

ആമുഖം

പുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ ആമുഖം ഇവിടെ.

## My First Post

Life becomes hard nowadays, sitting home nothing to do makes me read more. I usually goes for novels. But this time I decided to closely follow the reports and articles of top stories in news papers. Within a day or two, what I understood was, if these people start writing fiction, then the lead writers of today have to look for something else. The interviews of important personalities are now live fed by channels. But we will be reading a totally different story of what we saw and heard the last day. For those who cry about the dryness in Malayalam literature, here is the answer. People with good level of imagination is now with media. (July 05, 2007)

## Politics in campus: the need of time

I have read a lot, seen a lot and heard a lot about campus politics. When thinking with the open mind of student who is bothered about the situation of the country today, i have a small comment on the campus politics.

I just completed my professional course from one of the most criticized campuses of today in the name of campus politics. So i guess am eligible to propose a view on the fact. Banning politics in campus is just like banning internet for the thousands of websites with so called inappropriate content.

What am telling is, the most important part of the country's administration system is legislature. It is where the decisions are taken and new rules are made. Other pillars of democracy, namely executive, judiciary and media; does the job of implementing and cross checking the decisions made by legislature. So by banning the politics in campuses what todays society aims at? Creating a uneducated legislature, so that it acts as a spoon in the arms of the enemies of the state?

The main problem authority rises about the campus politics is, violence in the process. The campus is mostly youngsters between 17 and 25, the hot and energetic period, in malayalam ചോര തിള്ളുന്ന രഹായം. It is the duty of society and authorities to control law and order situation. If students are able to think about parents when any problem comes, then they will never go to make any violence in campus. Also if somebody is going to make problems in campus, then he will make that irrespective of politics. It is the duty of society to provide good political basis, election mechanism and facilities. It is never the right solution to ban politics in campus just because the society and authorities fail to implement it in the right way.

Kept in anyway, campus politics acts as a direct impression of what happens in the original society. Is it because of that authorities opposes campus politics? I don't know. I can't express all I wanted. Please post your comments. Then I guess I will be able to open me up better. (July 15, 2007)

## മൊബൈലും വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയും

കുറച്ചു കാലത്തെ ഇടവേളക്കു ശേഷം കാലികർപസക്തമെന്നെനിക്ക് തോന്നിയ ഒരു വിഷയവുമായി,

ഈയടുത്തൊരു ദിവസം ടെലിവിഷനിൽ കണ്ടൊരു പരിപാടിയാണ് എന്നെക്കൊണ്ടിതെഴുതിക്കുന്നത്. വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയും മൊബൈലും ആയിരുന്നു ആ ചർച്ചയുടെ വിഷയം. ചർച്ചയിൽ പങ്കെടുത്ത മാർ ഇവാന്റിയോസ് കോളേജിലെ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളടക്കമുള്ള പലരുടെയും അഭിപ്രായം പുത്തൻ തലമുറ ഫോണുകൾ (വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്ക്) അനാവശ്യമാണെന്നായിരുന്നു. വൈദ്യുതി കനിയായെന്നു കാരണം പരിപാടി മുഴുവനും കാണാനായില്ല. അതുകൊണ്ട് ചർച്ച സംഗ്രഹിച്ചതെങ്ങനെ എന്നറിയാനായില്ല. എന്തായാലും കഴിഞ്ഞ നാലു വർഷം ഒരു രാഷ്ട്രീയപരമായ ബിരുദ വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയായിരുന്ന ഈ ഞാനും അനുഭവത്തിൽനിന്നു വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ ചിലത് പറയട്ടെ. ചർച്ചയിൽ പങ്കെടുത്ത പലരും ധരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതു പോലെ വിലകൂടിയ ഫോണുകളും അത്യന്താധുനിക സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയും ര്സാർസ് സിംബലല്ല മറിച്ച് ലോകം കൈവെള്ളയിലൊതുക്കാനുള്ള സങ്കേതങ്ങളാണ്. ചർച്ചയിൽ പങ്കെടുത്ത അത്യന്തം പഠനത്തൽപ്പരരായ സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ മാർത്തമല്ല ക്യാമ്പസുകളിലുള്ളത്. മറിച്ച് ഒരു ഭൂരിഭാഗം (പഠനത്തോടൊപ്പം) ജീവിതം ആസ്വദിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നവരാണ്. ചിരിക്കുകയും കളിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന മനുഷ്യജീവികൾ. അവർക്ക് ജീവിതത്തിലെ അനശ്വര മുഹൂർത്തങ്ങൾ പകർത്താൻ ക്യാമറയും, സംഗീതം ആസ്വദിക്കാൻ മ്യൂസിക് പ്ലെയറും, ഇൻറർനെറ്റ്‌മായി ബന്ധപ്പെടാൻ മോഡവും, സർവ്വോപരി ഫോണും, എല്ലാം ആയി ര്പവർത്തിക്കാൻ ഈ വിലയ്ക്ക്, ഈ വല്ലപ്പത്തിൽ ഒരുപകരണം വേറെയുണ്ടോ? ഈ ലളിതമായ സമസ്യക്ക് എന്തിനൊരുത്തരും തരിക. ര്സാർസിനു വേണ്ടി ഇത്തരം ഫോണുകൾ കൊണ്ടു നടക്കുന്നവർ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ ഇടയിൽ ന്യൂനപക്ഷമാണ്.

