RELEVANT AND EFFECTIVE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Theological education becomes relevant when theologians start interacting with, and challenging the ongoing ministry in the world. In order to identify its effectiveness in twenty first century India, a broader discussion on its purpose, content and praxis should be initiated. In India there are more than 60 regional and national seminaries that are affiliated with the Senate of Serampore College. Recently we have held many discussions at the regional and national level on the content, form, method and praxis of theological education in India (2001-2002). As part of this ongoing discussion by the Asian theologians, I was asked to present a paper on this topic in the General Council of the United Theological College, Bangalore on 25th August 2001. In this paper I made an attempt to highlight a number of issues in the present praxis of theological education in India and proposed a new system of interactive learning that might address some of the associated problems.

The United Theological College offers integrated theological training with a high academic standard and at the same time provides programmes of study, devotional life and practical experience for men and women to prepare themselves for the different ministries to which they are called. The mission statement of the United Theological College affirms that the College "seeks to provide students with conceptual tools, spiritual discipline and practical skills which will equip them for a relevant ministry in the church and in society, responding critically to the religio-cultural heritage and socio-political-economic reality of India." The purpose of 'theological education' is to equip men and women for the diverse ministries to which they are called. In a similar manner Ross Kinsler notes that the purpose of theological education is to motivate, equip and enable the people of God to develop their gifts and give their lives in meaningful service. While appreciating the

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dynamic characteristics of such learning, this paper raises a few questions regarding its relevance to the context of the church and people in twenty first century India.

The definitions of 'theological education' use the word “equipping” in relation to training men and women to the diverse ministries. The use of this word may be interpreted as if the ministerial candidates who join the Theological College are seen as empty bottles, being filled during their theological training and going back to the churches as resourceful and equipped ministers. To some extent such an understanding has dominated the pedagogical praxis of theological education.\(^3\) Despite the achievements, theological teachers and theologians have accepted that there were problems and stated in the Oslo Consultation: “We acknowledge that some patterns of theological education have not assisted the churches to move forward, to respond to hurting people, to relate holistically to the earth, or to be people-focused and Christ-centred. We confess and grieve that we have sometimes ignored crucial insights about life and God in our work as theological teachers”\(^4\) This necessitates a new definition of theological education as a process.

**CONTEXT OF THE THEOLOGICAL COMMUNITY:**

There is a need to recognise the role of the church and the socio-cultural context in which the theological student was brought up. The tradition, faith and worldview with which he or she joins a theological college needs to be starting point of learning in the ministerial formation. Theological education needs to be seen as a process that begins even before a student begins his career in a seminary. An Asian theologian, C.S. Song defines theological education “as a process through which a person learns to be human through what God has been and done in Christ”\(^5\) If it is a learning process to be a human by fulfilling God’s will through his or her ministry, then the process began even before he or she joins theological education. His or her faith and worldview are shaped by the context of his or her church and society. The present practice of theological education does not provide enough space for the students to express the religious and social meanings with which they join the college. The theological courses are offered with a standardised and fixed curriculum. The process of learning depends much on the top-down model.\(^6\) It is campus and class-room based. This demands a new definition of theological education in order to address some of these problems.

In this paper theological education is defined as an ongoing process in which participants (theological teachers and students) are engaged in creating, sharing, interpreting, mediating and analysing one’s own faith experiences and religious meanings in relation to their contexts, traditions and communities. As participants, each one is enriched through dialogical and interactive education. In this sense theological community has to recognise the experiences and meanings with which students enter into the ongoing discourses of theological education. In the interactive method of learning, the participants share and reflect upon each other’s faith and socio-cultural experiences.

The meanings do not simply flow from the teacher to the students but are shared between them. Students possess certain cultural, political and religious meanings which are shaped and influenced by their contexts. By enabling the students to critically reflect upon their own experiences, the theological teachers learn together with them.\(^7\) This does not undervalue the academic and scholarly exercise in a theological institution. A wide
range of meanings is presented to the students during their ministerial formation. During this time the teacher needs to interact with those meanings of the student while helping him or her to be aware of the other available meanings. If the student's meanings are found relevant and meaningful, he or she should be encouraged to share them with others. This concept is similar to Paulo Freire's "problem posing" and "dialogical" education. The theological resources are themselves the result of reflection on practice, and are to be used to contribute to contemporary reflection in order to enlighten present practice and obedience. During the interaction a wide range of meanings of faith and life evolve.

