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# MUZIRIS NEWS

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**TO INTRODUCE THE LEGACY OF KESARI BALAKRISHNA PILLAI, MUZIRIS HERITAGE PROJECT HAS CONVERTED HIS OLD HOME IN NORTH PARAVUR, INTO A HERITAGE MUSEUM.**



# We too are on ALERT!

In almost every part of the world, people are fighting the miseries that have resulted from the outbreak of COVID-19. Healthcare professionals, administrators, and social workers have been working day and night to make sure that people are safe. Strict laws and guidelines have been enforced. It is a long battle that is fought to ensure a safe world to live in.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) sends rolling updates on Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It has summarised the outbreak in the beginning as pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan, China. It was first reported to the WHO Country office in China on 31 December 2019. It was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. WHO announced a name for the new disease – COVID -19 – on 11 February 2020. Moreover, it later categorised the virus as a pandemic, looking at the alarming levels of spread and severity.

The launch of 'Safe Hands Challenge' by the government to promote the power of clean hands to fight the virus by encouraging people to clean their hands with soap or alcohol-based hand rub, continues to play a vital role in preventing the spread of the virus.

Along with the present crisis, the world also looks at the mounting impacts of pollution and climate change very seriously. The tough times we face now are lessons to be optimistic about restoring a pollution-free atmosphere, congenial for living.

As WHO says: 'The rule of the game is: never give up'. All countries must aim to stop transmission and prevent the spread of COVID-19, whether they face no cases, sporadic cases, clusters or community transmission.

'Let hope be the antidote to fear.

Let our shared humanity be the antidote to our shared threat'.

# TRAVEL CLASSIC

Ms Aline Dobbie visited the Alappuzha Heritage Project in early February this year. In her words, it was a pleasurable follow-up to the visit she made two years ago to the Muziris Heritage Project. Muziris, with its rich heritage, made it hugely exciting and informative for her.

Ms. Dobbie found Alappuzha a relatively new town of a mere three or four centuries old. Its origin, growth, and decline due to the coir industry enabled by cheaper labour and mechanisation fascinated her. While referring to the Alappuzha project as an impressive undertaking, she commended the efforts to retrieve and restore many of the old buildings and transforming them into several museums to indicate the history of the town. 'This, dovetailed with the renovation of the main canals and the newly made cycle paths and walkways will enhance Alappuzha. This could, with continued dedication and co-operation of the townsfolk and Kerala Government, become a charming Amsterdam-like a town with both canals and beaches and museums. Every form of restoration and clean up in India enhances the country, furthermore. Alappuzha can grow into a modern heritage city, and I sincerely wish the Project a highly successful conclusion.'

*Born and brought up in North India, Ms. Dobbie is the author of four books on India. She is a travel writer both for electronic sites and print media. India fascinates her, and she visits India annually to register life in and around the country. She also writes non-fiction, but mainly about India, on social issues and wildlife conservation. She received The Pride of India Gold Award for her promotion of India in 2006 from the NRI Institute of India.*

*She now lives in Scotland.*



# Kesari Balakrishna Pillai



**M**uziris Heritage Project conserves valuable properties in its museums. Various museums envisaged as part of the Muziris Heritage Project display items representing the culturally significant history of Kerala.

Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai was one of the foremost intellectuals of Kerala, whose far-sighted approaches enriched every aspect of the literary world in Malayalam. He lived the last seventeen years of his life at the ancestral house of his wife at Madavanaparambu, in North Paravur. This house has been turned into a museum. The Project has acquired a few original notebooks of Kesari. All of them will be made available for researchers and scholars soon after they undergo a preservation treatment.

Kesari was born on 13 April 1889 at Thiruvananthapuram. He was the first art critic and one of the most profound literary figures and firebrand publishers Kerala has ever seen. He started his career as a tutor while continuing his studies in law; however, his legal career was short-lived. While practising as an lawyer, he was

invited to edit Samadarshi by its publisher. In response to the interest of a few publishers, he had also started writing. His own 'Sharada Press' published a newspaper Prabhodhakan, which was closed down within a few months. Then he started publishing Kesari, as a weekly, discussing politics and literature. Soon, 'Kesari' became his nickname. Mounting debts made him discontinue its publication and sell the press to pay off his dues. Later he moved to North Paravur, the native place of his wife.

His contribution to the field of progressive literature, historical research, literary criticism, art and its criticism is unparalleled. He is known in the history of modern Kerala as the founder and illuminating source of independent, fearless and critical journalism. Along with discussing contemporary issues, Kesari focused on providing a global perspective to Keralites and discussed news and views on the international scene. He also translated articles published in English and French journals. He was knowledgeable about art-forms and carefully studied various paintings of Kerala and compared them with ancient cave paintings of Ajanta and Ellora.

