

# **REFORMATION AND EDUCATION TODAY**

## **Challenges, Potentials and Learning Experiences for Education in a Context of Religious Diversity and Growing Extremism in India**

### **Remembering the Past with gratitude**

It is widely recognized that Christian Missions made a significant contribution in the field of education towards social development, national integrity and unity. The contribution of missionaries in the formation of Church in different parts of India with a deep sense of its spiritual and social obligation and their vision for theological education within the larger context of the dynamics of India's religious and cultural pluralism is a rich legacy. The Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century who were instrumental and the inspiration for the future Christian Missions were unanimous that God's mission in the world is entrusted to God's people. They challenge us to rediscover the meanings of the Gospel even today, and we are thankful to them. While we celebrate the bequeathed legacy of the Reformers and the Christian missionaries we revere them for their pioneering services. Inspired as such by the Gospel's core values of liberty, justice and truth, we admit that we have not been very successful in communicating the Gospel effectively in the modern times. We have the responsibility of letting it come alive into the living academic and spiritual traditions in our time and context when the ongoing reformation of the Church and society is called for. Churches in India have inherited this missionary heritage in the field of education. It is imperative to explore the contemporary significance of the Reformation to the ongoing mission and ministry of the Churches particularly in the field of education. We need to recapture the vision and mission of the Reformers and discover new paradigms for the vocation of the Church today.

With a brief note of appreciation to the contribution made by the Christian educational institutions, founded by Christian Missions, I would like to move to the changed social atmosphere and then also to the changed nature of Christian educational institutions by and large.

### **Changed Social Atmosphere in India**

India is proud to be the largest secular democracy in the world. People in India are at liberty to exercise their freedom of expression, movement and religion. At the same time they also experience rampant inequalities, injustice in the society creating unemployment, hunger,

poverty, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, marginalizing peoples, eroding values of life and destroying eco-systems. Due to globalization and free market economy, many changes have taken place in the productive relations too, and the life of the people have been taken for granted and human rights have been violated.

India enjoys a plurality that is very rare – of cultures, religions, races etc. In this ethos, any attempt at homogenising efforts looks formidable, and so, incongruous. This is where the problem today gets complicated as these homogenising tendencies are promoted by the powers that be. For example, Indian ethos is getting disturbed by an attempt at promoting cultural nationalism. Thus, Hindu nationalism is being vehemently promoted. Although the ruling party remains on the sidelines, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) the coordinating body of Hindutva Ideology, their ideological mentors the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangha (RSS) with a lot many scholars and learned men and Bhajrang Dal (the army of the Hanuman god) are fanatically involved in putting up a stiff opposition to Christian Mission work besides marginalising minorities. This is most glaring in Christian mission fields as the following incidents show:

*In Adivasi areas, Christian missionaries focus primarily on educational and health programmes leading to empowerment of the marginalized. These areas which were earlier peaceful have started witnessing communal tensions and are being subjected to attacks. Kandamal is the worst example of anti-Christian violence in the recent past in the tribal belt of Orissa causing rampant poverty and illiteracy. We have also witnessed the attacks on Churches in different parts of the Country, particularly in Delhi in 2014, just before the Assembly elections of Delhi.*

*Here is an example of what they are trying to do. In November 2014 in Bastar District, a tribal belt in Orissa, the VHP passed a resolution through the local government unit Panchayat to order all Roman Catholic Schools in the District that the children should not address Christian Priest Teachers as ‘Father’, but as ‘Acharya’. The resolution also insisted that all schools in the District should display the picture of the Hindu goddess of learning Ma Saraswati. They further ruled that no non Hindu should enter the 50 villages under the domain to conduct even private prayer meetings in homes and public places.*

*This incident is important for two reasons. First, it marks a trend of determined opposition to Christian involvement in Education particularly in the North. As for example, even in West Bengal, once a bastion state of the Marxist party a Convent was attacked by a party of Hindutva hooligans and an elderly nun was raped to show that nothing will stop them from putting an end to Christian Involvement in Education. The Government at the Centre balked over the dastardly event and the State Government could not nab the culprits.*

