



**Maliampurackal Kunchacko**

Film Producer/ Director

Born 1912  
Pulinkunnoo, Kuttanad.

Died 15 June 1976  
Madras, Tamil Nadu.



**കുഞ്ചാക്കോ**

മലയാള സിനിമയിലെ സുര്യോദയമായിരുന്നു കുഞ്ചാക്കോ.

പ്രതിസന്ധികളോട് പൊരുതി മുന്നേറുന്ന കൂട്ടനാടൻ കർഷകന്റെ സംരക്ഷേതാ വീര്യവുമായി മലയാള ചലച്ചിത്ര വേദിയിൽ അങ്കം കുറിച്ച മാളിയംപുരയ്ക്കൽ കുഞ്ചാക്കോ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചത് മലയാള സിനിമ ചരിത്രത്തിലെ അവിസ്മരണീയ ഏടുകൾ ... ജനപ്രിയ സിനിമകളിലെ ഇതിഹാസങ്ങൾ.

വയലാർ രാമവർമ്മ, തോപ്പിൽ ഭാസി, ലളിതാംബിക അന്തർജനം തുടങ്ങിയ സാഹിത്യ പ്രതിഭകൾ.

ദേവരാജൻ, ബാബുരാജ്, രാഘവൻ തുടങ്ങിയ സംഗീത പ്രതിഭകൾ.

സത്യൻ, പ്രേംനസീർ, കൊട്ടാരക്കര തുടങ്ങിയ അഭിനയ പ്രതിഭകൾ.

ഇവരുടെയെല്ലാം സംഭാവനകൾ മലയാള സിനിമയ്ക്ക് അനുശരാ മുതൽക്കുട്ടാക്കി കുഞ്ചാക്കോ.



In the night there was a violent storm. Both the thatched sheds collapsed in strong winds. Those were the studio's shooting floors. The place was Alappuzha. The year was 1961. The film company Udaya - recently re-opened after a closure of 5 years of trying financial times, had shooting sets erected inside those huge sheds.

Come morning, a score of performers, about the same number of film technicians, twice that number of workers and laborers stood gaping at the wreckage which should have been the arena of their activities that day.

In the film's leading man, Mr. Prem Nazir's words,

" ... as I turned my gaze from the debris to look at the people, I saw uncertainty written large in every face ... about the film under production, doubts about the future of the re-started studio ... and, anxiety about one's own tomorrow. Couldn't blame the poor folks. It would take months to repair this. Even I was wondering how to extricate myself from the predicament! ..."



An elephant herd shoot on sets constructed at the white sandy exteriors of Udaya Studios Alappuzha. 1962 film Palattukoman.

That was when Chackochan (Mr. Kunchacko), shielding himself from the drizzle with an umbrella held in right hand, walked in. In his hand was also a bunch of jasmine flowers freshly picked from the studio grotto of the Immaculate (Mary).



With a calm smile he announced,

"Everything would be up and ready by tomorrow morning. My brother Appachan shall be here any moment now with two boatloads of pura-kettukaar (expert thatched-shed builders) from our native Pulincunnoo. While they complete their job, let us not waste precious time ... we shall be doing rehearsals today ... Lets start, Now!"

Shooting resumed the very next morning in one of the floors. The other floor was ready by the second day. In all they had lost just one day of the planned schedule.



**SUPER SIMPLEX 35mm FILM PROJECTORS,  
UDAYA STUDIOS and KUNKO TALKIES.**

Exhibited here, is one among the matched pair of film projectors Super Simplex with Peerless Magnarhouse (USA), imported in the year 1947 for Udaya Studios Alleppey. The projector seen here was later installed at Kunko TalkiesPulinkunnoo - Kunchacko's home village. The matching pair of this projector remained at the preview theatre of Udaya Studios Alleppey.



illustrations by RK

film Othenante Makan (1970)  
song Yamini, yamini ...



Every year, during the Mullackal Temple Fair, the civic council of Alleppey town would request Kunchacko to temporarily setup the projector on the open-air municipal grounds and offer free-shows to the public. Kunchacko would oblige. After sundown, there used to be screening of songs from Udaya's films.

Mr. Kunchacko - the pioneer Malayalam filmmaker and owner of Udaya, thought that his home village should experience CINEMA - the 20th century art form he had come to embrace passionately. Hence he built a thatched shed – similar to the drama halls of those days, and named it after himself - ‘Kunko Talkies’.

Kunchacko would have been emulating his own father - Mani Chacko the entrepreneur, who started the first mechanised boat service for the natives of Kuttanad. For a long time, Kunko Talkies Pulinkunnoo - the very first film theatre in the watery province of Kuttanad, was the only place for entertainment for the natives. Started in the 1950s, the theatre was shut down in the 1990s when Television became the major entertainment.

Kunko Talkies has the distinction of being ... (ahem) The World’s only ‘Paddle-in Theatre’. During seasonal rains and floods, all activities in Kuttanad would generally come to a stop. So, Kunko Talkies remained closed during the monsoon months of every year.

But occasionally, during festive seasons too, sudden rains would disrupt film shows.

One such occurred in the 1960s. On an Onam festival day, people from all over Kuttanad came to Kunko Talkies in canoes and boats – the only means of transportation those days, and found that flood waters hadn’t receded in Pulinkunnoo village!

Not to be deterred, the audience rowed, paddled and punted their transports straight into the cinema hall and started clamoring for the advertised feature to commence. With all systems otherwise intact, the show had to start!!

The film was Udaya’s own ‘Krishna-Kuchela’ – a mythological. The audience, seated on their boats, a few even standing in knee-deep water, watched spellbound. On the screen they beheld the newborn Krishna being carried on Vasudeva’s head across river Yamuna. With it’s hood spread above, Vasuki the tenheaded serpent was protecting Krishna’s crib from rain!

For many among the drenched audience, that made their day.



film Krishna Kuchela (1961)

illustrations by RK scene The Birth of Lord Krishna



Kunchacko & Appachan at Udaya Studios, Alappuzha.

In a span of 25 years, the brothers had produced about 100 films.