

**TERESIAN GREEN PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVE AT
MALAYATTOOR
YOUTH GREEN FESTIVAL INITIATIVE
CO-ORDINATORS -BMC MEMBERS**

It was in April 2017 that the **students of St Teresa's College, Ernakulum** under the guidance of Ernakulum **District Administration**, the **District Suchitwa Mission** and Pelican Foundation dreamt of implementing **Green Protocol** in religious festivals. Over 80 students from various departments of the college came forward to implement the Green Protocol at **Malayattoor** during the Pilgrim season associated with Easter. The initiative is being carried out this year as well with much less effort since procedure/ modalities and systems are set. This year 205 students participated in this programme. Bhoomithra Sena Club members co-ordinated this programme.

The motive behind this youth green movement is to **manage/ban plastic at a major pilgrimage site**. The focus is on **plastic water bottles** which the pilgrims bring along as they climb the hill. Every year tons of plastic waste are collected from the hill which causes grave problems to the environment especially during the rainy season which follows. The Teresian youth dream to be a part of the team that can bring a change to this anthropogenic exploitation of Mother Nature. Though currently the focus is on reduction of plastic bottles, it can be extended to cover various items in a festival with student watch groups encouraging bio degradable decorations, use of reusable (steel / ceramic) / biodegradable (banana leaf) plates and glasses in festival related food distribution, paper / cloth bags in lieu of plastic covers etc.

ACTION PLAN AT MALAYATTOOR

Before the advent of the Pilgrim season, the students from various departments were divided into groups. During the pilgrim season, students approach the pilgrims at the beginning of their ascent to the Malayattoor hill making them aware of the motive of the movement. This is followed by **students pasting labels on water bottles that the pilgrims carry** collecting ten rupees per bottle. This amount is refunded when the pilgrims return with their labeled bottles after their day at Malayattoor. Through this simple procedure we could reduce plastic waste at Malayattoor by about 50 percent in 2017. **Innovativeness of our initiative:**

- Idea of Zero-Waste Green Festival with the support of local educational institutions
- Exposure for students.
- Setting a role model for other educational institutions.
- Cost effectiveness and proper resource management.
- Involvement of Local Bodies, Self-Help Groups and subsequent empowerment.
- Utilization of social media for spreading awareness and management- easy co-ordination of student volunteers through use of WhatsApp
- Mainly co-ordinated and managed by students themselves with minimal guidance from faculty
- Easy to institutionalize repeat operations in successive years after first year's coordinated effort.
- Potential for enviro-cultural revolution

Keeping its potential in mind we hope that, through linking one institution to one festival, this project can be carried forward to all religious festivals in Kerala making them eco-friendly with the aid of local educational institutions and local stakeholders. The cost involves only cost of TA to students and a certificate from district administration.