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<http://www.kcsmw.org>

Monthly Newsletter – September/October 2009

From the Editorial Team:

After the successful Onam Mela-Utsav 2009 event, the KCS entertainment team is gearing up for the Christmas gala, Jingle Bells 2009, to be held on December 12th at the High Point High School, MD. This is a great opportunity for talented community members, especially the youngsters and children, to step into the limelight. The team is ready to welcome you with open arms and weave you into their program — see their announcement below.

The 2009 Onam provided an auspicious occasion for KCS to celebrate its 25th year of service to the community in the greater Washington D.C. area. KCS members, organizing teams, and the community at large rose up to the challenge with wide participation and an all-day event featuring a variety of cultural delights—pookalams, payasa pachaka malsarm, pullikkali, and Atha Chamayam, capped off with a spectacular entertainment program. The souvneer publication Vartha was released to commemorate the occasion. A hearty Thank You to all the participants and volunteers, and especially the entertainment team, for putting on a flawless program.

We note that our sister organization—Kairali of Baltimore—is celebrating their 25th anniversary as well this year. Our congratulations to them on reaching this milestone.

The youth wing of KCS organized a blood drive on September the 26th at East West Community Center, Silver spring, Maryland.

KCS held its annual picnic on October 3rd at the Wheaton Regional Park in Maryland. Apprehensions about the weather, which may have kept the attendance on the lower side, turned out to be misplaced as beautiful fall weather prevailed throughout the day. Besides the sprint, tug-of-war, and Kabbadi competitions, there were novelties such as otherwise sane adults getting splattered with gooey albumin and yolk in the egg catching competition.

A special word of thanks to our sponsors who have supported us throughout the year with generous contributions for the Sreeniyan 20-20 show, the Onam mela, and the Vartha magazine.

As always, we welcome your comments and input to improve the Masika.

Your editorial team

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Blood Drive
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From the President:

Fall is here with a great variety of colors all around us. The days are getting shorter and the nights forever long. Be it rain or shine, spring, summer, fall, or winter, KCSMW have been working to give you at the least a day to remember for each season.

On the 29th of August, the Washington DC, Baltimore, Virginia region experienced Onam as it is celebrated in Kerala. The Onam Mela was a grand success with over 200 participants, the first-ever Athachamayam, the ever so delicious OnaSadya, the mesmerizing and multicolored entertainment programs, and the thought provoking visual treat – Saakshi (drama). The all-day event was fun filled and definitely one to remember for the years to come.

What is more gratifying than the knowledge that you saved a life? KCSMW provided an opportunity for just that, to save a life by donating blood. There are no words to show my appreciation towards our youth for organizing the blood drive in September. They joined hands with the American Red Cross and coordinated the blood drive by educating our community on the importance of donating blood. After all, the saying is that a pint of blood costs more than a gallon of gold.

The forecast called for a cold, rainy day but to our favor, the clouds gave way to a sunny day on the 3rd of October for the KCSMW Annual Picnic. There was food, fun, games, chit-chats, competitions, and more fun. The Wheaton Regional Park was a great place for the kids (of all ages). It was amazing how the parents enjoyed the games and fun just as much or more than their kids. By letting themselves become a kid, they were able to bond better with their young ones.

Saturday, the 12th of December will showcase yet another fun-filled mesmerizing and multicolored entertainment along with the dinner and DJ. Make sure you don't miss a minute of Jingle Bells 2009 presented to you by the most energetic teams of this year on stage.

Please feel free to contact any of our entertainment team members or myself if you would like to be a part of Jingle Bells 2009.

Enjoying the vibrant colors of nature,

Teji Manalel
President, KCSMW

A Glimpse of the Dragon Land

Going to China was extremely entertaining. Some of the highlights of the trip were going to the Great Wall, visiting the Forbidden City, walking along city streets, and visiting the Silk Market.

