

Part played by Relatives

In Navodaya's obliteration

Following the Kuttichathan 3D financial windfall, Papa froze all Navodaya activities. He slowly wound up our Outdoor Unit, Staff and Offices. He said only he was needed to manage the Studio Floor rentals. For his proximity to the Studio, even with Ammachi crying hoarse, in 3 years Papa constructed a palatal mansion within the Studio campus at the then remote Kakkanad. >>>>

All of us were made to sit idle. Jisha's marriage prospects suffered due to this indulgence of Papa.

Awed by Papa's personal charisma, Never-Die attitude & P.R. wizardry, everybody were singing praises on his patriarchal management style - this in fact was hyped by Papa himself when he went around reminding relatives and friends of their *many marriages Papa had conducted, bank-jobs he had procured for them* and the fact that *Papa had helped them in many troubles* with Papa's brilliance.

Lest the reader misunderstand, I (Jijo) do acknowledge all those attributes of Papa as the very foundations to my own good fortunes. Like what singer Jesudas during Papa's funeral had noted.

“The techniques and tactics of surviving in the film industry, *Kochumuthalaali* (Appachan) had learned in serving his elder brother *Valiyamuthalaali* (Kunchacko). And what he had learned in 30 years at Udaya, he put to good use in 8 years with his Navodaya. In bringing new talents, new technology and new films by youngsters ... which no other filmmaker could have had done”.

I have to admit that if it were not for Navodaya Appachan - my Papa, I could have never done Cinemascope, 3D, 70mm ... and the induction of new talents like Fazil & Mohanlal. My Papa's shortfalls do not invalidate his many good deeds. I take everything as a package from God. I cannot pick and choose. It is only Papa's management principles that I had always differed with.

What was seen in Papa was an **agrarian self-indulgence** (this term was coined by our Chackochan of Olavaipai, who agrees with me at least on this subject). I notice that the very same policy was practiced by *Yesteryears' Kanjirappally Estate Lords* and the likes of *Legendary Murickan of Kuttanad*. Woefully, the Aurangazibian deluge (quote - **after me? ... chaos!** - unquote) – A self-fulfilling prophesy, by which they had brought their own empires' self-extinction, still happens in our Syrian Catholic family businesses. It runs in the genes.

Papa's fan-club

Our relatives while visiting for freeload, sang paeans when listening to Papa creating his native Kuttanad in nearby Kachuruthi – a Kakkanad suburb. Papa had a 4 page article written in NANA film magazine (with Vachaparambil Mangalappallil Thomaskutty Uncle in attendance while Papa's interview was being done) about his great work that shall bring all Kerala filmmakers right there to Kachuruthi soon. [This article is attached herewith].

The logic I voiced -- ‘Even the Govt. Studio at TVM runs at a huge loss. In Madras, even AVM Chettiyar and Vijaya Vauhini Nagi Reddy are selling off their loss making studios for RealEstate developers’ – was not heeded. Because there were relatives always cheerleading Papa. But they came only to have Papa make recommendations for them for jobs in banks & colleges, getting their offspring's alliances fixed, and have cars (a luxury of those days) made available for their weddings & funerals.

I recollect well that till the 1990s none of our relatives owned a vehicle – even a two wheeler. My Papa's siblings or his cousins - i.e; my uncles, my cousins or my second cousins. All of them – in Kuttanad, Changanasery, Sherthalai, Palai, Cherpungal, etc. either commuted by bus or the conveyance sent by Papa from Alleppey.



sold to syro-malabar church in 1995
navodaya mansion in 2025



But there were ‘Special Boats’ owned by relatives in Kuttanad. The only exception of a car-owner was Papa’s Maliyampurackal cousin migrated to Calicut and doing business there. And of course, **the Kunchackos in Alleppey** with whom as ‘UDAYA’ we lived as a joint family till 1965, and to whom we owe the legacy of becoming a ‘filmmaking family’ shedding the legacy of an ‘agrarian family’.

