



ECA MIRROR

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Secretary's MESSAGE

The art of life is a constant readjustment to our surroundings – Kakuzo O



The COVID-19 pandemic came as a jolt and altered our lives unimaginably. ECA undoubtedly is a second home to most of us. It is where we converge to meet friends, play a game or simply unwind after a stressful day. All that came to a halt as remaining confined within our homes became the mandated safety norm.

After months of lockdown when the restrictions on various sectors were gradually lifted, we hoped that social clubs too would get to breathe a sigh of relief but that was not the case. Even to this day, though all activities of the club have resumed, we are far from reaching normalcy. This has had an adverse impact on the Association both financially and operationally.

The Executive Committee had to take quick financial decisions to run the routine activities of the Association smoothly. Though it caused some discomfort to our members and to the staff, they understood our difficulties and the support they have given us has been commendable.

The Caterers - Indian Coffee House - faced the challenge of reduced seating capacity norms as a result of the SOPs released by the government. However, they have been very supportive and adaptive. All safety measures are followed while serving food in the restaurant. The catering committee has also introduced the option of food takeaways for members using service providers such as Dunzo.

To keep up the morale of our members, the Executive Committee was constantly thinking of innovative ways to start engaging them in the club's activities. Since online platforms were becoming the new normal, we adopted them.

We moved our meetings online and found ways to engage our members using the available digital options. The Library Committee's book reading sessions and the Fine Arts Committee's ECA Sangeetham event were moved online. Both activities were effectively conducted and well accepted.

The showstopper undoubtedly was the recently held ECA Online Onotsavam. The

Executive Committee Members

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Library & Special Events
Mr. Sobin Soman
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Club Development

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Immediate Past President
Mr. Sudhy Varghese
Immediate Past
Gen. Secretary
Mr. Krishnanunni A.K.
Immediate Past Treasurer

ECA President, Dr. Devasia Kurian put forth the idea of an Online Onam Celebration. The Onam Celebrations Committee headed by the Vice President, VR Chandran and Jt. Secretary, Sanjai Gangadharan developed it and showcased one of ECA's finest Onam Celebrations.

The tough times are far from over and a challenging year may lie ahead. However, we are learning new ways to move forward. Any change, even for the better, is always accompanied by discomforts. Rest assured that the Executive Committee and the ECA staff will continue our dedicated efforts to serve our members. We are confident that we have the support of our members to help us sail through the choppy seas that face us.

Prajesh Soman
GENERAL SECRETARY

Onotsavam

Onotsavam at ECA is something the members always look forward to, as it's a coming together for family and friends. This year the pandemic upset the hopes of this big family as it looked like the Onotsavam would have to be called off.

However, our President would not give up. He called for an assembly of his cabinet and put forward the idea of taking Onotsavam 2020 online. Under his able leadership the team got started and evaluated options. The first online OCC was convened on 14th August 2020 and was well attended by Patrons, Past Presidents and Members. Ideas and suggestions came in and with this as the base, the leadership team put in the plan for the Onotsavam 2020.

A two day agenda was prepared with Day 1 for cultural programs and Day 2 for competitions and the Members' Ganemela. The 26th & 27th of September were decided as the dates for this event.

The members' program co-ordinator, Mrs. Sindhu Rajesh, reached out to members who wanted to participate in the cultural events and got them to start preparing.

In the 2nd OCC held on 28th October 2020 the final plan with budgets was submitted and approved. The OCC chairman with the support of the Executive Committee reached out to potential sponsors and started generating the funds required to conduct the program. The members were missing the HERALDING of ONAM. Suggestions from patrons and senior members helped the organizing team to explore the possibility of putting together memories of heralding from past performances. Mr. Shaji Pillai came forward to take up the task of doing this. The creative contents and online work was assigned to Raindrop Studios who started building the base for the online presentations.

In the subsequent OCC it was confirmed that the 2 days Online Onotsavam 2020 would be on similar lines as the in-person celebrations conducted in previous years. It would have the formal Inaugural function, the President's Awards for Excellence in Academics, Onam Heraldng and the Members' Cultural Programmes.

Mr. Shaji Pillai browsed through the video recordings of the Onam Celebrations of the past 14 years and then put together a 20-minute video title Memories of Heraldng. This turned out to be a heralding show as beautiful as ever. Ms. Nikitha Loraine and Mr. Shaji Pillai added fun and flavour to the flow of events by anchoring the entire Onotsavam 2020.

