PALLATTU BRAHMADATHAN

The Gentle Giant Who Walked into a Thousand Hearts

A Tribute to a Beloved Elephant



4 October 2026

In the 800th Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi

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When Two Farewells Met: St. Francis and Brahmadathan

A Remarkable Coincidence in the 800th Jubilee Year



On 4 October 2026, as the Franciscan family throughout the world celebrated the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the heavenly patron of animals and ecology, a heartbreaking tragedy unfolded in Kerala, India.

The year 2026 marked the 800th anniversary of the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi, his passage from earthly life to eternal life on the evening of 3 October 1226. The Church celebrates his feast annually on 4 October, honouring the saint whose extraordinary love embraced not only humanity but every creature of God's creation.

On that very feast day, Pallattu Brahmadathan, a majestic and beloved elephant who had captured the hearts of countless people, tragically lost his life after being struck by lightning during a thunderstorm.

There is something profoundly moving, almost poetic, about this remarkable coincidence.

Eight centuries earlier, St. Francis had departed from this world, leaving humanity an everlasting message of universal brotherhood, compassion, peace and reverence for all creation. Eight hundred years later, on the feast celebrating his memory, a gentle giant who had brought affection, happiness and unforgettable memories to so many people also departed from this earth.

For a Franciscan, this coincidence invites a deep and meaningful spiritual reflection.

St. Francis: The Saint Who Befriended the Wild

St. Francis of Assisi is universally remembered for his extraordinary tenderness towards animals and the natural world. Recognised by the Catholic Church as the patron saint of ecology, he is also widely venerated as the patron and protector of animals.

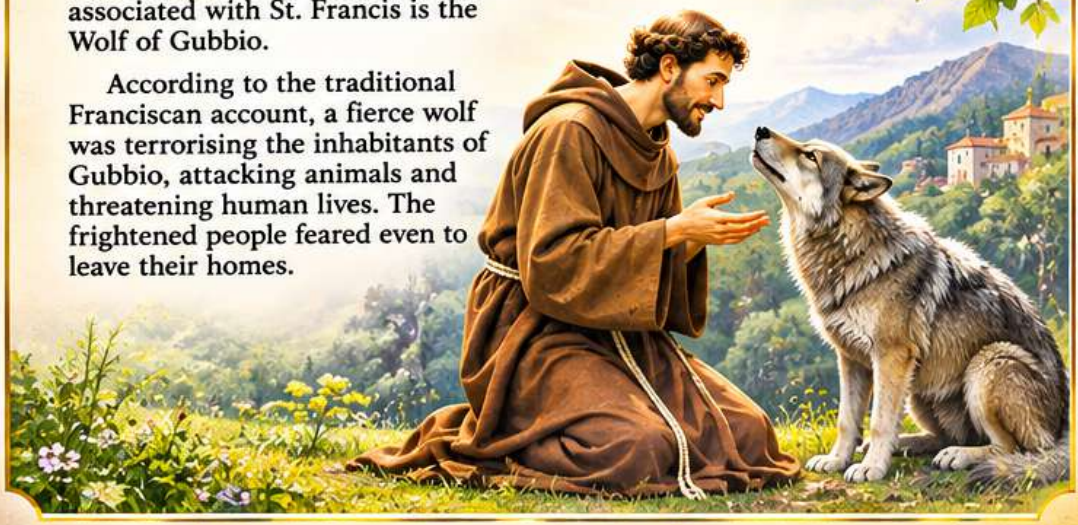
For Francis, animals were never merely creatures to be feared, exploited or possessed. They were his brothers and sisters, fellow members of God's great family of creation.

He affectionately called the birds his little sisters, spoke of Brother Wolf, and praised God through Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind and Sister Water. His heart was so deeply united with creation that even the wild creatures of the forests became, in the stories of his life, companions in his journey of love.

One of the most beautiful stories associated with St. Francis is the Wolf of Gubbio.

According to the traditional Franciscan account, a fierce wolf was terrorising the inhabitants of Gubbio, attacking animals and threatening human lives. The frightened people feared even to leave their homes.