Some among the relatives who came to sing paeans to Papa’s trumpets, Papa would depute them to urge Jijo to join in Papa’s magnificent works which would earn great dividends **for them also**. Maliyampurackal Joji and Mulanthanam Joyichan are examples to the occasional barrage I suffered.

When people deputed by Papa came to me to ‘correct my ways’ and wean me away from the ‘evil influences of my colleagues’, I would cite them the examples of Udaya Studios and Excel glasses. I would warn them of the impending doom ... that the way things are going with Papa & Ammachi’s overbearing into business functions and transactions, there would come a time when Jijo & Jos’s offspring would find difficulty to meet basic necessities.

What I had warned then, have come true today – **for us alone**.

The same relatives – thanks to Papa - are settled well. They own additional flats besides their house. They park their third car outside due to limited parking space in their portico. They send their offspring abroad for studies. Do yearly foreign trips, jungle safari and ship cruises. Conduct five star weddings with hired luxury car cavalcade. And here, our children struggle to survive. **Ironical, I find the phenomenon.**



Jacob's daughter studying for her engineering degree is dropped and picked up, almost daily, from her Sherthalai home to her Quilon Engineering College. Josmon's daughter Anna today commutes from her Kishkinta home to Chennai by bus. So did once Appu & Rocha. Josmon prided in the make-belief that he was preparing his children for hard-times. Of course, it was going to get a lot harder with him managing the affairs. When I enquired Sunita about the kids' safety, she replied that it was due to paucity of funds. I couldn't respond. My own situation during the last 25 years was not any different.

In the 1990s while Papa was winding up all business activities, I used to wrangle constantly about the economics of diversification. Once, in the presence of Josmon who was completing his last CA papers, I cited the example of Manorama and MRF- both 'achayan' family businesses, who were aggressively spreading out to different venues. Papa came up with an incredulous statement – "My sons have, individually, more assets than each one in those families". Even Josmon chided Papa for such a silly proclamation. This was one of the few instances Josmon agreed with me. But Papa was on a single minded trip to obliterate his organization, his legacy.

Navodaya Appachan Fanclub - I used to joke that the President and Treasurer was Appachan himself. There are two Secretaries for the fanclub.

One - West of Kuttanad at Alleppey – a Polytechnician.

The other - East of Kuttanad at Changanassery – a Banker.

Both were in high praises of my Papa, which is a good thing because Papa has caused so much good.

But when the Banker, though being a man of finance, is all praises for my octogenarian Papa's voodoo economics ... I find that strange. Yet, I console myself that - even K.M. Mani, from whom the State of Kerala had the misfortune to endure 13 Finance Budgets, is hailed by his crony Govt. Secretaries and his benami businessmen as 'The Most Brilliant Finance Minister'.

Alas, for us Malayalees, business prudence is in realizing which side of our bread is buttered!

The Banker would narrate to me how Appachan Uncle remained *ever-active* even to the day of his demise.

"At the age of 87, Appachan Uncle was about to rise from his hospital bed and scrutinize de-weeding ladies working in the Studio lawn!"

In case the reader is wondering, it is Appachan - my own Papa, the banker was narrating to me.

The Polytechnician would advise me that

'Like Josmon, if Jijo joins Papa and follow Papa's diktats, God shall bless Jijo with great fortunes ... and even compensate Jijo for the loss of Liza & Aarcha. Afterall, was it not Papa, as for many amongst us, who found the spouse for Jijo?' (Whether Jijo's compensation shall be **another wife & child** that he didn't specify).

To my question *'how long is Papa in his old age going to keep managing affairs?'* He would answer that *'Don't you know? All things shall remain well only as long as Papa is there!'*

This Aurangzeb dictum (**After Me? Chaos!**) should have been coached by Papa himself.

