

CHAVARA

A Champion of Education

Rosetta CMC

Abstract: Taking into account the immense educational contributions that Chavara rendered to the Church, the author portrays him as a champion of education. She also explores the spiritual and social life and the contributions that Chavara made in those fields. With his prophetic vision, he set in motion a comprehensive process of spiritual and social renewal in the Church and the society in Kerala. For the Kingdom of God, he explored the literary possibilities of the languages that were available to him and expressed himself in his own mother tongue in a unique manner. These works highlight the practical wisdom and sagacity of its saintly author. An educationist par excellence, Chavara realised that the members of the community, especially women, would ever remain downtrodden, if they did not move with the times and wanted to share with them the knowledge that he possessed and made arrangements for more. The steps that he took in order to disseminate it were bold and farsighted. As a result, several schools came up opening their portals to all irrespective of caste and creed. Similarly, he brought about a revolution in the lives of women by founding a religious congregation which was at the forefront of the empowerment of women at the time.

Keywords: Society, renewal, education, linguist, educationist, literature, testament, Church, school, Sanskrit, harijan, caste, Syro-Malabar, seminary, monastery, Carmelites, migrants, poet, women, prayer, empowerment.

1. Introduction

One of the most illustrious sons of the Church in India, Kuriakose Elias Chavara has been variously described as the guiding light to believers and non-believers alike, a good shepherd selflessly committed to the care of his sheep, a man of moral integrity and a pillar that supported the Church. The zeal and enthusiasm he evinced in the expansion and the protection of faith, proved him to be a spiritual luminary of the 19th

century. With his prophetic vision, he triggered a comprehensive process of spiritual and social renewal in the Church and the society in Kerala. He integrated in his multifaceted personality, a fine blend of *jnana yoga* which elevates one's intelligence and freedom to the divine presence; *karma yoga* which motivates one to be involved deeply in action and in service to humanity, *nishkama karma* attuned to further pronouncing the greater glory of God; and *bhakti yoga*, which enables one to make one's wisdom and *darsan* as a total self-oblation to the Divine, all steeped in prayer and contemplation.

On the occasion of the release of the postal stamp in honour of Chavara, in a function held in Trivandrum in 1987, R. Venkataraman, the then President of India, gave an appraisal on the life of this great soul. He said that he stands as a living inspiration for thousands of people in and around the country. He is gratefully remembered as a profound scholar, an educationist, a builder of institutions for the underprivileged, the illiterate, the destitute and the needy. Few people have been able to combine the contemplation of God with the service of man as naturally and creatively as this saintly soul. A mystic, he could also be an engine of activity. Being capable of withdrawing into his innermost being he was at the same time a motive force for the establishment of a social order in which everyone could live in dignity and faith.

2. In the Field of Education and Literature

Chavara was one of those rare priests of his generation who considered it better to retire from the secular world. The most remarkable feature of the man was that he withdrew from the world so as to penetrate into it more forcibly. He retired from it not because he disliked it but because he loved it; because he wanted it to become the Kingdom of God. All his attempts at educating and reforming people were motivated by the one desire that they should become people of God. The best means of making one's life useful and thus fulfilling one's mission is by educating oneself. Chavara tried to gain his full quota of knowledge. He learnt a good deal of Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit. He encountered great difficulties in learning Latin and Portuguese. Syriac was the liturgical language and the special field of his study. He gained some proficiency in Italian too towards the end of his life. We see a versatile linguist in him.

Chavara wanted to share with people the knowledge that he possessed. Hence, he took to translate this expertise and experience in various fields in writing. He was a prolific writer, both in prose and

verse. The diary he kept in his own handwriting for over a period of 41 years from 1829-1870 is an authoritative historical record of the Church in Malabar. As a stalwart champion of the cause of faith, he recorded the history of the Roccas Schism for posterity to be proud of. With resistance and loyalty he preserved the faith intact. His appreciation of his elders and erstwhile colleagues, and the co-founders, Fr Palackal and Fr Porukara has been recorded in biographies that introduce us to the history of the Church in the 18th century.

