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# “Keralathinte Kudumbashree’ The reflection and voice of Kudumbashree

## Kudumbashree

Kudumbashree has made use of sustainable and democratic values to build an infallible and well-rounded development model on a strong and society-based organisational setup. It stands tall and proud. Its women empowerment and poverty eradication activities alone speak volumes before the world. Courageously surpassing odds and driven by the light of self-realisation, Kudumbashree has become a coming together of three lakh women in the state.

Back in 1992, an experimental project started off in the seven wards of Alappuzha has emerged into the Kudumbashree of today. In the 19 years, it has put dedicated efforts into mainstreaming homemakers who solely depended on the income of a male head in the family. They were offered decent jobs and salary. By empowering women, Kudumbashree was able to set a new direction to the development prospects of the state. A transformation that improved the growth and progress of common women folk has enabled Kerala to be a model par excellence before the rest of the world.

## Staying relevant

Whenever humans made rapid historical strides from their dark socio-cultural pasts, those attempts were marked in golden letters in the pages of history. Those cannot be trivialised as just another step ahead. These recordings are torch bearers to the social setups, cultural degradation, renaissance and the real human life circumstances existed in the early days. They should never be looked down upon as a pile of papers or palm leaf writings, but be considered as vestiges of a point of time and its socio-cultural milieu. Since time immemorial, these past remnants are the yardsticks with which human progress in the socio-cultural-knowledge sectors are measured.

The revolutionary progress and development achieved by society are indispensable for the cultural growth specific to each point of time. By recording these multi-facete devolutionary phases of progress and culture, are we doing justice to history. A responsible society or government

are duty-bound to store these phases in the micro-levels and pass down to the coming generations. Knowledge and experience gained in this manner are immortalised through generations.

In the 19 year-long women-empowerment and poverty eradication mission of Kudumbashree enterprise, Kerala stood witness to a never-before-seen progressive revolution of women. They were in the confines of four walls, hidden behind the doors in fear, dependent on men. Administration or decision-making or addressing a gathering was strictly out of bounds. With the backing of Kudumbashree Mission, thousands of women, who were freed from the social, financial and intellectual slavery, came together to write a brave success story. Everything they achieved from these all-women collective shines in the socio-development map of the state in all glory.

Knowledge acquisition is not depended on books and laboratories. Experiences, travel, sights and what

more to say, unexpected setbacks and obstacles in life are opportunities to learn. Painful experiences too give us invaluable lessons and realisations. Hundreds of women, who were able to overcome obstacles of sorts to achieve unparalleled success in their lives are part Kudumbashree. Against this backdrop, we are bound to chronicle their struggles and achievements, various activities implemented by Kudumbashree and the changes happened in society, helpful methods adopted for poverty alleviation and women empowerment, either in print or visual form. Twenty years of experience, achievements, falls, resurrection, policy decisions and planning contribute to our intellectual property. Collecting these data in a right and time-bound manner is essential to bolster the foundation and structure upon which it rests.

Like the way family fortune is passed down through generations, Kudumbashree is obliged to pass on the intellectual property to many more generations to come. No doubt that this is a treasure trove of everything precious and great a responsible enterprise like Kudumbashree can gift the world. Also, a best way to be responsible to society and the world. We must be able to carry forward the exemplary history of Kudumbashree to students and research enthusiasts who are keen on knowing our women empowerment and poverty alleviation models. Not just that, it should be a simple yet stronger medium conveying the message of Kudumbashree project activities, their progress and achievements from the lowest strata in the three-tier governance system called Ayalkoottam to administrators, public and media. By being a creative medium, Kudumbashree magazine therefore has great significance in the hallways of history.

Can't blame if anyone thinks why a magazine for Kudumbashree. It enables women in the lowest strata of the three-tier system to keep themselves updated and achieve what they deserve. To keep Ayalkoottams informed, a strong campaign is required. Support of media has always been there with Kudumbashree. But they need not always carry every activity of Kudumbashree in the district-state levels, its practical growth or achievements with due importance. Women should not miss an opportunity to know and share what Kudumbashree welfare activities are, its benefits and job opportunities. That was when the need to publish an own magazine of Kudumbashree arose. Something capable enough to be its sound and reflection, a detailed chronicle of all the activities. This was achieved with the republication of 'Keralathinte Kudumbashree.'