*The second reason why the Bastar incident is important is that it provoked nation-wide responses in the social media with comments from activists who opposed the action as well as some pro Hindutva voices. The latter had said that Christians were criticizing Hinduism as an idolatrous religion. Interestingly there were some Islamic voices too in support of the opposition to Christian Mission Schools who said that Christian institutions were criticizing Islam for its Bigotry. We need to note that both these comments have some legitimacy especially with mushrooming of fundamental Christian indigenous missions who even today indulge in criticizing other religions along with a 'Proclamation' that only Christians will be found in heaven. We should acknowledge that Christians have shown aggressive, exclusive and triumphalist attitudes in their approach towards people of other faiths. Christian fundamentalism has raised its ugly head in the name of evangelism. The conviction that the love of the Parent God in Jesus Christ is inclusive is hard to come by.*

Some of the communal political parties are the major beneficiaries of communal violence in India. Communal politics, holding Muslims and Christians responsible for many imaginary ills of the country have intensified over the past years. The inclusive character of democratic set up has been threatened due to the divisive politics of communal forces. Attacks on Christians and their institutions which were in the past mostly in Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have spread to all parts of the country. There have been tensions and frequent eruption of communal violence, growing intolerance and attack on plurality leading to insecurity of minorities in different parts of the country. Unhealthy manipulations by some politicians and religious leaders have also provoked many disturbances and caused disintegration. At the same time there are individuals and organizations who fight against the prevalent myths and biases against the inclusive and democratic values. Recently over thirty writers, deeply hurt by an incident of gruesome murder of a former vice-chancellor of a University in Karnataka by some unidentified miscreants, joined by many scientists and artists returned their state awards raising their voices against the changing secular fabric of the country.

### **Changed situation among the Christian Educational Institutions**

Education is still manipulated in the society where only a minority elite is considered to be specially privileged. In the name of caste and class many groups of people are still discriminated. Instead of treating everyone with dignity, communal politics has penetrated into the field of education, media, culture and religiosity. There is a less and less value education in the Christian institutions. Especially the institutions run by the mainline Churches such as the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the different Lutheran Mission Institutions struggle hard to be faithful to their original vocational

commitment. Hindutva is gaining ground and Islamic Madrassas, Schools to teach Islam, are getting established.

Generally members of the Churches look upon the 'Mission' schools as providing an opportunity for employment for their young people. But ironically, especially the middle class and more affluent Christians, however, send their children to Private English medium schools. Education has now become a commodity. So to attract patronage schools have to produce results in terms of 100% passes and a great number of state ranks. So children are made to learn by heart and drilled further by tuition centres and tutorial colleges where the teachers teach in the evenings and early mornings for making extra money. One Social commentator said that the schools have now become like poultry batteries just producing eggs and chicks without worrying about the emotional stress of the chicken. There is little emphasis on sports and games and little leisure for children to be involved in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to develop citizenship values, to understand society, to be involved in environmental concerns etc. For example, to get students to come for Christian Youth meetings is difficult as most of the college students have to go to special coaching classes in order to improve the prospects of admission in professional institutions. On the other hand, some of the fundamentalist organizations do get good attendance as there is a constant propaganda that prayers of leaders and preachers will help secure better grades!

The situation is further vitiated because the Government at the Centre is keen to revise history as it is taught to make people accept that Hinduism is the National Religion of India, which should really be called Bharat. Their distorted logic revolves around some events in history: Muslim invasions and later colonial rule have destroyed the core values of Go-Matha worship (Cow worship) and Rama Rajya...The practice of Sati, burning of the widow along with her deceased husband came in as a practice in order to protect their widows from being taken as wives for the marauding Muslims. But strangely some years back they persuaded a widow called Rup Kanwar to volunteer to be burnt in her deceased husband's pyre. The issue created mass hysteria as an event signalling a going back to the core values of Bharat. Ambedkar movements are curbed because he declared Dalits are not Hindus and advocated that they become Buddhists which he claimed as a real going back to their earlier religion. A lot of evidence to show this is now being unearthed that dalits were in fact Buddhists who resisted reconversion to Hinduism during the anti-Buddhist rampage in the early centuries of the first millennium CE.

