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Chevalier T. THOMAS



A TRIBUTE

By

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DEDICATION

With intense affection and appreciation, we dedicate this short volume to the present and past pupils of the Institutions run by
T. Thomas Educational Trust

" I thank God every time I remember You."

Acknowledgements

It is impossible to thank each and every person connected with the publication of this 'tribute'. Yet, the invaluable help of a few has to be acknowledged. Mrs. E. Thomas, the wife of Chevalier T. Thomas desired to have a short biography of her husband published. The task of giving concrete shape to her wish became my responsibility and I consider it my privilege to do the same. This gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the admirable qualities of Chevalier T. Thomas — a man worthy of emulation for his integrity, approachability, humility and simplicity. I am especially indebted to Mrs. E. Thomas for her encouragement in publishing this brief biography.

My special thanks are due to Dr. K. Venkatasubramaniam, Vice - Chancellor of Central University, Pondicherry, for his foreword.

I am indebted to Rev. Fr. K. J. John, Principal, ST Mary's School, Red Hills, Mrs. Prema Rufus, Principal, Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women, who read parts of the manuscript and offered constructive criticism. General reviews as a whole were received from Mr. Ernest Joseph and Mr. J. Daniel, English Department St. Mary's Perambur.

A. Sathiasingh Dhanaraj
Editor

FOREWORD

I wish Mrs. Thomas all good Luck and God speed.



Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian

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Chevalier T. Thomas was a dedicated person with a vision and mission. His desire to provide education for the weaker sections marked him as a different kind of soul from the mundane humanity. His educational institutions bear the stamp of his unique service. His religious zest stood in good stead in accomplishing this mission. His genial nature enabled him to expand the circle of his friendship and helped in building up a great educational edifice under his care.

As a Director of Education, I had opportunities of witnessing his qualities as a builder of institutions. Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas is now developing the institutions further and is carrying on his noble work. Her dedication to this task is indeed praise worthy. Her publication — "Chi. Thomas a Tribute" brings out in bold relief the noble qualities of head and heart of late Mr. Thomas.

Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian

M.A., B.L., B.T., Ph.D.,

I wish Mrs. Thomas all good Luck and God speed.

BIOGRAPHY

A Biographical sketch - by Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas.

The lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing, leave behind us
Foot prints on the sands of Time.

No great man lives in vain. The History of the world is but a story of the lives of great men. Biography is the most universally pleasant and profitable of all reading. The men in whom Nature has succeeded are the true men. They are not extra ordinary, but they are in true order. A study of lives of great men and famous women reveals that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand with extraordinary zeal and enthusiasm.

"Blessed is the one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways." God helps only those who help themselves. Anyone who wants to reach the top, must start from the bottom and move upward, like climbing the steps of a ladder. My husband, chevalier T. Thomas, Founder correspondent of T. Thomas Educational Trust started from a humble beginning and reached the top. He devoted his life to the cause of education and created a community of disciplined children. Thereby he contributed to the social and educational upliftment of society. For his noble service to humanity, he got adequate reward. He was a very pious person who inculcated the fear of the Lord in his pupils. Such a person's life - history I am sketching so that it will serve as a guiding star to the youngsters.

Birth and Boyhood

"Birth — The pleasing punishment that women bear"

The lady who is happy even this day for having given birth to chevalier T. Thomas is Mrs. Eliamma. As Thiruvalluvar says.

ஈன்ற பொழுதிற் பெரிதுவக்கும் தன்மகனைச்
சான்றோ னெனக் கேட்ட தாய்.

Mrs. Eliamma will, indeed be more happy today ie, on the day of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Institutions founded by her son, than at the time when she enjoyed that "pleasing punishment" on the night of 25-1-1929. She is singularly blessed for having given birth to a great person like chev. T. Thomas. He belonged to Rahoor family and his father was Mr. Thomas Pappe.

It is believed that St. Thomas one of the twelve disciples of christ, had come to kerala where he found a few namboodris bathing in the river. He preached christianity to them and baptised them with the river water. Along with this apostle came three syrian christian families who settled in kerala. Mr. Thomas Pappe of Rahoor and Eliamma of Mulamootil are descendants of those Syrian families settled in Kerala. Thomas Pappe was employed in the local Post Office as a Post-Master. His wedding with Eliamma was performed in the traditional way of Kerala. After marriage Thomas Pappe stayed in Mulamootil House, Paliyakkara, that belonged to the ancestors of Eliamma. They led a happy life and begot eight children. Our founder T. Thomas was their fourth child. He has an elder brother and two elder sisters. Three brothers and a sister are younger to him.

During his childhood he was petted a lot by his maternal uncle and maternal grand parents mainly on

account of his childish mischief. His elder sister Thangamma was very fond of him and took good care of him. She later became the Principal of St. Stephen's College, Pathanapuram, Kerala and continued to have due regard for him till his death.

In his younger days, he was very mischievous. It is said that he would always be seen playing — playing with toys, pet animals and on the green fields that stretched a long distance in front of their house. He would run away when anyone told him that he was going to be bathed. He was never to be seen in the house during the daytime. He would spend most of his time playing in the fields, or in the lawn in the front of his house or the 'Thodu' - a small canal that was running by the side of this house.

He used to take advantage of the ignorance of his fellow children. He would get a lot of pleasure by pinching them or making fool of them. While playing games he would change the position of game objects like chess-board pawns, or Carrom board coins; while playing football he would sometimes cheat by using his hands to throw the ball into the goal. He was nick-named 'MOOTAI' which meant Bed bug in Malayalam, because he would pinch people unnoticed and fly away like the bed-bug.

In Thiruvella, a small town in the central part of Kerala, is situated the Shree Vallabha temple, after which the town the named. The Mulamootil house is also situated close to the shrine. A member of the Mulamootil family used to be the 'Fit-person' of this temple by heredity. At that time Mr. P. M. Abraham, called affectionately as 'Achchayan' by all the family members was the fit person of the temple. He undertook the task of

admitting Chev. T. Thomas, in the Gurukulam attached to the shrine at Thiruvella.

Education has for its object, the formation of character. Education brings forth a gentleman. A strong foundation of education was laid at the Gurukulam, which moulded him and changed him. At the age of six, after his study at the Gurukulam, he was admitted into a school. He was good at studies. Though he was moulded a little at the Gurukulam, the element of mischief was still in him. Even at school, he continued to pinch, beat or tease his classmates and play the fool with them. Deceiving others in games and sports gave him pleasure. On many occasions he had won victories in games, and sports merely by deceit. He was good in football, probably because he was interested in it. His elder brother had died while playing football in the field, perhaps that incident created a desire in him to master that game.

A photograph of his family taken when he was about eight years is still there in our house. It is a picture of a tired and dull looking boy. His sister Thangamma has the following incident to narrate, in connection with the photograph. When he was called for taking the family photograph, he ran out to play football with his mates in the fields and he did not come till the photographer arrived. Then he was found and made to stand for the family photograph. From childhood, he was very talkative and could pick-up a conversation with anyone without any fear or self-consciousness. He would interrogate any visitor to the house and talk freely to him. This attitude attained popularity for him with friends and relatives.

His teachers at school were fond of him and were affectionate to him, because he always secured good

rank in examination slowly the years rolled by and master Thomas reached sixth standard.

At this time there fell a spell of gloom on the family of our beloved founder, Death had stretched its cruel hand on the Mulamootil House. Thomas Pappé Rahocr, the father of our founder was called away by the Lord to his heavenly abode. But what are the hopes of man? The family of Mulamootil house got highly disappointed at the stroke of death which had eclipsed the gaiety of their family and impoverished their stock of harmless pleasure. Our beloved founder could not, any longer, enjoy the love and affection of his father, for he had lost him for ever.

The family lost its bread winner and head. The family's source of income became nil. There came a void in the family both physically and monetarily by his loss and the entire family suffered a great deal.

But God was rich in His mercy. He had immense sympathy for the family and came to their rescue. He sent the man who could support this family in all ways and mean. The man sent by the Lord, the man whose mind was made up by God to render yeoman service to this family was none other than the maternal uncle, of our beloved founder, the only brother-in-law of the deceased, Mr P. M. Abraham of the celebrated 'Avrachchan' Avrachchan by God's will and according to the Almighty's direction came forward to rescue their family by shouldering all their difficulties, just for the sake of his beloved sister, the mother of our founder. He was a man well known in that locality as stated earlier. He had rejected his marriage proposal and sacrificed his life for the betterment and uplift of his nephews and nieces.

He had sent back all those varieties of items that were sent from the bride's house for his betrothal. Thus he sacrificed and gave up his comforts for the sake of his sister. Since then he never changed his decision or thought of marriage. He remains a bachelor still, educated all his nephews and nieces.

