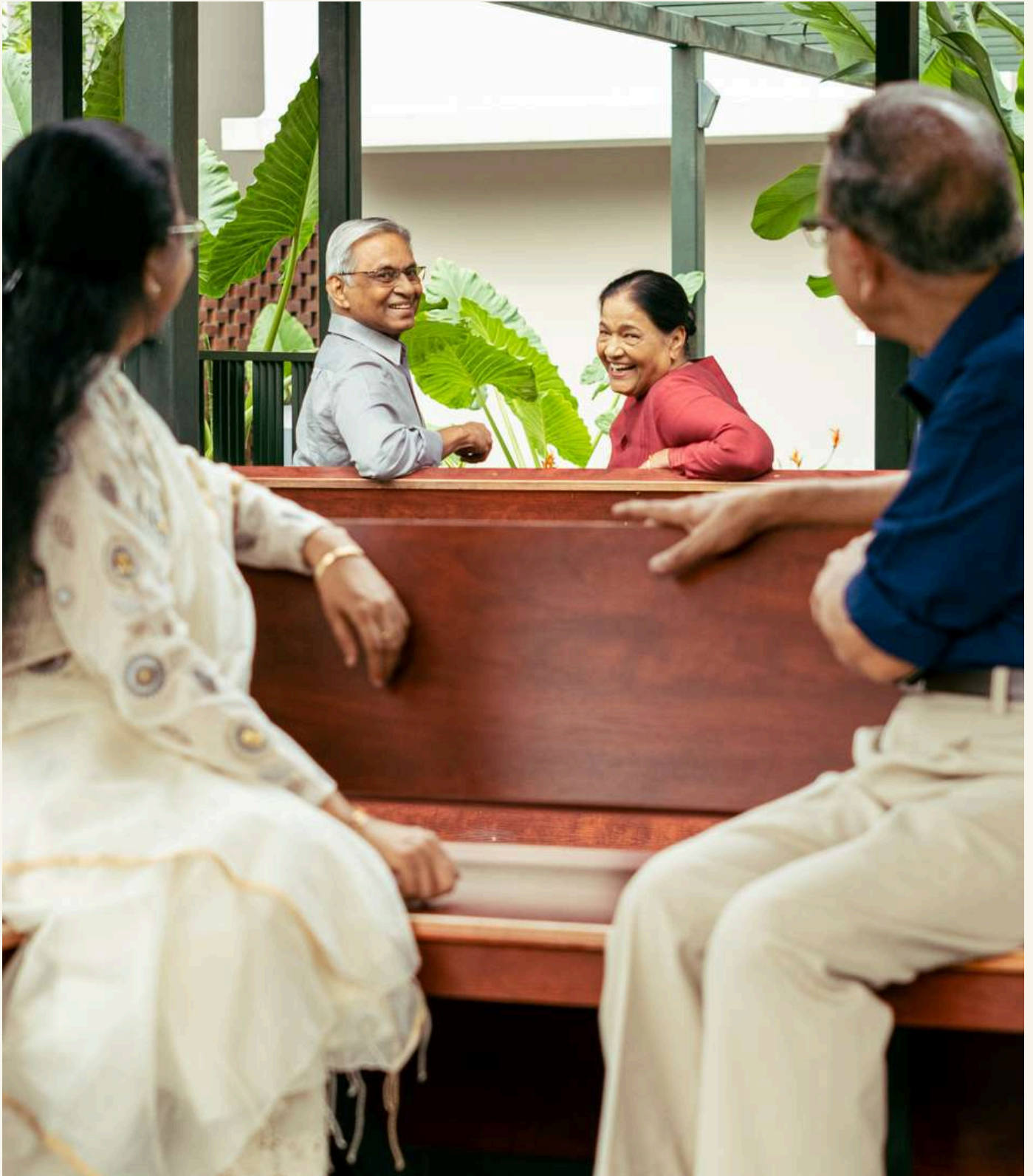


The  
**Odyssey**

**Bless**   
LIVING

Dec, 2025



[blesshomes.in](https://blesshomes.in)

*9+ years of experience*  
*Over 500 lives enriched*  
*200+ dedicated staff members*

"One of the best places to retire in India." – The Real Marigold Hotel Show, BBC

Editor's note

# We are now Bless Living!

## *9+ Years of Excellence*

As we step into our 10th year of delivering joy to our residents and their families, we proudly embrace a new chapter that reflects our commitment to offering more holistic, uplifting services for an active and fulfilling life at Bless Living.

Today, there is a growing recognition of the beauty, strength, and purpose found in the golden years. At Bless Living, we celebrate this wholeheartedly. We honour the wisdom, resilience, and vibrant spirit of our seniors by creating a community where life remains meaningful, engaging, and full of opportunities to thrive.

Bless Living, and life at Bless continues to be a true haven where seniors are celebrated and empowered to live their best years.

Gouri M. S.



# Celebrating Life & Community

## *Redefining Independent Living for Seniors*



Welcome back to The Odyssey! This edition takes you through the vibrant and exciting events that have unfolded at Bless Living.

From memorable day trips to book cover launches, and inspiring walkathons, our residents have been busy making the most of every moment. Whether it's embarking on new adventures or celebrating milestones together, the spirit of fun and community has been alive and well.

So, let's dive into the world of Bless and relive the unforgettable experiences that made this season truly special!

