

EDITORIAL

Benny Paul Thettayil CMI
Editor-in-Chief, HE

Shooting stars are objects resembling stars that quickly shoot across the sky. In reality, these amazing streaks of light that are seen in the night sky are caused by tiny bits of dust and rock that hit the atmosphere of the earth when they are dislodged from their orbits in space. Their velocity is accelerated so much that they heat up and glow as they move through the atmosphere. The velocity further contributes to the visual effect of a trail that the shooting stars leave behind momentarily. These are actually what astronomers call meteors. Most of the meteors burn up in the atmosphere before they touch the surface of the Earth. However, once in a while, a meteor appears that is large enough not to burn itself out. Part of it survives the journey and reaches the Earth's surface. This rare mass that reaches the earth is called a meteorite. At certain times of the year, you are likely to see a number of meteors in the night sky. These events are called meteor showers and they occur when the Earth passes through the trail of debris left by a comet as it orbits the Sun.

Trailblazers and Trailers

On account of the visual effect of the glowing trail that a shooting star leaves in the dark sky, it is also called a trailblazer. Analogically, the term is used for such rare personalities who, on account of their great contributions to the society, in a particular walk of life or several of them. They are also called trailblazers, for they blaze a trail for others to follow through wilderness, desert or untreaded terrains of life. Trailblazers are fast in pace and they loathe mediocrity that turns people into trailers rather than trailblazers. It is easier to be trailers of that which pulls you. It helps escape responsibility and security is guaranteed by that object that does the pulling. However, the invitation is to become people doing exciting work that could shape their fields of activities for decades and centuries to come.

Innovators and Imitators

An innovator in any field of endeavour is one of the first to introduce into reality something better than ever before. This introduction, in

turn, opens up new areas for others to follow suit. Such a person lives and moves in a society, which gradually begins to revolve around him because he is able to provide end-to-end solutions to the issues that he confronts in the society and helps members of the society bring their imaginations into reality. Often, an innovator is a very active consumer of and contributor to the cultural riches of a society and his novel and innovative ways reflect cultivated tastes for upscale standards. With dogged tenacity he works in pursuit of that which he has seen in the eye of his mind. Very often they are successful and sophisticated. They show how the energy inherent in people could be put to new or better uses in order to expand opportunities for or enhance the present status of the society. Like the shooting stars, innovators are few and far between but, that part of the society that was touched by the effect of this star eventually begins to feel the change from within. However, the world is full of imitators who for the right reason look up to the innovators for inspiration and direction. They fail to make any significant contribution to the society that they are part of. They depend on the innovators for leadership.

Trendsetters and Trendy-Tots

A trendsetter is an early adopter, who visualizes and brings into existence, and further into use, a fashion or trend before most other people begin to think of it. Subsequently, everyone else follows him. Trends are usually long lasting and indicative of a broader cultural shift as exemplified by the broad adoption of the educational initiatives in the nineteenth century South India in response to the educational initiatives of the Catholic Church. Sometimes trendsetters are so unconventional that their words, deeds, and innovations are not based on the well-accepted standards of the society. However, the trendsetters are so versatile that that they offer enough flexibility to suit the needs of the times. This flexibility helps form a cushion between two generations whose merge is often uneasy and jolting. They work and accomplish missions faster than their historical average. However, trendies are those who belong to a subculture who feed on the trends that the trendsetters set and hunger for ever newer trends that are set. Since their imagination is fed and trendy needs are met by the trendsetters, they fail to contribute anything significant to the society either.

Pioneers and Pirates

Pioneers start popular movements for the sake of the society. Their place is in the heart of the society. Often they do the fundamental work that will spawn future innovations and set new trends. The breakthroughs that the pioneers achieve in various fields will be taken up by tomorrow's leaders who share the vision of the pioneer. Often they take charge of the situation because they are people with high self-esteem. Since their resources from within are abundant, they exhibit motivations in high degrees. They are not only leaders who bring about change, but they are also most receptive to new ideas. Their vision in conceiving a movement, courage in pushing it to the limits to get it off the ground and persistence in keeping its momentum, leave a trail for others in the field. However, pirates live off the edges of a society and live on these movements. At the most what they do is to maintain the movements alive because the movements, in turn, keep them alive. The movements thrive or die depending on the number of the leaders and pirates there are in them bringing about a balanced growth and healthy survival.

Inventors and Investors

Inventors are those who identify a need of the society and are bent on meeting the need by finding a solution in remarkably novel ways. They are often immersed in presenting the society with something new. Their passions and creations reflect a cultivated taste for finer things in life – more refined and more perfect than that of the past generations. What is invented by them carries a mark of their taste, because the invention is the externalization of their independence and personality. Despite the fact that they are among either the established or emerging leaders in a given area of taste, they continue to seek and meet challenges. Versatility is their hallmark that their lives are characterized by variety. Investors, on the other hand, invest in expectation of a return of what they invest, but in multiplied measures. Profit is the aim of the investment. The means (investment) and the aim (profit) feed on each other, never able to come out of the mystifying but lucrative labyrinth that the investors create for themselves.