### Rise of 'Kudumbashree' magazine

At the start of Kudumbashree 20 years ago, a magazine brought news and updates of Kudumbashree, its activities and organisational structure to Ayalkoottam members and others. It was a brainchild of T.K. Jose, the then Executive Director, who is now the Additional Chief Secretary of Local Self Government Department. The magazine



was instrumental in telling women how significantis Kudumbashree to help them achievegoals and explore new job sectors. It was inspiration for hundreds of home-bound women to step out and explore newer horizons.

'Reach out the family through women and society through family', was the approach of Kudumbashree to mark its arrival in the state. The magazine had detailed yet uncomplicated narration of the activities and projects implemented by Kudumbashree. 'Kudumbashree', the mag, had a core committee led by Shri T.K. Jose with programme officers P. Kesavan Nair (rural development), Dr Krishnakumar (urban affairs), Ramanunni (human resource development and training), Sreekantan Nair (IT units), Latha Bhaskar (gender) and Leela Kumari (gender) as members.

Later on, it became the task of the district mission coordinators and assistant coordinators to prepare the magazine every month as Kudumbashree activities were on an expansion mode. Each edition was conceived based on one important topic handled by Kudumbashree. The 48-pages, printed in colour on the cover page and black and white inside, included interview of one prominent personality every time. Two thousand copies were printed to be distributed mainly in Secretariat, Departments, District Mission Offices, Panchayats, Corporation and Municipalities. During this time, subscription was introduced at a rate of Rs 10 per copy. A magazine detailing the project activities with emphasis on women empowerment on socio-financial fronts and experiences of Ayalkoottam members was so popular in Local Self

Government Institutions and Secretariat.

In the transition phase of Kudumbashree from its childhood to adolescence, Sarada Muraleedharan IAS took over as the Executive Director. Upon realising that the magazine can draw more and more women to Ayalkoottam and inspire them to take up new tasks by imbibing knowledge in agriculture micro enterprises, the new ED and then Public Relations Officer R. Parvathi Devi published the magazine with greater vigour. All pages were printed in multi-colour.

New projects, success stories of women, articles by prominent personalities, writings on Bala Sabha were the highlights. Every issue came out after close scrutiny. The magazine was registered with so much of effort and by that time Parvathi Devi left Kudumbashree. The magazine works were taken care of by S. Jayalakshmi, an editorial assistant with the Public Relations Department till January, 2011 and later it got stalled. A private public relations agency was entrusted by Kudumbashree, but the magazine publication could not be commenced. After her pretty-long stint with Kudumbashree, a much-loved and familiar Sarada Muraleedharan IAS left behind six glorious years of service in 2012. During her tenure, the magazine shot in popularity among Ayalkkootam women and others. The magazine, which was until then a regular at the centre of administration and its bylanes, could not see the light of day thereafter.

### The comeback

Efforts for a re-launch were on in 2013. A meeting in this regard was convened by a panel of officials comprising Jayakumar, programme officer; A. Sanjay Kumar, who was

having the additional charge of micro enterprises and Public Relations Officer; Chief Operating Officer Manjula Bharathi and consultants Soya Thomas and Priya Paul. It was held after editorial assistant with Public Relations department Asha S. Panicker submitted a request before the then Executive Director K.B. Valsalakumari on the need for a magazine.

