

FAMILIES OF THE POSTMODERN SOCIETY

Relevance of Chavara's Vision on Family

John Eattaniel CMI

Abstract: John Eattaniel reflects on the relevance of the vision of Chavara on family and applies the vision to the present day families of the postmodern society. Based on the *Chavarul*, which is intended to be an effective practical guidebook of family life, the author outlines the revolutionary shifts and changes families face today. The postmodern standards and values for families that are often opposed to the classical values bring a jolt to the family. The author makes a comparison between the familial values and relationships in the past and the postmodern functionalist view of family where living with children becomes impossible on practical grounds and the parents depend on old age homes for the rest of their life. It is in this context Chavara's vision on Christian families becomes all the more important. This foresight of Chavara on families and family life challenges and encourages families to foster intimacy and interpersonal relationships among the family members. The relevance of *Chavarul* is in the fact that it warns families about the hidden dangers arising from the various post-modern approaches. The study ends with a note on the relationship between parent and children. The author presents *Chavarul* as the testimony of a perceptive prophet of the Christian families with ingenuity.

Keywords: Relationship, Trinity, postmodern, society, like, intimacy, kinship, allegiance, attachment, youth, intimacy, altruism, connectivity, divorces, marriage, children, freedom, parents, sexuality, reciprocity, leisure, gay, gender, patriarchy, class, ethnicity, religion, charity, fraternity, love, justice, kenosis, possessions, debt, laziness, labourers, *Chavarul*, Chavara.

1. Introduction

This is the 150th year of the publication of Saint Chavara's renowned 'testament' to Christian families, titled *Oru Nalla Appante Chavarul* (trans: *Testament of a Loving Father*; popularly called the *Chavarul*). Saint Chavara wrote this much-admired booklet as a fatherly instruction to

the Christian families and bequeathed it to his home parishioners, to help transform families into ideal Christian homes. In his own words, the reasons behind his writing the booklet is to encourage them to lead an organised, peaceful, God fearing, exemplary Christian family life, blessed with an atmosphere of mutual affection, unity and intimacy of the members.

Chavara, an outstanding mystic and a visionary of his time, pictured families as images of heaven; they are heavenly paradises on earth, where the members of the family practice and cherish mutual love and interpersonal relationships. Christian families receive their call and the grace they need to live an exemplary family life from the Most Blessed Trinity. They must be inspired by the Trinitarian communion that they experience through the faithful practice of the baptismal life. *Chavarul* is intended to be an effective practical guidebook of family life to them.

Today our families are living in a postmodern context, and are challenged by revolutionary changes happening in every sphere of family life. *Chavarul* would be a guiding light for them, which sheds bright light on the path and efforts of designing and constructing more vibrant family relationships and structures in par with the changed situation that arose from drastic changes in the social, economic, moral and religious fields. *Chavarul* has a catalytic potency to reform and revitalise Christian families, safeguarding them from destruction.

2. The Revolutionary Shifts and Changes Families Face Today

Nowadays, families are confronted with revolutionary shifts and alterations with regard to the patterns existing in the family organisation, structure and relationships, which depend heavily on the changing social, economic, and ideological situations of our times. Several sociologists have come out to alarm individuals and societies regarding these far-reaching changes taking place in our postmodern society. Families all over the world are facing unprecedented, unimaginable, never-before-ever situations, which nobody can ignore. The pressures and tension they suffer are unavoidable; because they come from the shifts occurring in various existential aspects and essential realms of families that affect the very core – especially those related to the shape, structure, formation and internal dynamics that are at work in the family.

Shifts in interpersonal relationships present in the family; the shifts happening in areas related to family bonds, the sweeping alterations evolving in the way of seeing, assessing and evaluating the value and

significance of the different aspects like intimacy, kinship, allegiances and attachments in the family circles of relationships; the unusual importance that the friend-circles and peer groups enjoy, have unprecedented significance today. They are playing prominent roles in the form and types of interpersonal relationships actively operative in the families. They are now the elements, which really decide and set the nature and extent of different kinds of friendships and relationships in the families. Those traditional reference points employed in shaping and maintaining family bonds and family ties are becoming more and more irrelevant today. The values and perspectives of the postmodern period have taken up their place in shaping family structures, organisation, and infixing the interconnectedness and the nature and extent of interpersonal relationships inside and outside families. A kind of neo-individualism with its standards and values controls every aspect of the family. Family structures and activities are ordered, assessed and evaluated, vindicated or rejected measuring them against the postmodern values and standards.