A total of 13 cultural performances were presented by the members, their spouses and their children. The online platform provided the opportunity to members who are residing outside Bangalore and the country as well to participate in the Onotsavam.

The games and competitions were conducted by the team headed by Gopalakrishna Damodar and Prajesh Soman. This year there were competitions for the youngsters of ECA and these were conducted by the team led by Ann Kurian, Neha Sudhy, Nikitha Loraine, Anagha Anett and Hridya Sudhy.



Onotsavam Badminton and Billiards competitions were also conducted for members.

The shooting and edits of all the cultural programmes were completed by the 20th of September, the final editing and the trials were completed by the 25th and as planned the program was aired on the ECA Facebook group and the ECA YouTube channel on 26th of September at 6pm. Braving the hurdles of a pandemic, TEAM ECA created history by successfully conducting its first online Onotsavam.

On the 27th of September the following competitions were held: Go Get IT, Anthakashari, and Quiz. This was followed by the Members Ganamela, which was hosted and conducted by Mr. Sunil Kulamakkal and had good participation.

The Managing Committee would like to thank all the sponsors and the members who participated in Onotsavam 2020 and helped make it a grand success.

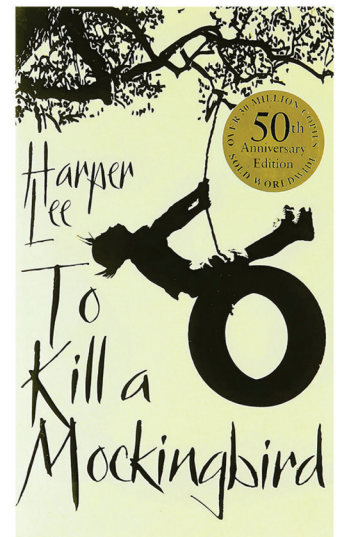
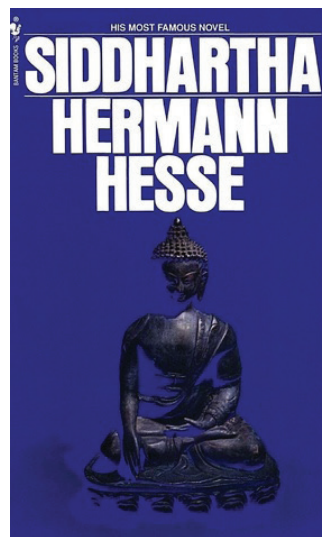
Much Ado about Moderation

If there ever was a lacuna in our ECA club, it was the missing literary and specifically book lovers arena. That was fortunately remedied with the launch of the ECA Book Club by the Library committee in the month of November 2019.

Soon a Book Club group was formed and with the help of a perfect navigator, Ratna Jose, it has sailed smoothly ever since. Ratna has steered the ship in the right direction by giving the correct coordinates in the form of rules to follow, setting a format, and initiating the inaugural session with the acclaimed book 'Siddhartha' by Hermann Hesse. There was no looking back ever since, and we have a full fledged, activity packed Book Club in place.

I had the privilege of being the moderator for the month of August 2020. The book of choice was 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee. Being a moderator in a live session itself is a challenge as we need to gauge the room's atmosphere, the audience's reaction, and modify as and when the need arises. However, an online platform where we are devoid of these simple takeaways was to swim in uncharted waters. All I could do was take the plunge and play it by the ear. Using a slide presentation as a prop, I hoped to take the story

forward. Being a popular, award winning book, and the genre being contemporary in nature, there were several interesting discussions and a healthy exchange of ideas. Personally, I learnt a lot from these various viewpoints.



At the end of the day, it gladdened me to realise that this mode of interaction brought in so many more participants, including international ones. Looking forward to many such cruises through uncharted waters.

Land ahoy!!

Kavita Varma
(Membership No.: K070)

Ornamental Fish

Staying occupied at home during the pandemic is proving to be quite a challenge. My daughter has her online classes while my wife stays busy teaching Mathematics to senior school students. I have taken to my pet love which is ornamental fish and I am pretty sure that the fish do love the attention.

Ornamental fish rearing is an age old practice. The vibrant colours of fish in an aquarium tank lend an aesthetic hue to any living area. An additional benefit is that aquariums have been instrumental in reducing blood pressure and going by today's stress index this colour in our lives will be a welcome add-on. We often come across folks who complain about their fish dying regularly and it is important to remember the following points while maintaining an aquarium.