My only escape from his 'good meaning' advice was to tell him *"Please Uncle, ... go and first and ask son MonKuttan to forgo his family and join you ... ask your son-in-law to forgo his and join his father ... after that you come and meet me, we shall discuss the issue"!*

I had to dish out the same to my brother-in-law Babu (Varghese T. V. Antony). After his return from his establishment of Tata Consultancy branches in Hong Kong and Shanghai, while in charge as VP at Chennai TCS, Babu would occasionally come to my Mahalingapuram (Navodaya) residence out of concern for my loneliness. Surely, he would have gone and met my parents and Josmon at Tambaram (Kishkinta) just before that.

Babu would advise me to go join and *help Papa* to run Kishkinta ... and revive filmmaking in Navodaya. I would cite professionalism, management principles, Imbichammad, Geo Kuttappan, Udaya Studios, Excel Glasses, Annamma Kunchacko, et al.

But Babu would disregard Public Limited Company norms and dwell on how Papa & Ammachi, being the true owners, know what is best for the company. He urged me to comply with their wishes.

He would disregard my contention that it was with many talents I had made Navodaya & Kishkinta. Instead, he would teach me (!) that it was only 'family unity' ... brothers Jijo & Jose standing UNITED with Papa, ... that brought all past successes.

Obviously, that line must have come from my Ammachi. To counter Jijo's dissent, it was Ammachi's dictum "Family Union is Strength – Fairness to others, be Damned!" *

Jisha also used to toe this line.

"കഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട് ഉണ്ടാക്കിയ കാശെല്ലാം വല്ലോനും തുറന്നു കൊടുത്തു അവനെല്ലാം ആളാകുന്നതും നോക്കിയിരുന്നോ!"

(She meant Fazil, Rajeev, Anand, Bichasar, Kuttappansar, Suershkanthan, etc. at different points in time). നിങ്ങളെക്കൊണ്ട് കഴിവില്ലാഞ്ഞിട്ട്!

"അലവലാതികളെയെല്ലാം ഓടിച്ചുവിട്ടിട്ടു സഹോദരന്മാർ അവസാനംവരെ അമ്മച്ചിയും പപ്പയും പറയുന്നത് മാത്രം കേട്ടാലേ ദൈവം അനുഗ്രഹിക്കൂ"

Again, my only escape from this 'good meaning' advice was to tell my brother in law - *"Dear Babu, first go meet Ratan Tata and offer this wisdom of **Owner Knows Best**. Ask him to fire all Presidents and VPs (including you, my brother) of his plethora of companies and take up direct running of his assets ... after that you come and meet me, we shall discuss this issue!"*

*Ammachi's issues with Papa, despite her '**United Stand**' against every 'divisive force', I am **ATTACHING** as her own letters to Papa. Also, **ATTACHING** Papa's letters to Josmon on the acute differences they had. Also **ATTACHING** CEO Balakrisnan's heartrending resignation letter to Papa. These I found recently in Papa's files at Kakkanad Studio when Josmon asked me to search for old documents.

I have never entered KISHKINTA Theme Park Campus after I left the place in 1997 for regaining Liza & Aarcha.

The first time I went to the residence constructed opposite to the park (where Papa, Ammachi, Josmon & family resided) was in the year 2012 when Papa expired. (This was a 6 acre plot bought in my name – Managing Director Navodaya Films PVT. Ltd. It was purchased by SureshKanthan when the 120 acre plot/s was purchased on the other side of the road for the park. This property was transferred to Sunita's name with false signatures of mine. Yes, Forgered.)

I along with Rajan, Prince & Tomsy were in Papa's funeral ambulance – Kochi to Tambaram, when I first entered this Papa's residence of a decade for his funeral at Dharkas Church cemetery.

The second time I went there was with Antony Uncle (IAS) to forcibly evacuate by boats Josmon's family and Ammachi during the floods of 2015 since they wouldn't leave when flood waters were 3 feet inside the house. They were concerned that people shall spirit away things from the park (already submerged in 12 feet water).

