

Thangal Kunju Musaliar

Founder, TKM Group of Educational Institutions

His dreams, ideas and ventures belonged to a league of their own as he gave priority to the interests and welfare of the society than his personal gains. He foresaw the importance of education and the empowerment of women, and centered his businesses around these concepts that played a key role in the upliftment of society

TKM GROUP





THE MAN WHO WALKED AHEAD OF TIMES

T.K. Musaliar was of the conviction that an act of goodness means giving to others without being asked and without expecting anything in return. He built his enterprise empire on this value system, and gave priority to the development of the community than that of his business

TKM. Three letters. But what they wrote was an epic.

It is a saga of one man's vision that transformed a community, empowered women, educated youth, and turned a town into one of the most developed regions in the state.

And those letters still stand tall among Kerala's celebrated entrepreneurs, social activists and educationists. On a pedestal that is not easy to reach is Thangal Kunju Musaliar, the game changer, the progressive thinker and the true visionary of a bygone era.

It is a bit beyond our imagination that a person from Kollam was featured in the Fortune Magazine in the 1940s as "the single biggest employer in the world." Not an exaggerated tagline, of course. Because, during that time Musaliar directly employed more than 30,000 persons! Not a small feat, and the number easily touched a lakh if the people who were



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TKM
SINCE 1956

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The lustre of those three letters has only increased with the passage of time. TKM shines bright on the front-line of Kerala's professional education scene which was witness to Thangal Kunju Musaliar's pioneering move to launch engineering education in the private sector in 1956.

Amazing indeed to recall that T K Musaliar built



He planned everything with the objective of adding more value to people's lives. Jobs in the factories and tile unit, business opportunities at the shopping complex, and educational facilities at the schools and colleges....he wanted others to be benefited from all his ventures

Kerala's first modern shopping complex way back when retail was in its basics. Constructed in the shape of a ship, the building housed a number of shops and two movie halls, a multiplex in today's lingo. A mall actually, at a time when such a concept was getting popular in metro cities. Musaliar's vision for Kollam was truly one of its kind. And even now it remains the landmark of the town, proudly showing off its connect with history.

How do you define a man who has left his imprints so deeply on the ethos of a whole town and its people? A man whose name brought Kerala to global attention for its employment status? Thangal Kunju Musaliar definitely stands apart in the entrepreneur clan of Kerala for his public-oriented work that aimed at developing the community economically and









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socially rather than amassing wealth for the promoter.

T.K. Musaliar was not just an enterprising social entrepreneur. He traveled, he wrote books, he published a newspaper and spoke eloquently about social upliftment, spirituality and humanity.

"When the mind begins to experience the sensation of physical comfort, joy or satisfied desires; the intelligence has to act as judge with consciousness as mediator" is one of his oft-quoted observations on leading a focused life.

A magnanimous personality indeed. A pioneer who put people's welfare above his personal gains.

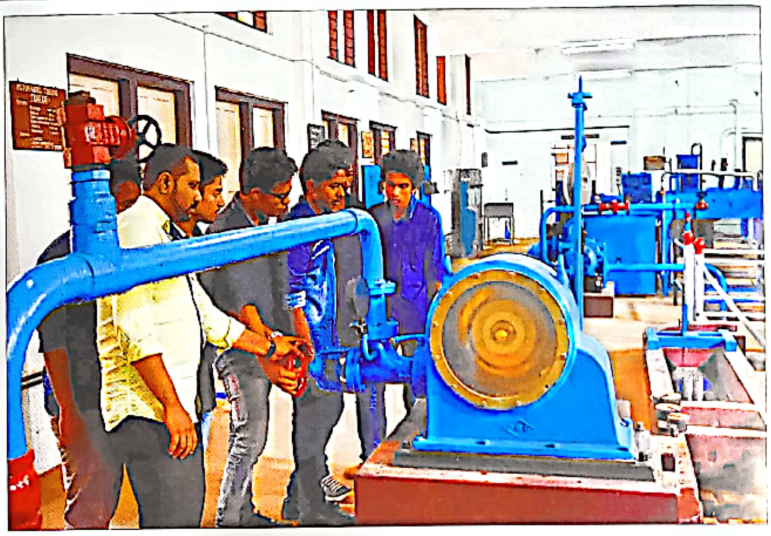
A hero for all

Who was Janab Thangal Kunju Musaliar?