The document Chavara bequeathed to the members of his parish, known as the *Chavarul of a good father from his death bed* has become a treasured possession, and is full of sound prudence, love and insight into human nature. This document surpasses several other supposedly more popular ones by virtue of the immeasurably sincere and practical wisdom and sagacity of its saintly author. No wonder then that a man of his calibre could not rest until he saw his brethren attained at least a desired standard. He went all out to establish and develop as many centres of education as possible. His achievements in the field and the progress that the community made after his time are recalled by Fr Valerian briefly under the caption 'Kuriakose Elias was a brilliant scholar and a great educationist'. Until his time, the Church in Malabar had not achieved much in the field of education. Being proficient in different world languages, he became a powerful influence in the cause of Catholic education. He was also concerned with the general education of the laity. The protestant missionaries had then already started and experimented with the running of English Schools. He realised that the community would ever remain downtrodden, if they did not move with the times, and in 1846 the monastery developed a new organ in the form of a Sanskrit School.

As Vicar General of the Syrians he took a very bold step for which the country at large should be grateful to him. He issued a mandate, calling upon all parish Churches under his jurisdiction to start schools attached to each of them. He threatened to close down the churches that failed to comply with his orders. He had envisioned a central college for Catholics, but it did not materialise due to various unfavourable circumstances. It is largely because of the farsighted vision of Chavara, in the establishment of a school in each parish that today the Catholics of Malabar are literate to a high degree. Syrian Catholics, who were thus guided by him, have now to their credit several colleges, high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, industrial schools and a commercial school. He also wanted to spread English education. The first English High School of Syrians was

founded in 1885 at Mannanam and it is now enjoying a very enviable reputation.

Chavara respected and promoted the culture of his land. He considered the Indian culture a wellspring of resources capable of refining the whole world through its propagation. He encouraged his followers in the study and assimilation of the culture with that ideal in mind, started the Sanskrit School at Mannanam and proposed the idea of sending two candidates from each of the parishes for higher studies. As a result, there are many resourceful individuals who happened to be specialised in Indian Philosophy in today's Indian Church. Needless to say, Indian Philosophy receives great emphasis and renewed status in the modern seminary curriculum. The seminal ideas of Chavara in this direction have reached concrete forms over the years by way of centres for the promotion and study of Indian Culture.

3. An Educationist Par Excellence

Chavara founded the first school of the Syro Malabar Church. It was started at Mannanam in 1846. The uniqueness of the school was that it was a Sanskrit school where Sanskrit would be taught. The reason why he started it as a Sanskrit School is because from the Vedic period Sanskrit was considered to be the language of the elite. The starting of the first school at Mannanam and the late order that came from him to start schools adjacent to every parish church was prophetic and it triggered a great social change in the society in Kerala. This decree had far-reaching consequences. He was convinced that the faith of his people should not remain merely in the emotional level. It should be founded on deep-rooted convictions. As a result, several schools came up opening their portals to all children irrespective of caste or creed.

Today, the Harijans and Dalits are all well-educated and are placed in high positions all over the country. K. R. Narayanan, who was a Harijan by birth and was privileged to get educated, and consequently in the long run was exalted to the honourable position of 'The President of India', is a shining example. By the inception of several schools the situation changed rapidly. The educational revolution initiated by him caused rapid socio-cultural changes. Those changes in turn, resulted in a boom in the economics fields, inspiring well educated young people to go abroad in search of greater job opportunities further resulting as a chain reaction, in greater economic growth of the state.

4. Educational Vision of Chavara

According to Swami Vivekananda, education is the development of head, hand and heart. The objective of education should be character formation and competence. Chavara was not an educationist as we define today. He was mainly a spiritual leader and reformer who initiated a few educational endeavours in his time. However, his life and activities reveal his vision of education. He strongly believed that education is a source of power and means of empowerment of a person. In his last testament, he wrote about the importance of education as follows: "... when children reach the age of discretion they should be sent to school." One of the reasons for Kerala to become so literate is the contribution of the private as well as aided schools and Chavara laid the foundation for the educational endeavours of the Church.

Chavara took special initiative for the education of the Dalits. He insisted that the schools should admit dalit children and there should not be any discrimination against them. In order to encourage them, he gave them special assistance in the form of food, books, dress and so on. The midday-meal (*uchakanji*) scheme that is being implemented in the primary schools today has its roots in Chavara's initiatives in his days. In fact it was he who introduced it about one and a half century ago. He found that many of the dalits were not sending their children to school because they took their children along with them when they went for daily work. The main reason was that they had no means to feed them at home. In order to encourage the dalits to send their children to school he introduced this scheme by taking contribution from the general public.