Visionaries and Worshipers

Visionaries are those farsighted people, who, for the sake of the society, are able to gaze into the future and are able to visualise

cutting-edge initiatives and solutions for the vexing issues that the members of the society are grappling with. Thanks to the experiences of engaging with the challenges he encounters, a visionary is able to engage with a wide cross section of the society where there is an opportunity to interact with raw realities of life. Moreover, he visualises dynamic platforms to bring together people with a similar vision, from various walks of life, to have a unity in purpose and encourage integrated action that matches the complexity of the issues that the society faces. Each section of the society is his concern that he either launches or becomes instrumental in launching initiatives that promote women and marginalised and ensures the participation of individuals and groups, men and women in the social and spiritual development and change. Worshippers, on the other hand, conscientiously follow an age-old ritual scrupulously practised by several generations that went ahead of them. Change is anathema to them and innovation is impossibility. They are there to follow – follow the instructions and translate the rubrics into action as if there is no relationship between rationality and worship.

Kuriakose Elias Chavara was one of such meteors that appeared in the overcast skies over India and left a well-defined trail for many a man and woman of the following generations to find paths that are answers to the burning issues that they faced in their locale, time, and society. The manner in which he left his mark on various areas of life, lighting up the ways for generations to come, would invite every man and woman not only to continue the various humanitarian projects that he undertook and the spiritual pursuits that he made, but also to be blazers of new trails in responding to the needs of the present time whose exigencies and priorities are very different from those of his times.

This Indian priest spearheaded an impressive number of initiatives, including a publishing house, several institutes, and two religious congregations – all aimed at maintaining and promoting the cultural and social present and preservation of Catholicism in the modern world. He intervened on behalf of the Church in Kerala at several turning points in her history. The interventions that he made at the arrival of an unauthorised Bishop, a request that he made for a separate bishop for the Syro Malabar Church and the liturgical practices that he implemented in the Church speak not only of leadership but also the vision that he had for the Church in Malabar. As one of the greatest scholars of his age, his educational initiatives

that addressed the challenges of the formal education system offered a viable alternative that enhanced the access to quality education for people from low-resource backgrounds.

Chavara reportedly drew his strength from the hours he had spent in prayer and contemplation each day. The secret of his intense and busy life is found in the long hours he gave to prayer. He preferred to pause before the Blessed Sacrament, to gain spiritual fortitude and return to gaining people's hearts, to bring them back to the sources of life by means of fresh pastoral initiatives. Engaging himself socially, spiritually, and intellectually in his society, Chavara became a true herald of the good times to come, the Herald of the East.

Herald of the East was launched in 1992 with the intention of making available relevant and topical material to a wide range of leadership on society, religion, and politics especially in the light of the teachings and engagements of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara. The launch was modest, the presentation was adequate, and response was encouraging. The momentum of the publication was maintained until 2007, when, unfortunately, it had to be discontinued.

On the occasion of the canonization of Kuriakose Elias Chavara, when the universal Church has deigned to recognise the sanctity of his life and person, we deem it highly opportune to relaunch of the *Herald of the East* for the following reasons: to honour the saint with a literary memento rededicated to a wider readership at this high point of the saga of studies, prayers, and symposia on the life, activities, and writings of the saint; to let the Christian Churches in the East hear the tales of the luminaries that set their skies ablaze; to honour the original visionaries of HE who deemed it the need of the hour to set up a forum, on the one hand, for various voices in the East to be heard when they raise them for a reason and, on the other, to make these voices available to those who would like to listen to them; to thank the numerous contributors (some of whom have left for their eternal reward since), who kept the HE alive and vibrant all those years with their scholarly and valuable studies and research. It is for these reasons that it was considered significant to acknowledge them in the first part of the relaunch issue. The aspiration in this relaunch of HE is to continue the discussion with renewed vigour, to look at the saint and his contributions in the light of the new studies that have been made in the recent years.

A note on record regarding those innovators who in whose fertile minds did the possibility of a relaunch of HE begin to stir, and on the

ones whose responsible shoulders the privilege was placed would be in place. They knew the steps needed to take right now. The brighter side of the relaunch is the solid and more fecund grounds that HE is replanted onto, namely, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK), which has a rich and long ecclesiastical academic tradition. The new base certainly will infuse new hope, vision, and viability. In addition, He has joined four other significant journals of high standard published by the Pontifical Athenaeum. No massive overhaul of the original was envisaged. However, the new creative team taking over the journal sensed it fit to give it a new look and a new tone.

Presented in the following pages are some of the facets of the MAN that Chavara was, the MILIEU that he lived in and the MESSAGE that he disseminated along with some of the initiatives that he launched.