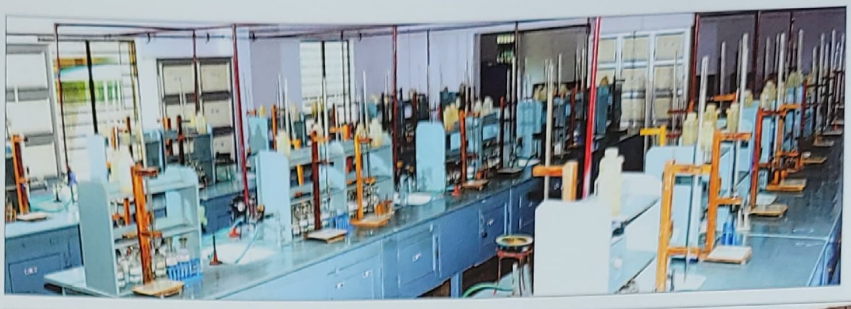




Higher education facilities and employment possibilities for the youngsters of Kerala underwent a massive change through the institutions started by T.K Musaliar that gave a new meaning to quality of learning

















Born in a family that traces its ancestry to the legendary Islamic missionary, Malik Ibn Deenar who came to India in the 8th century, T.K Musaliar created an empire of his own through sheer hard work, passion, commitment and leadership. Right from an early age, he felt he owed the society a great deal for all the blessings that life had bestowed on him. He was of the view that achievements should be shared to make their value last beyond one's lifetime.

And that 'People First' concept slowly became the core philosophy of all the enterprising













activities of Musaliar, making him one of the most respected Malayalees of all times.

It would be difficult for many people to believe that such an industrialist lived amongst us whose priority was the upliftment of society.

"He believed that if the living standards of people were improved it would automatically lead to a better society, a better state and a better country," says Shahal Hassan Musaliar, T.K Musaliar's son and Chairman of TKM Group.

"He planned everything with the objective of adding more value to their lives. Jobs in the factories and tile unit, business opportunities at the shopping complex and educational facilities at the schools and colleges....he wanted others to be benefited from all his ventures."

Indeed, a story worth telling. Again and again.

A business tycoon from Kollam

Thangal Kunju Musaliar's goals always revolved around his vision for the people and his native land. But it was foreign lands that taught him the first lessons in working for a cause, helping others and developing a community.

It was to Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) that he first boarded a ship in search of employment. The journey that crossed waters marked the beginning of a decade of an illustrious career, business and exposure to totally new waves of thoughts. Those ten years abroad prepared him for the life as a businessman back home where his socially-committed work would be lauded for generations to come.

When T.K Musaliar finally returned to Kollam, he did not plan a major enterprise that would create wealth for himself. Neither did he want to invest his savings and spend the rest of his life in luxury.

Instead, he wanted to start a venture which would help the local economy to grow while providing jobs to the people in Kollam. And a cashew factory matched his idea of an enterprise with a social cause. He started a tile unit, a tin factory and a company that dealt with tugs and barges. He kept adding more cashew

HOW HE DID IT!

- Focused on empowering the people around him though stable jobs, steady income, social support and educational facilities
- Ensured that the major portion of his workers were women so that their financial freedom would bring progress and prosperity to their homes in specific and the society in general
- Turned cashew nut trade into a highly successful business with the help of his loyal workforce
- Effectively made us of his experience abroad to grow his business the right way
- Started new ventures for the development of the region and the state, and not for personal gains
- He foresaw the importance of education in the development of the state, and started institutions of superior standards
- Opened TKM Engineering College to make professional education accessible to deserving students
- Made quality the driving principle of all the educational institutes under the Group to ensure the best of all employment opportunities for its students
- Always stayed ahead of times and thought beyond the conventional modes of doing business
- Gave priority to the development and progress of people in general

units, giving employment to thousands of natives, changing their lives for the better with steady income and benefits.