3. Postmodern Standards and Values for Families

The classical romantic models of love relationships in families are mere myths of the past for our present generation. It hardly presents any charm to the postmodern youth; they believe such lasting relationships are impossible in the present social and familial setup. In a hectic schedule of work and life, people do not get time for intimacy and altruism in interpersonal connectivity. We live in a world of swift changes that are taking place in every realm of life. Nobody has enough time to care for the other. So, if you want something, do not expect any assistance from anyone else. Such a realisation encourages each one to be a man or woman of one's own self.

Members in the family have become terribly demanding in the process of establishing their rights in everything. They plan and implement smart projects, which attract admiration and support from others and attain their personal goals of growth and welfare. The supreme concern of the families today should be the self-satisfaction and personal fulfilment of each individual member; and their communion, solidarity, intimacy, etc. are marginal to successful career and self-projection. Everything else stands subordinate to self-fulfilment and career. Friendships in life, whether in marriage or in family relationships, have become mere sporadic and are considered only as one of the available possibilities for the time being.

All types of interpersonal relationships are gauged temporary according to postmodern scales, relationships are mere interconnectivities, okay only for the time being, connection can be lost at any moment. Marriages in the family have narrowed down to mere partnerships, and monogamy and one partner relationships are hardly believable for many. Friendships and neighbourhoods last only for a limited span of time. Postmodern nomad living, especially in search of job and better facilities of life are accepted fairly natural and normal and many enjoy the advantages of the anonymity they provide. Divorces in marriage are often judged as a better option for some couples in their family life. Likewise, parenthood is also shrinking to shorter periods of time for several reasons. Even in normal long-lived marital relationships, people consider parenthood responsibility towards their children as a short term responsibility. Moreover, children consider that their filial obligations and duties cease when they reach adulthood. Nobody has any longstanding obligation or duty towards anyone; nobody owes anything to anybody. Family bonds and ties are just something 'alright for now'.

No one in our postmodern society considers family as an objectively essential institution of the society. In contrast to the former times, family has lost its significance as an essential supportive system of human growth and development. Many argue and assert that today the majority of individuals feel that it is all right for them and their life, even without the support and backing of their families. They believe that an individual's success and contentment come not from outside but from within, from his or her own personal efforts and hard work. The role and place of women in the family is also under paradigmatic shifts today; they are no longer confined to the boundaries of domestic chores. The women of this millennium are no more considered bread bakers but bread winners for the family. They play this role either together with their men or independently without them; they play both their primary and supplementary roles in the income generation. The society today considers assigning to women the role of housewife as their primary role as something outmoded.

Children enjoy enormous freedom at home today; they are hardly controlled by their parents, rather they live actually controlled, influenced and manipulated by their friends and peers. Parents switch over their role from acting like mature adults who control the behaviour and activities of their children to acting as mere friends giving their children an impression that there is no gradation or difference in life experience in family set up and everybody is equal in

the family. Parents have abandoned their pedagogical role in the society. Freedom and personal responsibility are slogans and norms of family relationships and activities at home. So also long-standing values of showing special concern and care and support towards parents when they advance in age are also neglected today. Instead, people consider those parents who expect their children to take care of them when they retire as awfully selfish. Their children who are now young couples excuse because they have their own priorities and duties towards their immediate family and career.