The literary life of Kesari has two inseparable dimensions. Being a writer, he did extensive research and wrote widely on topics like history, literature and art. He translated several important works from English, French and Russian literature. His historical works opened a new worldview for the readers in Kerala. As a critic, he analysed various literary works from the perspective of different literary movements and theories. He thus linked the literary works

produced here with the significant literary movements across the globe. His articles in Malayalam like Jeeval Saahiyathinte Vishayam (30/08/1937), Jeeval Sahiyathinte Saankethika Maargam (26/07/1937), Jeeval Saahiyavum Saadhaarana Saahiyavum (04/10/1937) etc. substantiate this point. He stated that Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Futurism etc. are to be developed here along with Socialist Realism. He thus encouraged many emerging writers including Thakazhi, Changampuzha, Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and found their works as the representation of the real-life of ordinary people.

Several books were written about Kesari after his demise. The Kesari Memorial Library in Pooyappilly, North Paravur was established when he was alive. The Kesari Balakrishna Pillai Memorial Town Hall at Paravur, the Kesari Smaraka Mandiram (Memorial building) at Thiruvananthapuram, the Smruthi Mandapam (Memorial platform) at Madavanaparamba, the 'Kesari' College at North Paravur, are all institutions that still keep the

memory of this legend, alive.

A man of such extraordinary thoughts was always referred to as 'an extraordinary commoner.' He passed away on 18 December 1960.

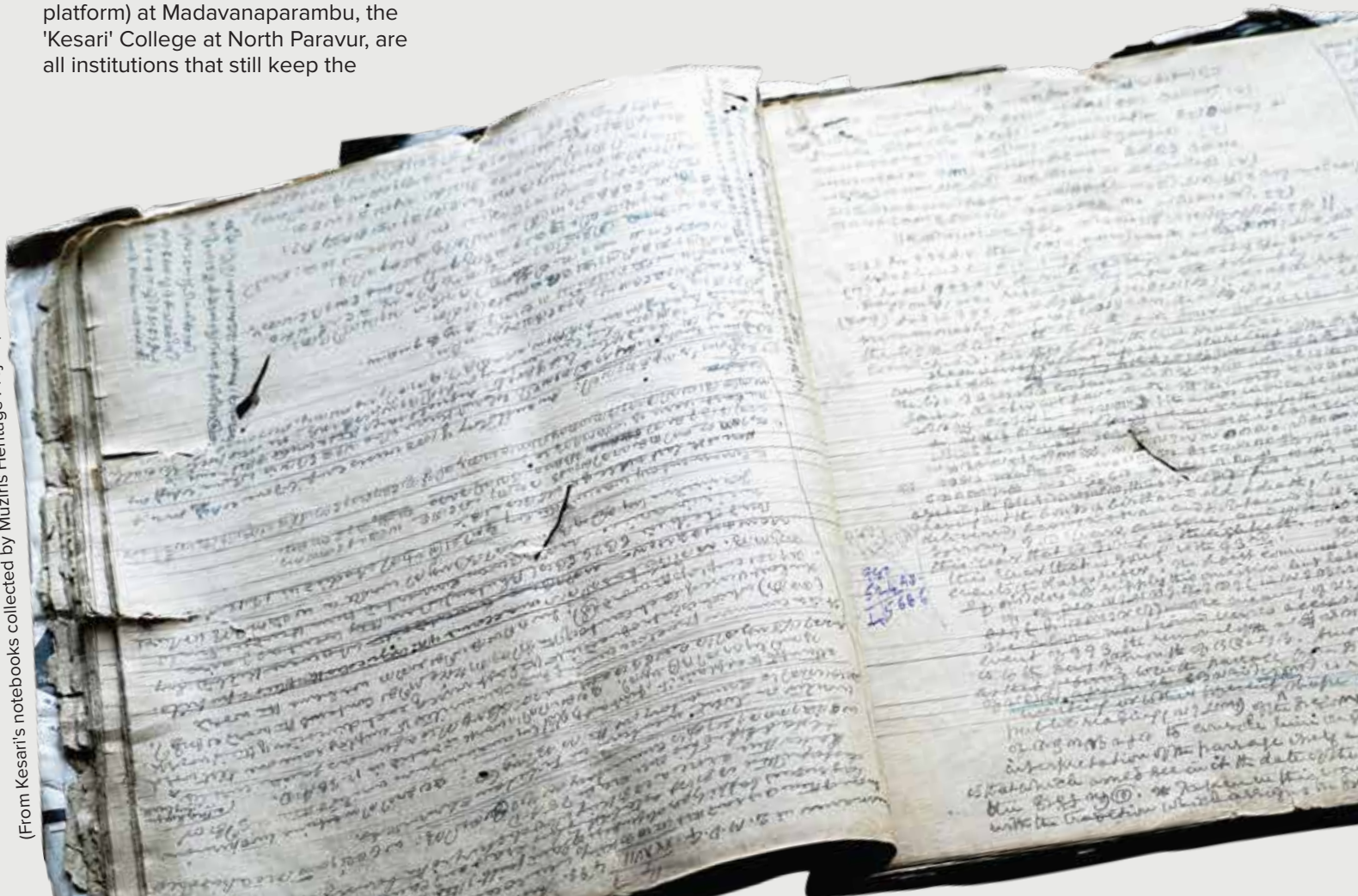
(The list of books published both during his lifetime and