In a context of cultural policing by the militant Hindu groups and ideological imposition from the Centre, our young people do not get proper education. The discriminatory disparities remain also in the educational sectors. There is discrimination in allocating resources, employment, loans and other facilities to the dalits and the marginalized. Commercialization in education has aggravated the social and economic differences in the society, sharpening polarization. The Church by and large has been involved in responding to this situation. Even if they do not become visionaries at least a minimum level of value education and commitment to non-communal community orientation are attempted in some of our institutions. Some committed NGOs are making an effort to participate in educating the poor among whom they work with a vision to develop a non-competitive mode of learning together, with awareness of commitment to the environment, compassion for the needy and becoming innovative in development that is not just for making more money but at making life better for all.

*Significant are the efforts of the late Sankar Guha Nyogi who was killed and whose movement was snuffed out and people like the artist Jyoti Sahi among others. In the midst of communal conflicts, violence and terrorism there are many initiatives towards communal amity, peace and dialogue in a comprehensive way.*

Conscious efforts have been made towards religious harmony by various religious groups and educational institutions.

*Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, Karnataka in South India are considered to be a replica of India which is known for peaceful co-existence and co-operation where we have a blending of different religions, cultures, languages and ethnic groups. However, in recent years the peaceful co-existence in this area has been disturbed and the districts have experienced outbreaks of communal clashes. With a deep sense of commitment to promote communal harmony in the year 1998 a Hindu educationist, Mr N. Vinaya Hegde, Chancellor of Nitte University, Mangaluru with the active support of a Roman Catholic theologian Prof. Dr John Fernandez and a Muslim educationist Prof. P. C. M. Kunhi started a movement called 'Dharma Samanvaya' (Dharma means Religion, Sam means together with, anvaya means integration) with a vision of 'Contacting, communicating and cooperating between people belonging to different religions, leading to religious harmony and communal amity'. Heads of educational institutions run by Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Jain communities, about 30 in number, and some educationists soon became part of this movement to prepare the action programmes. It was a process of education for the participants themselves to discover and appreciate the richness of one's own tradition and that of others. It was also a time to see what is common to all religions and what is different or unique in them. Various programmes have been organized through Dharma Samanvaya: In Schools and Colleges: Learning from one another, celebrating feasts and praying*

*together, doing social service together, training of teachers, social workers and volunteers. A core group acts as a catalyst of interreligious harmony in its institution. In the Society: Collaborating and networking with various religious communities, groups and organizations locally, nationally and internationally towards religious harmony to build up a peaceful society. The whole programme can be termed as a dialogue in a comprehensive way: Dialogue for contact, communication and co-operation.*

### **Transformation of the Social Location of the Community**

A real effort is to be made for building up the inherent values that lie buried in our culture. But it tends to be only for the elite as the way education is carried out is alien and in a high profile feature, and thus expensive. The absence of community orientation as a definite stand against casteism is a tell-tale remedy. One of the major contributions of the Reformation legacy in India is nothing but the emancipation of the marginalized communities. The Reformation legacy which was foundational for the missionary education programmes concentrated on the marginalized sections in India – the Adivasis, tribals, dalits, the fisherpeople, women etc. The missionary interventions into the life of the marginalized as they were going through severe exclusion and marginalization based on the caste practices marked a new era of emancipation and transformation in the 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the post missionary era in India demands new approaches and modules from Christian institutions in terms of the mission of emancipation and transformation of the marginalized. One of the major criticisms raised by B. R. Ambedkar, the great Indian Dalit leader against the Christian missionary programmes of emancipation is that it has never overcome its internal legacy of colonialism. Of course, Ambedkar was very much aware of the significance of English education and the tools of modernity to determine the progress of the downtrodden community in the period of colonial modernity. Like Gandhi, Ambedkar was also a product of western education. However, his obsession was mainly on the values of western culture which was ignorant of the hierarchical, patriarchal, casteist structure of Indian society. Hence, Ambedkar argues that Christian missionary education produced certain leaders from the dalit community who were capable of transcending their own private spaces but not in terms of changing the social location of the community. He was aware of the disparity and conflict between Christian dalits and other dalits and he even criticized the missionary emancipatory programmes for making the unity of dalits in India impossible. Whatever may the inconsistencies be, his argument points out the reason that played behind the impossibility of bringing the dalits in India under one single umbrella to affirm their potential for political bargaining which is essential in the modern democratic set up in India.