As the business grew, T.K Musaliar ensured that the workers too grew with it. He introduced a slew of welfare reforms that were trend-setters for all private sector enterprises in the state. His workers were the first to enjoy benefits and norms like fixed work time, turnover-based wage rate system and incentives for festivals. The industry took note, so did the leaders. And the public.

Kollam and its illustrious entrepreneur set a new business success model through impeccable planning and innovative production methods. His strategies helped organize the sector too, protecting workers against unethical work practices

During that time Kollam grew to be the global centre for cashew shopping. In fact, both domestic and foreign markers sold only the cashew from Kollam, and it became a major foreign exchange earner for Kerala. US was the major buyer of kernels till 1955. Next year, the erstwhile Soviet Union began purchasing kernels from Kollam and from 1969 it became the biggest buyer of Kollam cashew.

The business was thriving so much that Musaliar came to be known as the "Cashew King' in domestic and international markets. Despite



Musaliar foresaw the tremendous possibility of education in the years to come, and realized its importance in uplifting the society. He didn't want the focus on education to be limited to one institution. The TKM Educational Trust that he started in 1956 made great strides in the field by forming institutions that upheld the founder's vision

competition he became a force to reckon with, his innate business acumen, focus on customer care and strong leadership qualities helping him build a business empire of all times.

"He played a key role in turning Kollam into the hub of cashew processing. And when the business was at its peak, he shifted focus and founded the engineering college which was a landmark event for Kerala," remembers Shahal Hassan Musaliar.

Not just another engineering college. It was the first ever engineering college in the private sector in Kerala which at that time had only a handful of professional colleges. And when India's first President, Rajendra Prasad, came to

Kollam in 1956 to lay the foundation stone for the college, it marked the advent of a new era in education as well as in the social scene of the state.

Because, higher education and employment possibilities were to undergo a massive change through this institution that gave a new meaning to quality of studies. The Thangal Kunju Musaliar College of Engineering remains one of the best in the state as envisaged by the founder who translated his vision for a better tomorrow into this centre of excellence.

He foresaw the tremendous importance of education in the years to come, and realized its role in uplifting the society. Musaliar didn't want the focus on education to be limited to one institution. The TKM Educational Trust that he started in 1956 made great strides in the field by forming institutions that uphold the founder's vision. Along with the engineering college and an Arts & Science College, the Trust runs TKM Institute of Technology, Institute of Management, School of Communication and Information Technology, Centenary Public School, a High School and a Higher Secondary School. TKM Centre for Advanced Learning, and School of Architecture are the recent ones to come under the umbrella of the Trust.

"For us, education is not a business activity. Our aim is to help with the progress of society in whatever way we can. And so, the only criteria is the candidate's qualification whether it be for admission in any course or appointment of the faculty," says Shahal Hassan Musaliar.

The first engineering college in Kerala to be accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, the college now has more than 3600 students across its Degree, PG, Research departments. It remains one among the top engineering colleges in the country, and is a sought-after institution for its innovative courses like Food Technology.

