

May 2013

Dear

Mamachan, Babu, Devassiachan, Joyichan, Johnichan, Chackochan, Anil Madhavan.

It is about my role in our family business on which you have expressed concern.

A few staff at Kishkinta now left remaining loyal to the organization does inform me that it is at grave personal risk Josmon, his family and Ammachi face by residing there. I am talking about deteriorating industrial climate and poisoning of community relationship ... no need mentioning the near calamity during the 2005 floods. We have ample instances in this country (and in my own home town Alappuzha) whence situations were left to run out of control, entrepreneur's family members and factory management's kins had paid with their lives. It is my duty to warn my two sisters and brothers-in-law that the management policies of Josmon are similar that of late Boban Kunchacko, who under the misguidance of his mother had brought about devastations to Udaya Studios, Excel Glasses, his family and himself. Josmon, with his caustic behavior, has antagonized Varadarajapuram villagers, the neighboring industrialists (whom Jos terms enemies) and even his own staff. I wonder how much of the company details of misdeeds must be reaching the authorities given the inside opposition.

Ironically, our parent organisation's problems were once blamed on my Papa when mishaps occurred, though Papa by then was totally out of the scene from Udaya. Likewise, today's misfortune of Navodaya is being blamed on me - for the fact that I play no role there anymore. And one of the reasons behind this letter to you is to throw light on that blame.

I don't have any role today in the management of wealth nor the enjoyment of its fruits which once I had helped generate. This is because of the simple fact that myself and the team of people (which at one time included my wife Liza) who helped generate the wealth in the first place had been eased out of our responsibilities by my Father and Mother. You may notice that other than my brother Josmon - who chose to comply with Papa and Ammachi's non-professional style of management, not even a single person from that once formidable team of Navodaya talents - Projectmanagers, Designers, Filmdirectors, Artdirectors, Artists, Architects, Engineers, Executives, Footsoldiers, etc., has been around for the last 10 years. Nor has any fresh blood (the secret to all Navodaya fortunes) been added. To close relatives (yourself, for instance) who were concerned about the diminishing financial and the deteriorating management status of our family businesses, at one time in fully sympathy to me was told that *'because Jijo had a tragedy in his married life, which in turn has affected Jijo's mental health and ability to perform, Papa at his advanced age had to take up reins lest wolves (read as the list of talents above who have left) ravaged the family fortunes'*. In reality, papa had started curtailing all business activities from year 1985 - much before my marriage or the inception of Kishkinta I would come to this later in this letter.

The truth would be in stating that everyone (including Jijo, myself) were ousted so that Papa and Ammachi could keep a hands-on management - just like my Aunt Annamma Kunchacko had kept her hold on Udaya Studios & Excel Glasses while it lasted. And while imposing herself, ironically Mrs. Kunchacko's justifications were also on imaginary wolves at the doorsteps. Today Josmon calls all of those who once aided us as 'leeches'.

Too bad, those who don't learn from the past are condemned to repeat it (quote, Edmund Burke).

Awed by papa's Personal Charisma, Never-Die-Attitude & P.R. Wizardry, everybody were singing praises till yesterday 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 situations he had helped them* with his brilliance.

Lest you misunderstand, I do acknowledge all those attributes of Papa as the very foundations to my own good fortunes. Like what singer Jesudas in Papa's obituary had noted. "The techniques and tactics of surviving in the film industry, Appachan had learned in serving Kunchacko. And what he had learned in 30 years at Udaya, Appachan put to good use 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 Olavaip, 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!*) – A self-fulfilling prophesy, by which they had brought their own empires' self-extinction, happens in our Syrian Catholic family businesses. It runs in the genes.

I make no claims on the wealth Papa and Ammachi were desperate to hold on to with their both hands. Of course not, I don't approve of the actions of some of my nearest cousins who have filed court cases against their parents and siblings to acquire what is rightfully due to them. I follow the example set by my grandfather Manichacko – Pappa's father, who gave up the residence that is rightfully due to him as the youngest son, since his elder brother would not vacate the family 'tharavad' Maliyampurackal.

Contrary to what Josmon tries to make himself believe, my concerns voiced are not to stake claim on what is due to me. It is only to make sure that Navodaya doesn't go the Udaya way. I am sure I won't be able to help my brother unless his attitude changes. In 1978, at the age of 21 I had seen that even Papa couldn't revive Udaya's fortunes since Aunt Annamma Kunchacko won't change her style of functioning. Also, I find Josmon's attitude to defend Papa's role in my personal misfortune and his efforts to pin the blame on me, were never good starting points towards talks. He need not express kindness to his parents at the expense of fairness to his brother.

I would put it very plainly. It was my business acumen and innovative spirit (of course with Pappa's good standing) that made the family fortunes. Jijo is not as disconnected with the real world as Papa & Ammachi wanted everybody to believe; and out of love and loyalty to their parents Jose, Jiss & Jisha concur with them.

But, *there is none so deaf as those who wouldn't listen.*

Affectionately,
Jijo

P.S.

Given below are some facts to help refresh my mother's and siblings' memory.

Just after graduation when I was 20 years of age, I stood by my father during his partition with Boban Kunchacko. During this time Papa made '*Kadathanattu Makkom*' (1977) our first film - a mediocre one. I didn't like the way creativity was being executed, and opted to move out of family business. But Ammachi insisted that I should not desert Papa mid-project.

I forcibly took over the second film '*Thacholi Ambu*' (1978), to implement the idea of Cinemascope ... and the rest is history.

I stayed out of the project and family business when Papa asserted his style to make a disastrous '*Mamankom*' (1979). In the month of September 1979, Ammachi and Josmon came unannounced to my tutorial classroom at Ernakulam (where I was preparing for exams so as to finish my incomplete graduation papers) and cajoled me to come to Papa's assistance.

They said Papa has relented and changed.

I went back to make '*Manjil Virinja Pookal*' (1980), and the rest again is history.

With Josmon helping, I then made '*Padayottam 70MM*' (1982), '*Mamattikkuttiyamma*' (1983) and '*Kuttichathan 3D*' (1984).

In the three years following the phenomenal success of Kuttichathan, Papa suspended all business activities and sent away key organizational personnel of our film company. Now, the actual reason for suspending our livelihood of **family bread & butter business** lies in the fact that this one single film had generated more wealth than what brothers Kunchacko & Appachan did in 100 films during 30 years! What happened to Papa's frame of mind was the same as of a 'marakkaan' fisherman when an unprecedented 'chemmeen chaakara' occurs.

Papa's assertion had always been '*himself and a driver for him*' is sufficient to conduct all businesses. Everybody else, even if inefficient or insignificant, just need follow his instructions. With the 'Kuttichathan Chaakara', this got precipitated.