While others saw only a dangerous beast, Francis approached the wolf with courage, gentleness and compassion. He addressed it as Brother Wolf and invited it to live peacefully with the people.

The story tells us that the wolf became calm in his presence and responded to his invitation. Francis then persuaded the townspeople to provide food for the animal, while the wolf would cease attacking them.

The creature once feared as a dangerous enemy became, in the Franciscan tradition, a peaceful companion of the town.

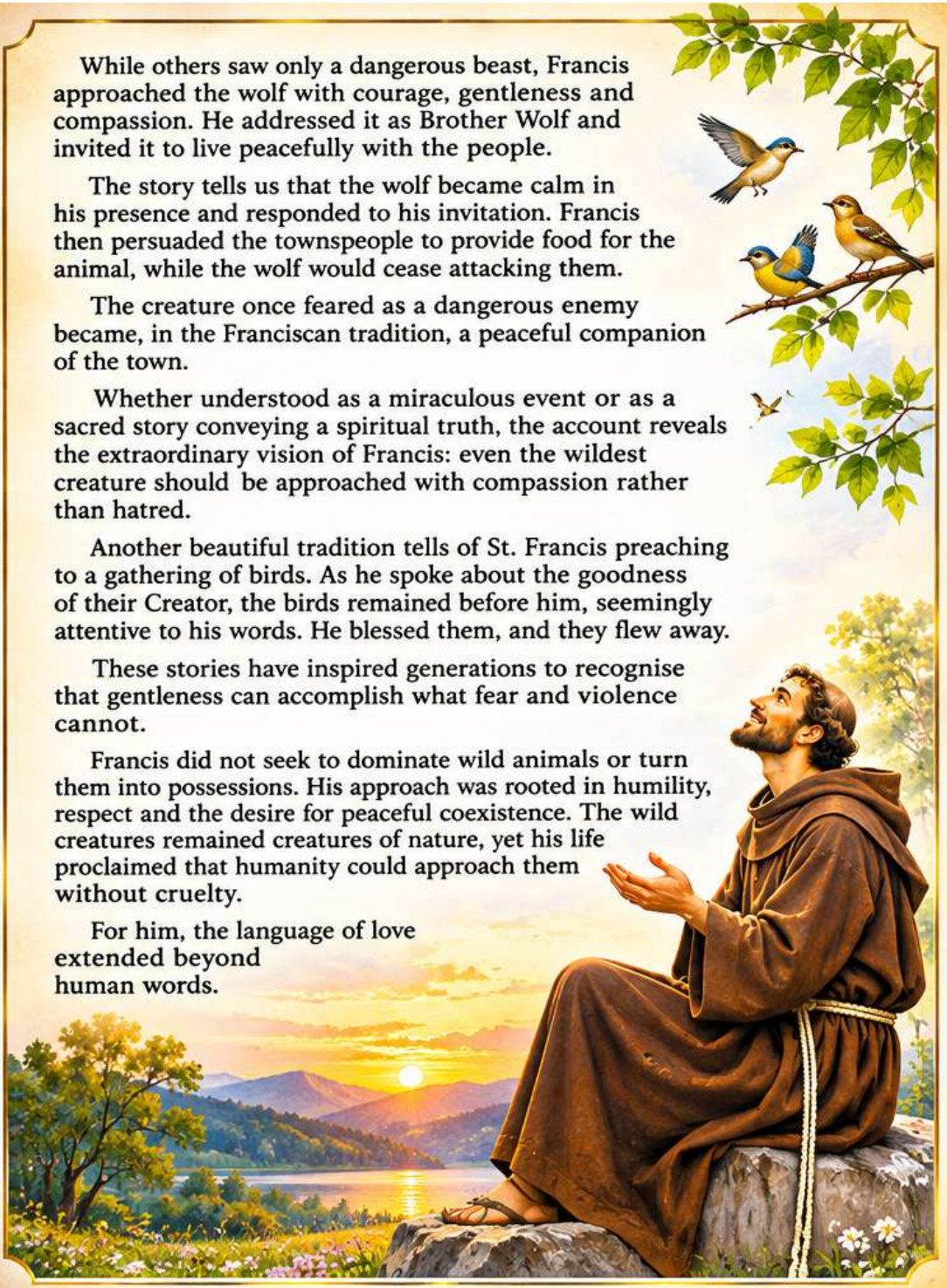
Whether understood as a miraculous event or as a sacred story conveying a spiritual truth, the account reveals the extraordinary vision of Francis: even the wildest creature should be approached with compassion rather than hatred.

