

OPUS

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TAMIL NADU SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

BLUE WHALE ALERT!



WATCH OUT.
In the past one month alone in India, three suicides and two attempts involving teens have been linked to the deadly Blue Whale game...

BEWARE

COVERSTORY

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AS BLUE WHALE IS DOING THE ROUNDS IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, **AMRUTHA P.** AND **AMRITHA BALAKRISHNAN** SOUND AN ALERT ABOUT THIS DREADFUL-SUICIDAL GAME

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WHEN THEY CAN'T WAIT TO EXPLORE
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For feedback, contact the Department of Media and Communication, CUTN. Want to be part of OPUS? We also welcome interesting news articles from students and faculty members from this university. Feel free to contact us, to contribute to this journal. Thank you.

Going nuts over monkeys!



By **Abhirami Vinod**

When was the last time you were shell-shocked over a coconut shell? For me, it was this week, when I paid a casual visit to Fort Kochi. A set of coconut shells neatly arranged on the pedestal of a make-shift shop stirred a range of emotions in me. Some of the monkeys carved out of coconut shells stared at me while the others crooned with their poker faces.

On my way to the place, the deafening downpour lashed at the windows of my bus. Did it set the mood for the creative reckoning moments later? Kochi roads are jam-packed. To add to the allure, it was twilight. I was with my friends, and thanks to their chit-chat, a cherubic atmosphere set in.

Happy faces of schoolchildren jumping onto boats and streaks of sunlight escaping the silhouettes of Chinese fishing nets greeted me. Walking along the pavement, I was awestruck when I spotted this range of artefacts carved out of coconut remains. Amid those colorful craft items, these carved dried coconut shells captured my heart.

I couldn't take my eyes off those enrapturing beauties. Coconut shell craftwork involves tremendous creativity and is used to create both utilities and decoratives. Art works from coconut shells have excellent quality lasting for years. A trio of monkeys made out of coconut husk was bemusing.

Instead of being cast away or used as fuel for cooking, these dry coconut shells have passed through deft hands to become decoratives. Table lamps, flowerpots and clocks were the other items that grabbed my attention.

As students, it is also our responsibility to promote indigenous art cultures such as these. ■

I-Day: Building a stronger nation

By **Maya N. S. & Shalini R.**

August 15 was a day of pomp and gaiety, as students joined the faculty members and the staffers of the university to celebrate the 71st Independence Day. Following the flag-hoisting ceremony, participants of the 15-day clean-up campaign that started on August 1 in the university were felicitated.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor Prof. A. P. Dash called on the students to build a new-strong India that's free of communalism, casteism, terrorism and corruption. He also underlined the need to keep afresh in our minds the struggle and pain that our forefathers underwent to achieve freedom and to also keep that in mind while building a new nation. After the Vice-Chancellor's address, Registrar Dr. S. Bhuvanewari conveyed her I-Day wishes to the students and staffers.

As part of the clean-up campaign, elocution, essay writing and singing contests were held on August 8 in the university. T. K. Tamil Bharathan from the Department of Tamil, Ganeshwar S. from the Department of Chemistry and Amit Kumar from the Department of Economics won the prizes in Tamil, English and Hindi speech competitions, respectively. Maya Ram from the Department of Life Science, Govind S. Nair from Economics, G. Revathi from Chemistry secured the prizes in Hindi, English and Tamil essay competitions, respectively.

Kaviya K. from the Department of Tamil and Ruchi Misra from Physics won the prizes in Tamil and Hindi patriotic singing competitions.

The prizes were distributed to the



winners during the Independence Day celebrations.

As we stood rapt in attention, beaming with pride and admiring the unfurled Tricolour, the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "a moment comes, which comes rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long

suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at the solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity," echoed in our ears.

Speeches at the event instilled a feeling of patriotism among the members present at the ceremony, enticing them to build a stronger nation. ■

Beware of Blue Whale!



