



# **SAVE OUR RICE MEDIA DOSSIER**

**NOVEMBER 2018 TO MARCH 2019**

# **SAVE OUR RICE**

**MEDIA DOSSIER**

**November 2018- March 2019**





## **Save Our Rice -Media Dossier November 2018- March 2019**

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**Save Our Rice Campaign**

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# Introduction

Save Our Rice Campaign aims to build a movement towards achieving food security and sovereignty, reviving rice culture and sustaining rice ecosystems. Save Our Rice attempts to sustain rice by creating linkage between different sectors, developing capacities to address local/ regional concerns, building alternatives models for sustainable ecological rice cultivation and developing a platform of people with rice culture as a common concern. The campaign was launched in 2004 in the Second International Year of Rice in Kumbalangi, Kerala. The Campaign is coordinated by Thanal and CREATE. The campaign is active in seven states - Tamilnadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhyapradesh and West Bengal, where it is coordinated by partners in those States. The major campaign objectives are

- Conserving Rice Ecosystems
- Sustaining Rice Culture and Diversity
- Protecting Traditional Wisdom
- Preventing GMOs and Toxics
- Ensuring Safe and Nutritious Food

This dossier is a collection of media reports from November 2018 to March 2019 related to work done in seven states, by Save Our Rice Campaign



CETAA | Global Meet 2018 | Silicon Valley

## Earth First ! The rest must wait !

*Sridhar Radhakrishnan, 1989 CSE.*

Never in the 3.8 billion years history of life on earth has there been a more grave threat to its very existence, as is now. And never has one species ever threatened this living planet more than this sentinel one, Homo Sapiens which is, EACH ONE OF US. With every irresponsible action of ours, which today is almost every action in our daily lives, we are undoubtedly smoke rolling to death, this only blue-green planet that we know has life on it.

And it is evident that this plunge would not end with a big bang, on the contrary it would be more painful, more prolonged as professed in this piece by T S Elliot.

*This is the way the world ends*

*This is the way the world ends*

*This is the way the world ends*

*Not with a bang but a whimper"*

(From "The Hollow Man")

Aren't we already seeing this, hearing it in our own homes, neighbourhood, society, nations, eventually a planet itself, whimpering from the poisons, diseases, guns, wars, monstrous structures, heat, climate change, and above all a receding wilderness that actually kept us all sane and live. Unless we as a race, decide not to let this happen, and pro-actively, even evangelically decide to reverse it, it could just happen, because thats what the new normal seems to be - more poisoned soils, animals, water, air, food and people, changing climate, haughty corrupt governments, non-liveable cities, despairing rural, and all this, ironically, strangely in an era of growth and development. Because this growth seems to be too skewed towards a politically and economically strong minority, thats also physically, mentally or virtually gated out from the larger others (other life forms as well). The 99% vs the 1% struggles that we saw in the new century is still simmering beneath, waiting. But there has been enough matter published about this collapse, and enough matter on the new ways of transforming economics and hence



societies. Looks like its time for a transformational era, one from a rather apocalyptic anthropocene to one of a sustainable and ecologically founded ecocene.

Now then, what is our role in this transformation ? Ponder. But do let me speak out of my learning and experience of the last two-three decades of what we have been doing primarily in Kerala and beyond through our small but now significant group - Thanal.

**Thanal is a small group of individuals, networked across the world, with common thoughts and diversely acting people and institutions, mostly small and effective, and broadly in pursuit of an ecologically sound way of sustaining life and livelihoods on this planet. Thanal has as its vision "People, Planet, Sustainability".**

A small group who came together in the nineteen eighties and later joined by some more like me in the nighties, to put the agenda of environmental



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health and justice into the mainstream thinking. It started like most eco groups with studying and addressing the natural world and natural history - especially the wild forests and animals, birds and butterflies etc. But soon we realised that the impact of the human on the ecosystems is so very huge even in the immediate surroundings that the focus of work shifted to help create awareness and lead to positive action on addressing environmental issues.

So, in the last three decades, its been working, on a wide range of issues, that later got covered under the programmes of sustainable resource use and management, sustainable agriculture and food security, living ecosystems and environment education, primarily building the collectives, models, enabling policy changes and even taking it into global change making forums, such as the United Nations.

In Kerala, we have been the minds and actors behind these sustainability and environmental initiatives - of the many, the organic farming policy, zero waste approaches to solve the waste issue, the green protocol to enable more natural materials and policies in institutions, events and households, the carbon neutral villages, so on and so forth.

Nationally, we were a critical part of the organic farming movement, the movement to stop India from cropping and feeding on GM food, and many more. Globally, under UN initiatives, we were there in the chemical safety conferences and the climate conferences.

Did I say this was a small group, actually No, Its a large one if we are to count the many that keeps us alive to work for this transformation. And that includes many from our own fold, the engineers, a handfull of CETians as well, and that's what makes this work for me all the more satisfying. But this is to also say that more of these hands are needed to support our efforts.

Lastly,

I know, our lives, our families, our career matter... but time has come...in whatever way...to be of worth to this living planet of ours. Let the Earth be our first priority, let us bring up generations that is connected to the natural world, who can redeem the values and skills than are needed to tend and heal it, make it liveable for all beings.

Pray, let us be the generation that deserves to be here. ■



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<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: CETAA California</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 11th November 2018</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: Global Meet 2018</b>



16/12/18 DECCAN HERALD  
**Conserving indigenous paddy varieties**

**R**ecently, the Organic Farming Research Centre (OFRC) at the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, was brimming with activities, reminding one of a festive season.