Our founder continued his education at M. G. M. High School, Thiruvella, where he proved to be a good pupil. He was very good at studies. His father's demise changed him a lot. He reduced his play time and concentrated on studies. He could always be found with books. In the evenings after his return from the school he would go to the Thodu-along with his books, sit on its bank and could be seen reading there. This improved a lot. He secured good ranks in each class. The years rolled by and in the year 1945, he finished his school final and also obtained a Gold medal for his excellence in studies.

The Young Man

Founder was the eldest of the living male issues in the family. On account of the financial crisis that the family was facing there rose the question whether he should be sent for higher studies or for a job. Avrachchan was of the opinion that his nephew should pursue higher education at university. Avrachchan accompanied our Founder to the university college, Trivandrum for admission.

On attainment of adolescence all the boyish mischief in him evaporated. Even at college he proved to be a meritorious student, but now and then he would write to his uncle for money. He could not resist the desire

of leading a joyous student life by spending money lavishly as many of his college mates used to it is said that during his college days he spent a luxurious life quite contrary to the life he had in his school days. He was very much interested in games and sports. He took part in all games but was very good in playing football. At the college he was a member of the college football team and also captained the team for two consecutive years. After passing out of the pre-degree course in first class, he got admission into the B.Sc. Degree course in the same college. He came out of the university college, Trivandrum with a First class degree in B.Sc.

Though he had three brothers and a sister younger to him in the family, to be educated and brought up, his maternal uncle made him study further. He wanted this nephew to become an I. A. S officer. He gave money to him to join an institution which coached the candidates for I. A. S Examination. Our founder went again to Trivandrum to get coaching and appear for the I.A.S. Examination. But he spent all the money and returned home without appearing for the I.A.S Examination, That action of the nephew irked the uncle, but still he made his nephew pursue higher education and admitted him in M. Sc. chemistry course at the university college, Trivandrum. Though our Founder was doing well in that course, he discontinued it after six months and came back to the house. After these two incidents, our Founder was left to do what he willed.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delighteth in His way. He had the aim and ambition to come up in life. But because of the family circumstances he had to start his career immediately. Heaven had blessed him to teach the school children and

he did it till his end. This earned him a lot of fame. He who would climb the ladder must begin at the bottom so did our Founder. In a humble way he started his career as a teacher for standard X in a High School at Sasthankotta. But, he served there for a year only. In the mean while, he wrote the competitive examination of the posts and Telegraphs department. Because he had fared well in the written examination he was called for the personal interview. He got through the personal interview also and was selected for the job in Posts and Telegraphs department. In 1953, he resigned his job as a teacher, for he was appointed as a clerk in the Posts and Telegraphs department and was posted at the Mount Road Post Office, Madras. He joined duty and worked as a clerk. At Madras he stayed in inn viz I. C. C., Lodge at Chintadripet run by Mr. Chandi, a person from Kerala. He attended the church everyday. At the Post Office he took up the departmental examination to become 'Inspector of Post Office', but without success. Then he joined M.A. (Eco.) in 1957 at Nagpur (correspondence course).

He wanted to pursue higher studies abroad and longed to become an Aeronautic Engineer. He prayed to the Almighty ceaselessly for this. God had received his prayers and in turn he had received the blessings from the Lord. The man who had such heavenly blessings had been my colleague, for at that time, I too was employed in the same Mount Road Post Office, Madras in the same designation.

He always loved to converse jovially with others. He loved to have cheerful company around him. His witty, intellectual conversation made him popular among our colleagues. He was a merry man with a cheerful

disposition. We had been co-workers during the years 1956-60. During those years he used to be brief and discuss his plans for the future with many of his friends. On one such occasion, I heard him say that he aspired to study Aeronantic Engineering in England and that he would marry the lady who would meet the expenses of his travel and study. Perhaps he had me in mind, for he had already presented me a book on the marriage rituals followed at weddings in Kerala I came forward to support him in his venture and to fulfil the desire that lingered deep in his heart. With the consent of my parents, I had the funds arranged by mortgaging our present residence and some of my jewels in George Town Co-operative Bank, Madras. The Post Master and the other officials eased the formalities to obtain visa etc. I thus be set sail to England in Dec. 1960. to pursue higher education in Aeronantic Engineering. At London he joined the course in Aeronantic Engineering.

“ God disposes what man proposes”; for his will was something different. Our Founder discontinued the study of Aeronantic Engineering and joined the Oxford Univercity to study M.A. in English Literature. In England worked for sometime as the General Manager of a carbon company. He studied Economics as a part-timer and secured a Diploma in Economics. During his stay in England he wrote to me letters every week. He was indeed good, not only in conversation, but in narration too. He had pictured in his writings, about the world famous Universities oxford and Cambridge and his experiences there. He was fortunate to see such schools of reputation like Harrow and Eton in England. These gave him a lot of inspiration

He wondered as to why should not the children of our nation be given such education. It created a desire in him to provide similar education to the children of our motherland. He wrote to me about all this. Bearing the qualification of M. A. English literature (from the University of Oxford) and the irresistible desire to provide sound education for the children of our motherland, he sailed back to India in 1964. On his voyage back, he kept writing to me about his experiences during the journey over the seas from England to Bombay. From Bombay he travelled by train and I received him at the Central Railway Station.

The Dawn

" To hear the lark begin his flight,
 And singing, startle the dull night,
 From his watch tower in the skies,
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
 Men to come, in spite of sorrow,
 And at my window bid good morrow
 Through the sweet briar or the vine,
 or the twisted eglantine "

The Lord said, "I am to give you fresh birth

Thus after his return from London he was reinstated at the Mount Road Post Office Madras and continued at the job for a while. But God had planned a different destiny for him.

Kerala is the state which has the highest percentage of educated population. This is because in Kerala we can find in addition to regular affiliated colleges a lot of

unrecognised colleges under the name and style of parallel (Tutorial) colleges—that prepare and send the students for University Examinations (as private candidates). The thought of this type of institutions in his native state made him thoughtful.

His thoughts gathered momentum. He resigned from the postal service in the same year and started a Tutorial college in our residence itself. This was the first temple of education he began and on account of his immense love to the Lord and mother Mary, he named it. St. Mary's Tutorial College. The college too gathered momentum the number of students was increasing day by day. Initially, there were lot of financial difficulties. But, since I was still continuing in the same job at post office and there was income from the rented portion of our house, we could manage. We had to toil day and night to develop that institution. He started thinking of bringing children from darkness to light.

Dream Comes true

Miracles seldom occur, except in the imagination of the faithful. The miracle started to make its appearance because he was bearing a precious seed in him, and he was a man ready for the opportunity when it comes, and also being a man of ready mind he had to utilise the opportunity at hand, because he was a man diligent in his business.

His imagination and his dreams, in England in shaping the children and the pattern of their education, started taking shape in his mind "Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways". His

ideas took concrete shape. In 1964, we started the school with only 3 children and a single teacher, at our residence No. 22, Madhavaram High Road, Perambur, Madras-11. The school was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Jacob, S.D.B, the then Assistant Headmaster of Don Bosco High School, Perambur. Even this was named after mother Mary. The strength of the school rose to one hundred that year and the founder was happy to see his dreams come true.

In 1965, I pledged my house and with that money, we purchased a piece of land in Duraiswamy Mudaliar Gardens Perambur, the site of the present boy's school. The owner of that land Mrs. Gunavathiammal was very kind to us. She gave us the land and took the money in instalments. She was one of the benefactress of our schools. She had a lot of affection for my husband. Her son was provided employment in our school. We erected thatched sheds in Duraiswamy Mudaliar Garden and shifted a part of the school into that complex for the convenience of those children and parents hailing from areas away from Perambur. Every pleasure has pain, we had to subject ourselves to a lot of pain to arrive at the pleasure of this day, the day we celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the schools.

In those days there was indeed, a great demand for English Medium Schools. By the grace of God, the schools started growing in size. Thinking is easy, acting is difficult and to put one's thought into action is the most difficult thing in the world. Our founder's ability in all walks of life was matchless. Because of his efficiency, determination and perseverance, he was able to put all his thoughts into action. Right from the inception of the school, we had to labour for the successful development

of the schools. We did not labour for the daily bread that perishes but for that meat which endures into everlasting life.

With every year the strength of the children and the number of classes increased. In 1971 the school was recognised by ISC (Indian school certificate) board. But since we had to cater to the needs of the parents and satisfy their demands, we switched over to C.B.S.E. syllabus in 1972. We had pupils from far off places like Avadi, Pattabiram, Red hills, Cholavaram etc.