4. Values and Relationships in the Past

In the past, family was viewed as a key institution of the society constituted through the exercise of a unique interpersonal relationship that existed among its members and practiced and realised in tune with the values and visions approved by the society at large. Formerly, families seemed to be wider webs where people knitted together their ability to interlink each other in human connectivity with a higher sense of interdependency and reciprocity, generosity and self-gift. Generativity and sexuality were realised and made fruitful in conjugal love in the families. In the past families were never looked at from a functional and utilitarian angle. In the bygone days for a family to be an ideal family it must be a community which in its solidarity practiced and safeguarded an elated practice of self-gifting among its members, practiced in their interpersonal and social involvement among their relatives and neighbours. In those days it was in the family and its contexts that people used to learn practicing gratuitousness seen in the interpersonal relationships. Commercial logics and values were never allowed in the family circles. Family members in those days used to compete in offering one another as complete gift completely availing their life at the service of the other. And everyone used to accept and acknowledge the offering of the other with an immense gratitude.

Another important element seen in family relationships was reciprocity. Reciprocity was a normal practice among the members; and was expected from everyone for it is an essential customary gesture that fostered and strengthened family ties. It was the rule of marital relationships and for close family bonds and ties. In the past, generativity in the family was expressed not only through begetting children through the biological union of the married couples, but expressed also in the practice of adoption of other individuals who are not related to the family through biological or kinship bonds.

Begetting children was not considered as family achievement alone but also as a great contribution of the family towards the common good of the group or society at large. People really experienced in family a forum where they can share and borrow satisfaction and accomplishment of their needs for love, mutual concern, communion and solidarity. Thus families grew to the stature of a joint venture where people cherished success in personal social relationships and advancement in various realms of their socioeconomic endeavours, and there they cherished the security and safety of themselves and their group.

5. Postmodern Functionalist View of Family

The postmodern society has been transformed into something resembling an endless shopping mall where people have greater choice about how they look, what they consume and what they believe in. Postmodernists are critical of functionalist ideas about the family; they want to experiment alternative types of family. The functionalist theory of the family provides a simplistic romantic picture on family. In this view, there is no place for anger, resentment, inequality, stress, depression and physical or sexual violence in the family. However, postmodernist thinking recognises families as normal possibilities and therefore families have to pursue other successful strategies as positive alternatives. They assert a pluralistic approach to family and to the life within the family, which advocates constant changes in the structure and shape and types of relationships in the family. For them there is no perfect or ideal family anywhere on the globe, no particular type of family can be generalised.

The relationship accomplished among the members of the family and their interactions within the boundaries of the family are kernel to the kinship bonding even among the extended families. Such relationships transform family bonds into a family history that links or joints other significant bonds together. In this way, relationships found in the family define the structural aspects and mutual expectations of the family members and of the relatives of the extended family. A unique relationship is derived from this is bond (often non-economic), or an exchange between the subjects of the family is occurring. This encourages the subjects to handover a cultural heritage which they represent within their bond.

Postmodernists argue that families are no longer solely influenced by what 'significant others' (relatives, friends and neighbours) might think, but are more concerned with and influenced by what the wider

range of 'insignificant others', i.e., their fellow consumers, think of them. The wearing of designer labels, the family car and the conspicuous consumption of leisure (e.g. the satellite dish, the foreign holiday etc.) may all become more important than family interaction and intimacy. There is evidence that children are increasingly being viewed by parents as fashion accessories. Parents may spend considerable sums of money on their children to show off to their neighbours, friends, relatives, etc. Today, individuals stress on 'personal life' instead of 'family'. The concept of 'personal life' is more neutral and flexible because it goes beyond marriage and biological kinship to include newer types of relationships such as post-divorce relationships, same-sex relationships and relationships in which people commit to each other but live apart from one another as friendships. Some critics of the postmodern theories on family diversity consider them as fairly exaggerated ones. Though postmodern theories on family assume a variety of family forms and relationships, the majority still keep continuity and similarity with the former ways and patterns of family life.

The sociological studies of the family today focus on the 'life-courses' of individuals rather than 'the family'. In other words, they examine the way our lives evolve and change as we experience personal events or rites of passage such as marriage, the birth of a child or death of a partner. This life-course analysis focuses on the meaning that people give to life-events that occur during their life-course. These stages may involve distinctly different sets of family interactions and relationships, e.g., marrying someone through an arranged marriage may result in a qualitatively different type of family set-up than and marrying someone outside the arranged marriage. Likewise, the family experience of a child who stays with a settled nuclear family will be different qualitatively and effectively, in procedure and in personal experience.

