



# Remembering the eminent

## Priyamvada

**O**RMA – the documentary video festival organized by the Information and Public Relations Department on July 27, 28, 29 in Thiruvananthapuram was unusual in many respects. Contrary to the general perception, it proved that there is considerable audience for the documentaries. Second, the festival proved to be another way of dissemination other than the main channels of communication. Third, documentaries detailing at length as the biography and contribution of eminent people is proudly and seriously viewed by the new generation.

The Information and Public Relations Department is producing video documentary series on eminent Malayalis who have contributed to the shaping of modern secular Kerala. Seventeen of the productions in the series are completed. The creative execution of the production was jointly done by C-Dit and KSFD. Mr. M.M. Hassan, Minister for Information and Parliamentary Affairs inaugurated the festival. The renowned poet, lyricist and film maker, Mr. P. Bhaskaran presided over the function.

'EMS' was the first video screened in the festival. Directed by Mr. K.S. Ranjith, the narrative of EMS unfolded through the interspersion of history and biography. The personality of EMS cannot be delineated from the history of modern Kerala. The visuals of independence and anti-land lord movement in Kerala is brilliantly shot.

If EMS challenged the Brahmin orthodoxy through the symbolic acts of burning sacred thread, C.J. Thomas, the playwright and one of the original thinkers in Malayalam upturned the christian orthodoxy through tearing away the sacred dress. The video documentary titled 'Malayalathinte Priya CJ' brilliantly portrayed the life of an eminent genius of Malayalam. The interview with CJ's wife Mrs. Rosi Thomas is really moving. The video is directed by Mr. A.V. Thampan.

Directed by Mr. Satheesh Poduval, the documentary on K. Kelappan, Kerala Gandhi attempted to capture the glorious moments of independence movement through the biographical narrative of Kelappan.

'Njeralath Rama Poduval – the Fakir' among Malayalam artists, the 'sopanam' music maestro is another video documentary presented in the first day of the festival. Mr. Satheesh Venganoor, who directed this video has brilliantly used the Sopana Sangeetham to evoke the enduring legacy of Njeralath.

Directed by Mr. Kannan, the video on "Ayyankali" – the social revolutionary who fought

against all forms of social oppression and envisioned the formation of secular modern Kerala enlivened the audience.

'Vaikkam Abdul Khader' by Mr. K. Satheesh and 'Pattam Thanu Pillai' by Mr. B.S. Ratheesh gave insights into the political values of Kerala during the independence movement. The importance of these two documentaries is that it evokes in us a supreme respect for the great statesmen who led us to the modern democratic Kerala.

'Aravindan' – by Mr. K.K. Chandran moves us beyond the realm of biographical documentary. Perhaps, a film on a filmmaker is the most challenging and interesting work to be done. Mr. K.K. Chandran has done this exceedingly well.

Directed by Mr. Majid Gulisthan, the video documentary on 'Sahodaran Ayyappan' is narrated through many recreated events. Nevertheless, this makes the documentary interesting and watchful. 'Sahodaran Ayyappan' – the great organizer of Sree Narayana Movement is accurately represented in this cinematically brilliant documentary.

Mr. K. Rajgopal's video documentary on Malayalam's dear 'SK', the best travelogue writer, has attempted to depict the life and times of S.K. Pottekkad. "Sri Narayana Guru", directed by Mr. P. Baburaj, portrays the different facets of Sri Narayana Guru – spiritual reformer, renaissance intellectual and social organizer.

'Goda Varma Raja' by Ms. Indira and Mr. Ajith, 'Akkamma Cheriyan' by Ms. Sreebala K. Menon, 'Pattikkamthodi Ravunni Menon' by Mr. N.P. Gopinath were meaningful attempts to truthfully represent the great lives of modern Kerala.

Directed by Mr. Krishnanunni, four times national award winning sound recordist, on the great ayurvedic physician of Kerala 'Vaidyaratnam P.S. Warriar' makes an interesting viewing. The elements of sound represented in the documentary makes it unusual in terms of narrative. The video documentary on 'Arnoos Pathiri', directed by Mr. Ravidran excellently captures the polyphonic trends of cultural formation of modern Kerala. The best insight that this documentary provides is on the secularization of modern Kerala through the contributions of non-Malayali writers and intellectuals.

The last documentary screened in the ORMA festival was on 'K.C.S. Panicker.' Titled, 'Varna Bhedangal', directed by Mr. Damodar Prasad, the video focuses on the intellectual and creative evolution of one of the greatest Malayalam painters, K.C.S. His contribution to the emergence of modernist sensibility in art is aptly presented through the narrative. ■