There were hundreds of farmers from across the state. They competed with each other to have a glimpse of paddy stacks of native varieties. The centre had set up 192 paddy stacks of various native varieties which included Rajamudi, Gandhasale, Rajabhoga, Chinnapoini, HMT, Ambemohar, Huggi Bhatta, Malgudi Sanna, Jeerige Sanna, Baama Black and Rathna Choodi.

**Sustainable cultivation**

One of the largest demonstrations of paddy stacks in Karnataka, the effort intended to popularise sustainable paddy cultivation among the farming community. The enthusiasm was such that each one of the farmers wanted to have the latest updates on those varieties.

A two-member expert team comprising associate researcher M Y Ullas and Dr S Pradeep, director, OFRC, conducted interactions with the farmers clarifying their doubts. The duo also provided inputs and perception.

Sarojamma, a farmer from Harihar, was surprised to see the varietal diversity. "I thought I was rich enough as I had 30 varieties of indigenous paddy. However, I am stunned to see these many varieties here," she exclaimed. Shivaji Gouda Patil, a farmer from Hangal, was satisfied as he found a variety that suited the soil of his field, in these blocks.

After the Green Revolution in the early 1960s, the high-yielding paddy va-



**LAB TO FIELD:** Blocks of traditional paddy varieties at the Organic Farming Research Centre in Navile, Shivamogga district. PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

rieties hit the market, promising higher yields. There was more focus on the use of chemicals for higher yields. As a result, soil lost its fertility and local varieties disappeared from the fields.

It took a few decades for farmers to realise the consequences of the use of chemicals on the crops. As a result, they returned to organic farming gradually and, in turn, started growing local varieties. Unfortunately, many of these varieties were on the brink of extinction.

Farmers' groups in the state and elsewhere in the country collected seeds of

local varieties and engaged in their cultivation. Over the years, more number of farmers were drawn to this local varieties and sustainable methods of farming.

While there are many individual efforts, several such efforts in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal came together under the banner of Save Our Rice Campaign, with an aim to build a movement towards achieving food security and sovereignty, reviving our rice culture and sustaining rice eco-systems.

The campaign which was launched in 2004, attempts to sustain rice by creating

linkages between different sectors, building alternative models for sustainable ecological rice cultivation, developing capacities to address issues related to rice, and developing a platform of people with rice culture as a common concern. Both farmers' organisations and individual farmers are a part of this network.

Field visits, tours, workshops and training programmes are organised to help understand the transitioning farmers understand seed selection and cultivation methods.

The campaign has also been backed

by Krishi Vigyan Kendras and other government-run agriculture research stations. Agricultural and Horticultural Research Station, Brahmavara and Organic Farming Research Station, Nagarahalli, Mysuru have conducted workshops and demonstrations in this regard.

OFRC's then-coordinator Dr N Devakumar had set up 70 stacks of native varieties for the demonstration eight years ago, which largely benefited farmers. Now number of native varieties has reached 192. The centre is engaging farmers to preserve as many varieties as possible.

"The Green Revolution ensured food sufficiency in the country. It is high time we focused on quality," Dr Manjunatha K Naik, vice-chancellor, University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga points out. "The university has taken an initiative to preserve local varieties," he adds. Naik promises distribution of seeds at subsidised rates to farmers.

"Mostly, these local varieties are not affected by diseases. The cost of cultivation is also less," Pradeep explains. The state has many varieties that are highly adaptable to changing weather conditions. The centre plans to create a database of every variety and analyse the nutritional values. However, preserving indigenous varieties of paddy isn't just enough. There is a need to create market for the produce.

"A few paddy growers associations have created the market for their produce. The government should focus on on-farm research, standardise sustainable paddy practices and implement sustainable farming techniques," stresses G Krishna Prasad, a member of Save Rice Campaign. Those who are interested can contact Ullas on 6361596337.

**Shanthkumar C**  
 (Translated by J Angadi)

**FEEDBACK**

Send your ideas and comments to: [spectrum@deccanherald.co.in](mailto:spectrum@deccanherald.co.in) or Spectrum, c/o Deccan Herald #75, M G Road, Bengaluru-560001

<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: Deccan Herald</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 16th December 2018</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: Bengaluru</b>



[Food](#)

# This 2019 calendar features India’s rice heritage

[Chitra Balasubramaniam](#)

January 25, 2019 THE HINDU



## The team behind India’s millet calendar is back, and this year’s focus is on rice

Calendars were, at one point of time, revered. They were printed in tens of thousands by corporations, companies, non-profit institutions. The doors of power opened with gifts of diaries and calendars. The fast world of smartphones, computers and online enchantment has meant that no one really cares so much for calendars these days. But innovations continue, and calendars are now a tool for spreading awareness.

One such is the Rice Calendar 2019. As Krishna Prasad G, founder, Sahaja Samrudha, says, “Rice Calendar 2019 is a unique effort by the Save Our Rice Campaign and Sahaja Samrudha to



popularise traditional rice and recipes.” Krishna Prasad had earlier come out with two editions of the millet calendar to popularise the use of millets. Rice is a natural extension.



Why rice, you think? Krishna Prasad explains, “Today, the younger generation knows only two or three varieties of rice. It is *basmati* in the North and *sona masuri* in the South. But our heritage of rice is far more. There are rice varieties which have medicinal properties; several can be used only for making sweet dishes; some are grown in saline areas; a few are grown in drylands. Some rices are aromatic: the fragrance can be noticed from a kilometre away. Rice diversity is vast.”

