

All set for a good cause-The New Indian Express

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Photos



Jacob Pulickan during one of his training sessions | Express

Did you know bathing with a normal day-to-day soap could make you cancer-prone? Did you know by eating a jackfruit, easily available in your courtyard, you are preventing cancer, AIDS and many such terminal diseases? Dr Jacob Pulickan, founder and leader of Kerala Swadeshi Movement, swears by these facts.

“It is time for a revival. We have started considering cancer a lifestyle. India aces in cancer and AIDS even when we have such beautiful climate and good habits. This has to change. By utilising easily available goods on our premises we could lead a healthy life,” says Jacob.

The Swadeshi Festival conducted by him and his society members at Gandhi Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram, has displayed handmade coconut-oil soaps to a plethora of jackfruit dishes. The festival is also giving training sessions and seminars to those who are interested in self-employment.

It has been 14 years since Jacob has started his Kerala Swadeshi Movement, a charitable society for unemployed people, especially women and children. Jacob, who has done his MA, MPhil and PhD in Gandhi Studies from New Delhi, came back to Kerala and became the Founder Coordinator of the Centre for Gandhian Studies of University of Kerala. During his nine years' stint at Kerala University, he found it hard to grab people's attention with social awareness seminars. Soon, he established Swadeshi Movement with the help of non-student youth and earned a name for himself in the field. Over the years, he and his team have trained about two lakh people from Kerala in jewel making, umbrella making, food processing, glass painting and many other self-employment methods.

K Jayakumari, a trainer at the Swadeshi, says the society has given her a new life. “I have a double MA. But I couldn't find a job until I stumbled upon Swadeshi movement. For me it was a resurrection

of sorts, as I was already paying my dues to the society by taking care of stray dogs. Swadeshi Movement has become a part of my life since then” .

The festival has more than 300 items on display, made with materials that are easily available from our surroundings. Products made with Kerala’s own specialties ‘bilimbi’, rose apple, nutmeg, cashew apple, ginger, red gooseberry, passion fruit, pineapple and mango, which are enriched with vitamins and proteins, are also available in this show. Natural soaps, cleaning lotions, washing soap, to Brahmi oil, you name it, everything you need for your health-quotient is available at Swadeshi.

Being a self-supporting endeavour, Swadeshi’s ultimate aim is to become a rural institute. Jacob is in the process of developing the idea into reality by giving the current projects a marketing boost.

The festival, which began on Monday, is open till April 13.