The standard of education provided by us was distinct and made our schools popular. Parents from Red Hills, specially one Mr Khader insisted that we must open a branch of our school at Red Hills for their convenience. The parents also assured that they would all help us to acquire land at Red Hills for the purpose. He met the parents and arranged for the purchase of land at Thiruvallur Kootu Road, Red Hills. The founder was much touched by the enthusiasm and effort of the parents. In 1976, a branch of St. Marys School was inaugurated at Red Hills. Later on we acquired the adjacent lands and expanded the Red Hills branch to the present dimension. Meanwhile the school in our premises was shifted to the vacant land next to my house. The first school started in our residence was shifted to Maryland complex in 1977, which is at present the higher secondary school for girls. As the years passed by the schools have grown to an unimaginable dimension.

Kottayam, is a small town in the central part of Kerala and our founder, has many of his relatives living there. His relatives asked him "You are good at running

schools, as such, why don't you start a school, here itself and be here." This made him plan to start a school in Kerala. He took lot of pain to open a school in Kerala. "Genius I often think means only an infinite capacity to take pains." Mr. M. K. Elias, the branch manager of State Bank of Travancore, at Kottayam and a cousin of the founder, assured him a piece of land in Kerala. In spite of his desire and longing to be in his mother state, he deputed me to do all the work of opening a new school at Kottayam. I had to approach every house of relatives and friends to get pupils for the proposed school. Raising funds for that venture was still more difficult. We obtained loan from the banks. Founder provided the rest of finance from the schools at Madras and opened the branch of our school in a rented building, under the name and style of "Marian Junior School" (faithfully remembering mother Mary) at Kottayam in the year 1979. He was very much attached to the Marian School at Kottayam. Later we purchased the present site of Marian School and constructed the building there. He ordered our mason, Mr. Bhagyam to build a room for him inside the Marian campus, for him to reside, leaving the rest of the institutions at Madras to be managed by me. I had been the co-correspondent of the Marian School, Kottayam during the years 1982-84. as per his kind order. There was a great deal of demand for admission into the schools run by him. From 1985 onwards we had to conduct entrance examination for admissions, on account of the great demand for seats.

His dreams became a reality and he was happy to see small children marching ahead in their uniform, He enjoyed listening to the tiny tots speaking in broken

English. Many a day, he would go and sit beside the small children, enjoying their warmth and affection. He wanted to introduce in his schools in Indian all the aspects of schools in Britain which inspired him.

THE PIOUS

"And now what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways and to love Him and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

Founder T. Thomas was born in an Orthodox Christian family. They belong to the Jacobite Syrian order. His family members are very pious. Our founder had been very pious since his childhood. He always accompanied his mother to the church. The Paliyakkara Church was situated close to their house. His mother being a pious lady used to accompany her. He had memorised all the hymns that were sung during the prayer. He also won a prize in Bible recitation competition in the Sunday school. He had an immense power of memory. Whatever he did, he did them all, either in the name of Lord or in the name of mother Mary, for Jacobite Syrians believed that, through mother Mary, their prayers could reach the Lord easily; also that mother Mary too would pray for them. Everything he did, he did so only after keeping that proposal in his prayers. And we know that "all things work together for good to them that Love God."

Even after his coming to Madras in 1953 on appointment, he attended the St Mathias Church, Vepery regularly. The present Bava, His Beatitude Catholicose,

Baselius Paulose II had been the Vicar of that church in those years. Still the Bava recollects how pious the founder had been. Our founder's activities had impressed the vicar so much that he made him the Secretary of the Congregation in the years 1956 - '60. He was one among the few befriended by God who kept awake in all his noble deeds. God assured him success. His method of running the institutions was an 'Art' indeed. The highest art is always the most religious and the greatest artist is always a devout man. He believed, "Lord is my light, my salvation and the strength of my life." "His delight was in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

His method of prayer, in the later years, was unique. He desired to do individual prayer. Though he was an ardent and staunch christian, very rarely one could find him attending the church (Mass) prayer services. He used to pray all alone in the Chapel silently kneeling down with tears rolling down the cheeks, perhaps because he was Inspired by the lines.

In prayers, the lips ne—'er act the winning part
Without the sweet concurrence of the heart.

Everyday one could see that he climbed the stairs to the chapel before he could board the car for leaving the house. On reaching his office he would read few verses from the Bible kept in his table-drawer and then only started his work in the office, God had received his prayers, and he had received the blessings from the Lord. Lord rejoiced in his works and inturn he rejoined in the shadow of His wings.

"He did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Lord." He was a

blessed person, for he feared the Lord and walked in His ways. He taught the school children the fear of the Lord. None on the earth he desired beside Him. Faith in the Lord produced in him peace, hope, joy etc. As he had, therefore, opportunity, he had done good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Lord made his journey prosperous. He got delighted in following the words of God, as said in the Bible, "he gave unto his servants that which was just and equal knowing that he also had a Master in heaven" Not only that he prayed, loved, feared, followed and honoured God Almighty but also he honoured the church authorities viz., Vicars, Bishops, and other dignitaries of christianity whenever he got a chance to do so and lost none of them. He honoured the Lord with all his wealth, the first fruits of all his crops, which made his barns to be filled to overflowing and made his cup brim over with new wine, Yes-certainly this happened.

He built a chapel for the Lord in our residence, made it the house, of worshipping the Lord for all the Jacobite Syrian Christians in and around Perambur. He had made Rev. Father Thomas the present chairman Bishop, His Grace Thomas Mar Osthathos, as the first headmaster of our school and also to be the Vicar of the chapel built in his residence. And later when he was ordained to be a Bishop, founder made him the chairman of the T. Thomas Educational Trust he formed. Founder's contribution for the growth and strength of the Syrian congregation in North Madras was commendable. He also planned to construct a Church in the Maryland campus, and laid the foundation stone too by the Patriarch. He took pleasure in hosting the supreme head of Syrian Churches in the world, His Holiness the Prince Patriarch

of Antioch and All the East, when he visited India in 1982. He was filled with overwhelming joy when His Holiness and His band consented to visit all our schools and our residence. All of them were immensely impressed by the marvellous and admirable achievements of our founder. They were taken by surprise when they were taken to our school at Kottayam, by our founder. The fourth of our institutions impressed them further. The pious lady, mother of our founder was very much pleased, knew no bounds to her joy when she could personally meet the supreme head of her church and got His blessings too. He made all his family members to be blessed by the Patriarch and His band.

He was very particular in observing the church canons. He proved his immense faith in God. He gave appointments to christians if they deserved and if there was a chance. He built all his institutions after the name of mother Mary, named a campus too as 'Maryland' He employed Reverents and Brothers in his schools and gave them the higher position possible. A good percentage of children admitted into his schools were christians. He taught them the fear of the Lord.

The Patriarch and the band of Bishops accompanied, were most impressed by the activities they witnessed, of this great man. In addition, our Chairman. His Grace Thomas Mar Osthathos had explained to the Patriarch, about the vastness of the founder's activities and the richness of his deeds and also how, through these institutions he made the world know the richness of His Glory; In recognition of his services to God and humanity, the Patriarch of Antioch conferred on him the

knighthood, "Star of Syria", the Ecclesiastical order, the highest honour which the Hierarchy of Syrian Church can confer on the most distinguished person among its members.

Thereafter he became "Chevalier T. Thomas". In recognition of his piety seven Bishops took part in his funeral ; and also conducted a High mass. Anyone who came across the church dignitaries could have listened to their praise for him. Such was his attachment to the Almighty and His people at large.

He was steered by God, so sailed safely.

The Victor

Thine, O Lord is the victory.

As a pioneer of education his was a humble beginning. He started a school with only three children and a single teacher and named it after Mother Mary, the virgin mother of Lord Jesus Christ From this humble beginning, in less than a score of years he rose to the highest any other could hardly reach.

He was a kind person, loved everyone both of the family and outside. He inherited good manners and consideration for others, which are the two main characteristics of a gentle man. "The love of money is the root of all evil." Though he made a lot of money through the schools we never used it for our ends. He had utilised all his earnings for the sake of the institutions, to pay his subordinates, to see them comforted, keeping no

comfort for him like the moon which has her light all over the sky, but her dark spots to herself. He was a very simple man in his dress, dwelling etc., though not in his deeds — the school activities — indeed to be simple is to be great. He had done things impossible for a talented. Four glorified institutions had been started by him. The school began as a mustard seedling, but it took roots and grew as a gigantic oak.

Right from the beginning he moved with his friends' subordinates and relatives cheerfully. He seldom lost his temper. The only thing worth having in earthly existence is a sense of humour. A smile is a curve in the face which can set a lot of things straight. He loved all his enemies and made them his friends. He was a cheerful man and loved to be with people, conversing with them. With anyone whom he came across, irrespective of their relation to him whether a relative, friend, colleague, subordinate, parent of the school child or even his servant, he would be humourous, cracking jokes to them. Humour is an affirmation of dignity. I have seen him playing hide and seek even with his lowest subordinates, I remember him, once taking away the turban, of one Mr. Arumugam, a watchman, without his knowledge, hiding it somewhere and then fooling him. The wisdom and the highest genius have invariably accompanied with cheerfulness. We have sufficient proof on record to show that Shakespeare and Socrates were the most festive companions.