True to my mercurial nature then, I cried hoarse and evoked the *metaphor of bamboo forests blooming* to warn everybody of impending disaster. Josmon and Ammachi pleaded inability and chose to be complacent. Given Papa's stature, I had nobody to turn to offer good advice to Papa.

I went to sulk at my Mahalingapuram residence, while Ammachi & Josmon stood and stayed with Papa at Kakkanad studio where Papa to celebrate his success was building a colossal mansion of palatial proportions. And Papa made everybody (except himself kept occupied by presiding the Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce) sit inactive & idle and thus officiated the stagnation of personal wealth.

Apparently my mother and siblings were impressed by Papa's voodoo economics theory - "**Kakkanad Studios & Kachuruthi lands can produce money from nothing! – just add water**". Papa had newspaper articles written on him and his unprecedented business style - Appachan Re-creating Kuttanad at Kachuruthy and Kakkanad. This won praises for him within his fanclub of relatives.

It took a mere 3 years for Navodaya to come down to Zero.

In the month of May 1987, Ammachi and Josmon came to meet me at Mahalingapuram (just after Josmon completed his pending CA papers) again unannounced, on a mission which by then was becoming a routine in our family. What had actually prompted the mission was Ammachi's sudden realization that the very first customer at Kakkanad Studio – Producer M.D. George, just settled his shooting fees and the amount didn't even cover the wear & tear to furniture, bedsheets, curtains, cooking utensils, aluminum tiffin carriers and steel serving plates!

Ammachi and Josmon once again cajoled me on that day in May 1987 at Mahalingapuram. They didn't have to exert much. It was then Ammachi's comment that Jijo was only eager to return!

They assured me Papa has relented and changed, again.

I returned once again, and all of us in desperation to regain lost grounds had tried out (1) *Chanakyan*, (2) Kadathanadan Ambadi court case, (3) Malampuzha Safari Park, (4) Beating Oriental Sajan on South Indian Film Chamber elections, (5) Kishkinta, (6) Bible TV Serial, (7) Kuttichathan DTS Re-Release, etc.....

[To prove his brother's financial misjudgment and his Papa's justification in taking over reins, Josmon at one time harped on the Bible episode costs & the Carousel ride cost at Kishkinta. I wonder to whom he attributes the rest].

It was **Kishkinta & Kuttichathan DTS Re-Release** that helped Papa make another circle and return to his true self. This time the casualties included Liza & Aarcha. On that loss, my parents and siblings were full of sympathy for their

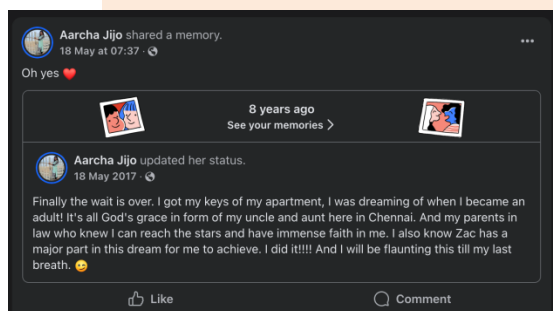
poor Jijokuttan. But Ammachi, Josmon, Jissmol, Jishamol, just couldn't understand why Jijo wouldn't show solidarity with Papa!

The fact - Papa's micro-management style sans any delegation of duty and interference into jobs assigned to individuals had caused the decline of Navodaya. For his interference into personal lives, I hold Papa primarily responsible for the loss of my Liza & Aarcha. I hold Ammachi & my siblings responsible for making the loss irreparable. As Papa as the chairman tightened his grip to turn my 600 strong/ 400 million/ multinational/ public limited/ professional organization into his personal fiefdom, and Ammachi was gratified that the park security guards were assigned to help in her house chores, by September 1998 for the third time I had walked away from the wealth I had generated. It didn't take Papa much time to knock down the **Management Systems, Safety Procedures**, override the **Operation Bible** and nullify the **Park By-laws** - all of these I as the managing director had put in place in consultation with the best of experts. The loss of these working principles would come to haunt poor Josmon eventually.

Just as in Mussolini's Second Roman Empire and also in Indira Gandhi's Emergency Era, 'a transport system running on time' ! was touted as mark of efficiency at Kishkinta in Papa's hands. The enforcement of discipline was marked by Ammachi's rounds in the 60 acre campus for the very purpose of curtailing idle-talk among the lawn-tending lady-staff.

I should confess that my priority then was to regain Liza & Aarcha, and I didn't care much about the sustenance of wealth or the future of my talented colleagues whom I was leaving behind. To prove Jijo's mental impairment, Papa (and later Josmon) went around showing to all relatives (especially the ones who were in awe of him) selected extracts from my letters to him. Papa and Ammachi would go around telling relatives how earnestly they go occasionally to plead with Liza & Aarcha to come back. These visits to Liza were despite my stern warnings. For in the first place, it was because of Papa's interference into her personal duties which, while on leaving for Bible Shoot at Rajastan I had entrusted Liza at Kishkinta, that she had left after differences with Papa. Papa's subsequent constant appeasement efforts by intruding into Liza's home and workspace undermined my reconciliation attempts. She would berate me for not keeping Papa and Ammachi off her back. I was left looking like a fool because of my parents. Why did I put up with this? Surely the 5th Commandment. I have seen with my own eyes what had happened to some of my uncles and cousins who violated the 5th Commandment.

Papa would do the same intrusion and interference with Aarcha after she came of age. These actions had made me the person irrelevant and insignificant in my loved one's life. Why, even Josmon would tout to all our relatives the assistance Josmon offers my daughter, which her irresponsible father (myself) fails to do. But Josmon has the cheek to add that he is helping Aarcha **'as an insurance against future inheritance claims'!!**



I am never on your side and also not on Vipin's side - not a good choice made your father for a boy friend - but what can one expect from skunks. I told your father to finish the story he started in June 2006. I am well aware of what Aarcha is capable of, that I can handle, I do not need your synthetic concern, thanks anyway. Liza



14 years later, Ammachi and Josmon had come yet again to cajole me. Deja-Vu!

Last September (2012). Ammachi & Josmon came again unannounced to Mahalingapuram (the first time after Papa's demise).

You know - history repeats itself; but not exactly in the same way.

