on about the places where we might find more flowers.

Our main competitors in the flower competitions were always the family of my father's elder sister. Mohanattan, their eldest son, was skilled at drawing. His drawings usually ended up becoming greeting cards for Christmas. He had an extraordinary knack for creating beautiful images, as if he could draw with his mind.

The magic of the floral carpets comes from the designs that Mohanattan and Raghupappan create. Both the households have been consistently winning prizes, alternating between first and second places.

The competition was organized by the local library. Winning a prize in the Onam flower carpet competition was no small feat. Usually, around twenty teams would compete. We would also visit the competition venue with

King Mahabali.
Most years, Premattan would dress up as King Mahabali. He would invariably manage to get leave from his military service for Onam.

Sugathattan would be the one coordinating the tiger dance. The judges for the flower carpet competition would also be present.

The flower carpets are laid out on the morning of the first day of Onam.

Most years, Raghupappan, who works at the Kochi shipyard, would arrive a few days early. Some years, he
would arrive just in the nick of time with the Kannur Express, just as the flower carpets are being prepared. There was always a sense of anticipation until he arrives. Once home, he would flash a small smile, then take a rough estimate of the available flowers and their quantities.
"Hmm... it seems we have fewer flowers this time...

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Don't blame me if we don't win," would be his customary warning every year.

On hearing this, grandma would arrive on the scene. "After waiting for you for several days, don't discourage him," she'd say.
"We'll see..." he would respond, staying silent for a long while, a piece of chalk in his hand. Then, he would begin to sketch the design for the flower carpet from one corner. The chalk would be borrowed from Rema teacher at Ashoka Vilasam L.P. School.


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"What are you planning to draw this time?" The kids would ask curiously.

Peace, Kerala, Maveli, women, children - these were the usual themes in the flower carpet designs.
"Let me draw, then we'll see," Raghupappan would respond, without lifting his face from the carpet.

There are quite a few rules for arranging flowers. Don't use leaves. The floor should not be visible through the flowers, purchasing flowers from the market will decrease the value - these are some of the long-standing rules.

For the Nel Vari (rice line), it's acceptable to use a part of the flowers. Debates over whether the Nel Vari falls into the leaf category occur annually.

We cannot pick Nel Vari from grandpa's paddy field. Usually, we pick from Kovalattan's field next to the cowshed, not visible through the gate. The rice gives strength to the flower arrangement. Mohanattan taught us how to lay it. "Don't spill this secret to our rivals," he used to caution while sharing the secret

Due to grandmother's rule to return home before the evening lamp is lit, sometimes we'd have to hurry the flower picking.

Once at home, flowers from the nearby houses will only be picked on the morning of the competition. I let the neighbors know beforehand. Jasmine, Hibiscus, Bougainvillea - these are the flowers we'd set out to pick in the morning.

On the day of the competition, about a dozen people will be seen picking flowers. While some are removing rice stalks, lightly breaking the hibiscus, and loosening the stalks of jasmine, the rest will slowly start arranging
flowers on the mat. Debates about which color goes to which part of the design

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2023
will ensue. Sometimes, the crushed hibiscus would be replaced with Bougainvillea flowers, and vice versa.

More often than not, the chenda (drum) performance with Mahabali arrives right next to our house every year. Small lamps would be lit around the flowers, coinciding with the arrival of Mahabali and his entourage.

The scent of flowers and the glow of lamp wicks remain in my memory as a poignant recollection.
"Aah... isn't this beautiful..." Mahabali would com-
ment, peering at the floral designs. You could hear grandmother replying from the background, "Look at him, he went around the whole village collecting flowers."

Mahabali would then approach, join us, and bless us. Whenever he does this in front of everyone, tears would unknowingly well up in my eyes.

We'd gather our friends and go out to admire the flowers. Upon returning home, we'd evaluate our work.
'This time we might win first prize, our flowers deserve a chance,' we'd say confidently. Then, there would be anxious anticipation until the results were announced.

The prize usually would be a set of glasses or a set of plates. This would be the ultimate prestige prize given in most of the prize distribution ceremonies. The most respected person in the village, a prominent officer named

Ananthattan, would typically present the prizes.

The prize-giving ceremony would take place on a stage set up near the Panakkadan pond. The sight of a
child stepping forward to accept the prize amid cheers brings back fond memories.