Another beautiful tradition tells of St. Francis preaching to a gathering of birds. As he spoke about the goodness of their Creator, the birds remained before him, seemingly attentive to his words. He blessed them, and they flew away.

These stories have inspired generations to recognise that gentleness can accomplish what fear and violence cannot.

Francis did not seek to dominate wild animals or turn them into possessions. His approach was rooted in humility, respect and the desire for peaceful coexistence. The wild creatures remained creatures of nature, yet his life proclaimed that humanity could approach them without cruelty.

For him, the language of love extended beyond human words.



Brahmadathan: A Gentle Giant Who Inspired Love

In the light of this Franciscan spirituality, the life of Pallattu Brahmadathan acquires a deeper meaning.

Brahmadathan was not merely a magnificent elephant admired for his towering presence, impressive tusks and majestic appearance. He was a living creature capable of learning, recognising familiar people and developing bonds of trust through patient care.

His relationship with his celebrated mahout, Damodaran Nair, affectionately known as Omanachettan, offers a particularly touching parallel to the Franciscan message.

According to accounts of their association, Omanachettan guided Brahmadathan through affection, familiarity, patient communication and Hindi commands rather than relying primarily on physical force.

Their relationship reminds us that even an animal of immense strength can respond to gentleness, understanding and consistent care.

The same message shines through the traditional story of St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio.

Where others may see only strength and danger, a compassionate heart recognises a living creature worthy of understanding and respect.

Brahmadathan's relationship with the Pallattu family also reminds us that affection can cross the boundaries between human beings and animals.

To the world, he was a celebrated elephant. To those who cared for him, he was a familiar and cherished presence whose life had become intertwined with their own.

His sudden death revealed the depth of the attachment that surrounded him.





Two Farewells, One Message of Love





The departure of St. Francis and the death of Brahmadathan belong to two entirely different worlds, separated by eight centuries. Yet their remembrance meets on a date filled with spiritual significance.

St. Francis died in 1226, leaving behind a message that continues to transform human hearts.

Brahmadathan died on 4 October 2026, leaving behind memories of affection, companionship and the remarkable bond between an elephant and those who loved him.

One was a saint who taught humanity to embrace all creation as a family.

The other was a majestic creature whose life reminds us how deeply an animal can become part of the human family.

Their stories invite us to reflect upon the sacredness of life, the fragility of earthly existence and the responsibility entrusted to humanity to protect and cherish every living creature.

The thunderstorm ended Brahmadathan's earthly journey, but it could not erase the affection he had awakened in human hearts.

Perhaps the most meaningful way to honour his memory is not merely to remember his beauty, strength or fame, but to allow his life to awaken greater compassion towards animals.

As we commemorate the 800th Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi, may the story of Brahmadathan become an invitation to rediscover the beauty of living in harmony with creation.

May we learn to approach animals not with cruelty but with kindness, not with domination but with responsibility, and not merely with admiration but with genuine respect for their dignity and well-being.

St. Francis taught the world that even the wildest creature deserves compassion. Brahmadathan reminds us that even the mightiest creature can find a tender place in the human heart.

And so, on that unforgettable 4 October 2026, two farewells met across eight centuries—not in the circumstances of their deaths, but in the enduring message of love for God's creation.

Brahmadathan has departed, but the love he awakened will continue to live in a thousand hearts.

May his memory inspire future generations to love, respect and protect every creature that shares this beautiful earth with us.

"Praised be You, my Lord, through all Your creatures."

— St. Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Creatures

A Gentle Giant Who Walked in Peace

Brahmadathan and St. Francis: Two Lives United by the Spirit of Peace

Among the many beautiful memories shared by the owners, mahouts and caretakers of Pallattu Brahmadathan, one remarkable quality stands above all others: his peaceful nature.