By **Amrutha P. & Amritha Balakrishnan**

Just before this Mumbai teen dived to death from the height of a seven-storey building last month, he clicked a picture of his legs and captioned it, "Soon the only thing you would be left with will be a picture of me."

On that fateful day, a neighbour spotted the Class 9 student walking on the edge of the terrace shooting what seemed like a selfie video before he jumped off and killed himself. Perhaps, this horror was linked to the dreadful-suicidal game Blue Whale and a wave of fright spread among the masses.

Blue Whale reportedly originated in Russia in 2013 and has, so far, claimed the scalps of more than 150 teens—the world over—who mostly fall prey to this vile.

In this online game, the player is assigned a challenge each day for 50 days and the ultimate challenge being committing suicide by throwing self from a high-rise. After completing each challenge—each potentially suicidal—the player has to send a photograph as a proof of completion of the challenge to the handler.

After this, several cases of suicides and attempts reported from across the country were linked to this grim game.

What is making our teens choose this

suicidal game? How its evil influence is spreading in the online social media? How it curtails the emotional intelligence of the youth and children? How this epidemic can be stopped?

Its bizarre tasks include watching horror movies and a few other treacherous activities monitored by a curator. Victims are forced to upload the photos of them completing the tasks for the curator's approval, with the game ending in the suicide of the player on Day 50. Surprisingly, it has started finding takers among Indian youngsters and already claimed three lives—that of a Class 9 student in Mumbai, a Class 10 student in Bengal and a young-

ster from Kerala. There are unverifiable claims over the number of teenagers who killed themselves because of the challenge, but there is no evidence to suggest that the number is real.

Blue Whale is not a downloadable game, application or software. This 'fad' is a discrete phenomenon that enters social media networks from secretive groups and snatches the attention of the lot. It's been reported that the challenge originally started in secret groups on Russian social media networks.

Following the online threat, the Union government has sounded a warning alarm to educational institutions and parents.

It has also directed top internet platforms—Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Microsoft and Yahoo—to take down links related to this deadly game.

On this ongoing issue, Dr. V. Vithya, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, Central University of Tamil Nadu, gave out a vehement criticism. "Its players lose contact with their immediate surroundings and even reality. They isolate themselves and start living in a virtual world. It is innate in our culture to protect and care for each other. However, this game coerces people to inflict self-harm. It is a clear case of misuse of technology and the anonymity that it offers that's seizing the souls of young ones, who are the hope and support of families. Instead, games that nurture creativity should be encouraged. Though this game is about pain and misery still teens go for it."

"Such victims could already have some psychological disorders, with depressed kids becoming highly vulnerable to such suicidal games. To save kids from it, awareness should be created among parents to check their children's internet activities. Also, look for some tell-tale signs of sui-

cidal tendencies and take them seriously. Counselling will help," Dr. Vithya added.

Abby Varghese, first-year Geography student of the varsity, call it a daring game. "It is impossible to ban it. Rather, people should be taught about its dangers."

Rafia, a student the Department of Education, averred that committing suicide

in the name of a game is absurdity. "Eagerness should be the triggering factor and that authority should study the situation and find the curators of the game."

Dhanushya, first-year B.Sc. Mathematics student of our university, also critically views this game. "People who play this game are out of their mind." ■

It is impossible to ban it. Rather, people should be taught about its dangers."

- Abby Varghese

First-year Geography student

Committing suicide in the name of a game is absurdity. Eagerness should be the triggering factor and that authority should study the situation and find the curators of the game."

- Rafia V. K.

Department of Education

People who play this game are out of their mind."

- Dhanushya V.

First-year B.Sc. Mathematics student

Blue Whale is yet another dangerous game like the Pokemon. People who start to play get addicted to it over a period of time and find its is difficult to come out of it. It is better understood if you have seen the movie Nerve."