A variety of meanings is made available to all the students in order to reject, test, negotiate or choose those which are appealing and relevant to them. The students and teachers select those meanings that are relevant and acceptable to their context. There is a need for theological education to develop an interactive type of education through which the students can critically rethink their past experience and reflect upon it along with other members of the community. This is where our quest for a new theological paradigm begins.

In the interactive model of learning, the students are encouraged to communicate and articulate their different intelligence through various cultural forms and methods. For instance those students with a particular talent performed a sermon through a skit instead of a preaching it. In this model the teacher is not only a learner along with the student but also a facilitator and so the gap between the two is reduced. Similar ideas appear in the WCC study process on Holistic Education (1999-2001). Under the topic 'Holistic Education in Ecumenical Perspective', the members of WCC study process state,

Guided by a 'mechanistic world view' education often instrumentalizes and dichotomizes people and their relationships with each other and the divine. Far from acknowledging the learner as being subject of her/his destiny, much of the present model of education reflects a divorce from realities and history.

They also affirm individuals as persons in the context of community. Through holistic education one can build communities in which people learn together from their differences and also learn to value their own personal strengths, and are thus empowered to help one another.

There are a number of metaphors in India to picture this interactive relationship between a theological teacher and a student. One of the well known metaphors is the Gurukulum (learning centres) model in which though the authoritarian type of 'Guru' (teacher) is often pictured the relationship is one of learning together. This is explicitly stated in the Upanisadic prayer which is referred to in all Upanisadic texts (interpretations of Vedas). This prayer is chanted by both Guru and disciples when they begin to study the Vedas.

**Saha Naavavathu Sahanav Bhunohthu**
May he protect us both together; may he nourish us

**Saha Veeryam Karavaavahai**
both together, may we work conjointly with great energy;
This prayer and other similar prayers that are offered by the Gurus along with their disciples clearly show that they both have to learn together and work together towards an understanding of God and other beings.

Though Gurukulam was criticised for its pro-Brahmin stance and for neglecting women in their educational programmes, the model of learning in such Parambara (traditions) was interactive as one can see from the Upanisadic prayer quoted above. Samuel Amirtham, one of the Indian theological scholars argues that Gurukulam models for learning and living should be adopted by theological seminaries. For him Gurukulam “is a community which worships together, that stays together, grows together, serves together and can theologise together.” He states that some of Gurukulam characteristics—such as community meetings, fellowship groups and frequent common meals—were already adopted by Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Arasaradi. The main emphasis of this paper is on the relationship between the theological teachers and the students where both should see each other as a learner, listener, and facilitator.

On the other hand Dravidian’s Sangam (Place of learned and poet) type of learning is more open to women and all communities (regardless of castes) than the Gurukulam. Sangam was a place of discussions and learning of a group of learned and amateur scholars. Thus the Dravidian model of learning was linked with Sangam where the Arignar (Intellectuals) gather together to discuss not only the religious teachings but also philosophies of life besides learning the skills of administration, hunting and martial arts. These Sangams existed during the first century BC. This tradition exists even today in the form of ‘Patrimantram (debating place)’ where general matters regarding life and religion are discussed by intellectuals. In this way learning together, an open discussion on a wide range of meanings and nourishing each other with wisdom were part of the Guru-Shishya Parambarama (teacher-student relationship) in India while learning about God and the world. Such an interactive model of theological learning is not new as such in India. The present form of theological education caters to one type of intelligence whereas in reality different kinds of intelligence exist. The challenge for theological education is to find a way of accepting and utilising these different gifts for diverse ministries of the church.