മൊബൈലിൽനിന്നു ദുരുപയോഗം തടയാൻ ഹോർസലുകൾ നടപടികൾ വല്ലതും സ്വീകരിക്കാറുണ്ടോ എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിന് അഭിമാനത്തോടെ ഒരു വിദ്യാർത്ഥിനി പറഞ്ഞ ഉത്തരം എന്നെ അക്ഷരാർത്ഥത്തിൽ ഞെട്ടിച്ചു കളഞ്ഞു. ഹോർസലിൽ മൊബൈൽ കൈവശം വയ്ക്കാൻ വാർഡൻ അനുവദിക്കാറില്ലത്രേ. അർത് നിർബന്ധമുള്ളവർക്ക് വാർഡൻറെ കൈയ്യിലേൽപ്പിക്കാം. ഫോൺ വരുമ്പോൾ വാർഡൻറെ മുമ്പിൽ വച്ചു സംസാരിച്ചിട്ട് തിരിച്ചു കൊടുക്കണം. ഇങ്ങനെ മൊബൈലുപയോഗിക്കുന്ന സുഹൃത്തിനും കൂട്ടുകാർക്കും പുത്തൻ തലമുറയെന്നല്ല, മൊബൈൽ തന്നെ ആവശ്യമില്ല. അവർക്കൊക്കെ അത് കരങ്ങാർത്തനെ കൈയ്യിലുള്ള പൂമാലയാണ്. സാധാരണ മനുഷ്യരായി ജീവിക്കുകയും അവരെപ്പോലെ ചിന്തിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരുപാടു വിദ്യാർത്ഥി സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുണ്ട് ഈ കൊച്ചു കേരളത്തിൽ. അവർക്ക് മൊബൈൽ ഒരത്യാവശ്യമാണ്. സംസാരിക്കാനും, പരസ്പരം (സ്നേഹ)സന്ദേശം കൈമാറാനും മാർത്തമല്ല, ജീവിതാഘോഷങ്ങളുടെ നേർകാഴ്ചകൾ സൂക്ഷിക്കാൻ, തന്നെ ര്തസിപ്പിച്ച ഈരടികൾ വീണ്ടും വീണ്ടും ആസ്വദിക്കാൻ, ഒരിക്കലും തീരാത്ത മായകാഴ്ചകൾക്കായി ഇൻറർനെറ്റ് പരതാൻ, അങ്ങനെ പലതിനും, നേരം കൊല്ലികളായ കളികളുടെ പേരിൽ മത്സരം സംഘടിപ്പിക്കാനും, സോഫ്റ്റ് വെയറിൽനിന്നു ഉള്ളുകളികളിലേക്കിറങ്ങിച്ചെന്ന് തിരുത്താനും പോലും. അവർക്ക് മൊബൈൽ ഒഴിവാക്കാനാവാത്ത കൂട്ടാണ്. പഠിത്തം നന്നാക്കാനെന്ന പേരിൽ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ നേരെ നടക്കുന്ന ഇത്തരം ചെയ്തികൾക്കെതിരെ ആരും ര്പതികരിക്കാത്തതല്ല എന്നെ അത്ഭുതപ്പെടുത്തിയത്, വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ തന്നെ അതിനെ ന്യായീകരിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഞാൻ കണ്ടിടത്തോളം, മൊബൈൽ കാരണം മാർത്തം പഠിത്തം മോശമാവുന്ന ഒരു കുട്ടി പോലും ലോകത്തിലുണ്ടാവില്ല. പഠിക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്തവർക്ക്, മൊബൈലല്ലെങ്കിൽ മർഹാരു കാരണം കാണും.