As adolescence develops, many have to leave home to go to university they may live in a hall of residence and return to the family home occasionally. They may then move into a shared student household and in later adulthood decide to cohabit. These experiences are also influenced by other choices, e.g., the decision to be straight or gay. If we take into account the family decisions older people make, when the children leave home, they revert to being a married couple household. They may decide to spend their retirement and savings enjoying themselves through, for example, travelling the world. They may do voluntary work or decide to take part-time work. They may

help out their children with child-care. Grand-parenting may be important to them. However, these future choices may be partly shaped by events such as death, sickness and disability. Sometimes people have to live as a single-person household after the death of their partner. Living with their children may not be possible on practical grounds. Some even have to dependent on old age homes for rest of their life.

All these remind us of the need for taking seriously into account the postmodern realities that the families of today are confronting every day. In any discourse on family nowadays we have to pay keen attention to such elements present in the family relationships and organisations. The corresponding diversities in the organisation and structuring of contemporary families in the life style and in the ways of the family relationships are coming normally from within the social, economic, and cultural ambience of contemporary family life. It is true that many consider families not merely as a concrete structure, but more as a practical way of arrangement for what actually people do in their efforts to lead a successful and comfortable life on earth, manipulating what is available to them for the moment. The old distinctions between structures are no longer relevant. For example, the distinction between 'households' and 'families' is blurred by gay relationships in which friendships with other gay people are gauged as kinship. If we focus on life course and practice families follow, it will allow us to see more clearly the influence of wider social structure and norms such as gender/patriarchy, social class and ethnicity/religion on the member's expectations and actions.

6. Chavara's Vision on Christian Families

Saint Chavara was a great visionary of his period, whose visions on Christian families surpassed the horizons of his epoch. His deliberations on family give us a profound knowledge about his ingenuity in dealing with the topic of family. Families are depicted as dynamic centres of sublime human love and interpersonal relationships. In the introduction of *Chavarul*, he introduces families as premier locale of human communion and solidarity. There members are joint together in a high degree of human relationship through the bonds of blood and affection; and where children are duly respecting and obeying their parents, walking peacefully before God and one another. The members live there enjoying the sweetness of their relationships in pursuit of their eternal salvation, proper to their state of life. Family is the only place for the members to enjoy unimaginable

sweet consolation when they wander through the sorrowful valleys on this earth. However, families which are real image of heaven can be turned into the most disgusting place to live, when there is no order, no peace or no concern for one another, or no service mindedness prevail among its members.

This foresight of Chavara on families and family life challenges and encourages families not to focus too much on the rigid institutional character and dimensions of their family, but to mull genuinely over innovative ways and means, which foster intimacy and interpersonal relationships among the family members. Chavara rejected any static or institutional framework in conception of family, because they would objectify and make it something that is a finished product. He wanted to project the dynamic, vibrant, and ever-growing aspects current in the very concept and paradigm of family itself. He envisaged families as an institution with both institutional and relational aspects, which empower them to become an ever-open-to-change institution of the society. Families should not be tired of seeking strategies to make them a well-planned social institution with a human face on which reflected the innate thirst of men and women for living a lasting solidarity and communion which is dynamic, creative, passionate and mundane.

Chavara wants Christian families to perfect the spontaneous and natural ties that occur in family life into a love-relationship, which reiterates the divine paradigm of the Trinitarian communion; and the unity in the families must be the perfect oneness of the Three in the Holy Trinity. Foreseeing the pivotal role that the mutual love and affection of family relationships are playing in the formation, nurturing and stabilising the families, Chavara urged Christian families to act jointly in Gospel harmony and communion. The affectionate love and unity found in families shall foster Gospel magnanimity in forgiving each other's mistakes and shortcomings. Families shall consider these as the primary precept of their life. *Chavarul* warns families about the hidden dangers arising from dissensions and discords prevailing in homes between brothers and sisters; such families will soon perish (*Chavarul*, 1).