The students need not be seen as those who come here to ‘equip’ themselves in order to join the ministry but as those who continue their religious journey along with the faculty members of the seminary in order to recognise those meanings that are relevant to their faith, their context and their people. In this model interactions are not merely classroom based nor merely field exposure-oriented but involve an openness towards other meanings—those meanings that are not often heard and those meanings that are often neglected. There need not be any exclusive claim for a particular set of meanings nor rejection of other meanings. There is a need to hear as many meanings as possible while also allowing the learner to express his or her own meanings. In this
process a student may recognise a particular meaning that he or she may think relevant to his or her faith which the teacher may not agree to. In this process both have to interact in order to critically study and recognise those meanings together and then choose accordingly. This is where the interactive model certainly might contribute to a new level of learning though this model is not new as such but simply utilises the characteristics of the old Indian Gurukulam model of education.

**Context of the Church**

Theological education as a process does not occur in a vacuum rather it occurs in the context of the church and of society. Theological education is part of the churches’ ministry. Though a seminary operates mainly within the church, it is not limited to her four walls. Because theological education leads to ministerial formation, there is a need for a closer interaction between the theological institutions and the churches. Listening to each other’s views, critical negotiation between their faith experience and meanings, respecting each other’s traditions and striving towards an understanding of a holistic ministry—these are a few characteristics of an interactive relationship.

The interactive relationship between the church and theological college needs to be developed on the basis of mutual responsibility, respect and accountability. J.G. Muthuraj (Professor at UTC) in his response to ‘Priorities in Theological Education in India’ identifies churches and theological colleges as friends, partners and critics. Such a relationship requires mutual recognition of identities and autonomy. How far apart are theological institutions and the Church? How close are they or should they be? These are the questions that represent the core of this section.

The concerns among Indian churches are different from the concerns of the seminaries in India. One of the major concerns is to evangelise the masses. Through all the churches’ institutions, the gospel is proclaimed and taught through direct and indirect means and methods. Churches from south India send many missionaries to northern India through different organisations such as the Indian Missionary Society, the National Missionary Society and so on whereas theological colleges are concerned with dialogue between different religions. Many churches are concerned with the expansion of their buildings and institutions whereas theological colleges are raising voices for the poor and the oppressed.

Indian churches are also concerned with their minority rights which are often taken away from them by the government. Thus their educational and social institutions are indirectly or directly affected and are often closed down. Churches in the northern part of India are under direct attack from the Hindu fanatical groups and fundamentalists. By raising the question of conversion many of the missionaries, churches, converts and their institutions are destroyed by the communal forces in India. Churches look at theological seminaries and colleges for intellectual responses to these issues and problems. Theological schools need to recognise and help the churches to face these issues by reflecting upon them.

Theological institutions at times have addressed some of these issues. Because of their liberal attitude some of their teachings and principles could not be applied to the context of the churches. There is a gap between the churches’ practice and theological education.
For example in theological institutions the students are exposed to a wide range of meanings such as Dalit, feminist and liberal meanings alongside regular traditional theological, textual and ministerial teachings. In my ministerial experience in the churches I discovered that such meanings are irrelevant and cannot be preached through my sermons in the church. I am not arguing that these meanings are irrelevant in themselves, but in the churches, pastors including myself find it difficult to preach, or to use these principles, because the main concerns and interest of the church members are to some extent different from these praxis-related theologies.

Samartha used a metaphor in order to explain the tension between two Christologies by using the imagery of “Helicopter versus Bullock-Cart” For Samartha Helicopter Christology makes a lot of missiological noise (in a pluralistic context of Asia) and kicks up so much of theological dust that people around are prevented from hearing the voice and seeing the vision of the descending divinity. A Bullock-cart Christology has its wheels always touching the unpaved roads, for without the continual friction with the ground, the cart cannot move forward at all. Through interaction with the churches, theological community may recognise the churches’ theologies which are often concerned with people’s faith and traditions (theology from above) whereas the churches may realise the importance of challenging some of the traditional way of understanding faith and life to relate it to their context (theology from below). Taking this argument further Gunnar Stålsett argues that

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\text{a theology from above, from God, is reflected and manifested in a theology from below.} \\
\text{A Theology from below joins revelation and praxis. It is in this dialogue of the divine} \\
\text{with the humane that theology takes shape, and Christ becomes incarnate, to every new} \\
\text{generation. This is the starting point of contextuality.}
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To some extent the relationship between the churches and theological education could be developed by finding a third way between these two theological understandings (theology from above and theology from below).

