

Educationist's Autobiography blends faith, leadership, and youth empowerment



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Guwahati, Nov. 22, 2025: Don Bosco Institute (DBI), Kharghuli, celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a solemn thanksgiving ceremony and the launch of Building Dreams – Shaping Lives, the autobiography of its educationist founder Fr. V.M. Thomas.

Hon'ble Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, Chief Guest at the celebration, released the volume in the presence of Guest of Honour Devajit Saikia, Advocate General of Assam and Secretary of the BCCI. The event drew a distinguished gathering of judges, government officials, clergy, religious, alumni, and friends of Don Bosco.

More than a chronicle of achievements laid out in 598 pages, the autobiography is a testimony of grace and a narrative of how one man's vision became a collective mission for the youth of Northeast India. Former Chancellor of Assam Don Bosco University, Fr. Thomas recalls his first walk up Kharghuli hill in 1993, when the site was nothing but wild grass and rocks. In that silence, he heard a whisper: "Build here a Lighthouse for the youth of the North East." That whisper became the guiding vision of his life.

The book traces the journey from land acquisition struggles and water scarcity to milestones such as the foundation stone laid by Chief Minister Prafulla Kr. Mahanta in 2000, the inauguration by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2004, and the dedication by Fr. Pascual Chávez, Rector Major of the Salesians. For Fr. Thomas, these were not mere ceremonies but signs of a vision taking shape—an institution of learning and a sanctuary of hope.

Though trained at Harvard in Educational Administration, Planning and Social Policy, former principal of Don Bosco School Guwahati, Fr Thomas insists that true leadership was learned on the banks of the Brahmaputra: teamwork, service, and love in action. "True leadership is not power. It is teamwork and service. It is love in action." He salutes the pioneers, staff, and benefactors who stood shoulder to shoulder with him, describing them not as colleagues but as co-founders in spirit.

One of the book's strengths is its portrayal of DBI alumni as "living fruits" of the mission. Judges, senior officers, entrepreneurs, teachers, and social leaders are presented as the harvest of hope, proof that dreams can become destiny. His pride in past pupils such as Justice Ujjal Bhuyan and Devajit Saikia is framed as thanksgiving rather than self-congratulation.

Beyond institutional achievements, the autobiography highlights initiatives like YouthBuild, YouthLead, Skill Missions for the underprivileged, and Child Friendly Guwahati. The latter, close to his heart, is described as "the lamp that glows in the streets below," a mission for street children who sleep under bridges and yearn for dignity.

Stylistically, the book blends devotional reflection with narrative detail. "My autobiography is not a book of achievements. It is a story of grace." That humility makes the book resonate beyond DBI alumni or Salesian circles. It speaks to anyone who believes that institutions can be instruments of hope, and that faith can turn rocks into foundations.

In the end, *Building Dreams – Shaping Lives* is more than the life story of Fr. V.M. Thomas, the IAS and IPS trainer at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. It is a mirror held up to the Northeast itself—its struggles, its resilience, and its promise.

Critical Appreciation: Readers and reviewers note that the book's strength lies in its humility: it frames success as God's providence and community collaboration. It appeals not only to alumni and collaborators but also to anyone interested in how faith-based vision can shape education and social transformation in conflict-prone regions.

Closing tagline: “Dreams become destiny when faith builds foundations.”



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BY CM PAUL

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