പിന്നെ ദുരുപയോഗം, വ്യക്തവും, ശക്തവുമായ നിയമങ്ങളുണ്ടായിട്ടും മൊബൈൽ ദുരുപയോഗം ചെയ്യപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ, നമ്മുടെ നിയമവ്യവസ്ഥിതിയുടെ ര്പശ്ലമായാണ്

ഞാനത് കാണുന്നത്. ദുരൂപയോഗങ്ങൾ റിപ്പോർട്ട് ചെയ്യപ്പെടുകയും, നടപടികളും ശിക്ഷകളും ഉണ്ടാവുകയും ചെയ്താൽ ഒരു പരിധി വരെ ഇത്തരം ര്പശ്കങ്ങൾ കുറയ്ക്കാനാവും. സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യകൾ സരിച്ച് നമ്മുടെ നിയമവ്യവസ്ഥിതിയും ഭരണസംവിധാനങ്ങളും വളരാത്തതാണെന്നു തോന്നുന്നു ഇതിനുള്ള തടസ്സം. പീനെ പോലീസിനോടൊപ്പം നമുക്കെല്ലാവർക്കുമുള്ള മടിയും.

എറിയുന്നിയാവുന്നവർനെ കയ്യിൽ വടി കൊടുക്കരുതെന്നപോലെ, വിദ്യാർത്ഥിക്ക് മൊബൈൽ കൊടുക്കരുതെന്നു വാശി പിടിക്കുന്നവരോട്, വടി പിടിക്കാനെങ്കിലും പഠിച്ച ശേഷം എറിയുന്നവരെ നന്നാക്കുക. മൊബൈൽ ഉപയോഗത്തിൽ നിയർന്തണം വേണ്ടെന്നല്ല എർനെ അഭിർപായം, നിയർന്തണവും, നിരോധനവും ഫലത്തിൽ ഒന്നാവരുതെന്നാണ്. അതു ഗുണത്തേക്കാളേറെ ദോഷമേ ചെയ്യൂ. ഔചിത്യമില്ലാത്ത മൊബൈൽ ഉപയോഗം മാർതമേ നിയർന്തിക്കേണ്ടതുളളൂ എന്നാണെർനെ അഭിർപായം. (August 28, 2007)

## Asus eeepc 1005HA and Meego 1.0.1

I bought my eeepc in last December and since then i am using Ubuntu Netbook Remix(UMR) or Ubuntu Netbook Edition(UNE). It was working good and with some hacks i was able to use it to the best.

I don't use my netbook for much multimedia purposes(still i need to listen to a set of songs once in a while). I have a desktop from my institute and a another pc with a big screen TV connected to it for my multimedia choices. When i saw Meego coming out from maemo and moblin i was actually excited. There were many reason for excitement, one was of to see how they choose or combine the two legacies(maemo comes from so called debian side and moblin from fedora). Other was of happiness, since an os meant for mobile/smartphone computing will definitely be simple and faster.

Due to all excitement and my interest in OSes for netbooks based on Linux, i tried it out yesterday(yeah, i know its one and half months after 1.0 came out). To say the least, it was a very good system. Yeah there are a lot of drawbacks. But for a 1.0 release it appears pretty good.

The thing i hated most in the in these first 24 hrs is(whether you believe or not), it doesn't have g++. It is quite essential to compile somethings which doesn't come with the default system or in repository. Really speaking, i didn't care that i don't have multimedia capability, but g++ is essential for me.