The next time when I went to the place of my mother and brother's domicile was in year 2016 – in the months of May, June & July -- to get Josmon out on bail from jail, following his imprisonment due to the fatal accident. There was nobody in charge of the company – not a single manager! There was nobody for legal representation! Imagine ... this was once a 200 crore company with 600 staff. I was appalled by the loneliness of the once vibrant place. With TV Media screaming all sorts of nonsense against the park owners at nearby Tambaram, I had to have 19 year old Appu address the few staff at the park with a confidence inspiring talk.

What disturbed me was that I was alone with Ammachi, Sunita and Kids and a few workers in getting Josmon out of Jail! My brother-in-law Babu used to come occasionally to meet the lawyers I engaged. Babu's father T.V. Antony IAS - retired Chief Secretary, despite his advanced age, came with me to plead

with Senior IPS officers. Actor Pratap Pothan would come to meet Josmon in distant Vellore Central Prison with me.

But in those 90 days, I never saw a single relative of ours during those summer holidays there at Kishkinta Papa's residence.

Without my enquiring, it was told to me by the park staff and house servants that till the previous summer there were multitude of our blood relations coming with their families to enjoy Papa's Amusement Park hospitality – weeks long.

Without my asking, Jisha gave me an explanation that **every one of them who wanted to come, were at present on their knees praying for Josmon's release from prison.**

Well, speaking about prayers for Josmon, I was constantly following the heat index at Vellore district on BBC Weather and praying real hard for spells of summer rain. The temperature (and mosquito bites) would have been excruciating inside the Vellore Central Prison.

It was only Ammachi's youngest brother Dr. Louis Mulanthanam (Kochachan) who came to meet me just after Josmon's release from prison. His wife Maries aunty had expired recently.

Following Josmon's release from prison in July 2016 we managed to obtain, an apologetic Josmon suddenly turned violent towards Babu and Anil Madhavan when they talked to Josmon about Jijo's 'Park Restructuring' plans. Josmon wanted to open the park immediately. Both Anil and Babu advised me to leave Chennai (Mahalingapuram) for some time lest Josmon meant the words - 'to take out a gun and shoot his elder brother for stuffing sand into his mouth at the age of 3'- seriously. I had only to come here to Navodaya Studio Kakkanad. I came here to Kakkanad to reside after about 2 decades.

While I was here in the dilapidated Kakkanad Studio, Babu and Anil came down to further discuss 'Kishkinta Park Restrcturing'. My point was that it is dangerous to open without a Safety Audit. While we were discussing here in the hall, with Raghunath Paleri at one corner writing Chundan novel Malayalam from my English text, my cousin - the Physics professor for whom Papa got job at Kakkanad Bharat Matha College - I saw coming in, listening to the conversation for some time and leaving without talking a word to anybody.

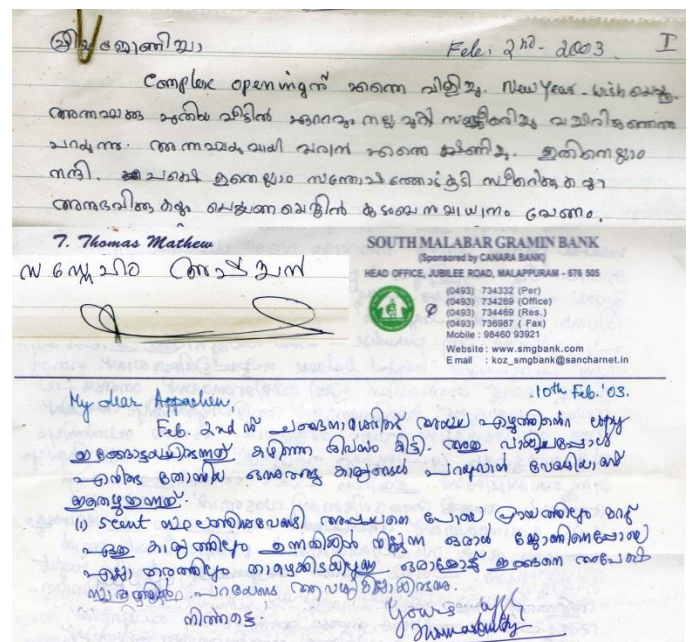
The next day we were appalled to hear Josmon had submitted TIDCO a Park opening date!