The right mix of fish

To successfully maintain an aquarium, it is imperative to understand the right mix of fish to be grown. In aquarium life there are some extremely aggressive species and it would be foolhardy to introduce them in the aquatic environment. Ideally, a healthy ratio of guppies, mollies and goldfish can be maintained. This would ensure that the tank would always be vibrant in colour.

Feed - Amount and quality

Fish are just like humans, especially goldfish. They just don't know when to stop eating. We would always have a child at home, wishing to show his friends his new pair of gold. The tendency to feed fish at irregular times persists and leads to bloating of the gold and subsequent mortality. The excessive feed also leads to deterioration of water quality and deprivation of optimum oxygen levels.

Itchy knuckles

The overzealous host at times feels that a tap on the glass aquarium would help draw the attention of his aquatic inhabitant. The tap however is the equivalent of a depth charge in Naval warfare terms and it has just about the same effect on the poor fish.

Too clean is not clean

Some aquarium keepers tend to change water very frequently and this does not bode well for the fish. Change of water means change of temperature as well as loss of existing nutrients in the environment and sometimes leads to shock.

Ornamental fish culture can be stimulating to both eye and mind. One can spend long hours just gazing at the tanks or rock aquarium pools. They require minimal upkeep and the age-old adage applies here as well – keep it simple. Also, try growing fish in outdoor pools. They have more space and grow faster. The tank's population needs to be monitored carefully and overcrowding is to be avoided.

Aquariums also need to maintain Social Distancing.

Chitradeep Chakraborty
(Membership No.: C-040)



Dear ECA Family,

I have been constantly thinking of how we spent the past decade together and how we should spend the next decade together as one happy ECA Family. The constant feeling that I get is that we need to get more creative and inclusive of new ideas and people into our activities at the Association throughout the year and here's why – I shall try to put across my point of view as my humble submission in the article :

“Joys of Creativity and Inclusion”

Creativity:

“There is really no prescription for creative work, I heard a writer say the other day that he sits down at the keyboard and the first thing he says to himself is ‘I don't know.’” — Geoff Talbot

That writer sounds like a wise man to me. All too often, when we start work, we bring too much knowledge, too many preconceptions about how we expect the work to turn out. So many, in fact, that we end up cramping our imagination to fit our expectations, instead of allowing it to surprise us with something unexpected.

And as we know, that unexpected “something” is the source of creative magic. Too much knowledge, not enough ignorance, and creativity will be conspicuous by its absence.

That's not to say there's no place for knowledge, skills, and experience. As creative people, we couldn't operate without these. But when we start a new piece of work, we need to look at it with fresh eyes, set aside our assumptions and open our minds to fresh sources of inspiration. We sometimes need to embrace a bit of uncertainty and creative ignorance.

This isn't a new idea. Keats famously wrote of “Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” Jonathan Fields wrote an entire book on the fact that uncertainty is integral to creativity, and the need for creators to tolerate and even “exalt” uncertainty.

But it's not always easy to feel the power of negative

capability, or the joy of creative ignorance, when you're faced with an empty screen, canvas, or stage, and the voice of doubt starts nagging from the back of your mind. At that moment, it's only human to reach for any kind of certainty, to relieve the pressure. ...let's start creating MAGIC TOGETHER for the next decade – 2018 - 2028.

Inclusion :

Let me highlight some ways in which the inclusion of new members and their families helps: us

- Build new friendships with typically developing kids from across different schools and members from across the city to contribute fresh new ideas and suggestions. For children, developing the ability to build friendships in the early years is key to establishing relationships in later life.
- Receive, encourage and include the new people without being isolated.
- Learn in the company of the experts and senior members.
- Develop the social competence needed to become active leaders.

Including youth, new members and their children in planning new activities also benefits children with more typical development and their families by providing opportunities to:

- Interact with children and families in their community whom they might otherwise not meet.
- Develop a greater understanding and respect for people who are actively involved in organising activities especially our Past Presidents and Office Bearers who have made invaluable contributions selflessly.
- Build a stronger sense of social responsibility.
- Interact with children who have a range of abilities.



- Learn from specialists who can provide information, skill building and support for tapping the strengths of individual children.

- Build a collaborative partnership with specialists, parents, and other staff and services.

As you read about the benefits of inclusion, you should notice that it's not just the young and new members who benefit but also their families. As children grow into adulthood, their attitudes and actions toward people will be shaped by their early experiences. Positive experiences in inclusive settings will enable them to understand and collaborate with other people around with their own unique personality, gifts and abilities.

Inclusion, though beneficial, does not occur without careful planning and thoughtful interaction with our Past Presidents and Office Bearers.