Then, one monsoon month, at twilight, while en route to the reading room after work, a snake bit Mohanattan. It was a swift journey towards death. It was a time when the reality of death was realized. I stood there,
unable to cry, staring at his lifeless body. It felt like I had lost a dear companion who used to walk with me through the alleys filled with poems and small pieces of literature, from cartoons to paper publications.

From the Onam days, filled with the poetry, literature, and music of Mohanattan and then Raghupappan. The many evenings we climbed Thamburan hill and gazed at the sky.

Everything fades into the oblivion of yesteryears.

There were many more Onams, many more flower carpets. All of them seemed like different ceremonies.

Only a few remain vivid in memory. But every time Onam arrives, the zest of old memories and the unity they bring imparts a fresh realization to everyone. It propels us forward...






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## Secretary's Report dma's Journey from chrismas 2022 to onam 2023

## Wish you all a Happy Onam!

As the Secretary of DMA for this year, I am pleased to present DMA's Journey from Christmas 2022 to Onam 2023. Please find below the major events and activities that our association has organized or participated in during this period.


Praveen G. Nair

## CHRISTMAS 2022:

We celebrated Christmas with a grand program named as "Divya Thaarakam" at St. Thomas Syro Malabar Church on December 17th. More than 150 families attended the event, which featured a wonderful Christmas Nativity Show, Christmas Carol, Arrival of Santa Claus, Music Medley, Cultural programs, and a delicious buffet. The highlight of the evening was the drama "Panchara Thankachante Christmas Raavu" directed by Sri. Boby Alappatt. The event was a huge success and received positive feedback from everyone. You can watch the highlights of our Christmas Programs, scanning the QR code.


VALENTINE'S DAY 2023:
DMA started the year 2023 activities with the Valentine’s Day - Family fiesta "Taj Dreamzz" on 18th of February, and the program was coordinated by Sri. Libin John and DMA Women's Forum. This was an evening of love and laughter. We also celebrated the Milestone Birthday of our EC Member Sri. Thomas Karthanal. There were various games, entertainment programs, a photo booth special buffet of Indian delicacies, along with wine and desserts. The highlight of the event was the satirical skit "Sthree Shaktheekaranam" directed by Sri. Saijan Joseph. You can watch the highlights by scanning the QR code on the side.



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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION:
DMA Women's Forums kickstarted their activities with International Women's Day Celebration on March 11th. The event was coordinated by Women's Forum President Smt. Boni Koithara and Secretary Smt. Priya Krishnan. There were games and activities to engage the Members and the team discussed the activities planned for the year 2023.


BLOOD DONATION DRIVE 2023:
Community Outreach is in the DNA of DMA. DMA in association with St. Thomas Syro Malabar Church, Southfield organized a Blood Donation Drive on April 29 to kickstart our charity and community outreach events for this year. The event was coordinated by Sri. Vinod Kondoor and it was done in partnership with Versiti. The event was a huge success and more than 50 people signed up for the Blood donation drive. DMA wants to thank all the people who signed for this noble cause.


## HIGH ON MUSIC 2023:

After the superhit "High on Music" Show in 2022, DMA organized High On Music 2023 with popular singers Vidhu Prathap, Jyotsna, Sachin Warrier and Arya Dhayal. This was another successful show for DMA this year. DMA EC Members Sri. Rajesh Kutty and Sri. Noble Thomas were the leads for this event. The event was held on May 19 @ Henry Ford II Performing Arts Center in Sterling Heights. DMA wants to thank our sponsors and the Malayalee community for making it a successful show.


HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PROJECT:
DMA and Habitat for Humanity believes that everyone deserves a decent place to live, and we partnered with Habitat for Humanity on July 1st, to rehab a home in Eastpointe, Michigan. The event was coordinated by DMA EC Members Sri. Sanju Koithara and Sri. Noble Thomas. DMA EC and Youth forum members along with the Habitat team spent a day to rehab the home for a low-income family.

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## SUMMER PICNIC:

DMA’s Annual Summer picnic was held on 15th July at Firefighters Park, Troy. The event was coordinated by DMA's past presidents and lead by Sri. Rojan Thomas. It was a fun-filled day with Barbeque specialties, "Naadan" Kerala food, face painting, fun games including Tug of war and Chess exhibition. This was a very successful event as many new members from the Malayalee community in Detroit came for the picnic. Scan the QR code to watch the highlights of our Sum-
 mer Picnic.