Krishna Prasad adds, “It is not as if people do not want to use it. They just do not know about it, where to buy or how to cook it. This calendar is a unique effort to popularise the traditional varieties of rice. We have given a chart of 13 recipes with the rice. The varieties of rice have been taken from across the country and include *chak hao* of Manipur, *gobindobogh* from Bengal and *navara* from Kerala.”

India in the Vedic period is supposed to have had around 4,00,000 varieties of rice. RH Richharia, the leading Indian rice scientist who documented and collected nearly 19,000 varieties in his lifetime, is said to have believed that India had over two lakh varieties. The underlying fact is that India’s traditional bowl of rice has enough biodiversity to last more than a lifetime. Each variety of rice is unique in characteristics and aroma. Each has a specific growing cycle, can withstand climatic extremes and uses lesser resources, paving the way for sustainable farming.

So the rice calendar is a way of reminding people of this vast inheritance and treasure. With recipes, images and information, it makes for interesting reading, and is, of course, a cynosure of all eyes on the wall.



So what does the calendar have? It talks of the rich heritage value and the role it plays in the life of Indians. From the first time food is given to a child (annaprashna), it is associated with fertility, auspiciousness, it is used to welcome guests with, it is showered as blessings (akshat), it is used to welcome newly-weds... it is more than just food, and has socio-religious bearings as well. It talks of the origin and genesis of black rice, medicinal rice and its properties, red rice, aromatic rice and its mention in the works of Sushruta and Charaka. This forms the front part of the calendar, together with the photos and, of course, dates.





The back of the calendar is where the stock of the goodies lie for a food enthusiast. Actually, it makes sense for everyone who is fond of rice or eats rice. The recipes have been divided into black rice recipes, aromatic rice recipes, and so on. The recipes include *payasam* using *karuppu kavuni*, *kalabhat* rice salad (recipe given), Manipur *chak hao amubi* rice burger (this is a novelty as the *chak hao* is used to make *kheer* traditionally); there are daily use recipes. A catalogue of 36 different varieties of rice is also given. The English calendar has details of rice from pan India. The regional one in Kannada, in the same format, has recipes and data on varieties of rice grown in Karnataka, while a similar one in Bengali is being prepared.



The calendar costs 100 (including postal charges). Contact Sahaja Samrudha at 7090009922/8212513155, or [sahajaindia@gmail.com](mailto:sahajaindia@gmail.com).

<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: THE HINDU</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 25th January 2019</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: Karnataka</b>



## Food Fest's SOS to save our rice

**The Park Hotel is hosting a month long celebration of rice till March 10 with the Save Our Rice Campaign**

Sourish Bhattacharyya

New Delhi

February 10, 2019 INDIA TODAY



Sneh Lata Yadav (first left) and Abhishek Basu of The Park (second from right) with members of the Save Our Rice Campaign at Fire restaurant.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- A group of scientists and civil society leaders launched the Save Our Rice Campaign 13 years ago
- Today, over 4,000 of rice varieties survive thanks to the Green Revolution and its emphasis on high-yielding varieties
- The traditional varieties require not more than normal rainfall to survive and can do without chemical crutches

In 1900, India was home to 1.5 lakh varieties of rice, which had been developed by enterprising farmers and hardened by the vagaries of nature over centuries. Today, thanks to the Green Revolution and its emphasis on high-yielding varieties, not more than 4,000 of these varieties survive, mostly in oblivion, in different parts of the country.



For people like you and me, India's rice wealth is limited to the Basmati and Sona Masoori, which come in many varieties and names - yes, they are high-yielding varieties, which were necessary to pull India out of the vicious cycles of droughts and famines, but they are water guzzlers, which makes them a threat to the environment makes them a threat to the environment in states such as Punjab and Haryana, and require heavy doses of pesticides and chemical fertilisers.

The traditional varieties (or folk rice varieties), now languishing in the shadow of these heavy hitters, on the other hand, require not more than normal rainfall to survive and can do without chemical crutches because they have developed natural defences in the centuries during which they have evolved.

They come in different colours - from white and yellow to brown, purple and black) - and they are short-grained and long-grained, loose and sticky. There's rice for every possible use in this country.

To save these home-grown rice varieties from extinction, and to popularise the survivors, a group of scientists and civil society leaders launched the Save Our Rice Campaign 13 years ago, and I got to meet one of the key members of the movement, Sridhar Radhakrishnan, an engineer-turned-rice conservator, who said the organisation had successfully revived 1,500 rice varieties at 15 seed banks run by farmers in six states. His eureka moment occurred in 2007-08, when, while working on a 'biodiversity food festival' at the Women's Christian College in Kanyakumari, he discovered 175 traditional varieties of rice he was not aware of.

These folk rice varieties, though, may not survive for long without a market. "If you don't grow them every year, you won't get the seeds to perpetuate the variety," explained Radhakrishnan.

<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: INDIA Today</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 10th February 2019</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: New Delhi</b>



[METRO PLUS](#)

## Rice to the occasion

[Sreedevi Lakshmi Kutty](#)

January 12, 2019 00:00 IST THE HINDU

Salt of the earth Sakkarai pongal made with poongarred rice Special Arrangement

**Add a heritage variety to your pongal this year. It will encourage thousands of organic farmers who toil to keep rare and valuable types of indigenous paddy alive**

“Pongal used to be celebrated with freshly harvested, hand-pound rice,” says Ashokan. “I would say *iluppai poo samba* is the best rice to make *pongol*, with its soft texture and faint aroma,” he adds. An organic farmer committed to growing traditional rice varieties, Ashokan know what he is talking about. He adds he has always been partial to *poongar* red rice and *iluppai poo samba* white rice, both of which he grows on his land.