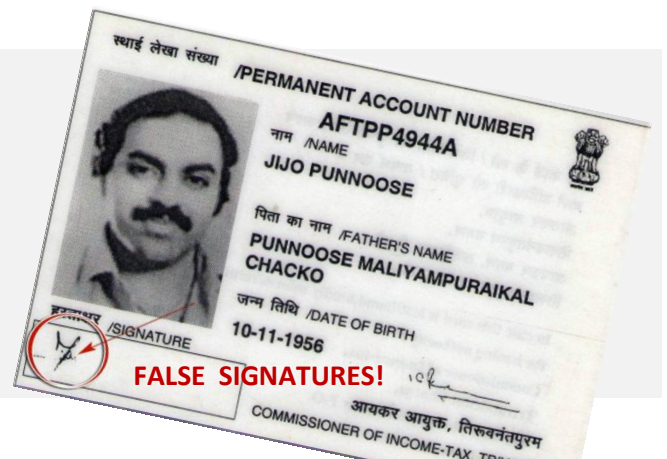
Papa hadn't relented, and this time it was not possible to change Papa.

So Ammachi and Josmon **expect me to change** and become like them. Ammachi is full of prayers. She has unshakable faith in God. Ammachi has Holy Eucharist consecrated at the gates of the Public Limited Company Kishkinta to keep away all evils – Mr. Kuttappan, Mr. Imbichammad, Sureshkanthan_... all whom at Ammachi's behest Papa broke off during his last days. She has exorcised the Kishkinta compound perimeters to be free from all 'leeches' – persons who are friendly with Jijo and who keeps him away from Kishkinta - Rajeevkumar, Najeeb, Sekher, et al. Ammachi believes that the present arrangement if it remains unchanged shall turn out very good. She is even sure that my family shall come together someday and all shall be well that ends well!!

35 years ago, I had felt sorry for the pious Aunt Annamma Kunchacko fervently praying in such terms for her son. Now I am not sure whom to feel sorrier for.

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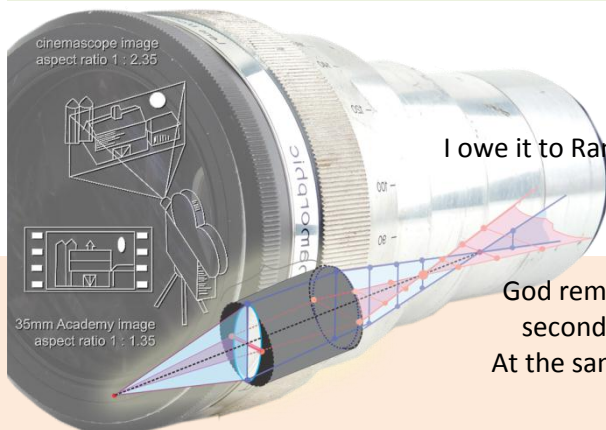
Added in 2024. Jijo



Papa's rise from behind the shadows of his elder brother **Kunchacko** – the father of Malayalam Cinema, happened with film *Kannappanunni* 1977. After Kunchacko's demise in 1976, Papa successfully completed the film on his own and released it. It was the greatest financial blockbuster till then. But, therein started Auntyammachi's (Annamma Kunchacko) opposition to Papa in overshadowing her son Bobachan.



(RIGHT) The last photograph at Udaya Studios before departure in 1977. Just after this photograph was taken, with a handgun in his *madikkuthu*, Bobachan stopped Papa from leaving with the costume boxes of film *Kadathanaattu Maakkom*. The film, Papa's 1st, hindered from being completed at Udaya, Papa had decided to shoot at Madras. When Papa decided to leave without the costume boxes, Bobachan chased papa out into the NH 47 in full view of the public. I witnessed all that before I started my career assisting my Papa.



I owe it to Ramehji of Prasad Film Laboratories for advising Papa to listen to his 20 year old son's idea on 'Cinemascope'. That launched my career ... and Navodaya's good fortunes.

God removed Papa's ignominy by making Sivaji Ganeshan act in Papa's second picture - *Thacholi Ambu*, the first Cinemascope in Malayalam. At the same time, God also meted out his justice by causing Bobachan's diminishment.



A folklore starring Sivaji & Nazeer, *Thacholi Ambu* celebrates a silver jubilee at Apsara theater, Calicut.

Thacholi Ambu cinemascope (1978) was so huge a hit that within one year all theaters (about 1100, average capacity 800 seats) in Kerala had converted themselves to anamorphic projection systems. For the initial set of releases, Navodaya had to supply lenses to the theaters. But by 1982, every single Malayalam film (average 120 films annually) was being made as cinemascope. Navodaya had not only revolutionized the production machinery, but also the theater circuits.

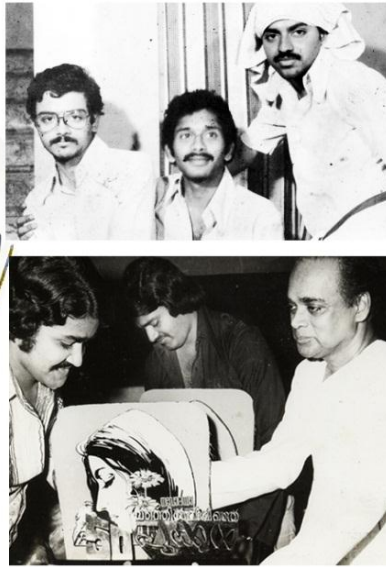
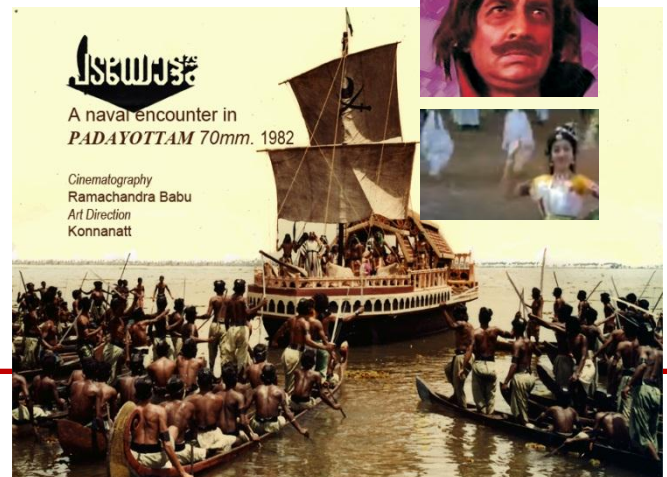


**The mark of intelligence
is in knowing one's abilities.
But the first step to wisdom,
is in knowing one's limitations.**

(RIGHT) Papa ought to have realized his limitations with this disastrous 3rd film. >> If he did, it was only temporary.



(BELOW) Another History! Not very successful. Yet, it caused Jissmol's Marriage to happen!!