## ADOPT A ROAD:

One of DMA's ongoing initiatives for the past 10 years, is the Adopt a Road program, where DMA Members volunteer to clean up our designated stretch of the road (Dequinder Road between 14 mile \& Big Beaver on the East Side and Novi Road between 8 mile and Grand River on the West side). The event was coordinated by DMA EC Members Sri. Sanju Koithara (East Side) and Sri. Sam Mathew (West Side). As part of the event DMA Members cleaned up the designated stretch of the roads and thus giving back to the community, we live in. We believe that our community outreach events make us standout from other community organizations.


VOLUNTEER WORK @ POP FRANCIS CENTER:
DMA believes that "Service to the humanity is service to God". DMA Women's Forum Members did the volunteer work @Pope Francis Center, Detroit on August 12th. The Center provides vital services to individuals experiencing homelessness. They welcome nearly 200 guests per day and provide them, nutritious meals and other services including access to the doctors, dentists, lawyers, and housing. DMA is Thankful to Pope Francis Center for this opportunity and looking forward for more in the future.

That's all for me to report for now but as of this writing we are getting ready to celebrate Indian Independence Day and the preparations for our Onam program "Polika" are in full swing.

Once again, Wishing you all a happy and safe Onam!
Praveen G. Nair General Secretary.


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## I'm Afraid of Giving Hugs

I was raised in a loving household where physical affection was rare and verbal expressions of love were rare. While it may sound unusual to phrase it that way, that was the reality of my upbringing. Rather than placing blame on my parents, whose own upbringing in India was influenced by a culture that discouraged such outward displays of affection, I sought alternative pathways to communicate my feelings of love to both friends and family. I found myself navigating the complexities of expressing affection in unconventional ways, as the scarcity of hugs and the absence of "I love yous" became a constant in my daily life. This journey led me to the captivating language of food and the role it plays in my relationships.

In college I gained recognition as the cherished "mom friend" - the individual known for their unwavering willingness to provide comfort and sustenance. Though I may not consider myself a culinary master, the mere act of preparing nourishing meals for my peers during times of illness, exhaustion, or culinary monotony has become an exquisite display of affection. In college's fast-paced environment, even the simplest creation, like tomatoes and eggs infused with an assortment of spices, is celebrated as an exceptional culinary masterpiece. The moment I present these dishes to my friends, their voices ring out with immediate praise and adulation - a testimony to the love and care that I pour into every dish.

Admittedly, my chosen method of demonstrating affection may deviate from societal norms. The hesitation I feel towards physical touch, coupled with a reluctance to vocally express my love, has pushed me to find solace in the language of food. Through each carefully prepared meal, I convey a piece of myself, encapsulating the profound care and boundless love that reside within me.

While unconventional, this approach to affection has been met with open arms by those I hold dear. They recognize and appreciate that physical touch and verbal affirmations do not come naturally to me. Instead, they embrace the alternative path I have forged, acknowledging that my culinary expressions of love possess a unique potency. Their acceptance for this aspect of my character creates an atmosphere in which I feel profoundly valued and understood.

In conclusion, the way I was raised, with limited use of physical and verbal affection, guided me towards a unique pathway of expressing affectionthrough the medium of food. Embracing the nurturing role of the "mom friend" during my college, I found genuine fulfillment in crafting comforting meals as a gesture of care. Although it might not be the conventional route, it was met with wholehearted acceptance by those close to me, fostering a deeper sense of connection. Through the language of food, I not only bridged the gap that my hesitations had created, but also constructed a direct route to hearts, ultimately transforming an unconventional journey into a heartening bond of mutual understanding and love.


Chinmay Sujith Nair

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& \text { THE BEST } \\
& \text { ACTOR }
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In a neighborhood with houses that reeked of austerity, the humble abode of one Mr. Holland was no different. It had a couple of ill-placed windows and a demeanor of stillness that other houses of the same neighborhood shared. Every day, at eight in the morning, Holland made it a point to get out of his bed and live a systematic, monotone life. Holland wasn't very good at this, but he knew that in order to get his life together, he had to establish a routine. Routines were important; they allowed for some consistency in a world where randomness could make or break a man.