The key lies in knowing how to use each variety, says Ashokan. “We take care of the particular needs of each; be it duration of crop, water requirement, photo sensitivity, seasons etc. Similarly, we also need to be aware of cooking times, methods and flavour profiles of different types of traditional rice. Once we figure that out, it is easy to cook delicious dishes.”

### Choices, choices

Balaji and Muthu Kumar, two other organic paddy farmers, say they prefer *kichadi samba* white rice for *pongol*, while farmer Radha, who also works with organic farming guru Sundararaman, says she can turn out a *pongol* with any traditional variety. But, she adds, she is always extra





happy if that was *karuppu kavuni* black rice. “Not everyone may agree, as *karuppu kavuni* retains a chewy texture even after cooking. It resembles the *aravana payasam* more than *pongal* , but I still love it,” she says.

There are thousands of farmers like Radha, Balaji, Muthu Kumar and Ashokan who grow, conserve and promote traditional rice varieties season after season.

Two people who have been key to bringing tens of thousands of farmers in Tamil Nadu into the fold of organic traditional paddy cultivation are the late G Nammalvar and KR Jayaraman, who passed away last month.

Jayaraman of Adhirangam’s now-famous Nel Thiruvizha festival created a wave of seed revival and an army of seed saviours in Tamil Nadu.

The work carried out by these seed warriors can yield success only if people adopt these varieties of traditional rice in their diet. And what better time to do that than during the *pongal* festival, which celebrates the *samba* harvest with delicious *sakkarai pongal* and *ven pongal* . The freshly-harvested, hand-pound rice strengthens the connection with farmers and farming.

There is also increasing anecdotal evidence that these traditional varieties are capable of withstanding climate vagaries better and have unique nutritive and healthful properties. Therefore, conserving traditional rice varieties is also becoming a survival imperative.

Paddy varieties that belong to this land are tasty and unique. Cultivated without chemicals by the sons and daughters of the soil they are nourishing for the body and the earth. This is a heritage we can proudly gift our children.

Let us grow these rices. Let us buy them and explore recipes. Let us cook, share and gift them, while thanking the farmers for not giving up on precious grains.

*Sreedevi Lakshmi Kutty is the Co-Founder of Bio Basics, a social venture retailing organic food and associated with the Save Our Rice Campaign.*

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#### ***Some traditional varieties***

- ***Kichadi samba*** Slender white-grained rice, a favourite of erstwhile royalty, delicious, easy to digest, hardy and easy to grow
- ***Thooyamalli*** White, as the name suggests, easy to grow and cook
- ***Mappillai samba*** Red and robust, gives strength, requires patience from the cook, but doesn’t scrimp on richness and taste



- *Seeraga samba* Our answer to basmati . Requires mollycoddling in the field and is sparing with yield, but rewards with fragrance and taste
- *Iluppai poo samba* Delicious, fragrant, rejuvenating, small-grained, still rarely grown
- *Poongar* Red and bold, takes time to cook, is said to be a healing grain, especially for women
- And many more like *garudan samba , kattuyanam , karuppu kavuni , sigappu kavuni , thanga samba , neelam samba , kullakar , karun kuruvai , swarna masuri , palkudavalai , arupatham kuruvai , ottadayan , and salem sanna*

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*One for all*

*In 2015, the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute made its database of rice varieties — the largest in the world — available online for free.*

<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: THE HINDU</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 12 January 2019</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: Metro Plus</b>



[METRO PLUS](#)

## Seeds of change

[Akila Kannadasan](#)

January 12, 2019 00:00 IST

Grassroots movement Seedsavers have grown in numbers across the country  
D Gopalakrishnan and special arrangement

### Remembering Nel Jayaraman who touched the lives of hundreds of farmers by reviving traditional paddy varieties

*His was a festival with a difference. Every farmer who participated, walked away with seeds of traditional rice varieties, with the promise of returning double the quantity the next year. At the 10th Seed Festival held in May 2016, Nel Jayaraman ('nel' is paddy in Tamil), distributed 156 seed varieties to over 7,000 farmers across the State. Jayaraman died in December 2018 battling cancer. Ananthoo, founder of Chennai-based reStore and Organic Farmers Market, who has worked closely with Jayaraman, remembers his times with the organic farming visionary.*

It must have been eight years ago. I was at Thiruvavur to attend the Nel Thiruvizha (Seed Festival) organised by Jayaraman.

I went there to volunteer; I'd heard about him from organic farming pioneer G Nammalvar and wanted to see if we could bring the varieties Jayaraman revived, to the market.

It was just a small affair then; some 500 people attended. But the festival grew exponentially from then on; from 500, the number of participants went up to 1,500 next year; and then to 2,500, 5,000... There was no looking back. When I entered the village of Adhirangam where the festival took place, I saw men carrying sacks of paddy; they came with five kilograms and returned with 10 kilograms the next year. That was how the seed exchange worked.

I remember how Jayaraman cycled across villages to find traditional paddy seeds and distribute them. I asked him how he planned to carry his vision forward; what would he do for funds? But he replied, "What do I need funds for? I have seeds and my cycle will take me everywhere. Or I'll take a bus."