### Tottering steps at Edamalakudi

The meeting decided the first edition be tribal special. Executive Director suggested a comprehensive feature on the Kudumbashree development activities in the Adivasi sector in Edamalakudi must be included. For reasons, a visit to Edamalakudi or a feature on the activities met with so many obstacles. A major reason was that the place cannot be travelled alone. The forest area had about 20 kilometre steep to the interiors. Telephone facilities were not available. When informed well in advance, the Adivasi inhabitants would come down to the valley to pick the District Mission authorities. Attack of wild animals can be expected anytime. The familiar routes of Adivasis were not easily accessible to outsiders without their support. Even if we gathered success stories and features on Edamalakudi written by prominent writers, unavailability of a special feature remained a drawback. The ED was doubtful how a magazine sans the activities of Kudumbashree Mission be complete. Since the journey was possible only with District Mission authorities, certain political situations and adverse climate stood in the way of execution. When the situation became conducive, the District Mission authorities in Idukki wound up their activities and returned to the parent department. Every effort for the re-launch went in vain







as it met with a fund shortage thereafter. Publication of a four-page newsletter continued. K.B. Valsalakumari who left in October 2015 was replaced by A. Shajahan IAS. So enthused he was about publishing the magazine though, he got transferred to another department very soon.

#### New leadership, new beginning

With S. Harikishore taking charge as the Executive Director in 2016, 'Keralathinte Kudumbashree' gathered steam all over again. He suggested the topics in each edition be based on different projects executed by Kudumbashree. All programme officers were supportive to chip in with write-ups pertaining to various projects, invite features from experts and make creative suggestions. The activities started after collecting enough material to run all editions till April 2017. Steps were on to publish the January 2017 edition themed at agriculture.

### Editorial Board

An editorial board was constituted with S. Harikishore as Chief Editor, then Director N.K. Jaya as Editor, Urban Programme Officer Binu Francis as Managing Editor and Asha S. Panicker as Associate Editor.

Focus was on making the magazine appear as attractive and novel. Towards this, a detailed interview of Minister for Local Self-Governments K.T. Jaleel was taken. The interview titled 'No Compromise on the Development of Kudumbashree'dwelled deeper into his hopes, expectations and viewpoints on Kudumbashree. It opened with him explaining how the enterprise shall move forward in future. An informative piece with insights and clear-cut guidelines was contributed by then LSGD Principal Secretary, (now Additional Chief Secretary) T.K. Jose IAS. It was headlined 'Kudumbashree Magazine: For In-depth Communication and Knowledge Dissemination'. Rest of the contents were formulated based on this.

### Contents in the first edition

The pattern followed from January 2017 was like dedicating 30 to 40 pages for the theme based on which the magazine is printed. Other pages featured expert pieces and write-ups by Kudumbashree officials on centralised projects and their progress, success stories, model activities, different project activities implemented in the district and Bala Sabha news. Best poems written by Ayalkoottam women and other noteworthy subjects are also included.

Editorial of January, 2017 edition was 'Let's revive organic farming literacy'. 'Women Who Draped Thennala All Green', 'No Compromise on the Development of Kudumbashree', (Minister K.T. Jaleel), 'Terrace Farming: Deep Rooted in Families', 'Kudumbashree Magazine: For In-depth Communication and Knowledge Dissemination' (T.K. Jose), 'Green Bite: A Packet Full of Health', 'Kochi Metro: Siren for Development', 'National Award for Kudumbashree Ayalkoottams', 'Overall Upliftment of

Scheduled Tribe Through Kudumbashree, 'Kudumbashree to Eradicate Stray Dog Menace', 'Not Just One or Two: Kudumbashree Chechis Spread Sadya to 3000', 'Amrutham Nutrimix for the Baby', 'Grading System to Strengthen Nutrimix Units', 'Heard That? Ayalkoottams Go Smart', 'Ashraya Promises Destitute Free Kerala', 'Vulnerability Mapping of Kudumbashree to Know the Depths of Insecurity', 'Snehitha', 'Karimadom Experience, a Beacon for Life', 'Home Loan for 3000 People in Urban Spaces', 'Job and Training for Youth in Tourism Sector', 'Street Vendors Act to Come Into Force under Corporations', 'State Meet of CDS Chairpersons', 'Her Hands Can Build Homes', 'Jobs for 8117 Youth in A Year', 'Grab a Great Job and Income' were other topics.

Once the contents were finalised, lay out and designing works commenced at Communique in Thiruvananthapuram. Printing was at the Kerala Government-owned Kerala Books and Publications Society (KBPS) at Kakkanad in Kochi. Wait was on to get the fool proof copy of first edition get printed.