At the time of Chavara, learning Sanskrit was the exclusive privilege of the Brahmins. By starting a Sanskrit school in 1864, attached to the monastery at Mannanam, he opened a channel for the Syro-Malabar Christians and others to learn Sanskrit. This should be the beginning of access to higher education for them. Strictly speaking, the printing press that he established need not be placed within the field of education. However, in an age when reading materials were rarely available in the local language Chavara started a printing press at Mannanam and contributed to the general education of the people. The unpretentious wooden press improvised by him has now been replaced by highly technical, digital and automatic machines.

Growing up, Chavara never had the benefits of higher education. Even in the special fields of morals, and theology, the instructions in

the seminaries were not of an enviably high order. The training of the priests was mostly centred round the Holy Bible. Based on this, he expounded his theology and morals so perfectly as to be a challenging match to foreign missionaries who were much better instructed. Perhaps it is not right to say that all this knowledge was of a purely natural order, the outcome of an intelligent, persevering study. The Catholic Church has examples of simple women like St Theresa of Avila, who had never seen the portals of a university being exalted as the Doctor of the Church! St Catherine of Sienna had no qualifications to dictate notes and letters of such perfection as to have held scholars, kings and popes spellbound. So the thoroughness of the knowledge that Chavara displayed should make one think whether God had not specially chosen him for this generation, out of the 'simple and ordinary' to confound the intelligent and the proud.

The most far-reaching, enduring and all-embracing field of activity initiated by Chavara through the monasteries in general and particularly from Mannanam was that of printing. One has to make a serious study to realise the tremendous impact the printing presses have had upon the Catholic life in the country. Prayer books, devotional books, signatures and numerous other timely publications emerging from these presses have permeated every Catholic home in the country. The prayer books published from Mannanam would have literally shown many the way to heaven. *Path to Heaven, Perpetual Adoration* and other prayer books have become part and parcel of Catholic life in Kerala. Through the varying vicissitudes of life, these publishing centres have been rendering yeoman service to the Church. When there were dissensions, difficulties and misunderstandings, various periodicals including dailies, weeklies, monthlies, annuals, special numbers, serial publications and well informed authoritative books were published in defence of truth.

5. A Poet and a Mystic

Chavara was a man of multidimensional talents. This included literary and poetic abilities which explored the depths of his mystical experiences. The seeds of Chavara's profound God-experience were sown in his family itself. His parents trained him in good Christian faith. They instilled in him an intense longing for personal intimacy with the Lord. He expresses this fact in his poem:

Mixed in her sweet milk, she regaled me
 With thoughts of heaven and words of grace so pure!
 Huddled close to her feet, I learnt aright

gently, of matters sublime, of my faith
 As at midnight, she rose and knelt at prayer
 Warding of sleep and petty dullness to the air.
 And when my infant tongue 'gan to lisp,
 Up to the sky, her finger point oft,
 The holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
 She, my noble mother made me repeat.¹

Chavara experienced God as his loving Father, a Father in whom he trusted for anything, anytime and everywhere; a Father who cares for him, who waits for him, who guides, inspires, directs and suffers for him. This father-son relationship instilled in him a deep love for his fellow-beings too. The experience of this filial love expressed itself mainly in two ways, his profound sense of gratitude to this Father, the source of everything good in and around him and his heart-rending sense of sin born out of this love.

What shall I render you, my Lord, my God,
 For all your wondrous gifts of mercy and love
 For cleansing my soul, so holy, spotless fair
 At the very start of my life

If poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, he is a poet, with an overflowing heart, pouring out his feelings spontaneously. His poetical works include *Compunction of the Soul (Atmanutapam)*, *Dirge (Maranaveetil Paduvanualla Pana)* and *Anastasia's Martyrdom (Anastasiayude Rakthasakshyam)*.

The long poem, "Compunction of the Soul," is cast in the epic mould. The theme and its subject make it differ from other grandiose works. In the poem, Chavara presents the life experiences of Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary. While describing these themes, he delves deeper into his own experiences and sheds tears of repentance pondering over the sins and weaknesses of his childhood. He seems indebted to several foreign books in composing his long poem. The most important among them is the Spanish work, the *Mystical City of God*, by venerable Mary of Agreda. Though the sources be many, Chavara reveals his inner feelings in style and imagery all his own. The poem begins with a beautiful description of God's mercy of which there is no limit. Most people who read the original version of it in Malayalam, are taken up by its rhyme scheme. What is remarkable is that, while adhering to strict standards of usage of rhyme, his

¹*Atmanutapam*, I, 49-68.

expression of ideas is in no way hampered. It throws light on the poet's artistic talents. For example:

Adinayakanaya Sarveswaran
Adathin Sutanay Chamachenneyum

He has composed the poem maintaining rhyme in the first letter of every line in a stanza and keeping the stanzas in alphabetic order. The third canto of the poem is an outline of the life of Christ:

The Lord of mercy, the Son of God
His glorious splendour, I long to see.