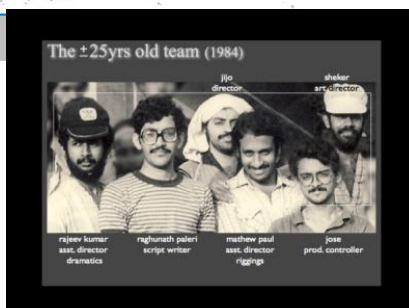


(ABOVE) This film is where I discovered my vocation – assimilating talents and resources God has provided me with, to create superstars, personal fortunes and History!



Fazil directing Baby Shalini in *Ente Mamattikuttiyamaku* (1983). This story about the pains and passions of adopting an orphan child made debuting Shalini a star overnight.

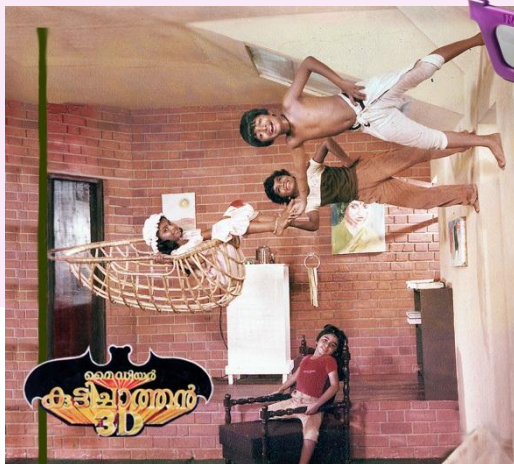
(LEFT) Our finest. Josemon's idea. Fazil's brilliance.



Kuttichathan
Switch On.
1984



Acquiring 3D technology from beyond the seven seas! Installing every Theater Lens & SilverScreen!!
Manufacturing 3D Glasses for every spectator!!!
Beyond the borders to other states and nations!!!!



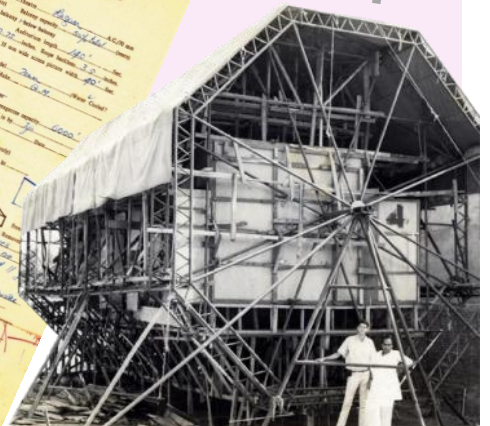
A Children's Film !

ICONIC !

A Rotating Set!

Financial
Windfall!

But, that caused
Papa's undoing!



1985. With 3D, I thought we were only warming up. So many more frontiers waiting to be conquered!
But, following the financial windfall, even our daily Bread & Butter Business was scuttled
Disaster ensued ...

I remember that day in the summer of 1985. I was just back in EKM after the Dubai 3D Release.

I overheard Papa phoning Director Fazil and the Actors to cancel Josmon's Tamil Project, without even Josmon being aware. A confirmed shooting was scheduled to start the very next week.

To my incredulous question 'WHY?'

Papa's answer was "There is no reason to make any more films. I am saving money being wasted by our Executive Anand & Editor Sheker.

They are misleading Josmon to gain personal advantage in the Tamil Film field.

It is high time to send them all away".



Realizing that I was about to get furious, a very diplomatic Papa backtracked.

But it was only temporary. He made sure Josmon, Anand and Sheker didn't follow through with another project despite the fabulous success of 'Poove Poo Chooda Va'. That was how in Navodaya's absence Fazil entered the Kollywood turf to direct and produce Tamil movies.

Papa was unenthusiastic in promoting our next film *Onnu Muthal Poojyam Vare* 1986. Citing the reason that this film, though iconic, lost money, Papa froze all productions for the next 3 years and 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 these 3 years Papa constructed a palatal mansion within the Studio campus at the then remote Kakkanad.

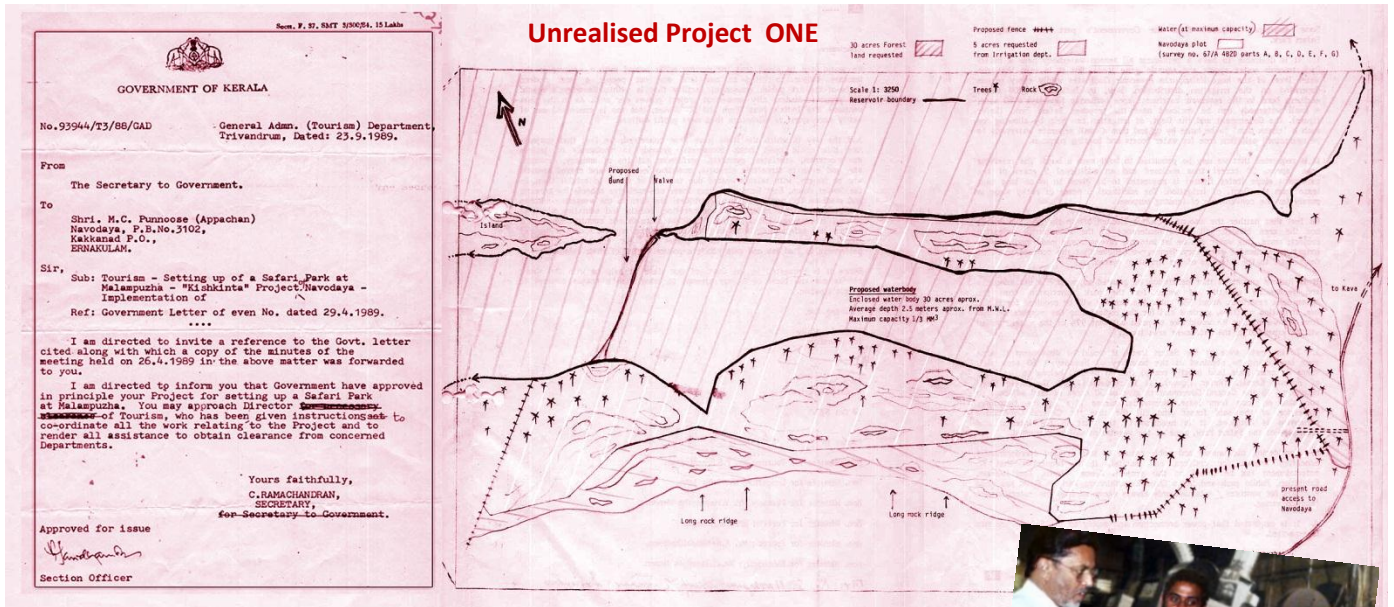
Jisha's marriage prospects suffered.

Papa's fan-club (our relatives) while visiting for freeloading, sang paeans when listening to Papa creating his native Kuttanad in nearby Kachuruthi – a Kakkanad suburb. But they came only to have Papa make recommendations for them for jobs in banks & colleges, getting their offspring's alliances fixed, and have car (a luxury those days) available for their weddings & funerals.