In the interviews and recollections I have watched, those who knew him closely repeatedly describe Brahmadathan as a calm, gentle and peaceful elephant. Despite his enormous strength and majestic appearance, he was remembered for his quiet temperament. According to these testimonies, he had no known history of violent incidents or serious misconduct. His greatness was not merely in his physical stature, but in the peaceful character that distinguished his life.

One of the greatest honours bestowed upon Brahmadathan was the privilege of carrying the sacred Thidambu, the ceremonial representation of the deity, upon his back during the world-famous Thrissur Pooram. Amid the magnificent celebrations, traditional music and thousands of devotees, he became part of a sacred cultural tradition. For those who loved him, this was not merely a ceremonial duty but a moment of immense honour and pride.

His life was thus closely associated with devotion, religious tradition and human affection. He carried a sacred symbol upon his back, but in the hearts of his admirers, he carried something equally precious: the beauty of peace.

This extraordinary quality invites a meaningful comparison with St. Francis of Assisi, the great apostle of peace and brotherhood.



Eight centuries ago, St. Francis walked through the towns and villages of Italy proclaiming, "May the Lord give you peace." He believed that peace was not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of love, humility, forgiveness and harmony. He sought reconciliation among enemies, befriended the poor and, according to Franciscan tradition, brought peace even between the fierce Wolf of Gubbio and the frightened townspeople.

Francis preached peace through his words and actions. Brahmadathan, in a different and beautiful way, became a symbol of peace through the gentle temperament remembered by those who cared for him.

One was a humble saint who carried the message of God's peace into the world. The other was a majestic elephant who carried the sacred Thidambu in Kerala's great religious celebrations.

Their lives cannot be equated, yet they offer a touching spiritual parallel.



St. Francis carried peace in his heart and proclaimed it to humanity. Brahmadathan carried a sacred symbol upon his back and, through his gentle nature, became a beloved image of peace.

On 4 October 2026, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, during the 800th Jubilee Year of the saint's Transitus, Brahmadathan's earthly journey ended tragically in a lightning strike.

What a moving coincidence that an elephant so often remembered for his peaceful nature should depart on the feast of the saint whose life was dedicated to peace and harmony with creation!

Perhaps the most beautiful tribute we can offer Brahmadathan is to preserve not only the memory of his majestic appearance or his ceremonial honours, but also the gentleness for which he was loved.