Chavara presents the living together of the family members as the *raison d'être* of a family. He highlights that the honour and blessing of every family lie in the ability and smartness to coexist within its family setup. A sweet, happy family keeps dissensions and quarrels away from among its members, and turns their life into a blissful co-existing that provides them a foretaste of heavenly paradise. Chavara

encouraged families to ignore faults and shortcomings in others and to forgive them and to consider them as normal in human relationships, as strong, prudent, and honourable people do. By all means, families must refrain from civil litigations, for a bright future of the family. Families must practice financial discipline in every sphere of life, avoid overbrowning and overspending, refrain from showy life styles, display of the status of wealth; must be frugal in spending, must not spend beyond their means in celebrating anniversaries and festivals. These are the advices that Chavara offers to the families (*Chavarul*, 5-6). These instructions seen in the *Chavarul* are precious even for today's families.

7. Relevance of *Chavarul* for the Present Day Families

Family in no way is a human invention; in no way it needs human justification. It is a divine institution, which the world needs to examine and comprehend. Chavara believed this fact and writes in the dedication page of *Chavarul*: "The omnipotent God most kindly brought me into this world. As I have been born in this family and from these parents, it is but natural that, in the order of charity and justice, I am." In the context of the insights that *Chavarul* exposes about the families, whether evaluated in the backdrop of the postmodern scenario or not, we appreciate the foresight and intellectual acumen that Chavara showed in assessing families of every time.

Family is divine call and a task to the whole human race; everybody has to play a role according to the state of life God assigned to her or him. However, if we fail to assimilate and properly make use of this great gift, accepting it as a mystery both with divine and human aspects, we distort that precious gift through negligence and recklessness. That is why Chavara wrote in the introduction: "Praying for divinely inspired clarity and peace of mind, I have framed these rules of conduct for families with the intention of their avoiding sin and destruction resulting from disorderliness."

In the first part, *Chavarul* suggests measures for turning families into an ideal Christian family. It looks at the family from different angles: first, the place of family in the divine design; second, how family is placed in the mission of the Church; third, importance of family in the society as a social institution and as social measure that initiates and nurtures interpersonal relationships among individuals in a society. From an ecclesial angle, family should be a house of God, a domestic Church, where sacrifices and prayers are carried out, and sacraments are efficaciously celebrated and God's real presence and

actual saving actions are felt and experienced. Family shall be a place where love, reconciliation, faith and mutual trust, charity, fraternity, love for neighbour, justice, concern for other, self-emptying, kenosis, sharing each other's burden, mutual respect, prayers and offerings, purity in mind and body, hope, trust in divine providence, search for the Kingdom God, Word of God, relentless efforts for salvation, communion and solidarity, peace and joy, etc. are experienced and practised.

In the above sense, family is an icon of the Church. From the angle of social relationships family is a social institution with structures and unique relationships that arise out of interpersonal bonds. The Holy Family of Nazareth is the paradigm here. Christian families should gaze upon the ordinary Jewish village family of the carpenter Joseph and Mary and Jesus, their child. Every Christian family should become an icon of the Holy Family of Nazareth, where mutual respect, hard work, simple life, faithful practice of religion and faith plays the crucial role. Fear of God, proper love and involvement with the neighbours, healthy relationships among the members, love and concern for the poor, righteousness, etc. are scrupulously practiced by the members. Even today, an authentic teaching on Christian families continues to emphasise these elements as fundamental traits of an ideal Christian family.

In the first part of the *Chavarul* we see Chavara's precepts for the family. The fundamental rule for any Christian family is mutual love, which empowers its members to accept and forgive human weaknesses and shortcoming in the family circles. It encourages families to live in the spirit of the Gospel demands of magnanimity, reciprocity, mercy and forgiveness. Such an atmosphere in the family helps the members to experience the sweetness of a heavenly peace and joy. Unity and solidarity will prevail and flourish there. The natural environment that helps to maintain communion and spontaneous interpersonal relationships in the family comes from the power and force innate to the kinship of the members.