As most of the other reviews say, interface is very good and the best for a netbook. I will go to the extent like, this is the best i have seen. Still there are issues with policy kit authentication(for my NTFS partition from windows installed by ASUS and ext4 of 10.04 UNE). Since the system or syslinux based bootloader doesn't support ext4, i had to recover the grub for ubuntu(which took some of my time).

Lack of office programs wont bother me much, but i didn quite understand the part of gadget(which allows you to add numerous plugin scripts the system). Poorly designed and quite out of focus. I use latex and beamer for my document and presentation purposes, so i was ok when ooffice was not there in Meego. But, when i get a ODF standard document, i don't really know what to do.

I noted another interesting aspect, the whole Meego claims to have Malayalam support and can input and render malayalam quite well(smc-fonts are missing, i am planning to put a repo in our savannah and later make sure meego uses smc-fonts and it comes default). Chromium has some issue when it comes to rendering Unicode 5.0(pre unicode 5.1 chilus, its not able to convert cons+virama+ zwj-> chillu). The interface renders it very well though. So, i think it has something to do with the chromium rendering modules(webkit i suppose, to be fair, chrome in windows doesn't show such tendencies).

Anyway, for serious netbook users and for future smartphones, systems based on meego and android are the future. I am all out to make sure, malayalam is working perfect and out of the box for meego(its easier for me and since its built especially for atom, i am one of the few who can test it).

I will setup a repository for smc fonts for meego in savannah. Next step is to make meego developers add smc-fonts in the repo. Another task is about verifying the rendering issue with chromium(which might take time, since i need to find chromium users in GNU.Linux).

For a first release, i should say, meego is very impressive. Yeah i know it doesn't have

multimedia capabilities(can't even play my MP3 files), still it gets a lot of marks for the interface. If they succeed in making the interface flawless, with a good sync with policy-kit to authenticate, i think meego can make a big leap with next release.

## 0.1 Comments

1. Ashik S: I can help with testing things on Chromium in fact Rajiv nair (mandooos) and me have it as our default browsers on our Ubuntu and Arch systems. Give us the test cases and we will run them and give you the results.
2. jinsbond007: hi,  
Thanks.So far i have only one problem with chromium. Reading Malayalam. I installed smc-fonts, Set the browser font to Meera and encoding to UTF8. But, it is having some issue with chillus formed by ZWJ. I am going home tomorrow, so not sure when will i be able to give the details but i will try my best  
The problem is only with the browser, all apps are gtk based(but, there is qt also under the hood though no apps are yet available). Since MeeGo is a combination of Moblin and maemo, i think it will have these kind of behaviour
3. : Hey can I copy and paste this post on my web site? What references must I give? You might give this info for other people too.
4. : The layout of the weblog is absolutely messed up when I look at it in Opera. Plz fix it.
5. Felicidad Heindl: I do enjoy the way you have framed this specific situation and it does indeed supply me some fodder for consideration. Nevertheless, through just what I have seen, I only hope when the comments stack on that people keep on issue and not start upon a tirade involving the news du jour. Yet, thank you for this excellent point and although I can not really concur with the idea in totality, I respect the standpoint.
6. yogabis: yogabis hello there and thank you for your information I have definitely picked up something new from right here. I did however expertise several technical issues using this website, as I experienced to reload the site lots of times previous to I c hello there and thank you for your information I have definitely picked up something new from right here. I did however expertise several technical issues using this website, as I experienced to reload the site lots of times previous to I could get

## Again on student politics, freedom of expression and interestingly my views about women

In facebook group of MESCE, there was an interesting discussion of an age old topic. A Fatima Ali(B Arch. Student at MES i guess) started it. She wanted our opinion on whether you like to be in a college like MES laden with strikes and gang wars and not much cultural activities as a result of it but authorities are questioned from time to time. Or in a college in Bangalore or somewhere, where none questions the authorities and in return they get to conduct some extravagant events and activities. As someone who values freedom over anything, my choice was obviously former stating there are better alternatives with better democratic atmosphere(with both inclusive and representative democracy).