The theology must be grounded while people’s faith experience of God cannot simply be ignored. It is the task of the theological institutions and churches to develop a new theological framework that would enable an easy transition between them. This could be identified as “Theology of Creative and Fruitful Tension” which holds together the two perspectives in a creative tension. It is essential that theological education takes spirituality of the people seriously while churches need to consider listening to serious theological issues of everyday life. Theological educators cannot impose their theologies on the churches. Both sides should be reminded of the need for a retrospective look at themselves. The church needs to provide a space for theological colleges to present some of their meanings to her intellectuals and thereby get the feedback from the people. Such activities can take place in rural areas as well in urban churches where theological teachers can go and speak with a selected group of youths or elders and have their reactions to their new theological ideas while also recording peoples’ experiences as part of their learning process.

A theological teacher and a minister play different roles in the ministry: servant, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, priest and ecumenist. These roles are helpful in order to
understand the relationship between the church and the theological institution. The theological institution should take up the role of a servant, prophet, shepherd, priest and ecumenist while interacting with the church. In the same way the Church should serve the college as a servant, lead as a shepherd, guide as a priest and challenge as a prophet. Interactive theological education has to take the needs of the church seriously and try to meet their expectations during training while, at the same time, maintaining academic autonomy. Indian churches are struggling with the credibility of some of their educational and social institutions. In any case theological institutions need to constructively criticise the churches and help them to correct their institutional practices. The churches should try to clarify certain issues and practices with the seminaries if such issues or practices affect their ministry.

Churches need to recognise the theological institutions’ ecumenical commitment and academic autonomy as part of the churches’ wider ministry. In India church members and the dioceses are ready to pay for missionaries or for the church extensions. But the theological institutions find it difficult to raise funds from many churches in India. The attitude of church members is that theological institutions should get their funds from abroad. As theological training is part of the extended ministry, the church needs to support theological colleges financially. By supporting the mission and ministry of a theological college, the churches share the vision of theological education along with the college.

From time to time theological education should be taken to the place where the churches are. The interaction between theological institutions and churches should not be limited at institutional level but could include interaction with local congregations and lay members of the churches. For example new theological concepts should be preached to a few selected congregations and be tested upon the members’ acceptance and experience. Their feedback could help the theological teachers and students to understand and reflect upon their own theological precepts.

Lay ministry is an integral part of the holistic ministry of the church which could be strengthened with the help of theological institutions. A few courses could be offered by the theological college in order to strengthen their faith and their theological understanding. By opening interaction with a few trained people, the theological teachers may themselves learn to review their own socio-cultural and religious meanings. There needs to be a closer cooperation between those theological institutions that provide theological training to ministerial candidates such as UTC or TTS and those that provide theological education to lay people such as TAFTEE. The United Theological College is one of the colleges well known for enabling students and teachers to commit themselves to the mission and ministry of the church as the disciple of Christ. It aims to deepen and sustain the students’ commitment so that whenever they face difficult situations in their ministry, they will not give in.

CONTEXT OF THE PEOPLE:

Training for different ministries involves enabling the people of God to understand, interpret and communicate their experience and understanding of God in relation to their context and also to critically reflect upon their context in the light of their experience. The theological institutions’ task is to make theological education relevant and effective in the
present Indian context. Theological education takes the context of the people as a framework for interpreting the biblical text, their churches' tradition and their faith experience. Theological education requires an interaction between the reflective analysis on the global and ecumenical perspective and of local issues and problems together with the active existential discernment of the presence of God. It also involved an active involvement in the local situation. In a globalized, media saturated, multi-faith context, people are engaged in a search for meanings of life and religion. Their faith and worldview are shaped by the process of globalization, by mediated messages of the media and by different religious claims. One of the major reasons for us to redefine theological education in terms of interaction and dialogue is due to the emerging issues in the fast changing contexts in India.