Realising something fishy, I called the cousin – Physics Professor, and asked whether he did speak something to Josmon after leaving listening to our conversation. Apparently, as soon as leaving here, in good faith he had warned Josmon that **Jijo was conspiring to shutdown Kishkinta** . He told me ...

ജിജോക്കൂട്ടാ, ഇനിയും ഒരു അപകടം നടക്കണമെന്നുണ്ടോ? ആരെങ്കിലുമൊക്കെ മരിക്കണമെന്നുണ്ടോ? ഒരു അപകടം സംഭവിച്ചു പോയി എന്നും കരുതി പപ്പായുടെ സ്വപ്നം തകർക്കാമോ? ഞങ്ങൾക്കൊക്കെ അവിടെ വരുവാനുള്ള അവസരം ഇല്ലാതാക്കാമോ?

In my life, this was the angriest moment I remember. I called him a vermin.

I despised the fate of his students in the discipline of science and statistical probability, who have had the misfortune to deserve a teacher like him.



How trifle those students would value innocent human lives when weighing against their selfish interests!

Soon Josmon opened the park ... and rewarded the professor- now retired, by making him a Director in Kishkinta Board. Thankfully soon the Park shut down forever with the Corona Pandemic.

6/10/99

Dear Shri Appachan,

My respects to you,

After careful consideration and deep introspection, I wish to put down my feelings.

Not at any time, any disrespect or bad feeling has crept into my mind. It is just that I have a conscience to keep and certain values to uphold, whatever be its cost.

I have realised that the management has views divergent to mine. Further I stand marginalised to ignominy by certain decisions that have been taken. I am not questioning the decisions but I am deeply hurt, wounded and insulted by the way they have been decided.

I respect the management decisions. After all none is above the company. But question is what is the company.

In this scenario, my self-respect does not allow me to continue as CEO. I still have ^{odd} two months left (till 31st Dec) as per my extension. I will utilise the time to get some more investments or new projects. That too if you wish.

I relinquish my post as CEO with effect from today. I shall not sign any cheques, take any decisions, whether routine or policy related.

I shall be informing all HODs about this change separately.

I shall send my official resignation separately for relieving w.e.f 31st Dec 99.

I am today feeling defeated that I am not good enough to be CEO ~~as per your views~~ as per your views. But

-3-

One has to accept. Maybe I am not fit in the present scenario.

What I have done for Kishkinta is known to many, both inside and outside the company. More than that it is known to me. I am proud of my association and the efforts that I have put in.

I am sure you are right and the wisdom of your advice is unquestionable.

Once again my respects to you.

I shall keep you informed about any new proposals for new projects or new investments for your approval.

With regards

N. Balakrishnan
(N. Balakrishnan)

18 Oct. 18 Monday

CAMP KERALA HOUSE
5, JANAKI MANTAR ROAD NEW DELHI-110001

ശ്രീ അപ്പച്ചൻ സാർ,

എന്റെ കൈയെഴുത്താണ് ഈ കത്ത്. ഞാൻ ഇപ്പോൾ കേരള ക്യാമ്പിൽ ഉണ്ട്. ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് എല്ലാപ്പോഴും ഓർമ്മിക്കുന്നു. ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളുടെ കരുതലുകൾക്കും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കും വളരെ അഭിമാനിക്കുന്നു. ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളുടെ കരുതലുകൾക്കും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കും വളരെ അഭിമാനിക്കുന്നു. ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളുടെ കരുതലുകൾക്കും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കും വളരെ അഭിമാനിക്കുന്നു.

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