We know that love conquers all and that we too succumb to love. He loved all his colleagues and subordinates. He drew them with cords of love and made them work for him *i.e.*, for the welfare of his schools like a magician. His subordinates

liked to and many others longed to work under him. He was a good administrator, good at deputation of work. He gave work to his subordinates according to their ability as said in Thirukkural—

இதனை இதனால் இவன் முடிக்கும் என்றாய்ந்து
அதனை அவன் கண் விடல்.

Like an arm chair politician, he made others work for him, while he sat in the same place and got the work done.

It is more blessed to give than receive. He was a kind and generous man. He was generous to everyone and more so to his subordinates, as said in the Bible "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that Ye also have a Master in heaven." There were occasions, when he readily helped many, at times of their crisis, monetarily. "The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love" He gave as he was able to according to the blessing that the Lord, hath given him. He retained no money for himself, he used to quote often—"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." He bore the infirmities of the weak and the Lord loaded him with benefits. He considered the poor and the Lord delivered him in times of trouble. He defended the poor, did justice to the afflicted and needy. He gave fee concessions to those children of parents who could not afford to pay the school fees, and also extended the concession to our staff members. He always has had mercy on the poor and opened his hand to the needy. Because God loves a cheerful giver and also because an army marches mainly on its stomach, he paid his

servants well. He gave them all without a care and gathered Rubies from the air.

He was a gentleman and the elements of gentleness in him were more simple, but greater. He respected all communities and selected his staff members irrespective of their caste, creed religion or their statehood. He allowed the death ceremonies of my parents to take place in the Hindu way. He even took part in them. He was always polite and he always addressed gentlemen and ladies with a Mr. or Mrs in conversation, and as well in correspondence. Even, when he developed a difference of opinion, he would pick up and proceed conversing with them. He could disagree with anyone without becoming disagreeable.

Wit is the rarest quality to be met with among people of education. This sense of humour, he brought into play in accordance with the person, place, time and situation. Though he invariably cherished taking toll of a person humourously, he saw to it that their relationship never got strained. He was indeed clever, he had perfect knowledge of many things. He was a man with clarity of purpose, firm determination, initiative. His duty consciousness was of high degree. His leadership was commendable. He sowed a small mustard seedling but it took roots and grew into a gigantic oak branching over Madras and Kerala. Through the schools he gave light to many especially the downtrodden (for quality education) that sit in darkness. All these he achieved, through his intelligence common sense, diplomacy, right thoughts, determination, firm action and charity.

He was much attached to his mother and his elder sister Thangamma, who looked after him well in his tender years. This created a love in him for women's welfare—also, because his trip to England had revealed to him that our women are lagging behind a lot. He had an ardent desire and also cherished the dream of opening a women's college in Perambur, to champion the cause of our womenfolk. By God's grace and the blessing of Almighty his dream has come true and I was successful in opening the women's college within a year after his departure. One more school had been started after his name and it is now a full fledged Higher Secondary School.

He was a victorious man. He was able to achieve more than what he thought of at the beginning. Still, his victories were not cheap—but worth having, for they had come as the result of hard fighting. Indeed they were miracles. A miracle, is an event which erects faith, that is the purpose and nature of miracles. After his departure, His Grace Aboodi Ramban, a Syrian Bishop from Switzerland, during his conversation with me :

'Why that I cannot tell,' said he

'But 't was a famous victory.'

ALAS ! THE LOSS

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept my faith.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give

me at the day and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

“To meet, to know, to love and then to part
Is the sad tale of many a human heart.”

O God! Why do you make us love your godly gift, and snatch them straight away? The raging storm spread the gloom around and the gigantic oak with deep and strong roots started shaking. Heaven gives its favourites early-death; whom the Gods love die young. The death hath stretched its cruel hands on him. The great tragedy occurred on the 16th of January 1984 and the great architect — Founder Correspondent Chevalier T. Thomas was snatched away from us. The end came to him in the form of Heart attack. He was called to his Heavenly abode. His soul had escaped as a bird sent out of the snare of fowlers.

“O thou wast not born to death, immortal bird. What are the hopes of man!” I was disappointed greatly by that stroke of death which hath eclipsed the gaiety of Marians and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure. “The light has gone out and there is darkness everywhere” — told Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, at the death of the father of our nation. Mahatma Gandhiji’s death plunged the whole nation into darkness. So were the Marians by the death of our beloved founder, my husband Chevalier T. Thomas.

God Almighty! blessed is the man whom thou chooseth and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy court, for many be called, but few be chosen.

When he was dead, I hope it might have been said 'His sins were scarlet, but his would be read'. Certainly his book *i e.*, life, deeds and biography will be 'read now and for ever. Though he walked through the valley of the shadow of death, I hope he wouldn't have feared evil, for He was with him. His staff and rod comforted him. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. He would have obtained salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ with eternal glory.

Is death the last sleep? No, it is the Last final awakening. Death is never an end or an obstacle but at the most, the beginning of new steps. Though he is dead he will be everlasting, for he believed in Him, the Lord.

He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life For God so loved the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

'O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?' A good man never dies—said Callimachus. There is no death; the stars go down to rise upon some fairier shore. Though nature has taken him away from our midst, I feel that 'he is absent in body, but present in spirit, which gave us the energy, enthusiasm and efforts to bring forth into the world the women's college, his unfulfilled and most cherished ambition, and also a school after his demise. We still progress, shall keep on progressing till there be many institutions of different faculties viz. Polytechnic, Engineering College etc. The soul of him, like a star, beacons from the abode where the eternal ones are.

Death be not proud, though some have called thee,
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
For, those, whom thou thinkst, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death.

EPILOGUE

'According to the Grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise Master builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth there upon',

Our founder Chevalier T. Thomas the great architect is not of an age, but for all time. He was an author and giver of all good things. He gave light to them that sit in darkness, He taught the fear of the Lord—the beginning of the wisdom—brought them up as well disciplined. He has not added years to his life, but he had added life to the years he lived, and played well those cards he held, to this success and to the benefit of mankind. He got to the top by doing the job he had in his hand, with everything he had of energy, enthusiasm and hardwork. He was a father to the poor and a man of the masses.

He lived and died for the sake of the schools he founded and nurtured. He was a rare man among men and a mighty among the mightiest. He will be remembered for his simplicity, sincerity, sacrifice, sufferings, selfless service and steadfastness. He was a man of magnetic personality and a treasure of knowledge. He devoted his entire life to the upbringing and for the well-being of his schools. His heart and soul always centred round his schools.

He was a man of great compassion and had great concern for the poor. He was generous to all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. He was a great Orator and conversationalist, administrator and an eminent scholar. His greatest aim was to provide employment to people and he achieved his goal here. It was his effort and single minded devotion and strong determination that

enabled him to run such temples of Education. His life is worthy of emulation by all those who want to attain success in their lives by hardwork. He started his career as a teacher and ended his career as a teacher. There are several thousands of people today, who are doctors, engineers, advocates, computer technologists, scientists etc, who proudly declare that they have studied and got their foundation in one of the schools run by Chevalier T. THOMAS.

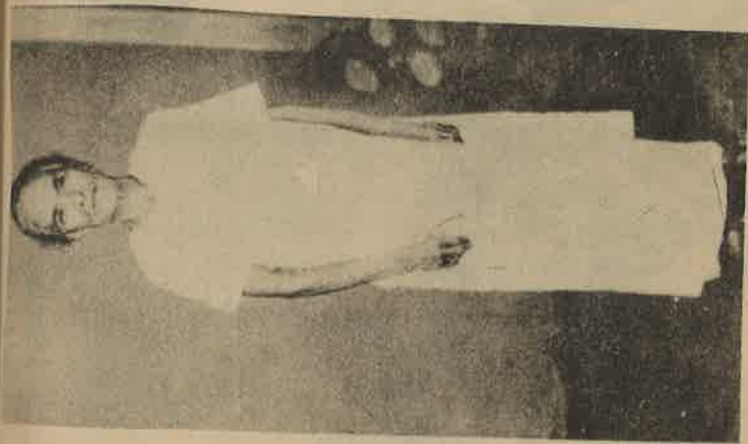
After his death, by the grace of God, I continue his work with the valuable help and co-operation rendered by our staff members and the heads of the institutions. I earnestly pray to the Lord Jesus Christ and Saint Mary to develop in me the qualities of forbearance and the mental attitude to do good to all. His countless, continuous efforts towards education and mankind will be maintained. He is the towering personality in the history of St. Mary's Schools and sister institutions. He believed that good parents breed good children and that duty, dignity and discipline are the priceless possessions of this world. He deserved any special credit for his efficient work. Efforts and Industry are important things to reach the goal.