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*-Mr M. A. Jose*



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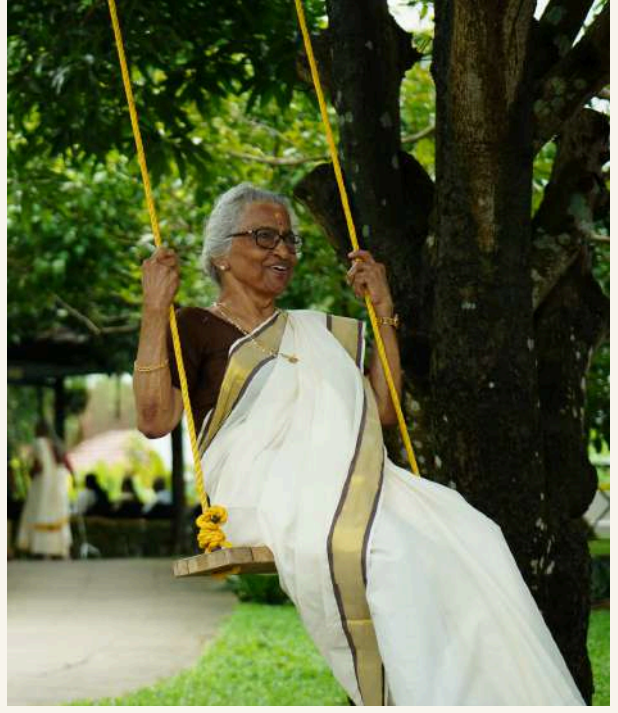
# Onam 2025

## *The Season of Harmony & Tradition*

Onam at Bless this year was nothing short of spectacular—a month filled with vibrant floral displays, lively games, festive shopping, and the joyful company of children. The highlight was Thiruvonam, when renowned music director Mr. Jakes Bejoy, grandson of our beloved resident Mrs. Alice Philip, joined the celebrations.

Onam has always been one of the happiest celebrations at Bless. This year was no different; our residents were brimming with excitement throughout the month.

From Atham to Thiruvonam, our residents and staff embraced tradition, togetherness, and the true spirit of Kerala's beloved festival.



## *Onam Special Activities*

### **A Blooming Beginning**

The celebrations began right from Atham, with a vibrant pookalam competition for our staff members. Over the next eight days, Bless witnessed a parade of stunning floral masterpieces that captivated both residents and staff alike.

### **A Kutty Onam**

Adding to the joy, we had the delightful company of the kindergarteners from Cochin International School. Their songs, dances, and cheerful presence filled our community with energy, laughter, and warmth. A heartfelt thank you goes out to the children and their teachers for making this Onam even more special.

### **Residents in Action**

In a beautiful turn of events, our residents themselves came together to create a grand pookalam on the day before Onam. Another highlight was the return of the much-loved Onam oonjal (swing), where our residents joyfully took turns swaying in the festive spirit.

### **Colours, Flavours, and Traditions**

To add variety, a special Onam stall was hosted featuring traditional delights such as chips, payasam, boli, and more. There was also a charming collection of Kerala sarees and mundus, allowing our residents to pick their festive attire.

### **First Onam**

Uthradam was a day packed with fun and laughter as residents and staff competed in traditional games—lemon and spoon race, sack race, musical chairs, tug of war, and the ever-exciting uriyadi.

### **Thiruvonam with Jakes Bejoy**

The highlight of the celebrations came on Thiruvonam with the presence of renowned music director Mr. Jakes Bejoy, who also happens to be the grandson of our beloved resident Mrs. Alice Philip. The day was alive with colourful performances and cultural showcases, culminating in a sumptuous and traditional Onam Sadya.

Onam at Bless was truly a celebration to remember. It was not just a festival but a reminder of the bonds we share as one family, creating memories that will stay alive in our hearts for years to come.





# Conference on Graceful Ageing

## *World Senior Citizens' Day*

Bless observed World Senior Citizens Day with an insightful conference on “Graceful Ageing.” The event brought together leading healthcare professionals, senior care specialists, and MSW students to explore opportunities, address challenges, and share best practices in geriatric care.

The conference began with a welcome address by Dr. Vijaya Kumar, a resident of Bless and Retired Medical Superintendent of the Government Hospital, Aluva. This was followed by the keynote address from Dr. Mathew Abraham, Senior Consultant – Neurology, Aster Medcity, on “Healthy Ageing in India: Scope, Gaps & Future.” His thought-provoking talk shed light on India’s evolving healthcare landscape and

the urgent need to strengthen geriatric care systems.

### **Panel 1 – Integrated Geriatric Care: Medical, Mental & Social Wellbeing**

Moderated by Dr. Prabha Gopakumar (Retired Central Government Doctor & resident of Bless), this session featured Dr. Sunny P. Orathel (Rajagiri Hospital), Dr. Anusree A. S. (Aster Medcity), Dr. Jose Antony (SSUS, Kalady), and Dr. Jyotish R. Nair (Apollo Adlux). The panel emphasized the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to senior healthcare, combining medical expertise, mental health support, and social engagement to ensure holistic wellbeing.

## Panel 2 – Dementia & Depression: Dual Challenge in Ageing

Led by Sr. Jessia (Kusumagiri Mental Health Centre), this discussion included Dr. C. J. Joseph (Little Flower Hospital), Dr. Kuruvilla Thomas (Kusumagiri Mental Health Centre), and Dr. Jino Joy (Medical Trust Hospital). The panel underscored the need for early detection, family involvement, and psychosocial support in addressing dementia and depression, two of the most significant mental health concerns among the elderly.

## Panel 3 – Rehabilitation, Palliative & End-of-Life Care

The final session, moderated by Dr. Sara Thomas (Retired Orthopedic Surgeon & resident of Bless), brought together Dr. Mathew Numpeli (National Health Mission, Ernakulam), Dr. Asiya N. (Sunrise Hospital), and Dr. Biju Raghavan (Rajagiri Hospital).

Discussions highlighted the importance of compassionate rehabilitation, palliative, and end-of-life care, advocating for sustainable models that prioritise dignity and comfort for seniors.

## Engaging Young Minds

Adding a dynamic dimension to the event, students from Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Bharat Mata College (Thrikkakara & Chundi), Jai Bharat College (Arakkapady), and Sri Shankaracharya University of Sanskrit (Kalady) actively participated, gaining first-hand exposure to the evolving field of geriatric care.

We expressed our heartfelt gratitude to all participating hospitals, experts, and students. The event successfully fostered collaboration and knowledge-sharing, reinforcing Bless’s mission to support healthy, dignified, and active ageing for India’s senior population.





# New Milestone

## Residential Block 3

### *A Day to Remember*

On July 6, 2024, the grand inauguration of Residential Block 3 brought together over 450 attendees, marking a momentous day for Bless Living.