Some seniors among the relatives who came to sing paeans to Papa's trumpets, Papa would depute them to come and urge me to join in Papa's magnificent works which earned great dividends **for them also**. Citing Udaya Studios, I would warn them of the impending doom ... that the way things are going, there would come a time when our own 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 - have settled well. They send their offspring abroad for studies. Do yearly foreign trips and ship cruises. Conduct five star weddings with luxury cars. Ironical, isn't it?



A Safari Park at Malampuzha. The Govt. of Kerala approved it in 1989 !!

This 50 acres of dense forest and waterscape we had purchased while shooting film Padayottam in 1982. The full titles were held mostly in Jijo's name.

Architect Jayachandran & Art Director Sheker did a full design. Liza, Suresh, RK and Naveen were with me. This took place while Josmon was shooting *Pooove Poo Chooda Va*.

Then what happened?

Papa backed out when the design plans were done. He said he had invested the money in additional land around Kakkanad (which, as piece-meal for daily bread and butter, would eventually be sold off with my signatures forged).



A Comprehensive 200 pages Techno-Economical Project Report. 40 Copies of this was submitted to Govt. Departments and Financial Institutions. The Govt (with Papa's friend Nayanar as CM) was ready to give us an additional 50 acres of land in Malampuzha Reservoir!

Papa kept the title deeds of Malampuzha 50 acres safely under his pillow (along with the rest of the property deeds) as assurance against the assets from being squandered away ... till the Govt. confiscated every unused forest lands in 2002 with an ordinance.

Wealth tucked safe under the pillow

Imagine what wonderful things could have been done with the place! This was 2 decades even before the likes of Kochouseph started successfully establishing amusement projects in Kerala – big and small.



In year 2022, Raju – once our Malampuzha manager, brought to me the Malampuzha title deeds Papa had entrusted him for the court case against the Govt. Raju said the documents have to be sent to Josemon, which I said I shall do. Josemon came the next day and made an emotionally violent hue and cry for Raju's action. Both Babu and I were amused at Josemon's pretext to spirit away the worthless documents upon which he was afraid that Jijo and Jisha shall stake a claim on the Malampuzha property in Govt. hands! This happened just after Josemon sent Sunimol with Papa's 'fantasy will' to be signed by us - to concede that all ancestral properties have been bequeathed to Josemon. Jisha complied due to Josemon's violent outbursts. I didn't. I knew Josemon's attempt to sleep peacefully with the documents under the pillow would be in vain. For, even Papa couldn't take them along with him to afterlife.

All those properties Papa and Ammachi clung to with both hands ... have perished.

Those who don't learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. [Edmond Burke]

I still sigh in exasperation when recalling my difficulty in 2005 for making Papa give me my house deeds (Mahalingapuram), and that in 2016 for Josemon give me my Kunko Talkies documents (Pulimcunnoo).



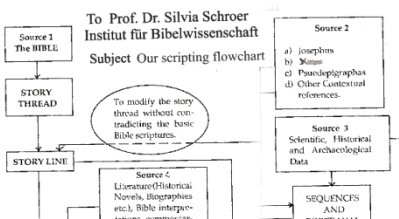
To Outdoor Entertainments.

1989 to 1991.

Navodaya Mass Entertainments Ltd. It took 3 years of creative efforts by a number of Artists, Architects, Program designers, Engineers, Environment scientists and City planners. It was indigenous design and fabrication of every amusement Ride. Architect Jayachandran & Ride designer Balakrishnan, under Project Engineer Imbichammad made fact-finding trips abroad. Ocean Park, Hongkong. Sentosa, Singapur. Alton Towers, UK. Munich & Reggio Emilia.

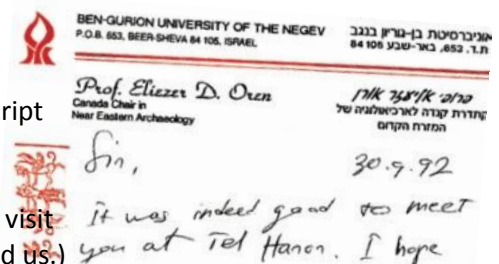


I studied TUV engineering standards for ride component designs and applied Murphy's Law for Safety in Operational Procedures. Art Director Sheker was in charge of Ergonomics. Our finest creation was the White Water Rapids Ride. (LEFT. with Aarcha during its construction). A transition from **filmmaking creativity** to **ride engineering** was very smooth for me – considering the Fluid (water) Dynamics involved. The ride theming – rocks, jungles and ruins – came by nature to Navodaya craftsmen.



Stories from the Bible was a project that involved intensive project research that spanned many continents. Art Directors and Cinematographers were deputed along with Research scholars and Script writers to the archaeological sites at Tel-Aviv, Negeb & Luxor and to Museums & Universities at Jerusalem, Cairo & Geneva.

(ABOVE . Visits to Archaeological Excavations of Tel-Haror. Also, a visit to Mount Tabor/ Transfiguration of Jesus, with Galilee seen behind us.)



The Bible Serial could not be shot in the indoors, because the events in the Holy Bible are wholly outdoors in their narratives. Those days the video format was so low in latitude and so wide in contrast, the only option was to shoot in film and convert to video for TV broadcast. I along with Senthil designed a process chain by which shot on film (16mm - Arri Germany) it could be edited on the emerging Digital Offline Systems (AVID-Massachusetts, USA) and conformed back to Betacam (Sony) with EDL Tabulators (Skotel – Canada).

The costs for all equipment were funded by the Christian Media Trust - MISSIO of Aachen, Germany. My self and Papa had travelled the first half of 1992 to Vatican, Cologne, Munich, Singapore for this. When the production of The Bible Serial (in Ajmer & Pushkar) started, Papa and Kuttappan borrowed large sums from Catholic Institutions – Diocese, Convent Congregations.

This was because all our liquid funds Papa had invested in land properties so as to prevent his sons from attempting any 'misadventure'. (Kerala Film Trade is replete with such misadventures of Kulathunkal Pothen, Kanmani Babu Sait, etc.) The pitfall of this borrowing is in the lead-time it took for this TV Project completion – an uncertain venture. For films, the borrowings happened from Theaters just before our film releases.

If I had known, I would have had the prudence to stop the project then and there itself.

Yet, the responsibility is still mine; as The Director. The buck ends with me.

Papa (and Josmon) had always blamed me for the 'Bible Disaster'.

But what about the advantages gained in the Project?