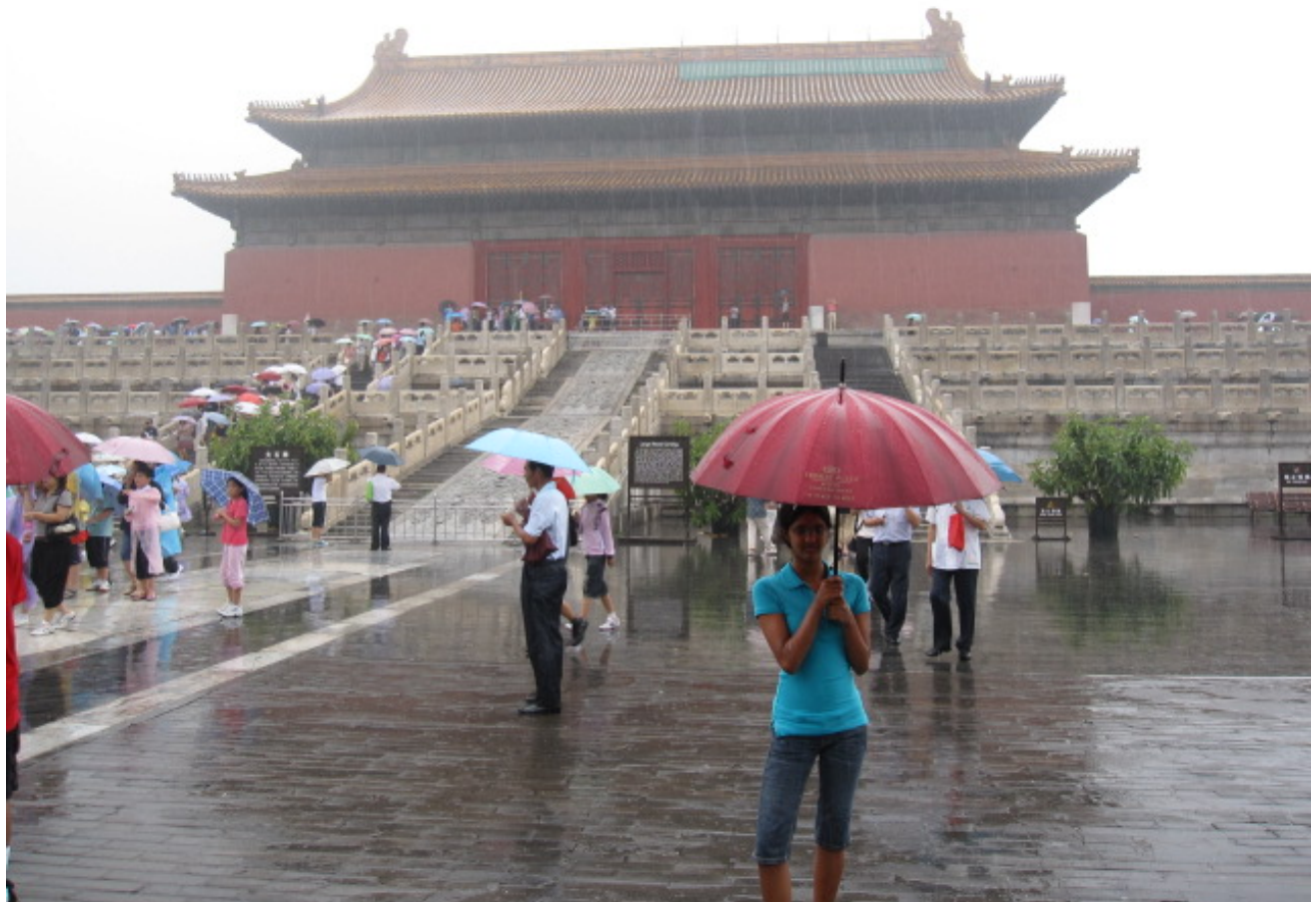
The Great Wall of China, in fact, was most definitely *not* great. Magnificent, colossal, and extravagant come into mind instead. The Wall is huge—and long, stretching nearly 4,000 miles. We went to the Badaling section near Beijing. The place was extremely crowded, and the tourists switch from pushing you toward the entrance of the Wall, to (once you get near enough to it) pushing away from it. Once you actually get on top of the Great Wall, before you can appreciate the beauty of it all, first you must walk. A lot. However, there are a lot of the strangers who are walking along side you to keep you occupied. For example, as we neared the top of the stairs, a Chinese lady and her son came up to me, waving a camera, saying, “Oh, picture, picture?”. Thinking that she wanted me to take a picture of her and her son, I smiled and nodded, reaching for her camera. But instead of giving me the camera, she held it up, while her son moved forward to stand next to me. It took me a second to realize that she wanted to take a picture of *me* with her son! Although I was in complete shock, I composed myself long enough to take the picture, and to hear them say thank you. Then I broke down laughing.



A View from the Great Wall of China

Fun Fact: Brown is not a common color in China. Ever planning to go there yourself? Beware of stares; they are unavoidable. Once we reached the top, I managed to calm down long enough to look around. The place was amazing. You could see so far, and it was all trees, distant mountains and the sky with the wall stretching into the horizon. It was definitely worth the climb.