The event included a blessing ceremony, cultural performances,

and the official handover of apartments, symbolizing the beginning of a new journey for our residents.

We were honored to welcome esteemed guests, including Mr. Benny Behenan, MP from Chalakudy, and Mr. Navas Meeran, who inaugurated the commencement of Phase 4 construction. These events further strengthen our vision of creating a vibrant and caring community.



RB 3 dining space



Salon



Gym



Doctor Consultation Room



Decorations from the Event



Performance by Dance Club



RB 3 Inauguration



Welcome Dance

## *Living Well at RB3 : A New Standard*

Residential Block 3 at Bless Living redefines the concept of modern senior living. Designed to balance luxury, wellness, and community, this new addition offers an environment where residents can embrace a fulfilling lifestyle.

### **Spaces That Inspire Well-Being**

RB3 offers an array of facilities aimed at promoting health and relaxation. The saltwater swimming pool provides a therapeutic space for low-impact exercise and unwinding, while the Ayurveda treatment room brings the healing traditions of Kerala to the forefront, offering tailored therapies in a serene setting.

For those seeking to stay active, the fully equipped gym ensures residents can maintain their fitness with ease, featuring equipment suited to all levels of physical ability. Together, these facilities are thoughtfully curated to support a holistic approach to wellness.

### **Everyday Convenience, Thoughtfully Designed**

Day-to-day life at RB3 is made effortless with on-premises facilities like the beauty parlor, doctor's consultation room, and convenience store. These additions ensure that residents have easy access to grooming, healthcare, and essentials, providing peace of mind and freeing up time to enjoy the things they love.

### **A Community Built on Connection**

RB3 is more than just a collection of facilities; it's a hub for community and connection. The common dining area, with seating for 120, encourages shared meals and lively conversations, while the amphitheater provides a stage for cultural events and performances. These spaces bring residents together, fostering camaraderie and enriching their daily lives with shared experiences.

*So I will be here, may be for the rest of my life...  
Hoping that the sunset years will be free of life's  
strife*

-Vimla Menon (Resident- RB 3)

# Activities and Fun

## A Spectacular Celebration of Colors

The atmosphere at Bless was nothing short of electrifying as residents and staff came together to celebrate Holi in a riot of color and joy. The day was filled with lively dance performances that brought energy and rhythm to every corner, while residents showcased their competitive spirit through a series of fun games. To top it all off, winners of the games were rewarded with food coupons, giving them the chance to indulge in delicious treats at our special festive food stall. The vibrant celebrations were a true reflection of community spirit, making this Holi an unforgettable experience for all!



## Republic Day Celebrations at Bless!

Bless Living marked Republic Day with a heartwarming display of patriotism and enthusiasm. The day kicked off with a grand flag hoisting ceremony by Dr. V. B. Kartha, followed by a solemn pledge led by Dr. Sara Thomas. The air was filled with pride as our talented Music Club delivered a moving patriotic song performance, setting the tone for the celebrations.

As the day progressed, the spirit of togetherness continued to shine with a spirited quiz competition that tested knowledge and fostered friendly competition. The evening was capped off with a lively patriotic song performance by our dedicated staff, leaving everyone with a deep sense of national pride. It was a Republic Day celebration that truly united us all in love for our country!



### **A Century & Counting: Celebrating 101 Years of Wisdom**

At Bless Living, milestones are cherished, and none was more inspiring than celebrating the 101st birthday of Dr. A.V. Ramanathan. Surrounded by his loving family and the Bless community, Dr. Ramanathan's special day coincided with World Older Persons Day 2024, making it a doubly joyous occasion.

Dr. Ramanathan's journey is a testament to the fulfilling life that seniors can lead at Bless Living. His wisdom and vibrant presence are a source of inspiration for all, demonstrating that every year is an opportunity to grow, connect, and enjoy life.

This celebration was more than a birthday—it was a reminder of the vitality, community, and support that make Bless Living a place where residents can truly thrive, no matter their age.



## Karkidakkam: The Season of Healing

This Karkidakam, our residents embraced a journey of healing and growth. From meditation and yoga sessions to exploring the benefits of Ayurvedic herbs and preparing the nourishing Karkidaka Kanji, they immersed themselves fully in every experience. The highlight of this year was the live preparation of the Karkidaka Kanji. Our residents joined our Chef and dear Balan Chettan in preparing this herbal soup. They actively participated by cutting and preparing the fresh Ayurvedic greens, making it a truly engaging and meaningful experience.

Residents also came forward to lead sessions on the Dashapushpangal. Overall, it was a month filled with learning, interaction, and rejuvenation for our residents.



## Diwali: The Festival of Lights

Diwali at Bless radiated joy and vibrancy as residents came together to light ceremonial lamps, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. The premises were adorned with intricate rangoli designs, adding to the festive spirit.

The evening came alive with spirited dance performances by residents and special guests, soulful musical renditions, and a sumptuous North Indian thali feast. A dedicated food stall serving traditional snacks further enriched the celebration. Diwali at Bless wasn't just about tradition—it was about fostering bonds and creating cherished memories.



### Valentine's Day: A day for Love & Fun

On February 14th, Bless Living came alive with love, kindness, and appreciation as residents gathered for a truly special celebration. The day was filled with joy, laughter, and a series of heartwarming activities designed to bring everyone together in the spirit of love. From engaging games to a love letter writing competition, the residents embraced the day with enthusiasm, celebrating the bonds of friendship and the joy of community.

The festivities were further enriched by a soulful musical night, where the residents and staff enjoyed the magic of music, dancing, and shared moments of happiness. Posing for photos together, they captured the essence of togetherness and the warmth of their close-knit community.



## Ramadan Iftar: Sharing Moments, Building Connections

The spirit of Ramadan shone brightly at Bless during the annual Iftar gathering. Residents and staff shared an evening of reflection and gratitude. A Ramadan special food stall and Mehndi stall was set for both residents and staff.

Residents and staff joined in on the fun games for the evening. More than just a meal, the event was a time to celebrate cultural inclusivity and strengthen the bonds that make Bless a vibrant and harmonious community. As laughter and conversation filled the air, the evening left everyone with cherished memories and a renewed sense of belonging.