We have paid our humble tribute to him by erecting statues in our campuses. If we are really sincere to him we have to develop our institutions as he liked. His life can be best summed up in these words of Shakespeare,

His life was gentle
and the elements
so mixed on him
that Nature might stand up
And say to all the World
" This was a Man ".

My object all sublime — I shall achieve in time.

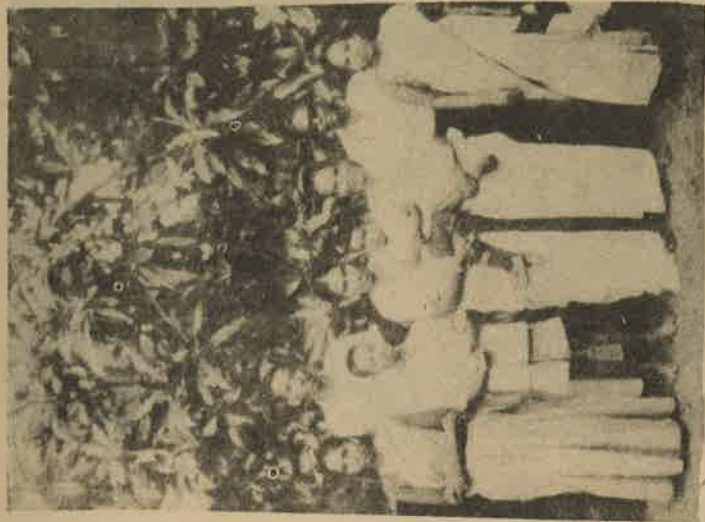
Family



Mother of Che. T. Thomas



While Young



Family Members



Family Members



Near His House



With Uncle and Mother



Blessings from Rev. Pautose - HI



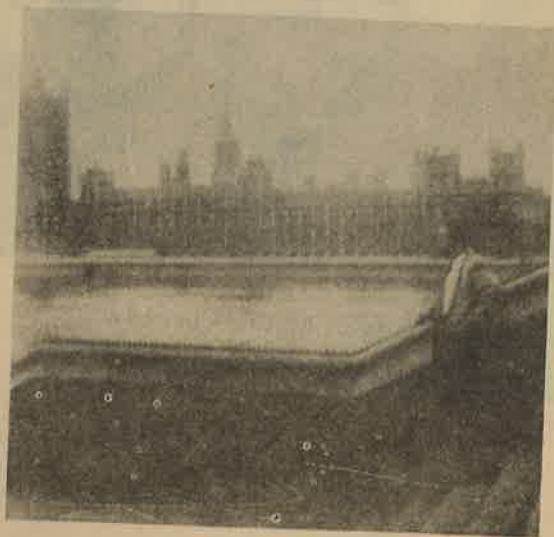
Family with the Patriarch



Amma with Mother - in - Law

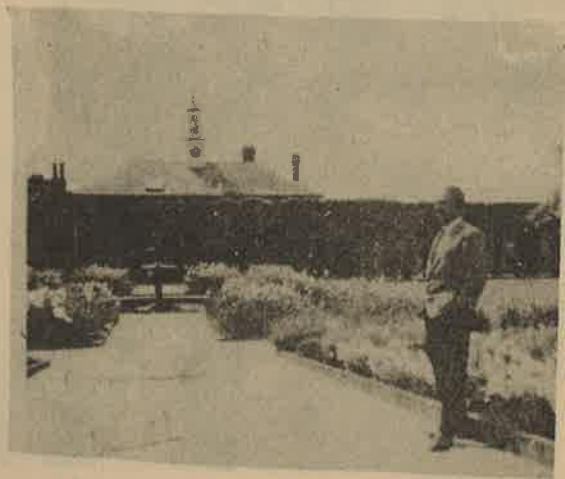


At London



Studies at London





**THE
MARRIAGE**



The Blessed Damsel



The Designed Man



Holy Communion — Bridgroom



Holy Communion — Bride



—The Priest's Blessing



The Wedding Ceremony



The Wedding Ceremony



Declared Man and Wife



Declared Man and Wife



Cutting the Wedding Cake



the couple



A Group Photo



The Bridegroom



At the Wedding Service



At the Reception



At the Reception



At the Reception



A Group Photo



In the presence of His Grace Abraham Mar Sēverios



With His Grace Paulose Mar Athanasius.



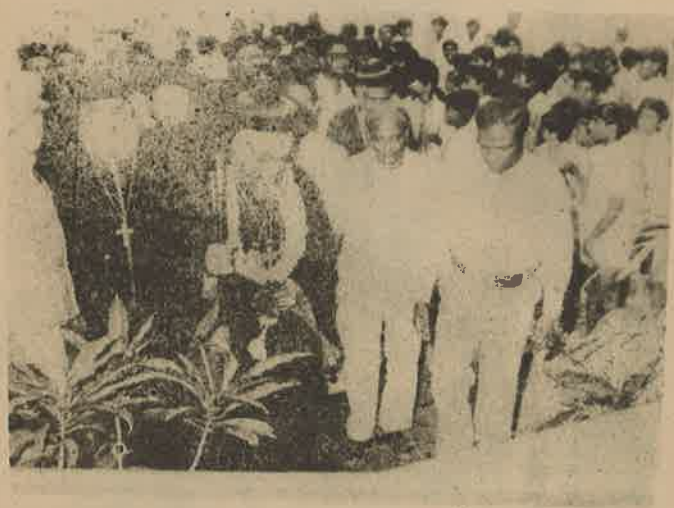
With His Beatitude Mar Basselius Paulose II.



In the presence of His Holiness Moran Mar
Ignatius Zakkai I — Iwas.

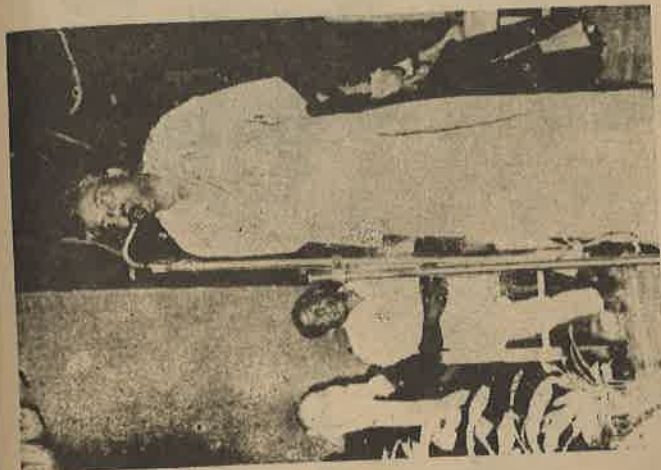


Leading His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakkai I -- Iwas.



With His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakkai I -- Iwas.

as.



Writli; former Educational Minister C. Aranganayagam

-Addressing the meeting





With the Ecclesiastical Order





With the Arch Bishop of Canterbury



With the former V. C. and Minister of Education



In the presence of His Grace Paulose Mar Athanasius.



With His Grace Thomas Mar Ostatios and His Holiness
Moran Mar Ignatius Zakkai I — Iwas.



In the presence of His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakkai — Iwas.



With His Grace Samuel Yesu Mar Athanasius
(Bishop in U.S.A.)



His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakkai I — I was
with the Family.



With the Ecclesiastical Authorities.



Welcoming His Excellency Mohantal Sukhadia



With His Excellency Prabhu Das Patwari
Governor of Tamilnadu



In the Presence of the Bishop



An Informal Talk



With the former President of India



Receiving a Moments from Mr. G. K. Moopanal



In a Lighter Mood



Amma with the Ecclesiastical Order.





His Excellency Being Welcomed



With His Excellency Jail Singh



Welcoming the British Deputy High Commissioner



With Hon'ble Education Minister



With Mr. & Mrs. Bakshi, Chairman, C.B.S.E.



With H. E. Prabhudoss Patwari



With Thiru M. P. Sivagnanam.

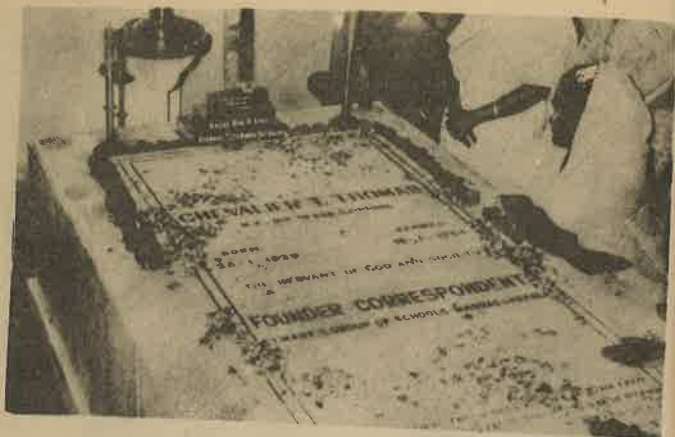
Amma with VIP



Amma Welcoming the Gathering



Amma with Educational Experts



Eternal Rest



Grand Epitaph



Never Alone.