Chavarul insists on safeguarding the synergy these spiritual and biological factors provide to the formation and progress of the institutional and relational aspects of family life. But in the present day society, due to several factors, these spontaneous and natural joining together or living together of the family members is hardly possible. Because of the unprecedented socio-economic situations prevailing in the present day society our postmodern generation is dragged into numerous unaccustomed forms of family life. Solidarity and unity are

shattered; family ties, contacts and connectivity are getting dangerously fragile, casual, thin and loose. Family bonds, kinship, direct person to person communication etc. are becoming rare; family entertainment and picnics, family celebration and family meals have become stuffs of bygone era.

In the name of better job opportunity and assured job security, higher and excellent education facilities and opportunities for children, easing of tensions and hectic routine of life, better travel facilities and easy mobility, etc., the new generation cultures have created in people a mentality of easily compromising family and family values. People today prefer economic self-sufficiency and career success to family or to connectivity with their kin. The final outcome of all these is the disintegration of family and destruction of interpersonal relationships. *Chavarul* points to the wisdom of our forefathers and asks families to take recourse to the fear of God, trust in divine providence when faced with trials and tribulations. The fear of God is the most valuable possession of a family; and patience will encourage people to entrust themselves to divine providence (*Chavarul*, 12, 20).

Chavarul encourages people to be moderate in their everyday life and instructs families: "Do not become too materialistic and keep acquiring novel items; instead, try hard to improve the holdings you already possess. The wealth of a family does not lie in amassing innumerable possessions, but in their quality" (*Chavarul*, 11). Chavara reminds people that the wealthiest family is the one which is not in debt (*Chavarul*, 4). *Chavarul* cautions families against seeking easy compromises for economic and other gains, which will not last long. Instead, learn to accept human limitations when challenges are confronted in life. *Chavarul* insists families to respect God and divine rule in the family; and to bring children in faith in God and encourage them to practice gospel values in their life. Families should not discard religious principles and moral teachings in their personal life and social engagements. They must sincerely work for the project of constructing sweet homes which are a great consolation for the members even when they endure trials in life.

8. The Relationship between Parent and Children

Chavarul in its second part concentrated on the relationship between parent and children and on the Christian and human upbringing of Children. Chavara presents family as a communion that brings parents and children together into a unity that safeguards the coexisting of

blood related kin, forming a wider family circle. Families should look after bonds and affections as the apple of one's eye; order and discipline should help to regulate the pattern and styles of life in the family. Parents have to take up the responsibility of organising and keeping unity and order in the family; children must practice respect and obedience at home. However, postmodern families are very loosely knit together; parents have lost confidence in themselves for their inability to lead their children in a mature way. Practice of mutual respect and obedience from either sides of children and parents remain confusing to many. Many parents are averse to properly reprimanding their children. Children show an uncontrolled freedom and an uninhibited way of easy-going life. *Chavarul* advises parents to take up their duty of upbringing their children as the most important and primary duty of their parenthood; they have to consider children as a gift from God to them, God has entrusted children to their care with the definite goal. Parents have to offer them back into God's hand on the day of final judgement (*Chavarul*, 2.1).

Chavara further insists parents to ensure that children are trained to be good Christians in their tender age. Attitudes of fear and love of God in the children will train them to respect and love parents and others. Parents must be diligent in bringing up children in a religious atmosphere (*Chavarul*, 2.2). Chavara has a lot of practical suggestions to the parents for training children in human and moral standards. He advised them to keep away from the tendency of presenting children as an object parent's pride and vanity (*Chavarul*, 2.12). Over-concern for children can spoil them. Hence, parents should be realistic when they correct their children regarding their behaviour and relationships. Parents should be involved in the choice of their mature decisions regarding their state of life. They shall not be indecisive or show undue regard for children even when they are grown up and have become erudite and competent. They must be prudent enough about when and how to entrust them the management of the household affairs (*Chavarul*, 2.15).

In the first part of *Chavarul*, Chavara proposes several precepts for the families, which he considered vital to them, in ordering the structures and interpersonal relationships. He wants love as the cornerstone of family life. When family is built up on love, everyone in the family avoids dissensions and discords, and would remain reluctant to go for public litigation against anyone related to the family. Christian families shall base their life and activities on the gospel values. They will lead a humble and ordinary life where they

are satisfied with what is available to them; and never be extravagant in the celebrations of the family. When one reflects seriously on the significance and importance of these instructions, one realises that they are immensely relevant today.