Holland worked at Iris Entertainment as a new employee and having observed the stoic and almost robotic nature of some of the higherups, wanted to imitate their behavior. Unfortunately, the industry Holland had joined was a dying one, and his pay was less than favorable. He was now on his way to attend an important meeting, in which the attendees would brainstorm ways to bring the struggling company back to its former glory. Doing so would mean more money on the payroll, and thus more food on everyone's plates.

As Holland left his house, his ever-wandering mind drifted to the action movie he watched last night. The ostentatious CGI and the flashy fight scenes had been mediocre, and the emotional scenes where the audience was supposed to be moved were downright pitiful. It would be arduous to try and create an experience that would rejuvenate the dying company when all the current actors were subpar and modern technology wasn't sufficient to seamlessly weave together fantasy and reality. Holland checked his watch as he walked on the concrete sidewalk that connected his neighborhood and his office. The digital display read: Friday, September 21st, 2040.

Holland, as he was approaching his office build-
ing thought of a dystopian book he had finished earlier in the week. In it, the inhabitants of a certain city were prisoners, but they were completely oblivious to their predicament. A quote in the novel went something along the lines of, "The best prisoners don't know that they are imprisoned." It had left a mark on Holland, and he had been thinking of that quote for the whole week. Suddenly, Holland thought of an idea that might help in bringing not just Iris Entertainment, but potentially the entire movie industry back to life. As Holland approached the room where the meeting would be held, a smile spread across his face.

Three years later, in a remote island off the coast of Great Britain, a cabin made of wood lay in the middle of a dense forest. Its only inhabitant was a man whose name had been forgotten by living memory. He had once lived in the city and worked for a company that was once booming with business but was now a shell of its former glory. He had sold all of his electronic possessions and had adapted to a life of living off the grid. He didn't use electricity or running water (he bathed in a nearby river), and he didn't use any vehicles other than a ramshackle bicycle. Every day was a new adventure for him; he didn't follow any kind of routine and thus could allow for flexibility and random chance to offset his life in one way or another.

This man, who had led a 'normal' life for the last twenty-nine years, had begun to see minute changes in the landscape all around him. On the path he took every day from his cabin to the ocean to go fishing, he observed that the forest seemed a little bit emptier with each passing day. This could only mean that trees were disappearing subtly. Furthermore, a faint emergence of a dirt path that diverged from the cabin-to-ocean path could also be seen. This was slightly off-putting to the man, who had gone down the same trail many times and was

investigate. Maybe some answers about what was going on would be found there.

The man headed up his usual path before turning right onto the smaller path that had appeared. He could feel his heart pounding like a drum with every step he took. His breath, which was always rough, now seemed to have developed a jagged edge to it. As the man walked slowly up the path, his heart started beating louder, almost as if it was straining to jump out of his chest. Adrenaline raced through him as his walk slowly turned into a jog. As the man finally approached the end of the path, he couldn't believe what was in front of him.

It was an exact copy of his cabin.
The man could have gone back toward his home and forgotten about the whole experience. However, along with the unnerving feeling of dread that was slowing taking over his body, there also lingered some curiosity. The man walked into the cabin. Inside, he found that it was arranged exactly like his own home. After taking a couple steps inside, he froze. On the wall was a symbol of an eye. It seemed to have been painted on, but that was not the strangest part about it. The eye was a dead ringer for the logo of the company that the man used to work for.
now even building a wooden pathway on it. Every day, the number of disappearing trees and the size of the dirt path became larger and larger until it simply couldn't be ignored. For the time being, though, the man didn't want to investigate.

One night, as the man was sleeping, he was awoken by a strange whirring sound outside of his cabin. The sound, which was machinelike, seemed like it was from a completely different world, and the man hadn't heard anything like it during his stay in the forest. There was not a single animal in the forest that could make even a remotely similar sound. Only one possible thing could have made that sound: a piece of machinery. The man was confused, since he had brought very few things from the outside world, and none of them were electronic. He was still skeptical about the nature of the sound, so he got up from his bed and went outside of his cabin. He looked around, only to see that everything was perfectly normal. That is, until the whirring sound started up again, this time closer to the cabin.

There was no mistaking it now. This was definitely a piece of machinery making that sound, which could only mean one thing: other people were on the island. The man remembered the dirt path that branched off from his usual route to the sea. He decided to finally go on that path and


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