Josmon gave away my custom-designed ARRI 16mm camera system (cost 2 Cr. In 1993) **as junk, without even asking me**. The Bombay operator who took it made a fortune renting it out in the next 2 years.

The Bible picture negatives – like all other Navodaya films – rotted and was lost in the Film Lab. Even today, 35 years later, it could have brought lakhs in OTT revenue (to mitigate difficulty for our daily bread).



Navodaya brought the first Film Computer System to India >>>

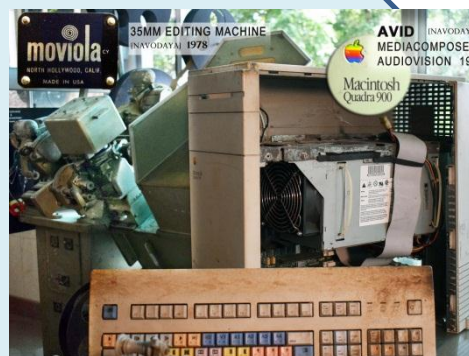
In a meeting at Singapore, Curt Rawley offered Papa AVID's very first non-linear editing machine to be sold outside the U.S. I carried the chip-boards, software floppies and hard-drives from Singapore and Senthil set it up in Chennai. This was for ***Stories from The Bible*** – a TV Serial shot on film and telecast on video tape.

This unit transformed the filmmaking landscape of India.

In 1994, by offering free training on 'Mediacomposer' and 'AudioVision' on this Mac Quadra 900, Jose Punnoose of Navodaya and Senthilkumar of Real Image made a whole generation of film professionals in Kollywood and Bollywood embrace desk-top-systems for filmmaking.

This occurred even before the transition happened in Hollywood.

With revolution done in Chennai, Josmon shifted the original Quadra 900 machine from Chennai to Trivandrum and started a Digital Sound Studio – a first in the state. On 1998 Christmas Eve, upon Josmon's initiative for which I commended him for, alone I went to TVM to assemble the computer circuit boards and software on the system. I personally trained the staff and technicians for the new studio.



In five years, the revolution happened in Malayalam film industry too. But, for the very reason that Papa could not oversee the TVM studio activities, which without any owner-supervision the staff were running, Papa had this facility shut down and all component machinery brought down and dumped at Kakkanad Studios. Our staff that I had trained joined many other Digital Audio Studios started by individual film producers and even performers (Mohanlal, Revathy Suresh, Siddique Lal, etc).

Audio Mix facility became a big business in the Malayalam Film Industry.

That was the time businessmen of Kerala were diversifying their activities for the sake of their grand-children. But my once prudent Papa was darkening his own sons' survival!

Post 2005, for doing Navodaya's own film-audios, I had the misfortune to go and wait in queue in front of studios owned by my disciples' disciples.

Last year (2022) I had to undergo the same ordeal for doing Kuttichathan dubbing in English.

All TVM studio machinery which Papa shifted from Trivandrum to Kakkanad Studio rotted and perished. But then, that is nothing when compared to the fate of my custom- designed and fabricated amusement park machinery in Kishkinta under Papa's chairmanship from 1995 to 2010.

Note on (ONE) below – About the same time Papa got terribly cheated by the Marwari Nimbus, Papa did cheat the KISHKINTA board by illegally selling the company land and routing the money to cheat the Malaysian Berjaya by buying the shares through benamis – Devasiachan and Johnichan. Jijo was also cheated when the Berjaya shares were transferred to Sunita's name. I notice a Divine retribution.

MONUMENTAL STUPIDITIES

A decade later, when Josmon used the same cheat to buy Berjaya's additional shares by using benamis - Ranimol, Bauby, Johnichan, Anil Madhavan and Abdul Salam, his plans to compensate the benamis came to a sudden halt with the accident. Again, Divine retribution.

(ONE). The Sponsorship arrangements for Bible Serial were done by Nimbus, a Marwari corporation. When telecasts ran into trouble in 1992, and the Sponsors withdrew, Nimbus filed a suit against us – for compensation. This was without merit and was panned in the Mumbai Court for 10 years.

In 2003, in Mumbai, Papa was approached by a Malayali Advocate (Chacko) promising to revive the said case and getting Crores in compensation for Papa from the plaintiff Nimbus! Papa had to reward the advocate (Chacko) only a percentage of the compensation as commission.

How do I know this? ...

Papa soon dropped in to my Mahalingapuram residence and declared this new development as an instance of inefficiency of Kuttappan who had negotiated the original contract with Nimbus ... and Papa's brilliance in presently handling this issue.

An year later Ammachi comes to Mahalingapuram and tells me that the case has been lost ... and Nimbus is attaching all our properties since the verdict of compensation – in Crores, the court has granted Nimbus.

This calamity, Ammachi blamed on me and persons (Kuttappan) whom I entrusted Bible Production.

But, it was a trap Papa had walked into. The Advocate (Chacko) was a Nimbus stooge. By allowing him to represent Papa, he cut a deal with Nimbus and furthered the Marwari businessman's false claims!

Jisha today narrates tearfully how she went with Papa and fell at the Marwari businessman's wife's feet. That lady was a Christian, it seems.

N.B. One of Papa's celebrated achievements in 1952 was winning the case and retrieving 100 acres Nilambur Estate his brother Kunchacko had stupidly lost! Papa was in his late 20s then. Here with Nimbus, Papa was in his late 70s.

(TWO). Josmon uses the same playbook to blame others for his mistakes.

Around 2008, Papa had sold 60 acres – about half of Kishkinta land, to KGS. Part of this plan was to route unaccounted money to Devasiachan and Johnichan to buy Berjaya shares in Sunimol's name ... by which, the NAME shareholders (Jijo too) lost. But the illegality was only fair according to Ammachi who had the Holy Eucharist consecrated at the Park Entrance for that. This resulted in acrimony between Papa and Josmon.

Because, the areas hurriedly marked off for transaction deprived Kishkinta with a proper Entrance – exactly where Ammachi had the Holy Eucharist consecrated.

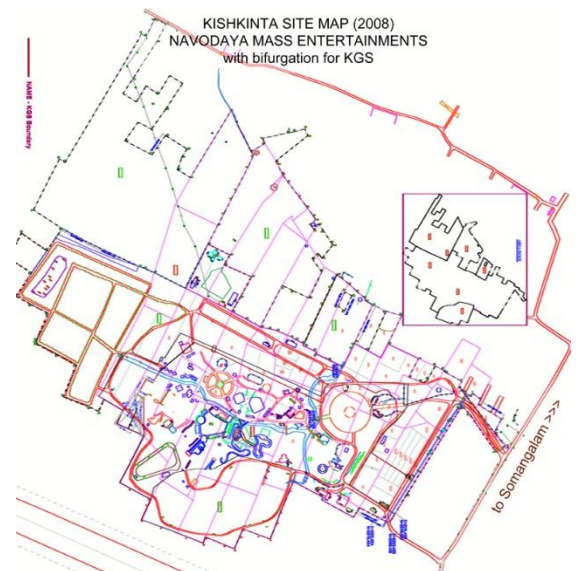
Can't blame Josmon.