Posthumously is given below)

- 1916 - തിരുവിതാകുര ചരിത്രസംക്ഷേപം ബാബിലോണു നീനേവയം അഥവാ പാരസ്ത്യ പരിഷ്കാരാരോൽപത്തി ലാർഡ് റാബർട്സ്
- 1918 - ലാർഡ് കിച്ചിനർ
- 1921 - പുരാതനപ്രദീപം ഒന്നാം ഭാഗം ഹുവാങ് ച്യാങ്, അലക്സാൻ മഹാൻ, യൂജിസസ് ഗ്രാൻഡ് രണ്ടു സാഹസിക യാത്രകൾ ഐതിഹ്യദീപിക സാസിലൂ (ബൽസാക്ക്)
- 1922 - വിക്രമാദിത്യൻ ത്രിഭുവനമല്ലൻ ഹർഷവർദ്ധനൻ
- 1931 - കാമുകൻ (മോപ്പസാങ്)
- 1933 - കാർമെൻ (പ്രോസ്പർ മെറിമേ)
- 1935 - നവലോകം
- 1935 - പ്രേതങ്ങൾ (ഇബ്സൻ)
- 1937 - രൂപമഞ്ജരി
- 1941 - ഒരു സ്ത്രീയുടെ ജീവിതം (മോപ്പസാങ്)

- 1945 - ഓമനകൾ (പിരാൻഡലോ)
- 1947 - ആപ്പിൾപ്പൂമൊട്ട് (സിനൈറ്റിഷിയൂസ്) നോവൽ പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങൾ
- 1949 - മൂന്നു ഹാസ്യകഥകൾ
- 1952 - സാഹിത്യഗവേഷണമാല-ഒന്നാം ഭാഗം
- 1957 - പ്രാചീനകേരള ചരിത്രഗവേഷണം സാങ്കേതികഗ്രന്ഥ നിരൂപണങ്ങൾ
- 1958 - ഒമ്പതു ഫ്രഞ്ചുകഥകൾ, നാലു ഹാസ്യകഥകൾ
- 1959 - സാഹിത്യ വിമർശനങ്ങൾ ആരം ഉർബാസ് (ജേക്കബ് വാസ്റ്റർമാൻ)
- 1960 - കുറെക്കൂടി സാങ്കേതിക ഗ്രന്ഥനിരൂപണങ്ങൾ
- 1961 - എട്ടു പാശ്ചാത്യകഥകൾ കേസരിയുടെ മുഖപ്രസംഗങ്ങൾ
- 1984 - ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ അടിവേരുകൾ കേസരിയുടെ സാഹിത്യ വിമർശനങ്ങൾ
- 1989 - കേസരിയുടെ ലോകങ്ങൾ നവീന ചിത്രകല
- 1992 - ചരിത്രപഠനങ്ങൾ
- 2009 - Outline of Proto Historic Chronology of Western Asia
- 2011 - 13 - കേസരിയുടെ ചരിത്ര ഗവേഷണങ്ങൾ (4വാല്യം)

(From Kesari's notebooks collected by Muziris Heritage Project).







## WORKSHOP ON 'PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION AND FIRST-AID FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS'

A three-day workshop on 'Preventive Conservation and First-Aid for Archaeological Collections' was organised by Muziris Heritage Project and Institute of Conservation, University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria, supported by Austrian Embassy, New Delhi, Indian Embassy Vienna and Eurasia Pacific Unit, from 04th to 06th, March 2020, at the Muziris International Research and Convention Centre, Pullut.

On Wednesday, 04 March, the workshop had a formal inaugural ceremony. Dr Brigitte Öppinger-Walchshofer, Ambassador, Austrian Embassy, New Delhi, inaugurated it. Prof. Kesavan Veluthat, Director, Institute for the Study of the Heritage of Coastal Kerala (ISHCK) welcomed the gathering. Prof. Gabriela Krist, Institute of Conservation, University of Applied Arts, Vienna, also addressed the gathering. Shri P M Nowshad, MD, Muziris Heritage Project, introduced the heritage conservation project. Prof. M Velayudhan Nair, Chief Advisor to Government of Kerala for Museums, and Consultant, Muziris Heritage Project, delivered the Keynote Address. Later, Dr Öppinger-Walchshofer addressed the gathering.