The culture of family members, especially parental figures, is important when they assemble to solve family problems in the interpersonal relationships. People easily approach civil courts even for petty quarrels and ego problems, which often destroy unity and concord in the family, and increase enmity among the relatives and neighbours. The new generation is not ready to give up anything, because of their over-emphasis and ego worship. Individual's self-assertion, self-satisfaction and self-glorification are asserted in everything. Pride and vain glory are like cancers that eat up the security and serenity of the families. Bombastic buildings, household appliances, pompous life-styles, etc. are destroying families. Enormous spending and huge borrowings multiply debt. Hedonistic outlook to life and the marginalisation of religion and moral values turn families and societies into brooding grounds of social and moral evils, control and reign over the contemporary family and social situations. Chavarul presents the antidote to the present day woes of families as it makes a plea to heed to the gospel call to "love one another," and practice real humility and simplicity in life; taking religion serious in life of individuals, families and societies, which rejuvenate the people of our times into a God-fearing people.

The various socialisation processes taking place in the families are to be monitored closely, for in the name of socialisation several evils can creep into the family. So, Chavara discourages indiscriminate access given to everyone who visits the family. He also reprimands loose talks in the families. He warns against the tendency of wandering into the homes neighbours as silly newsmongers. He cautions people to take extra care in selecting their close friends; and directs his readers to pick up individuals who lead a self-disciplined orderly life as God-fearing persons; do not move along indiscriminately with anyone and everyone, but seek and keep the company of honourable gentle and respected ones.

Families shall be exemplary locations where human friendship and dignity are respected and safeguarded in talk and actions. Choose friends carefully – one from among a thousand, who is trustworthy, genuine and dependable to the end. In the family labour according to your status in life, and avoid every chance for laziness. Don't amass wealth by fraud and deceit. Perform at least one charitable act daily so

that one can render at least something good to someone a day. Families shall not deny or delay just wages to labourers, and consider it as a grave sin before God. Chavara is pleading for a special love towards the poor and the marginalised and asks families to deter from actions that humiliate or trouble the poor. *Chavarul* encourages reading of good and inspiring books in the family, and warns about the dangers of indiscreet reading habits. Parents shall procure for their children the treasure of books packed with wisdom and philosophical knowledge that enhance piety, which will help them conform their life to noble ways. Everyone shall abide strictly to a fixed timetable in their everyday life, something that should not exclude any aspect of their life from dawn to dusk.

9. Conclusion

The admonitions of *Chavarul* may appear old-fashioned and insignificant. For many today, the postmodern scenario is drastically different from that of Chavara's time. When we examine the situations of the past and the present, we identify several similarities between the two scenarios. Take the case of efforts for socialisations in the family. Changes are more in the realm of technology that is used and in the gravity and extent of damages done. For socialisation, the postmodern society depends more on the cyber world and social communication media. If we use them without discretion in the name of social interconnectivity and interpersonal availability, human face of the family will be affected adversely. Smart phones and other information technologies will destroy human life dangerously making everything further and further virtual rather than real. Personal commitments and person to person contacts will be minimised; direct conversations and dealing between individual and individual turn to be more and more dubious. Moral unrighteousness and human dignity can get marginalised.

Internet and social media have begun to dominate and decide human standards and values of life. Social justice and concern for the poor are to be safeguarded and practiced painstakingly in family. Work and work culture should be organised and practiced with human dignity. Job and job satisfaction should not be determined discarding family and family relationships; wage and wages difference should be controlled and regulated in such a way everyone employed can have a decent living together with his family. Employment opportunities to work in the society where one lives shall be ensured, giving priority to family and its concerns. Safeguarding openness and

privacy in the society and families is vital for a secure, free and contented welfare society, which honour human dignity and a God-fearing life. In short, *Chavarul* is the testimony of a perceptive prophet of the Christian families, Saint Chavara, whose ingenuity is beyond comparison.