Papa's sale of Navodaya Studio land in 1993 to Syro-Malabar Church without consulting anybody had deprived a proper entrance to the Studio Floors too. KGS eventually selling the 60 acres to Reliance, who eventually selling the same to Stalin's son-in-law's RealEstate Developer, saw the final buyers forcefully claim and possess the areas in year 2022.

With park staff reduced to a handful, Josmon, deprived of a competent management hierarchy, entrusted a mere draughtsman to compile the survey numbers of areas transferable to the RealEstate buyers. The draughtsman fouled it up further by noting the plot numbers wrong ... very wrong indeed. In result, the buyers ended up taking possession of the park's prime spaces and crucial utility constructed areas.

This effectively sealed the fate of Kishkinta.

A rancorous Josmon drove away the draughtsman, started abusive battles with the buyers and today blames the 'survey number errors' on persons who had constituted Kishkinta 30 years earlier! Deprived of records lost in repeated flooding, Josmon is unmindful to the fact that the land titles, when they were in competent hands, had stood valid and unchallenged for 3 decades.



(THREE). In 2005, Safety Supervisor Engineer Mr.T was the only senior manager to assist Papa in running Kishkinta. Mr.T had perfected the art of sycophancy for him to remain intact, while all others were ordered to abandon the sinking ship. The same Mr.T brought an 'International Financing Agent' who promised to obtain 500 Crores Rupees as foreign funding for Kishkinta. In this agent, Ammachi would have found an angel sent by God to save Kishkinta.

The 'angel' took Papa, Josmon and Mr.T to Singapore and Malaysia at considerable expenses and a six digit reward to himself for enabling 'negotiations' with Consortiums.

In KAL, suddenly the angel disappeared!

This incident was told to me years later by persons who knew the 'agent' as a notorious tout in Pollachi and Coimbatore.

(FOUR). In 2004, at the age of 79, despite better judgment from others, Papa insisted that he himself shall go to oversee the release of Chota Chetan 3D in the lawless state of Bihar.

Because of uncertainty in '3D Glass revenue collection', the film was never screened in Bihar even 20 years after its debut in 1994. Since Papa in 2004 was offered some quick money by a shady distributor, Papa wrote out a distribution agreement to him. Instead of deputing managers (Kuttappan, Raju or Anand) Papa went to Patna. There arose a dispute in collecting the 3D Glasses revenue. Along with his 3D Screening Team, Papa was physically assaulted by the distributor's henchmen.

N.B. One of Papa's celebrated achievement in 1979 was to quell the caste-mob-riot that broke out against the Hindutva locals and Film Unit members (junior artists) while shooting film *Mamaankom* at Kalady Sringeri Matt. Papa was 55 years old then. At Bihar he was 79.

(FIVE) All Iconic Navodaya Films, Permanently Lost.

Kadathanattu Maakkom,
Thacholi Ambu,
Mamaankom,
Theekkadal,
Manjil Virinja Pookkal,
Padayottam,
Ente Maamattukkutti Ammakku,
Onnu Muthal Poojyam Varey,
Chanakyan,
.... and of course,

Stories From The Bible.

Sometime in 2004, from my 1st floor residence at Mahalingapuram, I went down to the ground floor where the Editing, Production and Audio rooms are located. At the attached store I found one of the most shocking of sights for an old-time filmmaker, who I am.

Lying there were two cans of film rolls -

NEGATIVES ! - of my iconic films *Manjil Virinja Pookkal* (1980) and *Padayottam* (1982). The reel numbers 8 and 10 to which the rolls corresponds to, clearly written on them.

I immediately asked for editing in-charge Rajashekar.

Selbin in charge of the office told me that Rajashekar had resigned and left the previous month itself.

I managed to get a reluctant Rajashekar on phone a few days later.

To my frantic question as to why and how precious negatives that had to be stored in Film Laboratory at thermo-sanitized conditions were left orphaned here in the store, Rajashekar gave an incredulous answer.

The said reels (negatives) were taken from Prasad Film Laboratories to be given to SUN TV. The TV Channel had requested Papa for a feature on Superstar Mohanlal and the excerpts from these two films - Mohanlal's first, where to be included in the TV Program featuring Papa. (The *Manjil Virinja Pookkal* reel # 8 had Mohanlal's debuting appearance - Narendran the Villain).

Once SUN TV had transferred the negatives to tape for broadcast, they returned the cans to Navodaya Editing. Now, there was a 3 decades old standing norm that **'negatives have to be transported only in a car ... no bus, two-wheeler or auto rickshaw allowed'**. Such was the precaution put in for negatives. If I was consulted, I would not have even allowed my negatives to be taken out for a TV promo purpose!

When Rajashekar asked for a car for taking the negatives back to Prasad Lab, Josmon answered that *'archiving the film negatives was not worth the expense of sending a car from Kishkinta to Chennai City'*. Also, said Rajashekar, Josmon had asked the Lab not to preserve the Navodaya negatives any further due to the annual maintenance charges - however paltry it was!



Rajeshekar, the old-film-school editor's voice was chocking when he was telling me this. He told me that was the reason he got disgusted and resigned his job with us.

A Flashback. There was an incident in the 1970s about film *Unniyarcha* (1961), the first Vadakkanpaattu (Ballads of North Malabar) film in Malayalam. The original film **Unniyarcha** is not available today because portions (4 to 6 reels as I remember) of the original B&W negative were lost in 1972 when they took out those reels for portions of *Unniyarcha* to be included in the color film **Aromalunni**. A production executive misplaced the reels. They were not returned to the B&W laboratory of AVM after copying them at the Gemini Color Lab. So sad, by the time they realised it, no film print also existed for remastering. I remember the cries of despair, since the film was iconic and one of the biggest financial success stories in Malayalam cinema. The loss in revenue alone is incalculable ... forget the historic value of that work of art! My cousin Boban Kunchacko (Kunchacko's son), to mitigate the loss, added some voice commentaries to the story elements of the remaining available portions of the original and recertified the revised version in 1983.

Hence all of us are aware how precious film master negatives are.

Josmon was still handling the Navodaya film business. So I frantically called my brother to ask the reason for this sacrilegious act of discarded film negative reels. Josmon's answer was what he told Rajashekar. It was not worth preserving. He also added that since the films have been transferred to Betamax Video Tape, that would suffice for all future purposes.