If people called him asking for any number of varieties of seeds, he went directly to see to it that they got what they wanted. I participated in the planning of his seed festivals. But the man didn't believe in going by a strict plan. He was always cool when those around him panicked. For instance, if I told him there were many people coming for the event and that we had to plan for meals and plates, he would respond unfettered, “*Thambi*, it'll fall in place. If there are no plates, we can buy banana leaves; if there's no food, we can cook and serve rice; we have it in plenty, don't we.”

What if the sound-systems don't work, I insisted and he said, “Then we might have to speak louder.” I joked that I would refuse to come for planning meetings, because anyway, he didn't need them. On a serious note, all the festivals he organised went on smoothly, like he believed.

During floods or droughts, he took the collector of Nagapattinam to show him how our traditional paddy withstood the forces of Nature. He visited collectorates to submit petitions against genetically-modified crops wherever he encountered them. Later in life, when his popularity grew, he spent more time at meetings and less time in the field; but that's where his heart was.

Hundreds of people called me from India and abroad, enquiring about his health during his final days. He showed that if you worked selflessly for society, it will give back.

As told to Akila Kannadasan

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***Reasons to be grateful***

- ***Rare varieties he revived and went on to popularise:***
- ***Madu muzhungi***
- ***Milagu samba***
- ***Aanai komban***
- ***Kattu yanam***
- ***Kuzhiyadichan***

<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: THE HINDU</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 12th January 2019</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: Metro Plus</b>



## **‘Nel’ Jayaraman, Who Revived Over 170 Local Paddy Seed Varieties, Passes Away**

Passionate about conservation, Jayaraman travelled across Tamil Nadu and collected seeds which were on the edge of extinction and revived them.

[Nileena S.B](#)  
08 Dec 2018



Image Courtesy: DNA India

**CHENNAI:** K R Jayaraman, one of India’s most ardent crusaders in farming, succumbed to cancer on Thursday. Widely known as Nel (Tamil for paddy) Jayaraman, he was known for reviving more than 170 local paddy varieties and promoting organic farming in Tamil Nadu.

Jayaraman, who was also the coordinator of ‘Save our Rice’ campaign in the state, was recognised for his work and had won several awards by the state and Central governments.

An unassuming farmer, Nel Jayaraman started his crusade by conserving seeds and promoting native styles of farming and local seed varieties across the state.



A native of Adirangam in Thiruvavur district, which was known for Vaishnavite pilgrimage, it was because of Jayaraman that since 2006, the district became famous for the annual paddy seed festival, known as ‘Nel Thiruvizha’. Each year, farmers from across the state and nearby places participate in the programme. Last year approximately 12,000 farmers attended the festival.

Jayaraman began popularising local seed varieties by giving each participant two kilograms of seeds and asked them to return next year with 4 Kg. Soon, farmers started returning to the annual festival with more than 4 kg of seeds, as a result of which the festival is now considered one of the most important platform for farmers in Tamil Nadu.

Two years in a row (2012 and 2013), Jayaraman was awarded the ‘Best Organic Farmer’ title by the state government. In 2015, he won the ‘Best Genome Saviour’ award by the National Innovation Foundation (NIF).

“When I first met him, Nel Jayaraman was just another farmer from Thiruvavur,” recalls C Jayakumar, the founder of Thanal, the environmental group that has been collaborating with Jayaraman for years.

“In 2004, we conducted a conference on international paddy year. G Nammalvar (a green crusader, agricultural and environmental activist) was the keynote speaker in that conference. Jayaraman was with him. He was a trustee of CREATE (a consumer-based organisation in Tamil Nadu ) back then. He took a steep turn since then and started getting involved in the conservation. He reached out to people even in remote corners of the state and started organising them. One of his key concepts was that seeds are not for sale. It was an interesting movement that he led in Tamil Nadu. What began with 50 or 60 people, has now spread to every district”

As a result, says Jayakumar, “everywhere you can find farmers who use local variety of seeds for farming now. He travelled across the state and collected seeds which were on the edge of extinction and revived them. He was very active in his work even when he was ill,” adding that Jayaraman was a “person who refused to fail.”

Now wonder, several people landed up to pay homage to him, including political leaders and film stars. M K Stalin, the chief of DMK, tweeted that Jayaraman had devoted his life to “protect the soil of Tamil Nadu.” The state government had offered Rs 5 lakh for his medical expenses, and according to *The Hindu*, actor Sivakarthykeyan has offered to take care of the educational expenses of Jayaraman’s son.

<b>Name of Media</b>	<b>: NEWS CLICK</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>: English</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: 8th December 2018</b>
<b>Edition/Location</b>	<b>: Chennai</b>



## **‘Nel’ Jayaraman, Tamil Nadu agriculturalist who fought to save native paddy varieties, passes away**

Nel Jayaraman followed the footsteps of his late mentor Nammalvar and worked tirelessly to promote the cause of preserving native paddy seeds.



Published: 06th December 2018 09:12 AM | Last Updated: 07th December 2018 11:03 AM  
| A+A A-



His popularity as a seed conservation man is what earned him the nick name – Nel Jayaraman, (Nel means Paddy seed in Tamil). (Photo | Twitter)

By [T Muruganandham](#)  
Express News Service

CHENNAI: 'Nel' Jayaraman, state coordinator of [Save Our Rice Campaign](#) who strove hard for conservation of native paddy varieties for many years, passed away at a private hospital here on Thursday. He was fighting cancer for the past couple of years and recently admitted in a private hospital in Chennai. The end came at 5.20 am. He was 52 and is survived by his wife and a son.