## Vishu: Welcoming a New Year in Style

Bless witnessed a joyful and vibrant Vishu celebration this year. From the early morning Vishu Kani to the delightful appearances of little Krishnans and Radhas, the spirit of the festival was beautifully brought to life.

Both staff and residents enthusiastically participated, showcasing a range of performances that lit up the day. A special highlight was the impressive Thiruvathira performed by our male staff — a rare and heartwarming sight that was truly appreciated by all.



## Doctors' Day: Big Salute to Doctors Everywhere

Bless is home to more than 40 doctors and nothing brings them together like shared experiences. For the Doctors' Day celebrations this year, we held screening of a short drama that beautifully captured the life and journey of a doctor. This performance that featured snippets from the life of our Premier resident Dr Venugopal, took all the doctors present to the good old days.

The event also featured the launch of the Swarna Mitra program, an initiative dedicated to celebrating active aging through positive psychological interventions.

A special thank you to Dr. Priya Vijayakumar, MD, and Dr. Divyamol K. Sasidharan, Assistant Professor at Amrita Hospital, for joining us and making the occasion truly special.



### Fathers' Day: A Letter to Dad

This Father's Day, we invited our extended Bless family to share heartfelt messages for their beloved fathers through letters.

The response was truly moving, with many beautiful letters pouring in. The joy on the faces of our dear residents as they received these heartfelt messages was simply priceless. We are deeply grateful to all our extended family members for making this day so special and unforgettable.



## Chess Day: A Battle on the Board

An exciting chess tournament was held on International Chess Day, showcasing the strategic brilliance of our residents. In a closely contested match between Mrs. Shirly Alex and Mr. K. J. George, Mrs. Shirly Alex emerged victorious.

A separate tournament was also organised for the staff, where Mr. Sriraj claimed victory over Mr. Akhil Unnikrishnan. It was a week filled with fun, friendly competition, and memorable moments for both our residents and staff.



## Cherai: A Trip to the Coast

This Friendship Day, our residents celebrated togetherness with a joyful trip to a beach resort in Cherai. From fishing adventures to fun games, delicious food, and a refreshing stroll along the shore, the day was filled with laughter and memories. It was the perfect blend of friendship, fun, and the calming charm of the sea.



## Children’s Day with Cochin International School

Our residents spent a memorable morning with the lively kindergarteners of Cochin International School as part of our Children’s Day celebrations. The faculty gave us a warm welcome, and the joyful energy of the children set the tone for the day. Residents formed small groups and engaged with the students through storytelling, colouring activities, games, and even a hands-on introduction to crochet. It was a heartwarming experience filled with laughter, learning, and meaningful connections — a truly special day for both the children and our residents.



## A Visit from Caritas Germany

Delegates from Caritas, Germany’s largest non-profit organisation, recently visited Bless to gain insights into senior living facilities in India. It was a meaningful exchange where we shared our approach to community living and active ageing, and also learned from their experience and global perspective.



# *A Bond Rekindled*

## **Mothers' Day Celebrations, a heartwarming reunion**

Bless is home to many inspiring and nurturing mothers, and this Mother's Day, we celebrated them in a truly meaningful way. We were honoured to welcome the graceful and accomplished Mrs. Mallika Sukumaran as the Chief Guest for the occasion.

One of the most touching moments of the day was her reunion with her former Hindi professor—our very own resident, Prof. Padmakumari. The two reminisced about days gone by—from the times they rode the same bus, to the classroom where Padmakumari Aunty shaped young minds, including that of a spirited young Mallika.

Mallika Ma'am fondly recalled how her love for Hindi and strong command of the language was shaped by Padmakumari Aunty's exceptional teaching. She expressed deep gratitude for the role her teacher played in her life.

Mallika Ma'am joined in the festivities with great energy, she moved us with her inspiring words, sang a beautiful lullaby, and cheered on during the joyful ramp walk by our residents.

It was truly a day to remember—filled with love, laughter, nostalgia, and the magic of unforgettable connections.



# Gallery



Snippets from several celebrations at Bless (Clock wise from left top corner): Piano class, Images 2 & 3- special orders from our kitchen, Valentines' Day special craft class, Cancer Awareness Day quotes board, Onam Celebration at Santi Bhavan, & Kids from Cochin International School.



Snippets from daily life at Bless: From morning walks to swimming and engaging activities; life at Bless is always full, active, and inspiring.



# A Celebration of Champions

## **Pratibimb 2025**

It was a three-day extravaganza at Bless Living, celebrating the vibrant spirit of the community through sports, culture, and camaraderie. The event began with a grand inauguration, where the Pratibimb flag was proudly raised, and last year's championship trophy was unveiled, igniting excitement among participants. We also unveiled the Pratibimb banner made with the handprint of our staff members.

## **Sports and Team Spirit**

Day one featured exhilarating cricket matches, with teams battling for glory amid cheers from enthusiastic spectators. The following days brought a whirlwind of tournaments in carroms, dodgeball, and badminton, keeping the competitive spirit soaring high. The grand finale, a nail biting epic tug-of-war, saw Blue Team emerging as champions closely followed by Green Team.



### Cultural Showcases

The mornings were alive with dazzling cultural performances, including group dances, comedy skits, and fancy dress contests. All the teams brought their A games and mesmerised all the judges and audience members with their mesmerizing performances. The evenings featured fun games like musical chairs and lemon-and-spoon races, ensuring everyone found a way to participate and enjoy the festivities.

### Community and Togetherness

Pratibimb 2025 was more than just a competition—it was a celebration of togetherness. Residents acted as guides, mentors, and referees, making the event truly special. The event left everyone with unforgettable memories, showcasing the energy, talent, and unity of the Bless community.



# 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Grand Celebration and a New Face

Bless celebrated its 9th anniversary on 15 November 2025 with a vibrant and memorable event held at the facility. The celebrations were graced by Chief Guest Mr. Rajive Paul Chungath, whose presence added prestige to the occasion.