'Keralathinte Kudumbashree' Again

The task and execution of the magazine was a personally rewarding experience. The feeling was palpable when the first edition was released by Minister K.T. Jaleel by handing over a copy to Shri S. Harikishore during the state-level BUDS Arts Festival held at Vyloppilli Samskriti Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram on February 2, 2017. It was a big dream come true and the start of spreading a word on Kudumbashree activities everywhere. Hundreds were witness to the moment. Magician Gopinath Muthukad as guest of honour was a great matter of joy for the students.



## Topics included in the 2017 magazine

The magazine has been published under the aegis of the Public Relations wing of Kudumbashree. Each month came with a different theme. Contents in 2017 follow.

**January:** Agriculture

**February:** Tribal

**March:** Women empowerment

**April:** Micro Enterprises

**May:** State-level annual meet of Kudumbashree and social development

**June:** Bala Sabha

**July:** Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

**August:** Organisational setup

**September:** Micro Finance

**October:** Producer Company and Collective

**November:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

**December:** Special livelihood project for Adivasis in Attappadi.

## Themes in 2018

**January:** National Resource Organisation

**February:** Kudumbashree Election and CDS Meeting

**March:** National Urban Livelihoods Mission and Construction

**April:** Faming and animal husbandry

**May:** Construction and convergence

**June:** Marketing

**July:** Year of Ayalkoottam, micro-finance summit, TBDAS

**August:** Department level convergence and successful models

**September:** New enterprise models in service sectors

**October:** Job sectors and success stories

**November:** Women empowerment, best models in Kerala and India

**December:** CDS success stories

Themes in 2019

**January:** National Urban Livelihoods Mission/skill development/new convergence

**February:** Kerala Chicken, ABC programme, producer companies, social development and convergence with other departments

**March:** 2018-19 -Year of Achievements, achieved goals, scale up of projects, targets for next year

**April:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, National Urban Livelihoods Mission, Micro Enterprises, advantages of housing and convergence, tribal constructions, NULM-PMAY convergence.

## Attractive Series

The magazine features several attractive series -- 'Amma Velicham', about how influential was mothers in the lives of men who are successful in their personal and professional fronts, 'Arangum', 'Suneeti', 'Veendum Thodiyum' (related to



farming), 'Courage in the Face of Adversities' to pick a few. As the number of pages had to be reduced for cost-cutting, 'Amma Velicham', 'Arangu', and 'Suneeti' were omitted from the 64-page magazine.

'Courage in the Face of Adversities' has life stories of several women who made rapid strides in their lives from poverty and hardships. Girija runs a catering unit. Ramla from Kannur, who surpassed religious-barriers following the death of her husband, joined Kudumbashree and later became a people's representative. Ambili from Pathanamthitta opened a bag making unit overcoming the odds to become an entrepreneur. Sujatha was saved from the verge of suicide to etch victory through the Aadu Gramam project. Omana from Kasargode earns close to Rs 30,000 a month. Kalamani digs well in Malappuram. All these people were introduced through the magazine to inspire women who fall before setbacks.

'Veedom Thodiyum' also keeps high standards. For 11 months from the re-launch in 2017 January, P.S. Geethakutty, head, KAU Centre for Gender Studies in Agriculture at Mannuthy handled this section. This enabled Ayalkoottam members indulged in group farming learn new methods of farming, agriculture technology and production and sales of value-added products. For the later editions, Dr Sheeba Rebecca Issac of Agriculture College in Vellayani, Dr T.V. Rajendralal of Farm Information Bureau, Vishnu S.P. and Dr R. Prakash contributed insightful articles.

### **Aiming communication and development**

Development Communication intends to facilitate social development by inspiring people to try newer enterprises and field of activities through hard-hitting, real-life examples. This way of communication is more than just knowledge transfer. The magazine, from its day of inception, has been development-oriented, creative and practical in its approach towards social development. Impactful communication leads to sustainable growth

in society. Such development-oriented communication helps to disseminate knowledge, and empower individuals and society alike. A coming together of these factors is Kudumbashree magazine. The magazine is published with an aim to reach out to Ayalkoottam members, drive home the message of activities related to women empowerment and poverty eradication carried out by Kudumbashree in the state-district levels and keep them inspired.