Another issue that we have to address in terms of the question of education to the marginalized in India today is the impact of globalization which has opened up new vistas of possibilities in the field of education that are accessible to the elite only. Whether we agree it or not, the globalized life has influenced our lives in the Church and society tremendously. I think the new role before the Christian educational institutions is to provide ample opportunities for the dalits, tribals, Adivasis and the other marginalized sections to make use of these avenues. What we see in India is the great enthusiasm among students from such communities to go for higher studies and this is one of the major reasons behind the growing unrest in the higher education University campuses which have always been the abode of elite students. The suicide of the Dalit researcher Rohit Vemula in Hyderabad University on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2016 is one of the typical examples for this growing aversion and unrest. Unlike the Reformation period, the Christian communities in India today are invoked to assure the presence of dalit and marginalized students in the campuses and the need to give spaces to affirm their respect, dignity and pride with a rightful space and respectful human dignity.

Our era signifies three things with regard to the question of education, Christian responsibility and the marginalized:

1. **New Subjectivity Formation:** The people who are at the margins demand a new life which is devoid of the casteist constructions of social life and human subjectivity. It is a subjectivity through which the marginalized consider themselves as the custodians of their life. The ‘parental logic’ of the reformation legacy is critiqued for rendering them as the objects of charity. Education to the people in the margins has to address the changed epistemological situation where such people consider themselves as the subjects of their life. Today, they try to re-position themselves as agents of a democratic society through education. They are not at the receiving end, rather they are at the deciding position. Hence, the marginalized people in India today try to make use of all new capitals, whether it is orientation to new international courses or technical skills or entrepreneurship that are offered by globalization. The challenge before the Christian institutions is that whether they are capable of offering them new possibilities.
2. **‘Oikumene of Solidarity’:** The emancipation of the marginalized and the dalits has to be communitarian. For that matter, dalit culture, arts, songs, science, philosophy,

and dalit liturgy are to be improved and enhanced. Unless and until their culture is respected, their complete emancipation remains unfulfilled. Community formation is not of caste-group formations, rather it is to go beyond their caste or sub-caste boundaries to formulate a subaltern identity in solidarity with the other marginalized sections in the country and the globe – the Minjung, the African American, the transgenders etc. The cultural resources of these marginalized sections can create a vision of an ‘oikumene of solidarity’ where the universal Church and the ecumenical movement find meaning. It is a challenge for the Churches to become part of this ‘oikumene of solidarity’ in order to re-imagine itself as the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Christian role in the field of education especially with regard to the emancipation of dalits, tribals, adivasis and other marginalized groups should keep this ultimate vision in this post-missionary Indian context. Otherwise, the education ministry of the Churches will be looked as part of the colonial agenda.

- 3. Formation of a Political Community:** Education for the marginalized should enable them to relocate themselves as a political community in India. It is here that the role of the Christians in education becomes part of the nation building effort. Christianity in India since the Independence was part of the nation building process and Christian education mission has always been integral to it. Not as a minority or a majority community, but as a democratic community, Christians in India played a vital role in keeping the Indian polity democratic and just. The educational ministry of the Church to the marginalized is part of the witness of the Church in nation building. The Church in India has had the legacy of being a corrective force in this regard. However, I am afraid, the Indian Church is facing the danger of losing its credibility of being and becoming a corrective force in India today due to its silence on issues of justice and growing interest in profit-making projects. There is a strong allegation from the Hindutva forces that Christianity encourages the capitalist mode of education and thereby enhances market-economy. The ultimate purpose of education is the welfare and liberation of the total humanity and the whole cosmos. If there are sections of people who still remain under the yoke of bondage and repression, then the nation still needs education of transformation. And that has to be done within the outlook of the formation of just-democratic political community at large.