I wish to select three major issues that arise from three different contexts in order to highlight the process of 'doing' theology within a particular context. Doing theology involves students and teachers not only learning together but also finding a way of translating it into praxis that would make an impact in the context. First the process of globalization is making an impact on every society in India which has brought in the multinational companies and promoted the values of individualism and achievement. It has contributed to the existing exploitative tendencies of the globalized elite and mighty. One of our faculty members, J. Mohan Razu has written extensively on this subject and helped many of us to reflect critically upon the issue of globalization. In such a context of globalization people are engaged in search for meanings of faith and life.

Secondly our age is being identified as the ICE age which is expanded as Information, Communication and Entertainment age. The Hindu, one of the national newspapers, says on Sunday, December 31, 2000,

_We are in serious danger of becoming a nation where cable and optics fibre will reach most urban homes long before portable water and drainage, and where children in remote areas will have easier access to movies than to schooling._

The Indian society can also be called a media saturated society where more than 60 cable channels are available. People have structured their social and cultural practices and relationship and their communication through one or some of these media and their programs. In the media saturated society there is a shift in the process of meaning making. Religious, socio-cultural and political meanings are bought and sold in a market of audiences. Regardless of creed, caste and race people are influenced by the flood of information and entertainment programmes. The churches try to use the media as an extension of the pulpit in order to proclaim the gospel. There is also a negative attitude among churches towards their own folk forms of communication. These folk media are the only alternatives to enable people to participate and to become aware of Christian and community values. Using modern technology we are trying to improve the quality of theological education in our college. Our students are taught to publish their own development related magazines using computers. They are offered journalism and audio-visual production courses.

The churches need to engage in the public debate by using the means and forms of
the people to challenge certain values of globalisation and of communal forces. Otherwise the church will remain as an isolated institution in an ICE age. Theological Institutions need to provide skills as well as theoretical training to understand the issues in the media saturated society to the ministers as well as to the students. The United Theological College is one of the best centres in South Asia for providing subjects related to theology and the ethics of communication. The department of communication runs postgraduate and research courses for theological teachers from South Asian countries.

Thirdly religious fundamentalism has become a threat to the multi-cultural society where people from different religions lived together. Non-Christians, particularly Hindus, are becoming increasingly aware of their identity and so create a new spirit of nationalism. Because of the increasing role of fundamentalists, the confrontation between different religious communities has become a reality in many parts of India. Despite this, the majority of people in India believe in the peaceful coexistence of different religions together. Most are searching for social and religious meanings within their own respective faith and tradition that would enable them to live together. Dialogue between different religious communities might solve many of the problems and could help people to eliminate riots. The recent murders and riots in Gujarat (one of the states in India) challenges Christians to reflect and think again about their mission. One aspect of Christian mission should be reconciliation—reconciliation between warring communities.

Along with its partners UTC held a one day seminar for the Bangalore journalists on “Perceptions of Islam in the Media” in order to make them aware of the negative perceptions that are often presented to the public about Islam and Muslims. After this programme a national level dialogue between RSS—a Hindu fundamentalist group and Christian leaders was held at UTC to try to reduce the attacks on the churches by these fundamentalists. Many of the faculty members including the principal participated in this programme. Following the attack on minorities in Gujarat, a major discussion was arranged at UTC involving Muslim, Christian and Hindu leaders in order to promote better understanding between them. In this way UTC is already on the path of establishing reconciliation among different communities. In order to encourage the churches to follow similar ways it is essential for theologians to analyse and theologise such dialogues.

The old questions as to whether one should be theo-centric or Christo-centric in holding dialogue with others; whether salvation exists outside Christianity or not; whether it is possible with Christ need not be asked in this context. The main concern is to what extent there can be a process of reconciliation between Muslims and Hindus and to what extent can Christians play a role in this process. Already people from different religions are engaged in a search for meanings of reconciliation within their religious traditions. Theologians, along with the churches need to engage in different religious communities’ search for meanings that would enable them to live peacefully with other religious people. Theological institutions need to take such dialogical and interactive processes to the churches so that their leaders and their lay members also participate and thus enhance the grass-root level dialogue among different religious people.