CHEV. T. THOMAS-A TRIBUTE

CHAPTER - I

BORN TO SERVE :

Stop, and see the stately educational institutions in North Madras. They are high enough to strike the blue sky. Not one institution, but five great centres of learning in Madras and another one in Kottayam to speak volumes about this man. One generation creeps into oblivion followed by another; millions of people appear and disappear on this planet, but very few are remembered by posterity. Their names remain eternal in the history of mankind. On the epitaph of many, we read the following:

Name

Born on

Died on

but on the epitaph of this great man is written.

“ HERE SLEEPS THE NOBLE HEART WHICH CAN BEAR ANYTHING ”

Who is this great man? Who? Who? Who??? He is Chevalier T. Thomas whose name goes down in the galaxy of Educationists and Philanthropists.

A Unique Achievement

To establish and to bring up an institution among the elite of society is an easy task, but with prophetic insight he established institutions in the place normally known as 'BLACK TOWN' a place educationally backward.

It was a Herculean task. Every year thousands of pupils leave the portals of these institutions, paying rich tributes to the laudable achievements of this "MORNING STAR" of education. A man of indefatigable industry, propelled by the spirit to minister to people rather than be ministered, deeply impregnated in the minds of old and young. God in accordance with His Jivine clock, allowed him Fifty four years to erect monuments of learning. He established educational institutions not to become an 'EDUCATIONAL LORD' but to open the doors of Wisdom to the backward and the needy and to those who are not exposed to the impact of education.

PARENTAGE :

This man of great vision and dynamic leadership was born at Tiruvella on January 25th 1929. His father was Mr. Thomas Pappé. His mother Mrs. Eliamma, who infused religious faith in this great man, is a prayerful lady, who nurtured her children with enduring abilities, with care and love even after the demise of her beloved husband. Mr. P. M. Abraham, the maternal Uncle of Mr. T. Thomas, who is respected by everyone, remained a bachelor to bring up his sister's children. He is the guardian angel of the family.

"He profits most who serve best"



CHAPTER II

POISE THROUGH INDUSTRY

He had his schooling at M.G.M. High School, situated close to his house. He distinguished himself at studies and games. His short and sturdy structure enabled him to play Foot-Ball skilfully. Had he continued and specialised in soccer, he would have become "THE MARADONA" of our country. He had high esteem for his teachers. He entertained the teachers in the schools which he established and was always proud of them. He remembered his Alma Mater with gratitude, because it moulded him for a blessed future. He continued his loving relationship with his school-mates. For him, the road to a friend's house was not too long, as he visited his friends often.

When we are idle we are subjected to destructive thoughts, dangerous impulses and perilous pressures from within. "Satan finds mischief for idle hands." An idle mind is the devil's workshop" so go the proverbs.

Jesus Himself said. "I MUST WORK" (John 9 : 4) Jesus also said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5 : 17). He was a symbol of hardwork. At school he was studious and often assisted his beloved mother in domestic obligations. The art of untiring work gave him everlasting engagement in this worthwhile pursuit. This mighty man remained industrious right to the end. He was so busy he had no time for fear-producing worry-loaded thoughts, as he knew, "Work

does not kill a man, but worry does". He never sat on the stool of do-nothing, twiddling his thumbs, waiting for miracles to happen without praying or paying the cost through the medium of investing his time, talent and money.

There are some who would rationalize their idleness by their advanced years. But as years passed by, Chev. T. Thomas started many institutions, not resting on the laurels that he had already achieved. He never thought of immunizing himself from industry just because he was advanced in years.

Tennyson was eighty-three when he wrote "CROSSING THE BAR". Kent wrote some of his great philosophical works when he was past seventy.

Titian painted his incomparable "BATTLE OF LEPANTO" at ninety-eight, his "LAST SUPPER" at ninety-nine.

Michelangelo was producing masterpieces in the field of sculpture at eighty-nine.

"Industry" was the spirit in his life.

He started his career as a teacher in Susthankotta. He was a born teacher, his way of teaching Mathematics was appreciated and understood by his disciples. He moved with the pupils without reservations. He was a pedagogue of the first order. He was easily accessible to his pupils.

Teaching What a responsibility ! He was very concerned about the word 'Method'. According to him, the word 'Method' is simply descriptive of processes and techniques used by a teacher to communicate information to the students. Because classes differ in interests, mental ability and attention, the teacher must use teaching methods which are appropriate for a particular group. Children have learning characteristics which differ considerably from those of adults, so, teaching methods which may be very effective for adults will not necessarily have a rapport with children. Another major factor is the objective of the lesson. What goals are to be accomplished in the classroom period? As Findley Edge reminds us in his book, "TEACHING FOR RESULTS", good teaching objectives should be brief enough to be remembered, clear enough to be written down and specific enough to be achieved".

As an educational administrator, he deputed the members of the staff to get exposed to varieties of teaching by attending workshops and conferences. The teacher, who wishes to be really effective will be sure that his teaching is characterised by variety. In his addresses to the members of the staff, he often emphasised the teacher's own attitude towards his ministry as very important - He says, "Teaching is a genuine service to God, which must meet high standards the teacher may see variety as one of those standards of excellence towards which he must be constantly striving. The conscientious teacher can learn new methods by reading helpful literature, observing effective teachers and attending workshops and conferences"

Though he was a teacher for a short span of time, it gave him adequate training to measure the efficiency of teachers and their limitations. This learning process, enabled him to recruit teachers and to provide the best infra-structure for the institution though, with limited resources. He fell in love with the teaching- profession.

His experience abroad, made him seek for the values of creative writing. The most significant value of creative writing is the exploration into self, which it provides. When we articulate our feelings or ideas about a certain matter on paper, we tend to discipline our minds into orderly thinking about that subject. That is why College teachers assign term papers and other writing projects, which call for discipline of organised thought process. The practice of creative writing will certainly develop an insight into self-discipline and organisation of one's thoughts.

“ There are no gains without pains ”

CHAPTER III

AT POST OFFICE :

He appeared for the Competitive Examination of the P & T Department. He was selected and posted at the Mount Road Post Office, Madras in 1953. He identified with the local people. He was very popular with the co-workers in the Post-Office. He was a good and able conversationalist. He could strike a conversation with anyone on any topic. He poured out his future plans to his friends.

The leader must be good at communicating. He may have other skills because of the field in which he works, but he is to be first and foremost an able communicant. Good musicianship, for instance, is a pre-requisite for a good choir, but great musicians have failed as choir-directors because they could not communicate effectively to the members of the choir.

His ability to communicate effectively through speech and writing won the admiration of the leaders in every field. These were his more valuable assets. Communication is the means by which the leader reproduces leadership principles in others. He increased his credibility and authority when he used comparison that referred to the experiences of his audience. Everyone would get buried in his conversation and speech and hours would roll away, unnoticed. His conversation was studded with infectious humour. His basic concepts are

immortal and inspiring. As Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs says, "Ideas are imperishable leaders may come and go, personalities may live and die, but mental and spiritual concepts are immortal. These are the dynamics for changing the course of history and the lives of men and women".

His ready wit and flowing style amply salted with aptanecdotes drawn from his own wide experience made the listeners hang on his lips.

His conversational ability was matchless. His arguments were convincing and comforting. He never raised his voice even when he was in the midst of a heated argument. Members of the staff got away from his roof with comfort and consolation for having received a satisfactory reply for burning issues.

HIS CHOICE :

While he was working in the Post-Office, he carved a permanent place for Miss Saraswathi, his colleague, a lady with womanly virtues, daring propensities in executing assistance to the needy and showing great concern and sympathy for her colleagues. He thought that he was being attracted by the alluring qualities of Miss Saraswathy (Who later became his wife and co-founder of institutions) and waited to strike a conversation with his sweet-lady.

One day, he picked up courage and gave a Magazine (Femina) to her, telling that it contained a readable and

informative article on the rituals being followed at weddings in Kerala. He requested her to go through the article. She reciprocated. This was the beginning of the matrimonial bond.

"Your actions determine your worth"



CHAPTER IV

IN ENGLAND :

He had the vision. He wanted to sharpen the vision. He never wasted time with nonessentials. Napoleon had a vision. He saw himself as emperor of all Europe. He motivated those who fought for him. But he failed because his egomaniacal plan could never fulfil his vision of European conquest. Many educated people become disillusioned and disappointed because they suffer from "CRISIS OF PURPOSE" To be effective, a leader must constantly sharpen the focus of his vision.