My advice that '*Betamax was a low-information medium and the emerging formats of the future would need the wide information in color, latitude and resolution stored as analog data in the celluloid*' was stonewalled by Josmon's on a single emotion – contempt.

Before closing, I had to tell my brother that at least the blood, sweat and tears of many like me who worked hard to create the iconic products had to be valued – the basic reason to preserve art. My brother doesn't seem to understand that.

Come 2010s, even the TV Channels were asking for **HD TV resolution transfer from celluloid** for broadcast. Navodaya's films had none. Even the Beta format had gone out of market. By 2015 technology had improved such that there was need for 4K Digital transfers for rerelease in theatres. Navodaya films had none. This was the time when many (like *Vadakkan Veera Gatha* 1989 got rereleased).

In 2023 February C.V.Sarathy of E4E went to Josmon to ask whether any old film prints of Navodaya movies could be located ... for example, the Navodaya film *Chanakyan* (1988). Sanjay Wadhva - the OTT Online Moghul, had just located a print of film *Gentleman* (1994) in a Coimbatore garage and had it restored at his expense. The negative of *Gentleman* was considered to be lost forever. Now with the restoration, Sanjay was providing revenue of 8 lakhs per month to the producer (Kochumon) from international web subscription. All Navodaya films, if restored, can bring decent revenue every month.

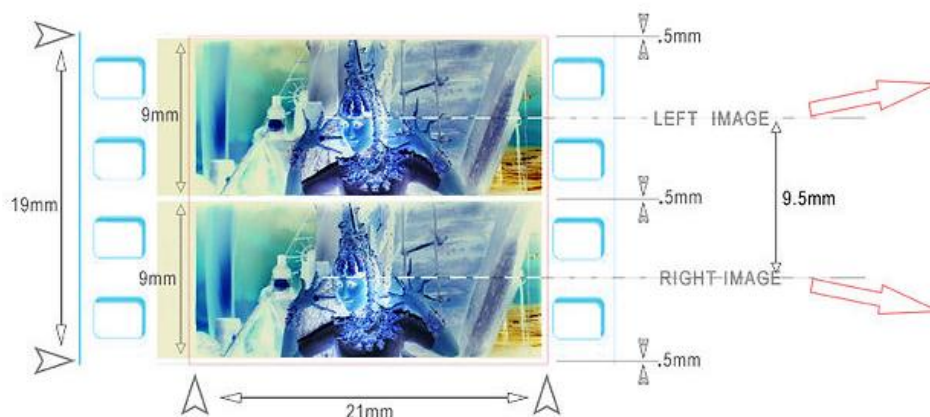
How could I tell Sanjay or Sarathy that this is badly needed revenue I wish to have for our children to survive?

Well, I had taken the rights for film *Kuttichathan* from Papa in 2003.

Hence in 2010 I scanned and restored the 3D film at a considerable cost to me.

Kuttichathan is the only Navodaya film today that exists. The Youtube contents of other Navodaya films are of so low resolution and poor quality, they are not possible for theatrical viewing.

Having woken up to reality, recent days (2025) Josmon has started enquiring Pune & Film Division Archives whether they hold any old prints of Navodaya's award-winning films.



Dual stream Digital 3D Imaging (2004)



3D Rig – MRT Prototype Ark of the Covenant
Design by RealFun & Fabrication by SICCO Engineering, Chennai.



Amusement Park Snippets Digital 3D Imaging (2004)

Shot on Beamsplitter prototype
720p @ 60fps with twin
Panasonic Varicams

C.G. in S3D by Indian Artists

Technical

* Twin Cameras - AJ HDC271@ 720p 60fps
with CLA 35HD adaptors
Visual Technologies (I) Pvt. Ltd.
* Twin Lenses - Carl Zeiss Ultraprimes
24mm, 32mm, 50mm, 85mm, 135mm
film lenses by Sujatha & Raviprasad



At Navodaya, Mahalingapuram, Chennai, I spent the whole of 2003 on developing Digital 3D Imaging which was **cutting edge technology** then. During the final stages of research and development an invitation came from Chinese State Film Corporation to come and popularise 3D Cinema on Chinese Mainland. Their Chairman — a young Chinese American, under recommendation from Chris Condon of Stereovision, Burbank, LA., personally invited 4 of my group to come over to tour China's massive theatre network. He requested to bring our films (*Kuttichathan*, *Magic Magic*) with our new Digital 3D System and equipments — that too, all expenses being paid by them. For, I had offered all our demonstration services free. This was a clear six years before film AVATAR created a 3D Digital revolution all over the world. Including myself, 3D Technician Naveen Kothadia, Senior business organiser N. G. John.

Visas issued by Chinese Embassy in Delhi, in the last week of departure, my Pappa (Navodaya Appachan) suddenly stepped out of his dominion in Kishkinta and announced that Pappa and my brother Jos shall lead the planned trip to Beijing. Ammachi sent me a letter that she would go to China instead of Kuttappan. (I still have this letter). Rather than defy Pappa, I cancelled the program.

The trip, as Babu knows, turned purposeless.

Josmon took away my Digital 3D Components to conduct a 'Rotating Set Show' (again purposeless). For the want of resources I personally invested in, this innovation – 6 years before James Cameron's, didn't materialize.



To be shot in NY Manhattan. Jose knew I won't concede to an **all-out, all-India** release because of logistic reasons. For, I maintained that 3D screenings cannot be setup simultaneously across hundreds of cinemas overnight. But Jos wanted to do it like others had done with distributor agents.

My brother was not patient to wait for another year by which time Senthil Kumar of Real Image promised to have a 3D DCP ready for Digital Projection in the theaters. I was developing a 3D System with Dual Digital (1920 X 1080) Cameras.

We thought it **A Historic Idea. A Great Experiment** – to have Digital 3D Cinematography and Digital 3D Projections in Cinemas. (Consider! This was a decade before James Cameron film AVATAR hit the screens).

Josmon produced and directed *Magic, Magic* 3D with Chris Condon's lenses in 2001. The story was Jose's own 'dog story' which failed to be developed as a script under Tom and Paleri.

With production-design fully done, with a week to go before shooting started in Manhattan, the Twin Tower 9/11 tragedy occurred and shooting permissions in the vicinity (such as Times Square and Battery Park) were revoked. Despite my strong objection in continuing with the production, Kuttappansar and Jose went about to shoot with drastic script changes at the shooting spot. Kuttappan's contention was that '3D by itself is the selling point; everything else is secondary'. Josmon's insisted that Ammachi's prayer-group had 'divined' that this film was 'now or never'. Obviously, these assurances were misplaced. The film was both a financial and critical disaster. Within days of it 3D screenings, it was removed from the theaters in India.