**Theological Institutions and Church Together in Society:**

Due to these changes in their contexts people are already engaged in a search for
meanings that would enable them to face the realities around them. It is essential that the theological community along with the church attempt to engage in the people's search for religious and cultural meanings. In order to engage, we need to accept people as they are and go to the place where they are rather than asking them to come to where we are. Unless students and teachers recognise the meanings that arise from different contexts, it is difficult to highlight the relevant meanings from the text and from the traditions. The theological teacher participates in the students' search for socio-cultural and religious meanings that would relate the biblical text and their traditions to their contexts. Thus both engage in the people's search for social and religious meanings and enable them to identify, critically reflect upon and interpret those meanings that are available to them.

Theological institutions along with the churches become 'learners together' in order to understand, interpret the social, cultural and political issues in the light of the theological concepts. This interaction may result in sharing, interpreting and challenging the Christian faith and the churches' traditions in order to relate them to their respective contexts. We begin by interpreting biblical text and traditions to the context in various ways and reflect upon the issues in our context from different theological perspectives. Here a student attempts to participate in the ongoing process of theological education by merging his or her horizon with that of the text and its author. By fusing the horizons the theological community participates in the event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. Steven Bevans suggests different models such as: Translation, Anthropological, Praxis, Synthetic and Transcendental in order to bring together the biblical and church traditions and cultural and social concepts. These models may provide a platform for theological students and teachers to reflect upon his context from his understanding of the text and tradition. Theological education as a process needs to recognize wide range of models with which the students reflect upon their own context.

**Jesus and an Interactive Model of Learning:**

An interactive and dialogic model of learning is not a new paradigm. It can be found in the interaction between Jesus and his 'friends'. The present system of theological education needs to consider this way of learning in order to make theological education relevant and effective to twenty-first-century India. Through the dialogic and interactive method of learning, the participants in the process of theological education are open to any philosophical and scientific discourse, Christian faith, traditions and experiences and to people of other faiths. It is not an isolated process in the sense that it learns from and contributes to other interactions (i.e., between the theological community and the church, theological community and people of other faiths and the church and the people of other faiths). Theological education has to reflect and address the issues in the context of the Church and also in the context of the people from different theological perspectives.

**United Theological College and Interactive Learning:**

Being part of the United Theological College, I am proud to say many of these concerns are already being taken into our system of theological education. The faculty is considering a revision of curriculum in order to improve our present system with the purpose of
Reducing the load for the students while also including courses from the new emerging fields such as Women's Studies, Communication and Mission and Ecumenism. The curriculum will have to provide many options that would enable the student to choose the subjects according to his or her interest and contextual needs. Our theme for the current academic year is “Growing together in faith, hope and love.” The College faculty has decided to send our lecturers to the churches to interact with the pastors and the leaders. Through our publications such as (Bangalore Theological Forum and Mashihi Sevek) we have extensively discussed and reflected upon some of the contemporary issues from different theological perspectives.

The College has assured the churches through different forums that they will co-operate with the churches, with other theological institutions and other centres of education in order to share resources of research and personnel. The College administration along with the faculty attempts to develop a sustainable process of theological education which is financially supported by the Indian churches and by other institutions in India. While retaining the academic standard, the College is also committed to the spiritual formation of our students. The task before theological institution such as UTC is to get involved in shaping intellectual thinking of the nation and to provide a credible critique of political and economic development. By recognising new ways of learning, reflecting, teaching and evaluating the faculty seeks to understand together the Christian faith in the context of other faiths and its relevance to the diverse socio-cultural contexts working alongside with the churches, and together with the people in India.

Notes
6. In the top-down model, the students learn from the teacher. In this model the theological meanings flow from teacher (top) to the students (clown).
7. While recognizing the meanings within learner (as he or she come from different cultural, social and denominational contexts), the teacher enables him or her to develop the critical thinking through which he or she neither accepts all those meanings that are available to them during their training nor becomes passive to the existing realities in the churches. In this process, both teacher and student are learners together as both share, reflect and evaluate each other's experience within their own understanding and participate in each other's search for meanings.
Freire was convinced that “neither ignorance nor knowledge can be absolute, and human beings in creating and recreating their knowledge are engaged in a permanent act of discovery” —quoted from Paulo Freire's Education for Critical Consciousness, p. 118, 119.