In a significant milestone for the organisation, Mr. Rajive unveiled the new logo and officially announced the brand's refreshed identity — Bless Retirement Living will henceforth be known as Bless Living. The announcement marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the community.

The colourful celebration saw enthusiastic participation from residents, who were actively involved in every aspect of the event. From assisting the team with decorations to presenting lively dance and musical performances, residents truly embodied the spirit of the Bless Living experience.

The anniversary event also doubled as the award ceremony for Bless's inaugural Silver Olympics, an exciting sports festival that witnessed active participation across events such as basketball, badminton, swimming, chess, ludo, and many more. A special acknowledgment was extended to the Wohl Physio team for their dedicated support and for sponsoring the prizes for the winners.

Managing Director Mr. Gijo Antony was also present and expressed his joy and optimism for the future, highlighting the organisation's commitment to continued growth and enriching community living.

The 9th anniversary celebration not only marked a milestone but also showcased the vibrant, inclusive, and forward-looking ethos of Bless Living.





# Praising the Legacy

## A Tribute Through "Guarding the Edge"

The biography of the beloved Dr. Mariamma Alexander, authored by renowned journalist N. Vijay Mohan, titled *Guarding the Edge: Biography of Dr. Mariamma Alexander*, is set to be a timeless tribute to her incredible life and legacy. We hosted the book cover launch of the book on 11th February.

Mr. N. Vijay Mohan, no stranger to Bless, has been a constant presence here over the years. He not only directed the heartwarming video *Bless is a Blessing*, but has also visited Dr. Mariamma on several occasions to gather insights for the book.

Though Dr. Mariamma is no longer with us, the forthcoming release of *Guarding the Edge* ensures that her extraordinary contributions and dedication as a doctor will continue to inspire generations to come. Her legacy will forever live on as a guiding light for all who have been touched by her wisdom, compassion, and unwavering commitment to healing. We eagerly await the book's release, knowing it will be a beautiful tribute to an exceptional woman whose life story will resonate deeply with us all.



# Still Blooming

## An Art Exhibition by the Residents of Bless Living

We are delighted and proud to have showcased a remarkable art exhibition featuring the talented and inspiring artists of Bless Living. Held from 20th to 24th November at the C Gallery of Durbar Hall, the exhibition attracted visitors from across the community who came to appreciate the creativity and dedication of our residents.

The exhibition highlighted artworks created by participants of the Bless Art Class, led by our resident and art instructor, Mrs. Mallika Paul. It also included additional paintings by residents, along with beautifully handcrafted embroidery, crochet, and Kantha work, each piece reflecting passion, patience, and artistic expression. Mrs. Mallika Paul also shared that it was Mrs. Lija's encouragement and initiative that motivated the lead organiser to bring this vision to fruition, creating a nurturing environment where every artist's contribution could shine. This collaboration beautifully highlighted how art can unite and uplift seniors, focusing on the joy of the process as much as the outcome, supporting both cognitive and emotional well-being.

The event was inaugurated by Mrs. Sheela Kochouseph in the presence of artist C. S. Jayaraman, making the occasion even more meaningful. The exhibition was also organised by the Blessed Life Foundation, the charity wing of Bless Living.



# Silver Olympics

The spirit of sportsmanship and enthusiasm filled Bless as residents gathered to compete in the Bless Silver Olympics. The event, held during the first week of November, saw an impressive level of participation and energy across all activities. The Olympics featured a diverse selection of events, including basketball, badminton, swimming, chess, bocce ball, ludo, carroms, and more. As part of our anniversary celebration, we also hosted the award ceremony for the inaugural Bless Silver Olympics. A special note of appreciation goes to the Wohl Physio team for their dedicated guidance and for sponsoring the prizes presented to our winners.

## Winners of the Bless Silver Olympics 2025

### **Basketball**

First: Mr. C. I. Mathew  
Second: Mr. Abdul Rahaman

### **Carroms**

First: Mrs. Gladys Jose  
Second: Mrs. Geetha Devi

### **Bocce Ball- Winning Team**

Mrs. Vijayalakshmi  
Mr. C. I. Mathew  
Mr. Victor Fernandez  
Mr. K. J. George

### **Swimming**

First: Mr. C. I. Mathew &  
Mr. Mathew Michael  
Second: Mr. M. Mathew

### **Ludo**

First: Mrs. Nirmala Kambil  
Second: Mr. C. I. Mathew

### **Chess**

First: Mr. K. J. George  
Second: Mrs. Shirly Alex

### **Badminton (Doubles)**

First: Mr. K. J. George &  
Mr. C. I. Mathew

### **Rummy**

First: Mr. C. I. Mathew  
Second: Mrs. Elizabeth  
George







# *A Journey Through Heritage and Joy*

## **Day Trip to Fort Kochi**

What could be more satisfying than spending a day exploring your favorite city with your favorite people? Our residents experienced just that with a fantastic one-day getaway, immersing themselves in the unique charm of Kochi. The day began early, with a serene boat ride that set the tone for a day filled with discovery and adventure.