Malayalam, the language of Kerala, will always take pride in these beautiful and touching lines of poetry.

When we examine the poetry of the period, we rarely come across impressive and sweet melodies of this kind. Each couplet ends in '*kanakenam*' (I long to see you with my inner eyes). This indicates the poet's ardent desire to see the Lord and to be united with Him.

"The Babe in the Manger" is a canto in which poet employs a very simple but beautiful style to describe the poor and innocent shepherds who came to the manger to see the new-born babe. The lines describing the nativity are very delightful to the ear, as they are rich with felicitous expressions and powerful feelings.

As the lotus blooms or water lily rests
The babe reclined on the 'ocean's star! (Mary)
As the cygnet on a lotus bed, Him,
The 'star of the sea' in her arms cradled.

It was unfortunate that *Atmanuthappam*, in spite of its felicity of expression, musical quality and enlightening thoughts, remained unnoticed, undiscovered and unknown for more than a century. The beautiful lines of poetry which he composed, following a strict rhyme scheme, were quite surprising great poets.

You are the Lord of all sages of wisdom.
Yet you were born helpless in the midst of cattle.
You outshine every star of the sky.
Oh! Lord of the season, I long to see!

Only poets of high calibre could write beautiful and meaningful lines as these.

Another important poem of Chavara is a semi-epic poem - *The Martyrdom of Anastasia*. This was written in the semi-epic style (*Khanda Kavya*). This is the story of a girl called Anastasia who became a martyr in ancient Rome. It was written in unpretentious language and set to the rhythm of *vanchippattu*. The events treated in the poem are placed in the 3rd century A.D. When Emperor Valerian ruled the Roman

Empire, he insisted on the Christians under his regime on giving up their faith and burning incense at the shrine of Jove. In those days a nun named Sophia was the superior of a convent and Anastasia, a beautiful maiden was a member of this convent. One of the imperial consuls, attracted by her charm summons her to his presence to tempt her with gold and pleasures and to force her to renounce her faith and her virginity and to adore the pagan deity. However, before sending her to him, Sophia admonished her to be ready to lay down her life for her Bridegroom, Christ. Anastasia remained firm in her Christian faith, and was terribly persecuted. Even when locked up, she sang and praised God. Hearing about it the consul was angry and gave orders to cut off her tongue. She was killed brutally. The martyrdom of Anastasia is rendered beautifully in the style of a semi-epic poem. It is cast in the ballad form.

Sacrificing the diamonds and gold
As if the soil of the earth
Anastasia, a pretty girl of high birth and rank
Confines herself to the vowed life.

Chavara attempts to impress his readers with the tenacious but loving personality of Sophia who was not only the founder but also the shepherdess of the Convent. Before the emperor's servant forcefully brings Anastasia to the king's presence, the mature and prudent Sophia counsels her daughter. Her instructions are made lighter by Chavara's beautiful and impressive language:

Holy Sophia, hearing this news, held her daughter close and said,
Daughter dear, your blessed groom, calls you with a longing love
Go, be quick, recall your former days of joy,
Days your King stretched out his arms,
To clasp you close to Him with love;
The Lord who climbed the cliffs and hills,
The Lord who crowned His head with thorns,
The Lord who offered life and love, it is the Lord, your Holy Groom
Show His glory, show his might, the Lord you love so dear, and
well,
Oh! He your constant friend forever men of earth shall never
possess.

The great critic Sukumar Azhikode remarks: "The people whom we honour today are of the 19th century. However, we should bear in mind that they have created not only the 19th century but also the 20th

century.”² Chavara is one of the trendsetters of our age. His literary works are beautiful gems of Malayalam language.

6. The Empowerment of Women

Chavara’s vision anticipated modern developments in yet another field – the empowerment of women. As early as 1864, he laid the foundation for the Indian religious Congregation for women, thereby accelerating the great change that has come about in the status of women. Thus he represented a major manifestation of the Indian Renaissance which would eventually raise underprivileged, alleviate distress and infuse into the people a sense of pride in themselves. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, comments on the antiquity and significance of Christianity in India as follows: “Remember, St Thomas came to India when many countries in Europe had not yet become Christian and so those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and higher ancestry than the Christians of many of the European countries.” It is a matter of pride to us that it so happened.