For Freire theologically the very nature of human life is characterised by a dialogical communication with God. Pedagogically dialogue is not simply an exchange of views, rather it is the reflection upon the human world and relationships, as envisaged by God the creator.

9. John J. Vincent, 1979, Alternative Theological Education. Sheffield, Urban Theology Unit, p. 23. The theological students need to know how to use these resources for their own reflection and how to make them available to the church and encourage it to reflect. They need to be formed as reflective persons and to try to form a reflective community.

10. F. Ross Kings, Ministry by the People, p. 301.


16. ‘Sangam concept’ among ancient Tamils is a disputed one. There is enough evidence being produced by historians that Sangam existed since the 3rd Century BC. These sangams had poets and intellectuals who came together to discuss and dispute issues in society through various forms and means. Auwai was one of the lady poet who participated in the Sangam debates. Many poets were non-Brahminical background as they spoke and disputed in Tamil. K. Radhakrishnan, 2000, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru (History of Tamil Literature), Chennai: Thiiruvaramu.

A. Ramakrishnan, 2001, Thamizhcha Varalarum, Thamizhar Bandhavum (History and Culture of Tamils), Madurai: Sarvpodaya Pannai.

17. S. Sakthivel, 1984, Tamil Mozhi Varalaru (History of Tamil Language), Chennai, Manikavasagar Pathipaham, p. 30-1.


19. G. W. Webber 1973, Innovation in Theological Education: Reflection from United States, in Learning in Context, published by Theological Education Fund, Kent. New Life Press. Webber recognizes this problem in 1973 and asks: "If men and women must spend their ministries living as part of the ordinary human community, should not their theological education for at least a significant part of its duration, involve them also in living in a normative manner, and not in the rather peculiar style of academic institutions?"—p. 100.


24. Evelyn Monterio, 2001, Emerging Theological Issues in India. A Paper presented at the regional consultation on Theological Priorities in India, Pune, March. Due to the liberalization policy many people's jobs have been made redundant by the private firms whose values also fluctuate according to the market price. This has contributed to an addition of poor masses.

26. Private FM radio stations are growing in numbers; newspaper industries are increasing Over 185 radio stations with 293 transmitters sending programming that reaches 97.3% of the population in India. 792 television transmitting stations broadcasting 19 regular channels. The number of newspapers and periodicals increased from 30,214 in 1990 to 40,000 in 1995 - www.comminit.com/power_point/country_communication_profiles/tsld004.htm

27. Media has taken away the main role in providing socio-cultural and religious meanings to people at large from the social and religious institutions and thus contribute to the audience’s worldview and beliefs.


30. The task for theological education in a multi-faith context is to recognize presence of other religious faiths and the importance of interfaith dialogue. The dialogues that are held by our institutions are very artificial where ‘we’ a few Christian representatives hold dialogue with ‘them’ a few Hindu or other religious representatives. This has not made much impact on the people at the grassroots level where there is an ongoing dialogue among people of different faiths in their tea shops, in their offices and other places. If there is to be a genuine dialogue, one needs to accept the other as he or she is and one needs to go to the place where the other is.

31. Joel C. Weishammer, 1986, Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method, New Heaven: Yale University Press. Gadamer argues, Understanding is thought as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. The fusion of horizons is achieved when the text and tradition are interpreted so that their claim upon the present is acknowledged.


34. The aim of the translation model is to elicit the same reaction in contemporary hearers or readers as in the original hearers or readers. The primary concern of the anthropological model is the establishment or preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith. The praxis model, also known as theology of liberation, is about discerning meaning and contributing to the course of social change. The synthetic model tries to balance the insights of each of the above three models and reaches out to insights from other cultures and ways of thinking. In the transcendental model, the starting point is concerned with one’s own religious experience and one’s own experience to oneself within the historical, geographical, social and cultural environment.