It will not be an exaggeration to say that Jayaraman had sacrificed his life protecting native paddy varieties for the future generations. Born in a poor agricultural family in Kattimedu village in Thiruvavarur district, Jayaraman had studied only upto Class 9 and worked as a labourer in Thiruthuraipoondi.

When he took part in the month-long awareness campaign on 'poisonless food', organised by his mentor, late Nammazhvar in 2003, farmers in some villages gave seeds of seven native varieties of paddy. Nammazhvar handed over those seeds and asked Jayaraman to cultivate them and conserve the seeds. This was the main motivation for Jayaraman's search for native paddy varieties. His popularity as a seed conservation activist is what earned him the nickname – Nel Jayaraman, (Nel means Paddy seed in Tamil).

He was credited for redeemed 174 native varieties including Mappillai Samba, Rajamannar, Kavuni, Milagu Samba, Gundu Kar, Salem Samba, Sigappu Kuruvikar, Kallimadaiyaan, Samba Mochanam, Vadan Samba, Pichavaari, Navara and Neelan Samba. He has also established a research centre for native paddy varieties and organic farming at Adirangam village near Thiruthuraipoondi in Thiruvavarur district. This centre has been guiding the farmers who wish to return to organic farming. Through this, Jayaraman had inducted over 37,000 farmers into organic farming and increased paddy production.

In 2006, he launched Paddy Seed Festival and organised it in every May since then. Jayaraman would give two kg of seeds of native paddy varieties free of cost to each farmer with a condition that next year, at the same festival, the farmer should hand over four kgs of seeds to him so that the native variety seeds could be given to two more farmers.

In 2011, he received the State Award for best organic farmer for his contribution to organic farming and in 2015, he received the National Award for best Genome Savior. He was officiated as a Training Director of a consumer-based organization called CREATE in Tamilnadu, which is a major partner in the Save our Rice Campaign. He has written books including Mamarunthagum Parampariya Nel (traditional paddy which has medicinal values), Nellathikaram and Nellukiraiatha Neer.

After public homage in Chennai, the body of Jayaraman was taken to his native village Kattimedu where final rites for his mortal remains would take place on Friday.

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## Seed Saviours help preserve six Kerala rice varieties

Leneesh K, state coordinator-Kerala of the national Save our Rice Campaign (SoRC), was having sleepless nights, of late.



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Next year the SoRC will source the seeds from the farmers and return to the germplasm (File Photo| K K Sundar/EPS)

By [Rajesh Abraham](#)  
Express News Service

KOCHI: Leneesh K, state coordinator-Kerala of the national Save our Rice Campaign (SoRC), was having sleepless nights, of late. Six ethnic varieties of paddy from among the 180 indigenous rice varieties native to Kerala in SoRC's possession could not be harvested and considered lost due to the two-month delay in sowing following the last year's floods.

Then Leneesh dialled up farmers in the 'Seed Saviours Network' who may have the seeds. "We conduct the seed festival every year. We maintain a directory of farmers who buy or sell seeds. When we found out that some varieties have been 'lost', we contacted the farmers at various places. Luckily they had the seeds. It was a big relief," he told 'Express'.



“Next year the SoRC will source the seeds from the farmers and return to the germplasm,” said Leneesh. For preserving rare and ethnic varieties of rice, the SoRC cultivates them through the rice diversity blocks (RDB) or on farm cultivation, which in this instance, is a ‘germplasm’.

SoRC had in its possession a total of 336 seeds, of which 180 rice varieties were from Kerala and 156 from other states and some from Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal and Myanmar. “We were not worried about the rice seeds lost from other states, as we could procure and preserve them again,” he said.

Initially, Leneesh said he thought over 70 varieties of rice, native to Kerala, were lost. But in the final analysis, it was found that six varieties are missing. These are ‘karimala’ (mostly cultivated in Kannur), ‘kazhama’ (Kannur), ‘palliyaral’ (Kannur and Kozhikode), ‘ovuvattanmar’ - red ovuvattan and black ovuvattan (Kannur), ‘anamodan’ (Malappuram) and ‘echiladan’ (Kozhikode). He said every year a segment of farmers and collectives cultivate these rare varieties, after they collect the seeds from the seed varieties.

What is required is to find a market for these varieties by selling their unique features such as taste and nutritional elements. “Karimala is very hard and is difficult to digest, and hence farmers are reluctant to cultivate this variety due to lack of demand. Anamodan and echiladan have to be done via upland cultivation. Only some tribals have been doing this. Most of the places of upland cultivation have been converted to rubber or cashew plantations,” said Leneesh.

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## Nel Jayaraman, who preserved traditional paddies, is no more

[B. Kolappan](#)

CHENNAI, December 06, 2018 THE HINDU CHENNAI



Nel Jayaraman. | Photo Credit: [Special Arrangement](#)

Nel Jayaraman, farmer and consumer activist, who dedicated his life for collecting, reviving and preserving traditional paddy varieties, died in a private hospital on Thursday after a long battle with cancer. He was so popular that the word Nel (paddy) became part of his name.

Adirangam, his native in Tiruvarur district is a famous vaishnavite pilgrimage centre. In recent times it turned into a hub of paddy festival visited by a lot of farmers every year. He practised organic farming.



Jayaraman, closely associated with CREATE, a consumer organisation, organised paddy festival since 2005 and distributed 2 kg of traditional paddy seeds to farmers and they had to return 4 kg after harvest.

“His enthusiasm earned the goodwill of an NRI from his village and he donated nine acres land for crop cultivation and for organising training programmes,” said S. Ranganathan, general secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Association.