The magazine is a one-stop point to stay updated on the following things: Advantages of various centralised projects implemented through Kudumbashree, Snehita Gender Help desk, Gender Resource Centres, Vigilant Groups, Community Counsellors, Animal Birth Control, Kerala Chicken, Railway Parking, Plastic Shredding, Well Recharge, Marriage Bureau, Offset Press, Power Laundry, Mobile crematorium, National-State Honours, Model Activities, Experience Stories, Bala Sabha Activities, Progress of Destitute Free Kerala, Expansion of BUDS institutions, Novel Micro Enterprises, Café Kudumbashree, New Job Opportunities in Agriculture Sector, Micro Finance, Organisational Setup, Digitisation of Ayalkoottams, National Resource Organisation, Marketing, MIS, Skill Training and Placement, Producer Companies, Snehita-Gender Help Desk, Gender Resource Centre, Vigilant Groups and Community Counsellors. Each Ayalkoottam has discussions on it to gain knowledge. The transformation from an ordinary woman to an entrepreneur is an inspiration and encouragement for many women.

Updates also include details regarding National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY) and Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP). Activities of National Resource Organisation implemented in other states, experience of women who work as mentors



in other states are also subjects for the magazine.

Besides, there are special editions on every project. Write-ups well accompanied with pictures and statistics is opportunity for officers who work with the State and District mission to mark the progress of work and showcase their performance brilliance. It has already carried reports on Harsham, Harithakarma Sena, Construction Unit and Cement Brick Unit constituted for Ayalkoottam women to explore new job opportunities. There was also detailing on the new and diverse projects carried out in district level.

### Rag pickers? Not any more

Modern service sectors such as Kochi Metro was capable of an image makeover in Kudumbashree which helped in breaking the ragpicker stereotype to a great extent. Ticket reservation to office management in Metro is handled by our women. We are honoured to have provided jobs for transgenders, making Kochi Metro a first-of-its-kind in the country. They are able to best utilise the ever evolving job opportunities and ensure a decent means of living for women. These are supplemented by the news and features carried by the magazine.

### Number of copies and distribution

In January and February 2017, 25,000 copies printed in each month. The number was 45,000 in March and two-and-a-half lakhs each in April, May, June and July. Subscription was free in the first four months. The copies were 1.25 lakhs a month from September-December and 1.22 lakhs from January 2018 to April.

From January to June 2017, the magazine was despatched from the Business Post Centre at Thevara in Kochi. It was a bulk of 20 pieces to CDSes and 100 for District Mission Offices. Copies arriving the state office of Kudumbashree are distributed at Secretariat, office of the department minister, Additional Chief Secretary in LSGD, Private Secretaries of Ministers, MLAs, MPs, Kudumbashree Administrative Executive Committee Members and media groups. Contributing writers are also sent copies through courier.

### A magazine for 1.5 lakh Ayalkoottams

The campaign in April 2017 made about one-and-a-half Ayalkoottams subscribe to the magazine. If 20 members in each Ayalkoottam read the magazine, 30 lakh women constitute the readers, much to our pride and achievement. More and more Ayalkoottams pay the annual subscription fee of Rs 200 against the price per copy of Rs 20. The bigger

aim is to bring every woman in Kudumbashree under the ambit. Steps are on to make all libraries in the state subscribe the magazine.

Perhaps, it's a first-of-its-kind government publication to reach out to so many women in the state, thereby spreading its benefits to all strata in society. The benefits of Kudumbashree activities are therefore covering multiple facets. Ayalkoottam has become a space where women are able to overcome difficult pathways to attain social and financial independence through inspiring life stories.

As copies reach ministers, MLAs, IAS officers, district collectors and media persons, officials and Ayalkoottam members are aware of the activities Kudumbashree is implementing in association with other departments. This brings out opportunities to devise programmes and surveys that can be carried out by Kudumbashree women, assuring them a source of income. The largest women collective in Asia is looking forward to the future where 'Keralathinte Kudumbashree' becomes leading light to each and every family in Kerala.

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