Convinced of the glory of God’s vision for women as revealed in the Bible, Chavara decided to rectify the defects in man’s attitude to women prevalent in the Church and the society of his time. He imbibed the spirit of the Scripture and gave due dignity to women and tried to actualise that scriptural vision in his era. Mainly he assimilated the love, concern, openness and compassion of Jesus towards women. He also adapted the spirit of Jesus and worked for the uplift of women in the 19th century. He was an ecclesial visionary who realised the need of empowering women both for the social uplift of the families and for the committed service of the Church.

The social, religious and educational scenario of Chavara’s time was not bright. Caste system was the most prominent social institution in Kerala in the 18th and 19th centuries. During this age, social, political and religious power was vested in the hands of the Brahmins and social institutions were manipulated in such a way that it yielded them maximum benefit. Values such as equality, freedom, justice and brotherhood did not mean anything in the caste-ridden structure. Slavery in its primitive form prevailed in the land with all its atrocities. Even the Brahmin women who belonged to the highest class of the

²S. Azhikode, “A Man of Millennial Fusion” in J. Mannathara, ed., *The Life and Legacy of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bangalore: Christ University and Viva Books, 2015, 242-248.

society were subjected to severe restrictions and were absolutely under the dominance of their men. Dowry, polygamy and family traditions were the weapons employed by men to keep women under subjugation.

The Christian and Muslim communities in Kerala in the 18th and 19th centuries also followed the general practices prevalent among the Hindus. The St Thomas Christians had adopted many of the Hindu socio cultural and religious customs. Their community was a patriarchal community. Women were totally subjected to men and no education was given to them after adolescence. In short, women were expected only to work and do their duties as daughter, wife and mother; they had no rights and voice either in the family or in the society.

Chavara, a man of ecclesial vision and action was concerned about the deplorable condition of women in the Church and in the society. As a social reformer and a pastor of the time, he took creative steps to reform these women. He was convinced that the uplift of women was a very effective means to improve the quality of life in the family. With the help of Fr Leopold, he founded a Congregation for women in 1866 at Koonammavu. With constant inspiration and challenging presence and guidance, he prepared these consecrated women in the Church for the empowerment of the women in the society. One of the main reasons for Chavara's action was the felt need of educating the women of Kerala for the integral development of families, Church and society. His efforts for the empowerment of women were creative, radical and prophetic and were far ahead of his time. His pioneering and most significant contribution to the Church was his programme, oriented towards the spiritual renewal of the society, primarily through the religious Congregations which he founded for the personal sanctification of their members and the salvation of souls.

Chavara had been the beacon not only to the Kerala Church and society of his time but also to the subsequent generations. He dreamt of the possible transformation that education could bring to individuals, families, the Church and the society at large. As a result, he planned a number of educational reforms. His adventurous steps to educate the people who belonged to the lower classes along with the upper class, and women with men were indeed path breaking innovations which accelerated the socio-cultural progress of Kerala and helped the state to occupy a lead position among the Indian states in educational reforms.

The founding of a Sanskrit school at Mannanam in 1846 was a revolutionary act at a time when Sanskrit was considered to be the sole prerogative of the Brahmins. The school that Chavara opened admitted all children without the distinction of caste and creed; this was done at a time when even in the schools run by the state, admission was denied to the low caste and dalit children. The Catholic movement by Chavara, the Ezhava movement by Sree Narayana Guru, the Nair movement by Chattampi Swamikal and the Muslim movement by Abdul Khader moulavi deserve special mention in this context. All these movements were directed towards eradication of discrimination on the basis of caste and caste taboos and the uplift of women in the society. However, Chavara was far ahead of most of the social reformers of the 19th century Kerala society.

The profound God experience of Chavara led him to commit himself for the good of humanity. This deep God experience made him a radical disciple of Jesus, a true visionary with a mission. He expresses his great love for his brethren and works for their uplift in spiritual, mental and material spheres. It was his total faith in the providence of God and his Christ experience that gave him courage in all his endeavours. With the love of God and love of the brethren, he forged a vertical and horizontal relationship. He tinted his life in different ways as a pastor and a pillar of the Church, as one of the founders of men TOCD and prior of the religious community and as a catalyst of the society. Like Prophet Elijah, he led a life burning with zeal for the living God. He strenuously worked for an all-round reform, renewal and development of the Church and the people.

