A Unique Phenomenon

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Thangal Kunju Musaliar was a unique phenomenon of a bygone age when higher education in professional field was in its infancy in India. In spite of the fact that Kerala was fairly well advanced in general education, in the field of professional higher education it was far behind many other States in the country. The initiative taken by Musaliar to establish an Engineering College in the early fifties was a pioneering step unheard of until then in the State. Although he was not a highly educated person in the conventional sense, he was a man of vision who understood the importance of higher education, particularly professional education for the development of the State. Musaliar was also an entrepreneurial genius who could conceive the potentiality of developing the cashew industry in Quilon and the neighbouring areas. It is amazing that he established the cashew factories, as an organised industry at a time when Kerala was a backnumber in industrialisation. By establishing such a large number of factories Musaliar gave not only employment to thousands in the State which was suffering from chronic unemployment but also helped the country to earn precious foreign exchange. His contribution in other areas such as newspaper industry, journalism and encouragement to writers and intellectuals has also been remarkable. His interest in disseminating ideas and fearlessly expressing his views on social, economic and political issues earned him the reputation of a man of courage and character. He was not a politician in the ordinary sense in which we understand that term but his interest in politics as an art and a science was deep and abiding. Above all, he was a humanist and philanthropist.