Over to you:

Now that we all are traversing through the COVID-19 situation and navigating through its new challenges, it is time for us to ask:

How important is it for us to have many more creative programs in ECA and the loss of "not knowing" how to implement a creative process?

How do you connect with the joy of inclusion of youth, children and new members to create more magic around for the next decade?

Regards,

Manoj Subramanian

Congratulations

Ms. Nikhila Ballal, a Chartered Accountant by profession (ECA member No. DN026), (daughter of ECA member - Ramakrishna Ballal and Rani Ballal) secured the 5th rank in the state (with 100% marks in all the three practical papers and overall 96%) in the recent Carnatic Music Vocal Senior Level examination conducted by Karnataka State Education Board.



Write Brain Theory

My most enduring and rewarding love affair started aeons ago, at least it feels that way, when I was very young. Books have always found safe haven, a pride of place, in my home, both my parents being avid readers. It was just a matter of time before I opened one and lost myself in a loving embrace.

The first prize of any note I ever won, was also a book and I still remember it. It was a Nancy Drew title – The Bungalow Mystery and I had to travel to a magical little place to get my hands on it. The Premier Bookshop, which alas, is now buried in the pages of time. A hole in the wall, with haphazard stacks of books twice as tall as me and an inscrutable owner. I must have been in and out of the place hundreds of times yet, the owner and me have never exchanged a single word. I would nod at him, he at me. I would pick a book, pay, nod again and then he would nod back and that was it. If you are a hitch-hiker in the galaxy of books, this was the bookshop at the end of the universe, if you know what I mean.

My non curriculum writings were mostly heard, not read. I wrote the arguments for the school debating competitions, both for and against. And I confess, mea culpa maxima, I wrote for houses other than mine. Apologies Gidney House. Payment was usually oily samosas (awful) and Bejois mango juice (awful again and yeah, it existed for no good reason whatsoever) at the school canteen.

Now when I think of it, writing has found its way to me in some form or another. I would be translating scripts for NFDC approval or writing research notes for the TV serial I was cast in. Stuff I never got paid for but gladly did for the love of it. And not to mention the love poems I wrote for my girlfriends. Thankfully, those gems of soul stirring gallantry are irrevocably destroyed; they can't come back to embarrass me. Who says there's no justice in this world?

Probably, some of those poems caused the breakups in the first place. Eternally thankful for that too. Why am I writing this?

Short answer. A gentleman-who-must-not-be-named forced me to. He promised to inflict all sorts of nefarious, dangerous and unspeakably dishonourable things on me if I didn't. So. You can stop reading now.

Long answer, if you are still hanging around. Gratuitous advice alert. If you really, I mean truly, do like

writing, go ahead and just sit down and do it. A diary, a journal or something as inconsequential as what you are reading now. The happiness and satisfaction is in the physical act of writing, not in just thinking about doing it. Stop being self critical. That terrible little monkey was on my back for a long, long time. You become your own worst enemy and who needs more of those? You already have ECA. Just kidding.

I assure you, Lord Yama is not going to judge you on the quality of your writing. I've had a close brush with him once and took a quick peek at his records. Nope, nothing about writing. It's safe to do, I promise. All he said to me was "Oops, sorry, not your time yet." and sent me back. He's a cool guy.

Goddess Saraswati, I hear, is a patient one. No judgement there either. She will probably help you a little more next time round if you are really in love with writing now.

For the more ambitious types who want to get published, traditional publishing is a tough business and you'll face a lot of rejection. Brush it off and keep pushing. My best wishes to you.

The actual, honest answer. Shameless self promotion. My short story gets published by Bloomsbury this November. It's in an anthology called 'Unsung Valour – The Forgotten Warriors of Kurukshetra War.' My story is titled 'Shakuni: The Dice of Death'

I cannot convey the happiness I feel that my first published story is my little version of a portion of the Mahabharata which, simply is the greatest story ever told.

So, do buy and read. If you don't like my story, please blame the publisher, my neighbour's dog, MS Word, the Silk Board traffic jam, Modi, Rahul...you get the drift. And if you do, let me know and I'll put in a good word on your behalf to the two above mentioned deities.

Finally, I do firmly believe The Premier Bookshop exists in another dimension and that my book (books! Hopefully.) will magically find its way there. And when I get there one day, I'm gonna nod to the owner, point to my book and then at myself and say my first word to him. 'Author.'

The book 'Unsung Valour' is available for purchase on Amazon.

Ranjith Radhakrishnan
(Membership No.: R-144)

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