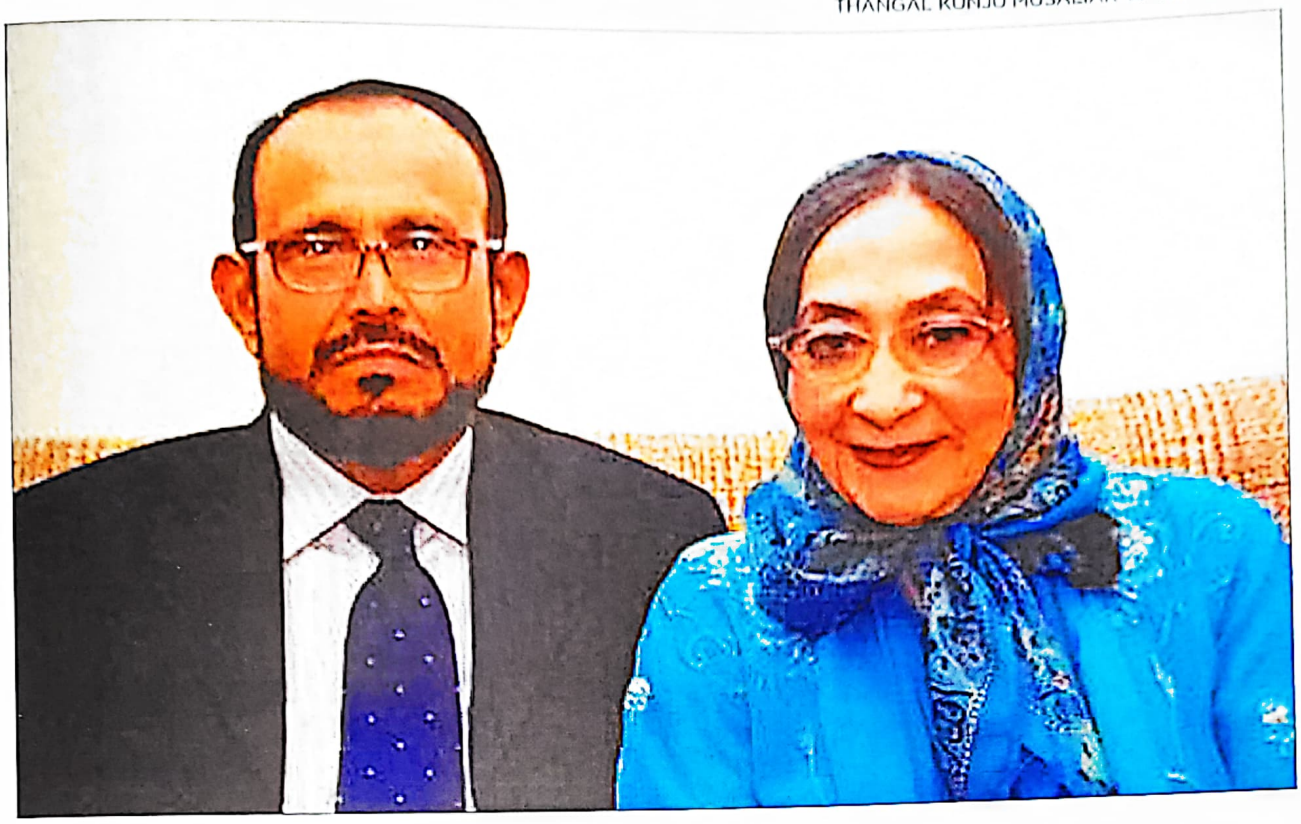


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A man who could not pursue his studies due to various reasons has thus become instrumental in imparting quality education to youngsters from Kerala and outside. A grand achievement indeed!

Innovative entrepreneur

T.K Musaliar was never one to rest with the accolades that came his way from various corners. His ideas went far beyond the conventional route of businessmen, and his experiments for ventures continued throughout his lifetime. Who would have thought of trying out a hydro-power project in River Periyar in those years? Of course, Musaliar did not think it was a wild idea. He spent huge amounts of money and time in experimenting the project with the support of a few engineers from abroad. His vision was grand, his objective clear – whatever venture he started should benefit people!



That is one reason why he entered the publishing scene with a newspaper, "Prabhatham.' It was instrumental in creating a strong public opinion on issues related to the socio-political landscape of the state. It was forthright in its views and upheld the values of democracy, communal harmony and fraternity for the development and progress of the society.

Continuing his efforts to help others, he also launched Janakshema Samajam that extended assistance to people from the lower strata of society to set up and run small businesses and ventures.

A born genius, Janab Thangal Kunju Musaliar created a space of his own in the annals of literature too. As the author of two books - 'Practical Advaita - the law of Nature' and 'Communism, Capitalism and Socialism in the Present Context' – Musaliar continues to surprise anyone who reads about him. Even without a formal education, he achieved what many of us could only dream of.

His contributions to the development of society have not gone unnoticed. On the occasion of celebrating the birth centenary of this visionary personality in 1997, the Postal Department honoured him by releasing a postal stamp. A gesture befitting the grandeur of a man whose ideas, dreams and actions always centered around this place and its people.

His life is a clear example of how one man, one idea and one gesture can make a difference to thousands of lives.