Chavara was so active ecclesiastically and socially that he brought massive and sweeping reforms during the sixty five years of his life in the complex and complicated history of Kerala during the 19th century. He realised that 'a lot of good was being neglected' because of the absence of religious houses. Hence, he made arduous efforts and established a religious house for men, a *darsanaveedu* on the top of Mannanam hill in 1831. For the general renewal of Christian life, several renewal programmes were introduced. He was not only a spiritual leader but also a leader of the society.

The efforts of Chavara to serve the poor and to empower women were unique in the history of the Kerala Church. Women empowerment was part of his integral vision for the renewal of the society in his time. He realised that the situation of women in Kerala would change with the help of religious communities for women. This socio-pastoral and ecclesial vision of Chavara is realised in the

foundation and mission of CMC. He envisioned that a group of religious women empowered through education and committed for the glory of God and the service of people could change the destiny of other women and transform them into dynamic individuals who could make significant contribution towards the building up of the Church and the society. Through her apostolate of faith formation, education and all her welfare activities, a CMC sister empowers women and children. The uniqueness of the apostolate of CMC is that they are a continuation of the apostolic activities of the saint in the 19th century with various adaptations. In the ensuing years, CMC became an effective catalyst of social change and a spiritual movement in the society.

The contributions of CMC towards the empowerment of women in the contemporary Indian society are great. A remarkable transformation has been realised in relation to the status of women, such as, social, economic, political, educational and religious. Thus they could empower the women of the 21st century to a great measure. A comparison of the 19th century situation of women with that of the 21st century helps to realize that there is great positive difference in their social, economic, political and religious status. Women were freed from various bondages through education and empowerment programmes provided by the state, Christian missionaries, Catholic Church, social reformers like Chavara, religious Congregations like CMC and all the other organizations in the time. The CMC and the CMI Congregations founded by Chavara have played a significant role in making education a vehicle for enlightenment, liberation and empowerment. The socio cultural and economic status of women has made significant progress. The women of modern India want to be liberal, educated and suave. She is no more confined by the four walls. There is a steady growth in her self-esteem and confidence. She has started exercising greater control over her own life. This has resulted in changed power equations at her home, her workplace, the Church and the society. The number of working women is rising day by day.

In spite of the empowerment of women, the major problems and struggles which women are facing in the present century cannot be ignored. In principle, women are indeed considered important and equal partners of men in the process of development, but in practice they are either discriminated against or ignored. There are several facets of gender discrimination both in the family and in the society. The subordinate position of women in several states of India is indicated by the lower ratio of girls to boys, the growing domestic

violence, the increasing number of dowry-death, rape, bride-burning, sexual harassment, eve-teasing, female infanticide, gender exploitation in the work place and by the increasing number of girls reported missing especially in the villages. Trafficking of women and girls is becoming more common. Women are easy targets of sexual assault and violence. When it comes to their rights, women are often not aware of their rights to property and education, their legal and political rights, their decision-making power or even their basic human rights.

The above listed predicaments of women are constant reminders to CMC to think and act courageously and faithfully to keep and work for the dignity of women. The men of the society need to be made aware that they accept and uphold their own dignity only by respecting the dignity of the other half of the society - women. Equally important is the need to conscientise women themselves to stand up for their own sake. Both these are inevitable to give a dignified life for women in the contemporary society. CMC need to open their eyes and take the responsibility of finding new ways and means to empower women. The dream of Chavara will come true only when each member of the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel is transformed into a motivated, committed and dynamic religious who can witness and serve as an instrument of encouragement and empowerment for every woman she meets in creating a better world also for the less privileged.

7. Conclusion

Chavara is the pride not only of Kerala, but of the entire humankind. The good he did over a span of six and a half decades has left a lasting legacy. His life is an inspiring and edifying saga. He dedicated himself wholly to God and worked always for the social, cultural and educational uplift of his people. Kerala premiers several other Indian states for its literature, art, movies, sports and so on. The enterprising immigrants from this strip of land are found all over the world. The Church in India has just celebrated with great splendour and devotion the canonisation of Chavara, one of the stalwarts in its 20 centuries of history. His contributions are radically ecclesial, down to earth, people oriented, exceptionally prophetic, integrally and ultimately spiritual. We cannot but marvel at that golden personality which stands out ever luminous and unique in the Indian ecclesial, educational and social arena.