Ever heard of the Forbidden City? If you haven't, the Forbidden City is a palace, located in the middle of Beijing, and was the home for the Emperor and his household for almost five centuries. It contains thousands of rooms and large court yards, and expands over 7,800,000 square feet. This famous palace was another stop during our tour. It also happened to be the one and only time it rained during our visit. We walked around the entire Forbidden City, seeing the king's bedroom, courtroom, wives rooms, and closet, and once we got out, about 10 minutes later it stops raining! The only plus side of the rain in my opinion was that it cleared up the pollution in the sky, causing me to see the blue sky for the first time in China.



Forbidden City Courtyard



The Beijing Olympics resulted in the construction of many new sports stadiums, including the famous Birds Nest where the opening ceremony was held and the water cube swimming pool. Once the Olympics were over, the buildings were turned into tourist attractions!

Aside from the tours and famous places to visit, I took many walks up and down the streets in China. The best place to walk near our hotel was the Wangfujing Street. As you walk down the sidewalk, you eventually come to a place where cars are not allowed, so people just walk down the middle of the street. On either side of the road there are shops to go to, and there is a department store building (full of designer stores), and two other malls. The newest one, the APM mall, is nothing like what you see at home. Its 8 stories, and is filled with food and clothing stores. If you were to stand in the middle of the 1st floor, and look left and right, you would see escalators one on top of the other! I have been more jealous in my life. To top of the wondrous street, if you go there at night, poof! Night market stalls have appeared! They sell anything and everything. There's snake, scorpions, sheep intestines, squid, etc., all served kabob style. In another street, there are all kinds of fruits, also kabob style, glazed with sugar.

We visited a jade factory and learned about how jade was sculpted to make beautiful works of art, how to distinguish between real jade and fake jade (jade, when tapped, emits a high pitched ring, while glass isn't that high, and plastic makes no ring), and we even got to see craftsmen actually work on jade to make the final creation. My father bought me a jade locket, with matching earrings (oooo, aaaaa!).

In Hou Hai, a shopping area with lakes, parks and walkways, we came across a shop selling sarees and Indian jewelry, complete with posters of Priti Zinta and Bipasha Basu. Lotus flowers floated around the edges of the lakes and ponds. Among other Beijing sights that reminded me of India, as we were walking, men kept approaching us asking if we would like to go on a tour of Hutongs (old alleyways) in cycle rickshaws. In a park near the Temple of Heaven (a breathtaking pagoda-style round building which served as King's sacrificial altar) we saw people line dancing to the tune of blaring music from *Mohabbatein*.

The highlight of the trip, in my opinion, was going to the Silk market. 5 stories of stalls set up with jackets, jeans, belts, purses, necklaces, earrings, hair clips, and more? It would have been my dream spot if not for the people running each stall. If you get interested in one item, don't expect to be able to leave until you buy it. They grab you by the wrists and keep you in the shop. The prices for everything are so ridiculously high. Bargain for the price, and it will come down to almost 10x cheaper.

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Kerala Cultural Society of Metropolitan Washington

www.kcsmw.org



Carol Singing Competition

Christmas Tree Decoration Competition

Variety Entertainment

Food, Fun and DJ



Saturday, December 12, 2009
High Point High School
3601 Powder Mill Rd.
Beltsville, MD 20705

3:30 PM General Body Meeting
4:00 PM Jingle Bells
7:30 PM Banquet



Contact

Teji Manalel	240-997-6874
Priti Raman	443-742-1447
Babu George	410-961-9528
Anil Nair	443-822-4828
Gopakumar Nair	703-585-1306
K. N. Swaminathan	301-352-0056
Beena Tomy	301-515-5190
Suresh Raj	301-706-5744



For details visit: www.kcsmw.org



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Onam Mela Pictures



Blood Drive Pics



Picnic Pictures





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The Kerala Cultural Society of Metropolitan Washington, Inc.

Mailing Address:
14032 Crest Hill Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20905

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I/We wish to enroll as: (please select one of the following)

Regular Lifetime Family Member(s)

Regular Annual Family Member(s)

Regular Annual Individual Member

of the Kerala Cultural society of Metropolitan Washington, Inc.

Pertinent information is provided below:

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone #s Home: _____ Fax number: _____

Office: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Name of Children (if applicable) (Optional)	Age	Date of Birth
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Membership fee paid: Yes No (please check applicable box here and below)

Regular Lifetime Family Member(s)\$200

Regular Annual Family Member(s)\$25

Regular Annual Individual Member\$15

Signature: _____

Date: _____