Mr. Ranganathan said traditional paddies would grow very tall and the haystack was used to cover the roof of huts as they had the capacity to arrest leak during rainy season.

Jayaraman, who coordinated “Save Our Rice” campaign, began with distribution of 15 paddy varieties and increased to 64 varieties. He was able to collect seeds of over 170 paddy varieties and also organised training programme for cultivating them.

Though Cauvery Delta region is known as the rice bowl of [Tamil Nadu](#), natural calamities wrecked a havoc year after year. Encouraged by later natural agronomist Nammalvar, he collected information about the diversity of traditional paddy in coastal areas as they have potential to withstand climate variations.

According to his website, some of the important varieties he maintained were Kattuyanam (best suited for flood condition), Poongkar (suited for saline soil), Karunguruvai (best for making biriyani), Kuzhiyadichan (for alkaline soil), Kudavaalai, Gauvuni, Mappillai Samba (for high energy), Samba Mosanam (best suited for making flat rice), Arupatham Kuruvai (short duration variety (60 days). The website also gives details about traditional varieties, their special characters and land suitable for their cultivation.

All the varieties can be easily cultivated under the SRI (System of Rice Intensification) method.

He received the best organic farmer award of Tamil Nadu government in 2011 and invited to the International Rice Research Institute, Philippines.

After he was diagnosed with cancer, actor Sivakartheeyan admitted him in a private hospital and agreed to take care of the educational expense of his son. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami visited him in the hospital and offered 5 lakh.

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Obituary

## **Remembering Nel Jayaraman: Tamil Nadu's visionary agriculturalist**

The 54-year-old, who had revived over 170 native varieties of paddy, had been battling cancer for the last two years.

- [Anjana Shekar](#)
- Thursday, December 06, 2018 THE NEWS MINUTES

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Facebook/ Nel Jayaraman



Early on Thursday morning came the sad news of the passing away of Nel Jayaraman, an important farmer's crusader from Tamil Nadu and state coordinator of the Save our Rice Campaign. The 54-year-old visionary, who had been battling cancer for the last two years, passed away at a private hospital in Chennai.



Nel Jayaraman, who hails from Adhirangam village in Tamil Nadu's Thiruvavur district, began showing interest in cultivating, preserving and promoting native varieties of paddy from a very young age. According to a report in [The Hindu](#), in 2004 he distributed 2 kg of traditional paddy to over 300 farmers and thus began a formidable movement in organic farming. In 2005 and 2006, Jayaraman organised small meetings where he distributed organically grown native paddy seeds, a product of many years of experimenting, to farmers.

But Jayaraman rose from very a humble background. Coming from a family of agriculturalists, he could not complete high school and instead started working in his farm.

Later he joined the Federation of Consumer Organisations Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (FEDCOT) as director of agriculture. Having gained the friendship of Ponnambalam, Managing Trustee of Consumer Research, Education, Action, Training and Empowerment (CREATE), he joined CREATE.

“We attended a seminar in Kumbalangi in 2004, organised by Thanal, an environmental awareness NGO, and that was the beginning of change,” recalls Ponnambalam, whose relationship with Jayaraman dates back to over 20 years.

Jayaraman's role in Save Our Rice Campaign, which was launched in 2004, was unparalleled, says Usha Soolapani, National Coordinator of the Campaign. “He was the pillar of this campaign and inspired many farmers, youth and NGOs to go into organic farming. He was a great leader and a very good friend,” she says.





Usha recalls that in just two months after Jayaraman was diagnosed with cancer in 2016, instead of bowing down to the disease he sprung back into action to organise the Nel Tiruvizha that year. “This was within two months after he got diagnosed. I remember many of us had asked him not to go through the trouble of organising the tiruvizha that year given his health. He wouldn’t listen. Such was his enthusiasm,” she shares.

Nel Tiruvizha is an annual affair in Tamil Nadu that takes place during the last week of May. From accounts shared by people, we learn that Jayaraman did not give up even when his health took a turn for the worse. “The two years after he was diagnosed, 2017 and 2018, too he helped organising the tiruvizha. He refused to slow down,” shares Usha.

Sridhar Radhakrishnan from Thanal, agrees with Usha. “Even when we visited him during the last few months, he would talk only about farming and how it was important to share our knowledge. He made us shoot a video of him from the hospital, talking to his followers not about his pain but about farming. Such was his passion,” he shares.

The Nel Tiruvizhas that were organised by Jayaraman, the first of which was officially kicked off in 2007, was pivotal to what organic farming has become today. “He had a huge following and about 50,000 to 60,000 farmers have benefitted from his efforts,” says Sridhar.

“Thousands would visit the festival and would go back and follow, almost religiously, what they’d been told. He was able to revive native paddy varieties, giving them a new lease in life. What he has done will be remembered for years to come,” says Kavitha Kuruganti, Convenor of Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA).

Jayaraman revived over 170 native varieties of paddy, some of which are Kattu Kuthalam, Kadaikazhuthan, Seeraga Samba, Sivappu kuruvikar, Velchi and Mattaikkar.

Sharing a personal anecdote, Sridhar says, “Once when we did not have enough money to organise the festival, he had given us Rs 75,000. We came to know only a year later that he had pledged his wife’s jewellery, after which we raised some money to help clear his debts. He was very selfless and dedicated to his mission.”

This perhaps explains the overwhelming support he received from his followers during the past couple of years for his treatment, says Kavitha. “As soon as he was diagnosed, the doctors had given him two weeks’ time before starting immunotherapy. When we made an appeal, Tamilians from across the globe contributed. It was an extremely positive response. He had that kind of effect on people,” she says.