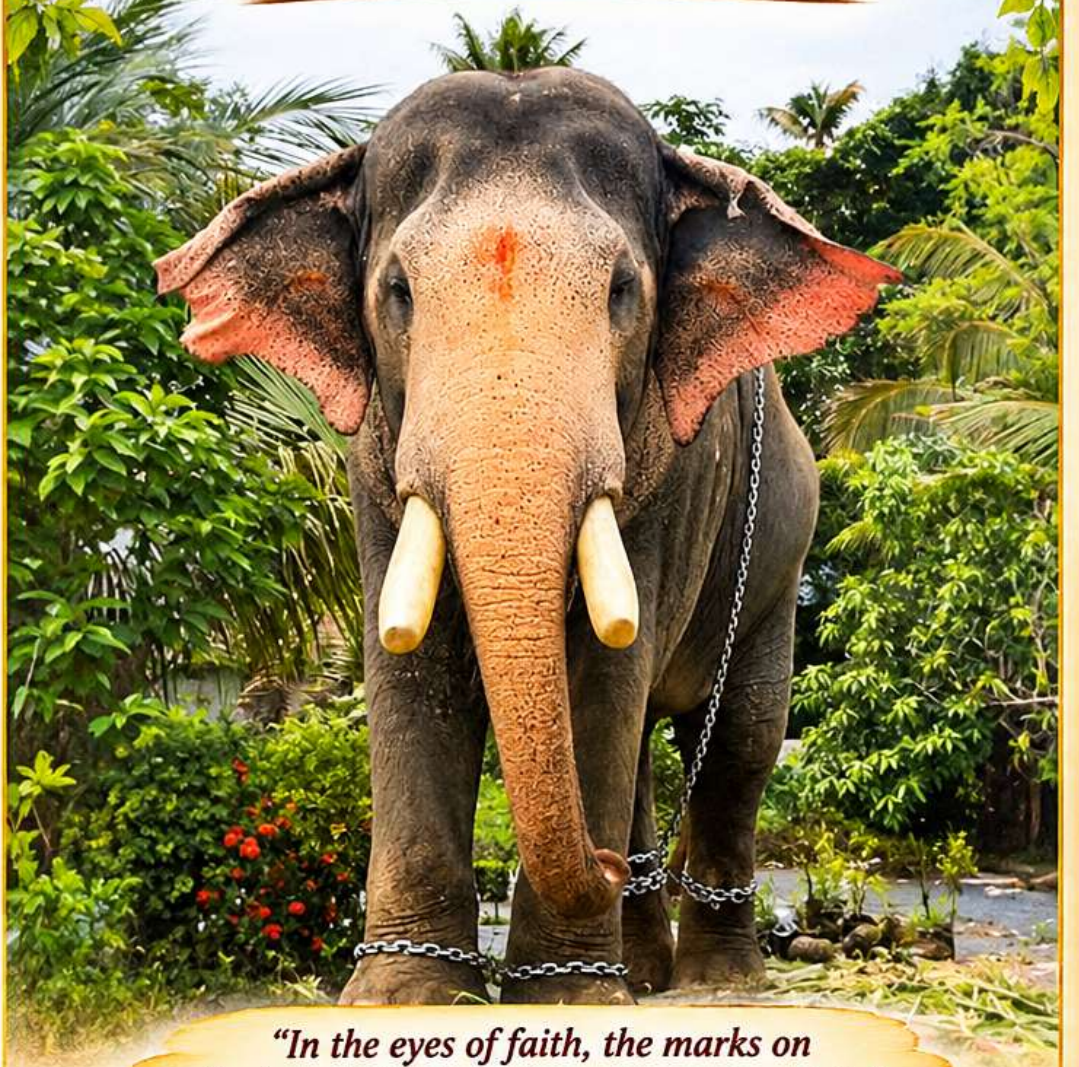
His strength inspired admiration. His peacefulness inspired affection. His memory invites humanity to embrace compassion.

May the gentle giant who carried the sacred Thidambu continue to remind generations that true greatness is not found in power alone, but in the peace and goodness that accompany it.

Brahmadathan walked with strength, lived with gentleness and departed leaving a message of peace.

The Seal of the Creator

A Franciscan Meditation



"In the eyes of faith, the marks on Brahmadathan's body can be contemplated as the seal of his Creator upon a beloved creature returning to Him."

When I contemplate the final moments of Pallattu Brahmadathan, my Franciscan heart discovers a profound spiritual mystery.

St. Francis of Assisi received the sacred Stigmata on Mount La Verna. The wounds of the crucified Christ were impressed upon his body as a mystical sign of his intimate union with the suffering Saviour.

The marks on Brahmadathan's forehead and around his neck were physically caused by lightning. Yet, in my spiritual reflection, they become a meaningful symbol of a life that belonged to God from its beginning to its end.

The Creator who fashioned him with such majesty, strength and gentleness entrusted him to the care of humanity. He walked among people, carried the sacred Thidambu upon his back, and brought joy and affection to countless hearts.

And at the end of his earthly pilgrimage, the marks upon his body invite me to imagine his return to the loving hands of the One who gave him life.