## **A Memorable Getaway**

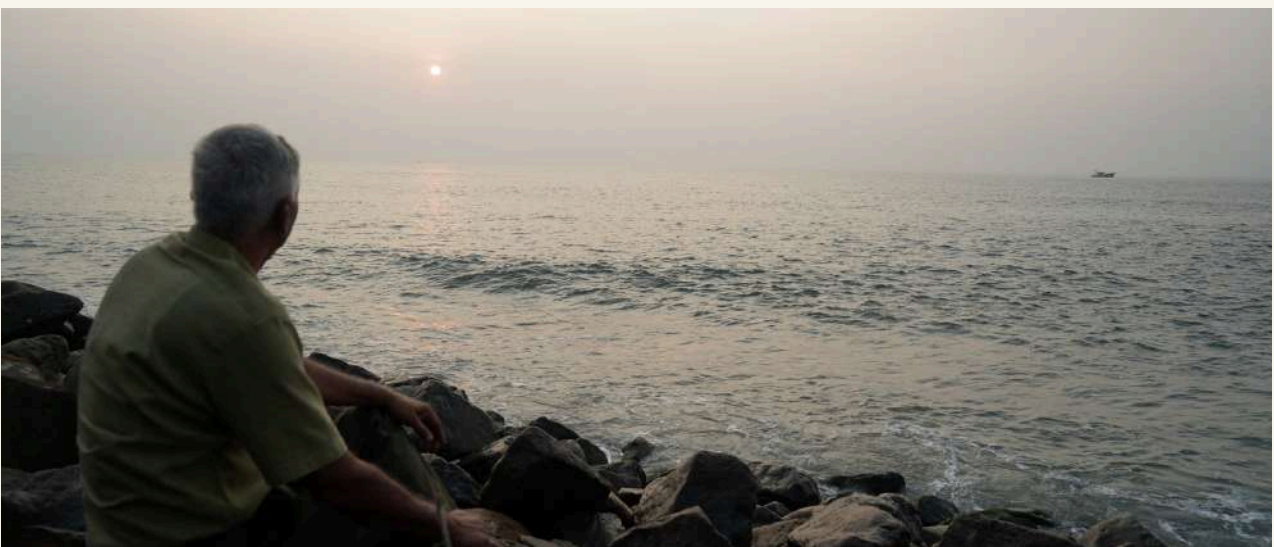
The group explored the historic streets of Mattancherry and Fort Kochi, where they marveled at the city's rich history, vibrant markets, and beautiful architecture. From visiting iconic palaces and churches to stepping into the peaceful Jewish temples, every stop was a new chapter in the story of this coastal gem.



As the day drew to a close, the residents gathered at the beach to witness one of Kochi's most beautiful sights—a breathtaking sunset over the Arabian Sea. The soft hues of the setting sun, combined with the cool sea breeze, provided a perfect ending to a day of exploration and joy.

our residents to immerse themselves in the heart of Kochi but also strengthened the bonds between them. It was a day of discovery, relaxation, and fun, creating wonderful memories that will be treasured for years to come. Truly, it was a day that showcased the beauty of both the city and the community that came together to enjoy it.

This unforgettable trip not only allowed



# Alluring Africa

*Travelogue by Mrs Nirmala Kambil*

*Year 2025 arrived at our door with a long awaited gift for my family. "A Trip to Africa" a much cherished dream was coming true.*



## Episode 1- The Inception

### **Africa is not new to me.**

I have spent the best 15 years of my life in Africa, 10 years in Tanzania and 5 years in Zambia and then moved to Hong Kong, another British colony.

We loved the dark continent and my children spent their younger years there. The local Africans were very friendly people but when the political atmosphere changed we opted to move to the Far East in 1975 along with other Expatriate officers who had been serving in the colonies.

It was our dream to visit Africa again and although travelled around the world visiting many countries over the years, could not be in Africa due to various reasons.

Year 2025 arrived at our door with a long awaited gift for my family. " A Trip to Africa" a much cherished dream was coming true. I had visited the Game parks with my husband and also had travelled to various towns and cities of East Africa and have many nostalgic memories of my days in Tanzania and the central African country of Zambia which also was a British colony, formerly known as Northern Rodeasia.

I contacted a travel agent in Tanzania "The Rickshaw Travels", owned by a Malayali named Prema and her husband. I had seen Prema about 60 years back in Dar es Salaam as a child before she was sent to a boarding school. Knew her parents, who have passed several years back.

One has to choose carefully the Safari as in the rainy season as well as in very hot summer, the journey becomes not only Difficult, but the animals also move from the grassland and take shelter under the bushes, emerging only in small numbers.

We decided that we will go in January/ February, which is not the peak season but at the same time a reasonably good time for a Safari.

My son Ajit, daughter Asha, son-in-law Jithu, and I landed in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia, on the 27th of January. My daughter in law could not accompany us as she was getting occasional bout of Sciatica.

Our main intention was to visit the Victoria falls, one of the biggest waterfalls in the world, like the Niagara falls. The water from the Zambezi river falls from an extremely large height into the gorges below with a huge spray and noise surrounded by natural vegetation.

From Lusaka we took a short domestic flight to Livingstone where the Victoria fall is. Rickshaw travels had arranged all our accommodation, sight seeing and and pickup and drop in to the airports and hotels. We did not want to take chances being unaware of the present conditions in these countries. But to our surprise the locals were so friendly and welcoming wherever we went.

*To be continued..*



# Harmony with Nature: A Journey of Self-Discovery

*-An AI retelling of Mr George Kadankavil's day spend on the Sundarbans*



**As the sun rose over the tranquil waters of Sundarbans**, a lone traveler embarked on a journey to connect with the natural world. This unassuming individual, driven by a desire to live in harmony with nature, set out to explore the intricate web of life that surrounds us.

His day began with a solitary walk along the riverside, where he encountered a few black ants scurrying across his path. In a fleeting moment of instinct, he stamped on them, only to be immediately overcome with a sense of guilt and remorse.

Seeking redemption, he continued his walk, where he met a loyal canine companion who would stay by his side for the next hour. Together, they watched the sunrise over the river, capturing the breathtaking moments through the lens of his camera. The dog's happy face in their selfie together melted his heart.

Feeling grateful for the dog's companionship, he decided to reward his new friend with a special treat. Upon returning to the hotel, he purchased a packet of biscuits, which he eagerly shared with the dog.

As he stood outside the shop, a black sheep caught his attention. "Ah, a black sheep," he mused, before quickly amending his thought, "black only in color, of course!" With a chuckle, he approached the sheep, which surprisingly proved to be quite cooperative. The dog, too, seemed to get along famously with the sheep, and the three of them posed for a delightful selfie together.

Just then, a small bird landed nearby, its eyes fixed longingly on the biscuits. The traveler's heart swelled with compassion, and he offered the bird a treat, which it gratefully accepted. As the bird sang a sweet melody, he felt a deep sense of connection with the natural world.

This traveler's story invites us to reflect on our own relationship with nature. How do our actions impact the delicate balance of the ecosystem? Can we learn to live in greater harmony with the world around us?

As we navigate the complexities of our own lives, may we draw inspiration from this traveler's quest for redemption and connection with nature. May we strive to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy and compassion towards all living beings.