His goal in life was to become an Aeronautic Engineer to model and modify the construction of planes. He wanted to go to England to pursue his studies in Aeronautic Engineering. He was fascinated by the firm idea of going abroad.

One day, when he was in the jocund company of his friend, he prophetically told that he would marry a lady, who would be willing to fund his travel to England and his studies, keeping in mind that his sweet-heart, Miss Saraswathy would come forward to support him at this venture. So did she. Mr. T. Thomas set sail to England in 1960.

He became very aggressive about modifying his goals to changing situations. He gave up his specialisation in Aeronautic Engineering and fell in love with English Literature and Economics. He worked as the General Manager in a Carbon Company and also got a Diploma in Economics.

He closely observed the custom and tradition of the English people. He developed a taste for their dishes. He would often imitate the dialogue of English people. The spirit of venture crept into his life style as he started exploring into the annals of English people. He studied the biographics of famous English leaders and British History. He often expressed "Risk-bearing will bring rewards, if it is meticulously executed"

Leaders are both born and made. In Shakespeare's famous lines, "Be not afraid of greatness! Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them" How can we be sitting around, waiting for somebody else to take the initiative and take none ourselves? What is needed is to leave a blazing trail for others to follow. He was determined to serve humanity. He became palpably singleminded and selfless. He emerged out with great inner-strength to face opposition and ridicule; staunch enough to endure obstructions and delay.

He visited great centres of learning like Cambridge and Oxford. The Pleasant sight of Public Schools like Harrow and Eton beckoned him with an irresistible call. These institutions implanted in his mind the necessity of quality education to be imparted to children of our country. He was greatly sharpened in his goal-setting. He started dreaming about great educational institutions in our country. It was 'creative imagination wedded to indomitable industry! Dream and reality, passion and practicalities must go together. Without the dream, the venture loses its direction and its fire, but without hard work and practical projects the dream vanishes into thin air. Yet he translated his dream into reality.

**"Take action, write down your plan,
work this into your goals"**

CHAPTER - V

THE VENTURE :

God used great leaders to save civilization and to give it spiritual direction. The true leader exerts a special influence because of his personality and gets his purpose accomplished. With this God-given purpose and talent, this great man was consumed by the ideal of starting an institution.

On his arrival from England (1964,) he commenced his task of establishing an institution. Preparation involves people. He shared his cherished idea with Miss Saraswathi, who readily agreed to render her full support for this noble venture. He thought, "Meaningful involvement of teachers and parents will be a key to the success of any institution." His enthusiasm was infectious. Enthusiasm comes from the Greek work "enthusi-asmēs" itself from "Ethos" ie, "inspired," we were inspired by his enthusiasm.

In 1964, with the support and supervision of Miss Saraswathi, he established an institution with 3 disciples and a teacher whose emolument was Rs. 50/- He was able to create expectancy in the society about the performance of the institution. He often sent a team of people to paste notices about the institution. He firmly believed that education was the liberating spirit for mankind. He wanted his staff and children to cultivate generosity, simplicity and contentment.

Though it was a humble beginning, it started growing in every dimension He surrendered his heart and soul to the institution. He prayed to Almighty for its growth and talked to everyone he came across about his institution. The institution became his centre of activity. He was single - minded in his venture. His friends discouraged him, but he never gave up his purpose. His way of developing an institution was practical and full of wisdom. His mission was to establish English Medium Schools, where no one else would have ventured. His aim was that "Quality - Education" must penetrate society. His effectiveness depended on hardwork and wisdom which God had supplied to him in abundance. He often quoted, "I am among you, as a serving man."

People in India and abroad came to know him through the institutions that he had established. No one could separate him from the institutions, because the institutions emerged out of his blood and sweat, to make the world better.

"A Vision is the revelation of God's will".

"A Vision is the foundation of leadership".

CHAPTER VI

THE MARRIAGE :

Marriages are made in Heaven manifested on earth. God in accordance with His will, brought Mr. Thomas from Tiruvella to work in the "Mount-Road, Post Office" where Miss. Saraswathy was working. Cupid was very active between them.

They had a common vision though the contradictions were visible between them. Pauline concept of "One Flesh" inspite of contradiction took deep root in exchanges of love between them. She admired him and supported his idea of going to England. Though they were separated by thousands of miles for four long years, they were one in spirit. He kept her informed about his life in England. So did she.

In 1972, he married Miss Saraswathy in accordance with the Syrian Orthodox Church tradition. She came to be known as Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, the Co-founder of his institutions. After his marriage, the educational venture gathered momentum. One institution after another emerged on the Educational map of India.

Metropolitan Timothy Aphren Aboodi aptly writes "Behind every great man there is a woman" and so we can say that "Behind every great woman there is a man" and both of them are great because they serve the rest. She took part in the agony and ecstasy of building institutions.

Both of them were consumed by the passion, of spreading education far and wide. They prepared the "Mandate" for this movement. This "Mandate," given by her beloved husband is followed by her faithfully in every respect.

"A prudent wife is from the lord" Prov. 19:14.

CHAPTER VII

THE DYNAMIC PRINCIPAL :

Do you know the single greatest problem in any organisation? The answer is simple : lack of managerial skills. Without help in dealing with people and developing skills in management, at best, most of us can give is only mediocre leadership. His leadership provided him with successful triangular relationship with 1) co-workers 2) parents 3) pupils. He was able to cope with a variety of situations. Psalm 78 : 72 gives a tribute to good leadership and management. "With upright heart he tended them and guided them with skillful hand".

To be a Pioneering Principal of a newly established school is a demanding job. He had to construct the school without foreign support, facing financial crunch. Most of his time was occupied with financial management. He arranged many "Benefit Shows" to generate money for his schools.

When several individuals get together, they develop 'Group Dynamics' by coming a group with a wide variety of interactions and common experiences. As a group, they have life and become "dynamic". This dynamic group consists of his able lieutenants like Rev. Fr. John (Principal, Redhills) Mr. T. V. George (Principal, Kottayam) Mrs. R. Sridhar (Principal, C. T. T. E., Perambur) Mrs. C. Jacob (Principal, Sembiam) and Mrs. Molly Thayil his former private secretary. This was a well

motivated team and worked day in and day out for the growth of these institutions. They often gathered round their reputed leader Mr. T. Thomas for planning programmes, and fellowship. Their undivided loyalty to their leader and devotion to duties contributed immensely to the growth of these institutions.

If anyone attempts to define the leadership of Mr. T. Thomas, they will fall in line with the statement of John R. Mott, who says, "Leadership is in the sense of rendering the maximum of service; leadership in the sense of the largest unselfishness; leadership in the sense of unwavering and unceasing absorption in the greatest work of the world, the building up of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ". He was able to balance practical planning with the trust in God. He achieved great things without moving out of his little old cabin by sending his lieutenants to accomplish the given-tasks. They did.

He was able to accept unreserved criticism. His skill in resolving personality conflicts and strained human relationships is matchless. We can quote a number of instances, and this book will be a big volume. For many, the world leadership cannots power, authority, honour, prestige or personal advantage, but for him, it seeks to be of service, rather than to dominate. He encouraged the disappointed and inspired the Co-workers in low spirit. He is the gift of God to us.

**"A leader works toward a goal
through the co-operation of people".**

CHAPTER VIII

INSTITUTION AFTER INSTITUTION :

Mr. T. Thomas did not stop with one institution. He went on building one institution after another. People thought that he had become crazy and his educational empire would tumble-down. He had determination to overcome difficulties. He had pressures and problems but he had God-given power to overcome all obstacles. He could have stopped with one institution but as a tireless ambassador of education he continued his mission. He established the following institutions:

1. 1964 — St. Mary's School (St. Mary's Boys' Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Perambur, Madras-11).
2. 1975 — St. Mary's Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Red Hills.
3. 1979 — Marian School, Kottayam.
4. 1980 — St. Mary's School, Sembium (St. Mary's Girl's Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Sembium).

He had an idea of establishing a College for Girls and a Hospital in Perambur. His beloved wife Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas with great zeal and enthusiasm has fulfilled his vision. She kept his vision and follows his foot-steps in building one institution after another.

He was aware of the educational needs of the people in North Madras. This awareness called him for action and he launched out. His response to the awareness contributed to his excellent performance in the short span of time. He was the great "Planter of Institutions".

He was the designer and engineer of his buildings. He constantly painted the picture of the building in his mind. Every brick and each piece of iron in the building is the symbol of his blood and sweat. Every evening he used to visit the places of construction, translating his engineering skill to find its berth. He used to look at his stately buildings and have a sense of gratification. He murmured, "This is the Temple of Learning I built by the grace of God".