About the kind of politics in college, i had written two long articles(here and here). The first one has a fierce discussion in the comment section. Then my experience in IIT gave me a new outlook for student politics and democracy in academic institutions. In any system, what i found was it all depended on leaders. None groomed the next generation or batch. If there was someone who is naturally capable and interested in taking the lead, the whole community benefits. Else the ones who represent the students simply gains something for themselves.

Anyway, that was not what was going to write here. In the whole discussion only a handful of people expressed their views. Interestingly(or as usual) the only lady in the whole discussion was Fatima. Later Karthika also joined it. When Fatima wrote a concluding note, i innocently asked, "fatima, interestingly, you were the only girl here, are you people afraid to express yourself or what?". I was actually interested to know whether all the ladies in the group(both alumni and current students of MES) are not interested or believe its up to them to express their views on politics. The result, i was accused of being "Male Chauvinist". I have been called many names during discussions in many forums. I have been part of internet and real world forums which discussed a variety of problems including plight of women. I do have a variety of friends from a various sections of society and it is the first time one of them is accusing me of being a male chauvinist

Anyway, am I a male chauvinist or not is not worth a discussion. Though to make my part clear, i should state that i have respect and belief in all ladies. As a matter of fact in many occasions i had to oppose the prejudiced remarks about them. Once I had an argument with my father about political awareness among female student population(later there was one about geographical awareness ). I was the one who defended the girls against his prejudiced, society imposed "ignorant female" thesis. So, it was natural for me to be curious to know whether there is any truth in the thesis put forward by my father(and majority of the society). A reply by Fatima does imply that they have their own opinions and they do think and try to understand situations(it seems they just don't like to put it up in public forums).

The cause of my father's thesis might be the society imposed restrictions on females to get into public discussions(when you are not part of discussions, you don't have opinions, its an age old method of suppression ). Then later, females themselves restricting themselves from being a part of messy discussions to avoid being tagged. I think Sreebala K. Menon once wrote about this in Mathrubhumi(society tagging females who take their own path in life or express their opinion on worldly issues). When you look around, females who (tried to) express their views and take a stand in issues were attacked more fiercely than their male colleagues. Just think about Arundhati Roy in recent Kashmir issue. There were 3 people in the dias, only her

remarks were taken up by Times Now. If you read her interviews in Thehelka (there are many on different issues) you will understand how good an intellectual is she and how much research and analysis is done by her before expressing her opinion on a matter (still we accuse her of reacting spontaneously to hot issues).

In case of MES, KBLH is a jail. Parents feel their children are safe in jail, where in fact they might be getting frustrated. If people are going to say we are happy in KBLH, I would suggest them to look up Stockholm Syndrome. When there is a strike in college, the entire female fraternity of the college is stripped of a chance of being part of it (they are in fact jailed). Most of them didn't get to see what happens or understand what's the point of the agitation. So it will be interesting to hear their point of view on the matter which was under discussion on that thread. On top I was interested to know whether the same atmosphere of tension which kept a large portion of females out of political discussions in campus was keeping them away from that thread. Now I understood that being curious about the opinions and inadequate representation and participation of females in a discussion is good enough ground to be tagged as a male chauvinist.

If as Fatima says a lot of females can express their views freely on her wall, why not they do that in the thread in MESCE group? Why not they pick up fights with us and enlighten us with their perspectives and visions? I do like to know these and that's not because I am a male chauvinist or sympathiser for the cause of female empowerment. But as someone who knows there is huge potential which is going to be wasted just because people are not confident enough or not ready to break some unwritten rules in the society. Social conventions are not forever, they are supposed to be rewritten after a period of time. I had actively written about my views on society. I dislike society for the restrictions it put on my thought and the prejudices it has against anybody and everybody. I learned to fight it, I like more people to fight that and overcome social inertia to make our system a dynamic one.

Here I rest my case!