# *I Wasn't Ready to Give Up —So I Didn't*

Dr. Paimpillil Sebastian Joseph



It all started with back pain—something I never thought would lead to a life-changing diagnosis. Concerned, I went to the hospital for a check-up. After several tests, the doctors informed me that I had stage 4 prostate cancer. The weight of the news didn't sink in immediately, but my family was devastated. Seeing their pain made me realize the seriousness of my condition.

Despite the shock, we decided to fight. I placed my trust in my doctors and in God, believing that I could overcome this battle. The journey was long and difficult, filled with countless treatments and moments of uncertainty. But through it all, my family stood by me, offering unwavering support and endless prayers. Their love and encouragement became my greatest source of strength.

After a long and challenging road, I emerged victorious—I was finally cancer-free. This experience taught me the power of faith, resilience, and the importance of having a strong support system. I am deeply grateful to my doctors, my family, and everyone who stood by me during this fight.

Today, I share my story to inspire others who are facing similar battles. Cancer may be a tough opponent, but with hope, determination, and the love of those around us, it is possible to overcome even the darkest moments.

**I am a survivor, and I am grateful for this second chance at life.**



# *Memoirs of Bless Homes*

-Jose Moothedan (Resident of Bless Homes for last 6 years)

*One of the best places to retire in India”  
-The Real Marigold Hotel” BBC*

- The above compliment perfectly fits Bless Homes as we see and experience it daily at Bless Homes, which stand out in many areas when compared to other retirement homes. At Bless Homes we have a feeling we are “at home” and we “belong to” this place.
- With an average age of 75 years Bless residents need an efficient health care system which has been already put in to operation by the Bless management.
- A special mention is to be made about the excellent nursing services available in Bless round the clock and emergency services with the help of in-built emergency alert system in each apartment.
- We have a doctor available for consultation at Bless, including individual consultations in the rooms. We also have a dispensary where the medicines required for the residents stocked.

- For residents, interactions and activities are required for healthy ageing. Bless meets this more than required, there are about 15 activities which the residents can attend.
- The full-time availability of top management personal in an around Bless is really heart-warming for the residents. This increases the confidence level of residents and boosts their morale.
- The services offered by the Bless staff to the residents are beyond excellence!
- Being a premium facility, there is a feeling that, this is an expensive place. This is not correct. In reality, if you are of normal health charges are moderate only. But, due to sickness and other disabilities when you require assistance for living the additional cost comes in.
- There is no institutionalization at Bless, we are free and hence relaxed.
- There are plenty of smiling faces to look at in Bless whether it is a staff, top management or residents and this is a tremendous motivator for me to be happy.
- My experience at Bless makes me happy and contented and life so far well-lived. The smiling faces beckon me for an extended life even though I will be completing 85 years in a couple of months. 😊



# *Financial Peace During the Silver Years*

-CKG Nair (Author, a financial sector policy-law-governance expert, and a Bless resident)



*Organising our assets and having an income-expenditure plan are the keys to financial peace*

Peaceful life during the silver years needs a thorough recasting of our life styles. Having done the hard work of our prime life well; peace should be the next motto. Putting your physical house in order is only partly complete by having a good house with supporting facilities or by checking into a senior living facility. We need to plan and implement many more things to lead a happy life. Our confidence that 'I know what is the best for me' may turn out to be sub-optimal, as life would twist and turn in unexpected ways.

## **Have an informed Financial plan**

A major part of stress-free life depends on achieving financial peace. Financial peace, however, does not mean be happy with the accumulated wealth and closing our minds to material issues. But far from it. Rational financial/wealth/asset planning needs reasonable level of financial awareness and high level of alertness. We need to be aware of the various investment options available, and each one's pros and cons, even though we may not invest in many of them. Like real

estate, gold [physical and digital], insurance, various securities, mutual funds, alternative investment instruments [real estate investment trusts, infrastructure investment trusts], exotic products like crypto assets, art works and non-fungible tokens etc.

### **Do not fall for 'high returns', digital arrests and other scams**

We need to understand the entities providing those products and services. While several products and entities are regulated, there are many who operate in the shadows promising glittering gold and multiplying returns overnight. Aged people with incomes are easy targets for the shadow operators. 'Digital arrests and other scams being reported are just a tip of the iceberg, as scamsters invent new ways to defraud people and are always ahead of the regulators and law enforcers. Our defense against frauds and scams must be strong, built upon proper awareness. We should deal with only regulated entities and products.

Quite often we take decisions based on others advice, since our own knowledge of the complex world of finance is very limited. There are so many experts to advise us. Remember, all of them are the well-wishers of the well-to-do. We need to know a lot even before interacting with them. As a first step we need to know whether they are qualified and authorized advisers? All financial sector regulators [RBI, SEBI, IRDA etc.] publish the list of such entities. Next, scrutinise their advice, even if they are authorized, regulated entities since mis-selling financial products is very common.

### **Compare products, providers and our risk profile**

Many advisers/customer care officials take advantage of their clients' information gap and push specific products where they or their company make the maximum profit. Remember, there are only a few, time-tested financial products that suit the risk-taking ability of senior people. Such as fixed deposits, health insurance and mutual funds if one is still active. Here too, there are qualitative differences between players and products and a good understanding of those issues is needed. For example, we should open account with well-capitalised, well-governed banks with long track record. And book FD of such duration as per our financial plan.

### **Plan early and keep our lives simple**

Taking stock, discharging liabilities, keeping only what is needed, completing legal documentations, systematising our income stream and spending pattern are major tasks to be accomplished for lasting financial peace. Accept the fact that our capabilities, both physical and mental, decline as we age. Since our mind should be alert enough to understand many nuances when we plan our future, we should have such plan ready at the earliest.

### **Three Wills**

In short, in order to keep the last phase of our life easy and simple, we need to have three Wills: 1). on property/assets; 2). on end of care [Living Will] and, 3). will to live well. Together, they provide us reasonable peace of body and mind.