Though he was a great builder of institutions, his life-style was simple. He believed in simple living and high thinking. He was contented to live in a small room and spent his hours at home on a "Small Settee". The small room was a multi-purpose apartment for him. He could have adopted the life-style of a Baron but he often

remembered the parable of the "Richman and Lazarus". Many homes were lit by the financial support given by this generous giver. When people approached him, for financial assistance, they always returned with a load of money and a heart of gratitude. When calamity struck the houses of the members of the staff, he would be there on the spot to render his assistances. This remarkable quality enabled the members of the staff to rally round him and he has been immortalised in the hearts of millions. He became one of the members of each family of the Marians. His identity with the members of the staff was par excellence and never created a wall of separation between him and the multitude of his staff members. His institutions are "Beneficial Permannences".

"Give God the glory".

CHAPTER IX

THE RELIGIOUS MAN

“He honour those, who fear the Lord” Psa. 15:4

He was brought up in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. Prayer and reading the “Bible” became his inseparable daily practices. He had the following verse as guidance, “For them that honour me, I will honour and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed”. His depth of understanding of the history of Indian Churches was accurate and he often quoted anecdotes from Church History either in his conservation or speeches. Before constructing the school buildings, he constructed the Church. It falls in line with the Biblical concept “Seek Ye first, the Kingdom of God and everything will be added unto you”.

HIS RELIGIOUS EXERCISES :

Every day before going anywhere, he was in the habit of going to the Church and prayed. He used to light candles and fall prostrate at the altar. He knew that, “Many things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of”.

As soon as he stepped into his small cabin which was the controlling room of all the activities of the institutions, he never forgot to pull the drawer of his table to take out a small Bible. Then he proceeded to glance at the living verses of the Bible. As he had committed many verses of the Bible to memory, he was able to quote from the Bible at relevant junctures. He brought relevance and practical applications to the interpretation of the Bible. He often spoke about the religious impact of his mother on him.

He took the initiative to establish St. Mary's Chapel at the residence of Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas and it was consecrated on 8-9-1970. The consecration service was conducted by His Grace Mathews Mar Athanasius, Metropolitan Bishop of the outside Kerala Diocese, in the presence of very Rev. Aphram Aboodi. The regular services commenced from 14-2-1971. Rev. Fr. C. M. Thomas was in-charge of the Chapel.

His religious faith is pronounced as he named his institutions in the name of St. Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. He was very particular in naming the beautiful Auditorium after the name of the Saint Mar Gregorious. He got his sweet-heart converted to Christian faith and the marriage was solemnized at St. Mary's Chapel. He was an active member and a regular

participant at the Divine Services held at St. Mathias Church, Vepery in tune with the Christian Orthodox tradition. He was ready to extend hospitality at any time to anyone belonging to the ecclesiastical order. His kindness often refreshed the hearts of God's people. The saints of God gained much joy and comfort from his concern and love. Many outstanding men of God visited his institutions and conducted Holy Mass at St. Mary's Chapel. He always gave top priority to worship, prayer and reading of the Holy Bible. Rev. Fr. K. J. John aptly writes, "He had immense faith in God, and began his days by a firm commitment to the Almighty. It was his practice to read the word of God immediately after entering this office. He was particular in observing the Church canons. By constructing the place of worship before starting the temple of learning he has proved his immense faith in God. He respected all communities and selected staff irrespective of caste, creed or religion. He believed in the hierarchy of the Syrian Orthodox Church. In recognition of his distinguished services, the Patriarch of Antioch, the supreme head of the Syrian Orthodox Church conferred on him Knighthood when His Holiness visited India in 1982, and accorded him with the highest honour which our Church could confer on the most illustrious among its members".

His faith in God gave him the inner strength to serve humanity following his Master's voice "To Minister and not to be Ministered". His devotion to Church gave him "Holy Boldness" in his noble ventures.

CHAPTER X

HIS DEATH AND AFTER

His death was sudden. He died of a massive cardiac arrest. He murmured a prayer, with the shadow of death passing by. The Founder of the Centres of Learning, the Upholder of Christian Faith, the Friend of the poor fought the good fight and completed his race. Each institution had worked an elaborate plan to celebrate his birth day on January 25th 1984., but to everyone's disappointment, he joined the heavenly choir! The news of his death spread like wild fire. People started, pouring in to have a glance at the mortal body of this great soul. His wife who was away at Marian School, Kottayam was not by the side of her beloved husband at the time of his death. This great man, who often called "Saraswathi, Saraswathi", became motionless his voice was still. Darkness covered the place and grief filled the hearts of his kith and kin, friends pupils-teachers and parents. The race designed by the divine, was over. He ran the race faithfully. What a legacy, he has given to posterity! The institutions are the monuments of this great man, moulding many thousands of pupils and giving noble employments for many thousands. He was the noble soul who realised the divine sovereignty and human responsibility. He has been immortalised by his life-style and service to Society.

A void was created by his death. The mantle of leadership had fallen on his beloved wife, the co-founder of all these institutions. Within the short span of four years, she established the following institutions, to carry out the unfinished tasks of her beloved husband :—

- 1) Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women.
- 2) Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth Matriculation Higher Secondary School.
- 3) Daniel Thangam Orphanage.

Everyone started calling his wife " Amma ", and she in turn discarded her multi-coloured dresses and put on a white costume. She is the " Mother " to 10,000 students and more than 600 teaching and non-teaching staff in the different institutions. Fear is unknown to her and forgiveness is an embodiment of her character. She toils day in and day out for the welfare of the staff and the growth of the institutions. She is " Amma " to the poor, pupils and staff. With her indefatigable industry, she works hard to mobilize the correct and pleasant public attitude towards her institutions. She is the harmonious blending of iron will and tender heart. She cannot withstand the killing of small creatures like ants. Tolerance is her virtue. Within the short span of four years, she has proved her enduring abilities to put jealous people to cover their faces with shame and remorse. The institutions with her guidance shot into the limelight by securing State Ranks consequently for three years (1986-1988). The assets and

the facilities of these institutions increased in every dimension. She is the Queen of the mighty Educational Empire with the servant-heart. She is an expert in generating money for the institutions and also in preparing institutional advertisements.

Her concern to improve the co-curricular activities in these institutions is matchless. She takes pains to improve the standard of performance in cultural activities. Her presence makes the people conscious of their responsibilities.

The tone and tenor of her voice is for the welfare of the employees. She announced welfare measures like pension scheme for the members of the staff, and she is very keen to introduce all welfare measures instituted by the Government. She treats the members of the staff as her family members.

Recently, she visited the Cancer Institute in Adayar to see one of the old students who was admitted and waiting for an operation. Her presence was a source of consolation to the parents of the boy and she offered substantial financial assistance. This shows the motherly love of our Amma. Who on earth, takes care of an old student of our institution, in this fashion !

“ His work continues ”.

CHAPTER XI

THE LEGACY

To make an attempt to analyse the leader of this stature calls for a stupendous task. It will never be exhaustive. Anyone could have identified, the servant spirit, the organisational acumen, the administrative expertise and the Christian leadership in him. His exemplary qualities are his legacy to us. He was a leader and an achiever. He had many memorable contributions to his credit. We thank God for this kind of people who enrich our culture and who inspire by their example.

His innumerable friends speak volume about his distinguished traits. He was always seen with his infectious laughter among the company of his friends. His attitude towards people was always friendly. He had no enemies, though people were jealous of his rare achievements. He was fully aware, "one's life does not consist in the abundance of things, he possesses". His lovable character won friends for him from every strata of society.

In the sanctuary of solitude, he had his concept of service crystalised. He often placed himself in solitary confinement, to have his inventory of his achievements. After remaining in solitude, he returned to his desk energetic and creative. He was often seen with his eyes closed, in a deep pensive mood. In mental seclusion, his mind got enlightened to pursue his goals.

Any institution is the lengthened shadow of an individual. He planned for a school that would be the finest in the city. His institution multiplied as there existed a great demand for his schools, followed by the flow of money. He never built a house for him, but he built institutions. He had the staying power, though he had to confront with manifold problems. He never had the mad passion for applause, he would like to stand behind the screen. He always treated everyone as equals. He eloquently expressed his love in deeds.

In the social area of life, he would, "in honour give preference to one another" (Romans 12: 10)

In the intellectual arena, he would subordinate his intellect to the mind of Christ that it might be maximised in serving others.

In the financial area of life, he followed, "Earn all you can and save all you can to give all you can for as long as your can".

Without risk, there is no forward movement. He dared to start an English Medium School in Red Hills. His mathematical ability and the financial management paid him good dividends as he went on taking risks in his educational ventures. He wanted to start an institution in South Madras. We hope that his wife would accomplish it soon. Of course, he demonstrated a thorough attention to details.

He handed down these institutions to our generation for their welfare and enlightenment. It is our duty to protect these centres of learning and proclaim the sacrifice and success of Chevalier T. Thomas.