## Evaluating FOSS Contributions

Counting FOSS contributions towards research grants actually threw open a new area of investigation as such I guess. Its about evaluation of novelty factor of contribution to FOSS project. As we know, in any field of research, evaluation metrics is a big area of investigation and people come up with new distances and measures every now and then(even we are in the middle of such an effort for OCR). Normally novelty factor is decided based on where the related paper is published, how good it is explored and how good is the theoretical foundation for the papers. The interesting thing is, many FOSS projects cite papers published(and some regularly publish papers) in main stream journals to get acknowledged for their novelty and to ensure the novelty of the algorithms they use. Many times authors note use in FOSS projects to report on real time usage, easier adaptation etc.(many plugins in GIMP are developments of European univ. PhDs, famous one is, a resynthesizer plugin). But the idea of evaluating the novelty factor solely considering the contribution to the project require a new metric to evaluate it too. The normal factors required to assert novelty is all present in a collaborative project very much in line with the normal lab, professor, conferences, peer reviews mechanism. The only difference and a crucial missing factor will a published(i would say inaccessible too, a paper costs 5-10 USD depending on the publisher, conference and journal) covering paper. Peer review of the technique, its implementation in real time projects and required documentations as part of the project documentation and various blog and log entries are available. Peer review of subject experts happen very well in discussions over IRC and mailing lists(most of which are archived). Different perspectives from theoretical foundations to practical implementation issues were discussed in a single go there(depends on the project too). But this varies from project to project. A project or a contribution which generates a bigger discussion and criticized and evaluated rigorously should get more points(very similar to classification of conferences and journals to A+,A,etc.). We can even have a FOSS project classification depending on how much discussions, scrutiny and perspectives are evaluated before new features are incorporated into the existing system. Also another thing we can draw parallel is the criterion used by conferences and journals for accepting a paper and the peer review system of the projects. These are some ideas got into my mind, when thought about a systematic evaluation metric for novelty in FOSS contribution. A metric and system like this will help to counter so many software patents too i guess. There is Special Interest Group of ACM for Computer Science Education. They have a special section on FOSS. I haven't seen the proceedings so don't know what all they discussed. But it will be good to check these formal forums and their proceedings to look for prior ideas on the subject. I don't have access to ACM libraries here. If we can put some time and thought into this, we can develop a draft and then may be start an open discussion too. This will help FOSS projects to avoid depending on non free published items for claiming the novelty factor due for them(since Santhosh is not interested in publishing, he is not recognized by anyone in academia of Indian Language Research though his works are very popular).

I think what ever i wrote was taking it apriori that acceptance of ideas to a project is enough for validation. My problem was how do we evaluate the novelty factor(we know there is novelty factor, but how to scale it). Then later on turning this novelty factor itself to rate the projects. Now projects interact with academia in a weird way, we should find a middle ground, where even academic contributions like submitting a paper to A+ journal is counted similar to adding the same algorithm with all its detail to a project with A+ novelty factor. People

might not accept it as such, and at first, there will be double contributions, but with enough campaigning and ensuring that the evaluation framework is strong enough and thus reliable, we can make some progress. It will also work as a counter measure to now monopolistic attitude of IEEE,ACM etc. in case of academic publishing. Only thing i worry about is the arguments against the review of documentation (like how implementation of something in one project will ensure its reimplementability in different scenario if the documentation is not aimed at that). Capability to reimplement and produce results for a different set of users for a different set of purposes should also carry weightage(like how much help does this implementation give on doing that). That usually doesn't come under the aims of project and they don't care, but the ones who are doing contribution and waiting for it to be counted towards their Degree or Salary should be aware and do it. Collaborative publishing can be very well used and example of wikipedia can support the claim. Acceptance by user community is a validation of novelty. But how the detail or contribution is accepted may not always be a measure of novelty (some contributions, very novel, might not trigger much response, some trivial ones might trigger huge response). So to evaluate novelty and the original contribution, there should be a mechanism which in turn projects can use to count or evaluate their innovativeness or novelty factor. This along with a must do documentation of the contribution in a collaborative peer reviewed wiki kind of system should ensure freedom of the knowledge generated out of the process. It is a matter of not just accepting FOSS to mainstream academic research, but more or less bringing back the idea of freedom to the academia. Should prepare a draft framework(i don't have much idea on how to prepare it). Then should try evaluating some recent contributions to some projects on basis of this framework(we can use SILPA as one of the sample projects). Then present this to the world as a method to count novelty in collaborative projects without using the normal way of stat of publication(all FOSS projects maintained by universities or research organizations cite their publications to show novelty).