# BLISSFUL IN BLESS HOMES -

Vimla Menon



Retirement home? What's that?  
I'd have asked two decades back.  
Today I stand at the threshold of Bless  
Homes,  
Wondering what lies within there for me..  
Will it be peace, fun and happiness ahead  
Like what my friend Mallika had said?

At this juncture my memory scans  
images of the visual and verbal  
expressions,  
of my siblings and close friends,  
questioning the need of my decision.  
"Why go there, we are here for you?"  
They had said with some apprehension.

Yes, everyone is there for me, I know...  
and gratitude for that I do owe,  
to all of them and to God.  
But shouldn't I avoid becoming a burden  
in my twilight years, till the fall of the last  
curtain?

Gone are the days of large families  
when all stayed together and could support  
each other.

With life's pace speeded up,  
and everyone having their own races to run  
it is unjust to make yourself a hindrance  
and topple the priorities of the next  
generation.

Our lives have reached the fag end,  
but the younger ones are on the way to make  
their ascent.

Love is..... Understanding their needs.  
It is not as if you are cutting off the bonds..  
Love is....not just staying together.  
Love is caring for the needs of each other.  
The assurance that you are safe and your  
needs taken care of,  
is a relief for loved ones of not being with you  
and thereof.

Proximity is not just another word for caring  
Being dependent and a burden is despairing.

So I will be here, may be for the rest of my  
life...  
Hoping that the sunset years will be free of  
life's strife

# സ്വപ്നം വിടരും ഭവനം- Lalitha N.



ബ്ലൈസ്സാണല്ലോ ഇന്നെൻറെ ലോകം.  
ബ്ലൈസ്സല്ലോ എൻറെ ജീവൻ.  
ചന്ദനഗന്ധം ഉതിരുമൊരു  
പുണ്യഗ്രഹമാണ്  
എനിക്കീ ബ്ലസ്....

നിറയെ പൂക്കളും ചെടികളും  
ശലഭങ്ങളും തുമ്പികളും  
പാറി പറക്കുന്ന നടപ്പാതകളും  
കിളികൾ തൻ കലപില ശബ്ദവും  
കുയിൽനാദവും എല്ലാം  
നിറഞ്ഞ ഈ സ്വപ്ന ഗൃഹം  
കണ്ടപ്പോൾ മനസ്സിൽ  
കൂടുകൂട്ടിയിരുന്ന ദുഃഖം  
എങ്ങോ പോയി മറഞ്ഞു..

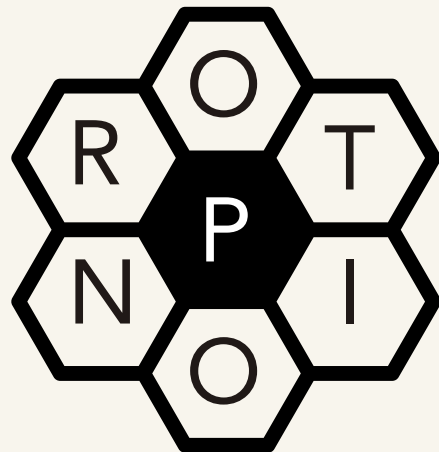
മരണ സാഗരം പൂൽകുന്ന  
നാൾ വരെ ഒരു സ്വപ്ന  
ബിന്ദുവായി ഞാൻ  
ഒഴുകിയെങ്കിലീ  
മാനസത്തിൽ നിത്യേന  
സന്തോഷം പൂക്കും....

## GAME TIME Spellathon

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the central letter. There should be at least one seven letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed. British English Dictionary is used as reference.

### Ratings

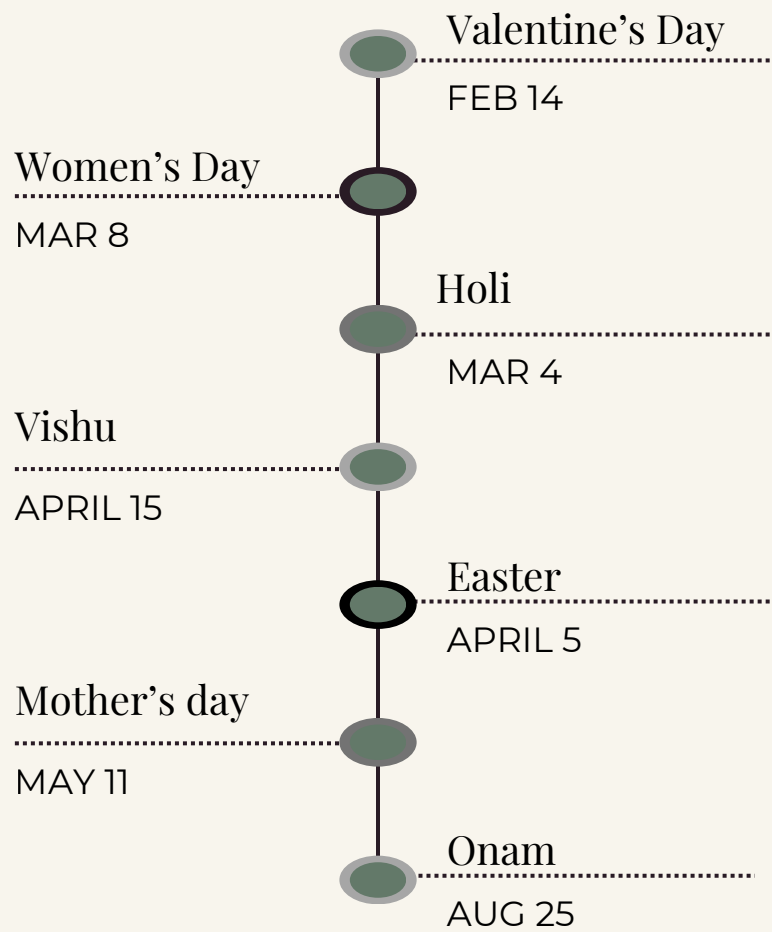
07- Average | 10- Good | 12- Outstanding



Ans:

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. -----
6. -----
7. -----
8. -----
9. -----
10. -----
11. -----
12. -----

# Upcoming Events





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