The participants of the workshop mainly included the Post Graduate Diploma students in Conservation from the Centre of Heritage Studies (CHS), Hill Palace, Ernakulam. In the session that followed, Dr





Midhun C Shekhar explained to the students the excavation processes being completed at the Muziris Kottappuram Fort, the precious findings being excavated, and the history and structure of the findings in detail. All through the sessions, Prof Kesavan Veluthat and Prof M. Velayudhan Nair interacted with the students giving them suggestions and inputs.

The second day of the workshop, Thursday, 05 March, was mainly devoted to practical exercises in Conservation at the Pattanam excavation site, Pattanam, North Paravur. Participants were divided into groups of three. The activities included the presentation of condition reports by Prof Gabriela Krist, Kathrin Schmidt, Objects Conservator, Dr Johanna Runkel, University Assistant and Dr Tanushree Gupta, Staff member, and the presentation of results by each group. Kerala Council for Historical



Research (KCHR) Chairman Dr P.K. Michael Tharakan addressed the students and interacted with them. A two-hour practical exercise was done on building analysis, identification of agents of deterioration, and investigation of risk-causing factors.

The third day's programme (06 March), covered the presentation of results by each group. Kathrin Schmidt led the lecture on 'First-aid Treatments on Archaeological Objects' followed by a discussion among the participants. Before the workshop came to a close, the same was evaluated, and topics for future workshops were discussed. All the members were presented with certificates of participation.

The three-day workshop offered a space for the participants to interact, seek information, and gain practical knowledge and share experiences with different disciplines in the archaeology.



Dr Brigitte Öppinger-Walchshofer, Ambassador of Austria to India, New Delhi, visited the Muziris monuments in Kodungallur including the Muziris Kottappuram Fort, Kottappuram Market and the Cheraman Juma Masjid. She also visited the Paravur Jewish Synagogue. Dr Öppinger-Walchshofer then took the Muziris boat ride to visit Paliyam Nalukettu and Paliyam Dutch Palace in Chendamangalam. She was accompanied by Sri P M Nowshad, MD, Muziris Heritage Project and other staff members of the Project.



## CHAVITTU NATAKAM

The locals of Gothuruthu are so passionate about 'Chavittu Natakam', the unique art form which is also known as the 'stamping drama.' Thambi Payyappilly, a resident of Gothuruthu, and the chief exponent of this art form has excelled in it for around 35 years on and off the stage. He still teaches school students, especially children from the Gothuruthu St. Sebastian's School, with a desire to promote it further, across India and abroad. These students have been bringing in laurels including A grades at the State school youth festivals.

All of them expressed a deep sense of engagement while learning this art form. The rhythmic stamping with the feet, an element of acting that goes in harmony with the songs, the range of expressions and gestures, the ornamental costumes and jewellery, the well-defined body movements together make the art form remarkably impressive.

The regular practice sessions are held where the little ones hone their craft. The Muziris Gothuruthu Chavittu Natakam Performance Centre is a stage that contributes to widening the cultural awareness of the land.

## MANJALI FORT

Considering the historical importance of the fort of Manjali and following the request from Karumalloor Panchayat, Muziris Heritage Project MD Mr P M Nowshad visited the Tipu Sultan Fort and tunnel in Manjali. 'More studies have to be conducted to consider including these structures in the Muziris Project', the MD said, after examining them. The entrance to the tunnel is now closed with large stones. The fort which is situated around 200 metres from here is in a dilapidated condition for lack of proper maintenance. It is situated in 20 cents of land and has two large rooms with three doors.

## MUZIRIS HERITAGE PROJECT

- a heritage conservation project under The Department of Tourism, Govt of Kerala
- one of the first and most significant non-formal education projects launched by the Dept of Tourism
- eight fully functional heritage museums, and various projects in progress
- focus on the local economy, traditional industries and artisan activities
- reliable academic and research content input in collaboration with various agencies
- active participation of various national and international agencies, Government departments and community
- first Green Project endorsed by the Govt of Kerala
- Alappuzha Heritage Project and the Ponnani Heritage Project are in progress
- development of the 'Spice Route Project' as a global tourism product in association with UNESCO and partner countries

## THE REVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

The villages under the Muziris region retain the indispensable crafts along with the village craftsmen who are masters of it. The handloom products of Chendamangalam once represented the entire handloom industry of Kerala. Other essential artisans included potters, basket-weavers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, bell metal workers, people engaged in fishing, mat weavers, pappad makers, and coir workers. Every one of these artisans has their specific roles to play in the society, but the shrunken local markets and lesser earnings are the primary reasons that forced many of them to abandon the trade.

To revive the various dying traditional crafts in the Muziris region, Muziris Heritage Project has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, New Delhi (INTACH) for joint initiatives on design, skill development and quality control programs.



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