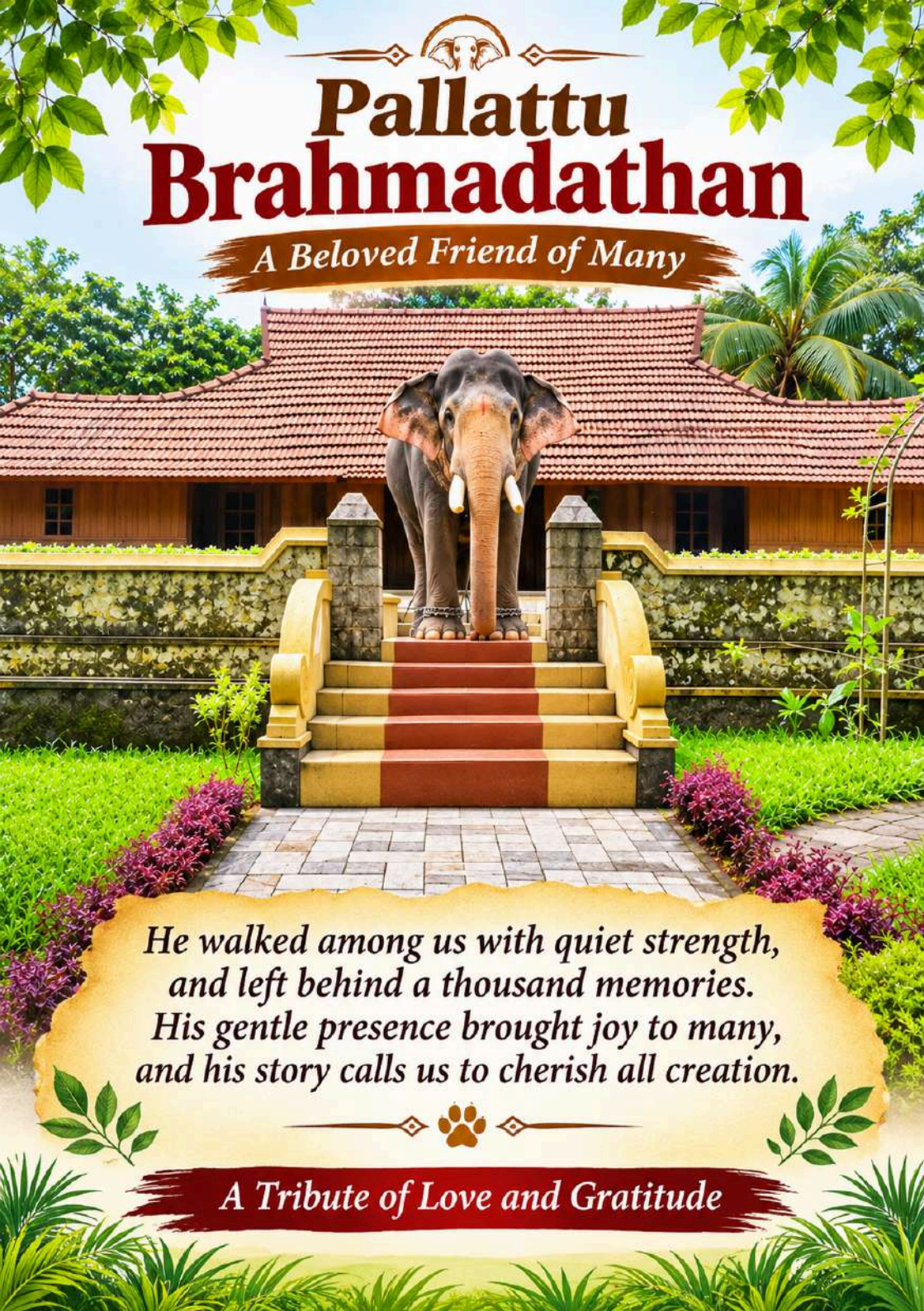


St. Francis bore the sacred marks of the Redeemer. Brahmadathan, in my contemplation, bore the symbolic seal of the Creator.

One reminds us of the mystery of divine love revealed through Christ's suffering. The other invites us to contemplate the mystery of creation, where every living being belongs ultimately to God.

The thunder silenced his earthly footsteps, but it could never erase the love he awakened. He came into this world as a beautiful work of the Creator, lived as a gentle giant among humanity, and, in my Franciscan meditation, I see his final marks as the Creator's seal upon a life returning to Him.

Bro. Joby P. Baby, CMSF


Pallattu
Brahmadathan
A Beloved Friend of Many
He walked among us with quiet strength,
and left behind a thousand memories.
His gentle presence brought joy to many,
and his story calls us to cherish all creation.
A Tribute of Love and Gratitude