While campaigns have been organised to collect money for his treatment, the Tamil Nadu Government, in November this year finally announced an aid of Rs 15 lakh for him.

Kavitha, however, observes that people’s support and love had given him a new lease of life these past two years. “In September 2017, I remember, we had the All India Kisan Mukti Yatra. This was when his health was deteriorating but no one could dissuade him from active



participation. He was energised and went ahead to organise it in Tamil Nadu. His enthusiasm was not dampened even when the disease was taking over,” she recalls.

Nel Jayaraman was a true follower of his guru Dr G Nammalvar. “Jayaraman was one of Dr Nammalvar’s ardent and best followers. It was in his footsteps that Jayaraman followed,” says Sridhar. It was not just his relationship with Dr Nammalvar that made him what he is today but Jayaraman had a distinct charm of being able to connect with people. “He had a wonderful knack of connecting with people. He not just helped them with seeds and techniques, but he meticulously followed up with them. He was a very grounded person,” says Sridhar.

“He would never say ‘no’ and had the tendency to help anyone who came to him for help. He came from a very modest background but his dedication was incomparable. Not everyone can be humble like him,” observes Usha.

In 2011, Jayaraman received the State Award for best organic farmer and in 2015, he received the National Award for best Genome Savior. But Jayaraman’s contribution has not been recognised enough, claims Kavitha.

“His loss will be irreparable. The kind of interest he was able to instil among delta farmers for paddy was unparalleled. There has been nothing like this in the rest of the country,” she adds.

But ever since the news of his demise spread, the question on everyone’s mind is – “Why him?”

“Just a few months back, we were invited to an event in Madurai organised by The Hindu and CREATE. Jayaraman was not sure if he’d make it but I was quite surprised to see him there. All through the meeting, he’d take breaks to lie down outside. When I asked why he was putting himself through so much pain, he said it was important that he attend and share his knowledge. That was the last public event he attended,” says Sridhar.

According to a [report](#), Nel Jayaraman’s mortal remains will be kept at Rathna Nagar 23/2, Second Street, Teynampet, Chennai for offering homage till 3.00 pm today, after which it will be taken to his hometown.

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## Tribute: ‘Nel’ Jayaraman, The Crusader Who Revived 170+ Native Paddy Varieties!

**A native of Adirangam village in the Tiruvarur district, Jayaraman was a class 8 dropout who began his work as a conservationist in 2004.**

by [Lekshmi Priya S](#) December 6, 2018, 5:22 pm

**I**n the early hours of Thursday, India lost KR Jayaraman, one of the country’s foremost traditional seed conservationists, to cancer.

Jayaraman’s lifelong crusade to protect native paddy varieties is so legendary that he came to be widely known as ‘Nel’ Jayaraman—*Nel* means paddy in Tamil.

A native of Adirangam village in the Tiruvarur district, Jayaraman was a class 8 dropout who began his work as a conservationist in 2004. He was following the footsteps of his mentor, G Nammalvar, who had died promoting the need of preserving native paddy seeds. At that point, he had only managed to collect 15 varieties of seeds.

**He then cultivated these in his own village, with the intention of distributing the grains to farmers nearby.**



Nel Jayaraman. Source: [Facebook](#).



This dream came to fruition when he organised *Nel Vizha*, a one-of-its-kind paddy seed festival in 2006 and distributed approximately 2 kgs of native seeds to farmers across the state at no charge.

For the next decade, he went on to revive close to 174 indigenous paddy varieties that were thought to be lost forever. Some of which include *Mappillai Samba*, *Rajamannar*, *Kavuni*, *Milagu Samba*, *Gundu Kar*, *Salem Samba*, *Sigappu Kuruvikar*, *Kallimadaiyaan*, *Samba Mochanam*, *Vadan Samba*, *Pichavaari*, *Navara* and *Neelan Samba*.

While preserving these varieties was one of his primary goals, Jayaraman also worked relentlessly towards popularising them amongst local farmers, besides vociferously advocating organic agricultural practices for increased paddy production.

It is also believed that he personally inducted close to 40,000 farmers into organic farming as well as seed conservation.

Jayaraman took his cause to the literary sphere as well. He authored several books that reiterated the need to protect native paddy varieties, In fact, many of his books—Mamarunthagum Parampariya Nel, Nellathikaram and Nellukiraitha Neer to name a few—are widely renowned.

**In recognition of his exemplary efforts, Jayaraman was bestowed with the ‘Best Organic Farmer’ award by the state government, two years in a row (2012 and 2013).**



Source: [Facebook](#).

Two years later, he won the ‘Best Genome Saviour’ award instituted by the National Innovation Foundation (NIF), which was conferred to him by the President of India.



Officiating as one of the training directors of CREATE, a consumer-based organisation in Tamil Nadu, he had essayed a crucial role in furthering the famous 'Save our Rice Campaign' across the state.

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**You may also like:** [Exclusive: How Can You 'Paint' with Paddy? Let India's Sole Paddy Artist Show You!](#)

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Sadly, he was diagnosed with malignant melanoma earlier this year, and despite undergoing intensive treatment at a private hospital in Chennai, he lost the battle and breathed his last today morning.

In recognition of the unparalleled legacy that Nel Jayaraman has left behind, we pay our respects to the selfless conservationist. We also hope that his tireless efforts in reviving lost paddy varieties will inspire farmers and agriculturists, for generations to come.

*(Edited by Gayatri Mishra)*

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