- Hermina Jenifer

Second-year M.A. in Mass Communication



Such victims could already have some psychological disorders, with depressed kids becoming highly vulnerable to such suicidal games. To save kids from it, awareness should be created among parents to check their children's internet activities. Also, look for some tell-tale signs of suicidal tendencies and take them seriously. Counselling will help."

- Dr. V. Vithya

Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology

CREATIVE CORNER



Photography by: **Roberto J. Baggio**; Location: **CUTN**
Second year, M. A. in Mass Communication

Time

With nothing to spare,
you robbed my life with your charm.
From hair and tooth
to thoughts and ideas...
the love of my life
and the long lost memories...
with nothing to spare
you drained my life with your charm.
You are time still.
Can't hold onto yourself.

Poem by: **Amal Devasia**

First year, M. A. in Mass Communication

One day, two places and loads of surprises



By **Amritha Balakrishnan & Swetha S.**

It wasn't even a week since we hit the CUTN campus but we couldn't resist our urge to load our backpacks. On the breezy morning of July 30, 17 of us embarked on a trip to the Thiruvavur town. It was break from the heat and to beat homesickness. Thiruvavur, the cart city, had several things in store for us.

One of the treasures in the heart of Thiruvavur is the ancient Thyagaraja Temple. Its pagoda is a grandeur in itself. It has four gateways each facing one of the four directions. What awaits us inside is even more magnificent. Though the deity in the sanctum sanctorum is Lord Shiva, one can see several idols of Lord Ganesha around the temple. Besides, there are deities of Lakshmi, Parvathy and Durga as well. Its walls are

paneled with amusing art works and inscriptions. A major portion of the mural paintings have faded away. However, the inscriptions remain intact.

We spent about half a day admiring the aesthetics of the architecture and sculptures. It would take days to appreciate and adore each sculpture of the ancient abode of Lord Shiva. After bidding adieu to Thiruvavur, we headed towards Velankanni. Velankanni has one of the country's biggest Catholic pilgrimage centres. The Basilica of our Lady of Good Health is popularly known as the 'Lourdes of the East'. Its origin can be traced back to the sixteenth century. The impeccably beautiful Basilica is built in Gothic style architecture. The church that stands tall in pristine white disseminates the aura of tranquillity and faith. Offerings are made by pilgrims for

the fulfilment of wishes. Morning Star church is the largest of the three churches. Going by folklore, churches and chapels were built where Mother Mary gave apparition to people.

We witnessed a huge crowd of devotees seeking Mother Mary's blessings. Many devotees were seen to be crawling in the sand to seek penance for sins.

Finally, we went to get a glance of the sea beside the church. Though the beach is shabby to look at, the beauty of the sea cannot be overlooked.

Another matter of surprise for us was the presence of palmists and fortune-tellers there, who coated their sweet lies with sugar syrup. When the sun rays sank into the sea, we bid farewell to Velankanni and returned to our new home in CUTN, carrying with us the memories of our first expedition. ■

A VOLLEY OF HOPE...

By **Deepthi P. J. & Darsana J.**

Kabaddi is a rustic sport that holds your breath. It demands rigour, passion and everything else that are needed to synchronise mental ability with excellent bodywork. Volleyball is a different ball game altogether. Manoj B. from the Department of Tamil of the Central University of Tamil Nadu has mastered both of these two games.

A second-year postgraduate student, Manoj hails from Mannargudi. He has participated in state-level contests and aiming to further his sports career through the university.

Manoj nurtured a fascination for sports at the age of 14. He showcased his excellence during his college days.

He served as the captain for both the kabaddi and volleyball teams in his college. This apart, he teamed up with a bunch of sports buffs in his village for the upliftment of sports. As a result, he secured several rewards.

Manoj is aiming to build a strong volleyball team for the university and he is half-way through it. "I am building a team in CUTN and my coach is ready to support us with the faculties of the university," said Manoj.

As the university is strengthening its sports domain, Manoj aims to develop a platform for both kabaddi and volleyball. ■