The Church in India has to reconstitute its vision, evangelistic thrust and paradigms for its witness in the field of education. It has to realize the epistemological shifts that are happening in the pedagogical process. It has to understand the political changes that take place in the community formation and social assemblages. The challenge before the Church in this regard is to become a Church that represents the just community in the world. The sad part of the story is that some of our educational institutions have become centres of politics, corruption and power struggles. Education has become a profitable venture sold and bought for a price. The Christian educational institutions are also not an exception to this state of affairs. By raising these pertinent issues, we are challenged to renew our commitment to the reformation and renewal of God's people and God's world by bringing justice to weaker sections, developing inter-cultural and cross-cultural living and protecting the secular democratic and pluralistic ethos of our nation. In a broader sense, education is the totality of changes that shapes an individual's behaviour which, in turn, has significance to the entire society. Here the whole environment becomes the educative agency which enables an individual to develop his/her potentialities, abilities and attitudes to the full and equip him/her for a harmonious life in the society. The teaching ministry of the Church can play a very significant role in this venture of faith.

### **Education for Transformation and Transformation in Education**

Education has been so far largely based on the 'banking' method where information is pumped in without creating a base for creativity in the minds of the learners. For this the tools of education methods, teaching techniques and a way to indicate values of life need to be worked out. If education is for transformation, then it has to begin with the text-books, the teachers and the learners, and the learning exercise need to be a participatory activity leading to creative interactivity in the context of plurality. The students need to evolve appropriate methods of objectivity, analytical tools etc. What our educational institutions including theological institutions require isn't simply reform or transformation, but a revolution of sorts in Educational Philosophy and Pedagogy, enhanced performance and accountability at all levels, collaborating with the Government and other educational institutions. While our discussions often centre on 'Education for Transformation,' sufficient attention also needs to be given to 'Transformation in Education' in ethos, purpose and policy. It is a challenge to our entire value and belief systems. India has witnessed the emergence of cultural communalism, religious fundamentalism and exploitative technological development. In the midst of various challenges posed by the cultural and spiritual crises for education we have to

explore the meaning of partnership and solidarity in a country of plurality and diversity of religions, castes, peoples, languages and cultures. What is the meaning of partnership and solidarity in a religio-pluralistic country? Transformation in education is understood in terms of shaping better individuals and better society. In our curriculum we should lay emphases equally on the following: Attaining academic excellence, Acquiring practical skills, Personal and communitarian formation. It is the totality of changes that take place in an individual's behaviour which has significance not only for the individual but also to the society. Education and educational policies in a particular society are to be geared towards transforming the society and move in the path of progress and development.

Education can play a significant role in shaping our culture and social values too. Instilling fundamental cultural values among all people is of great significance in a multi-religious country. It is not merely geared to meet the needs of literary and intellectual pursuits, but also to shape the ethical and social fabric of our society. The message of inclusive and democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity as well as positive aspects of plurality and intercommunity relations which have kept people together has to be spread all over through our educational institutions and media. We must build broader solidarities crossing the boundaries of religious affiliations in order to address the question of communalism. If transformation has to happen, it must happen from the bottom permeating the society and transforming realities. The education system has the responsibility to bring about the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an integrated and egalitarian society.

Schools and colleges were established by missionaries and Churches in India to teach people to read, write and make them literate, to train teachers and preachers to assist in Christian instruction. They were also aiming at conversion through their social and educational activities. Education was obviously a very useful means for conversion, as it has been at every stage of missionary activity. Through it they could influence the minds of the children already at the time of the formative period of their lives. Elementary schools were established partly for the purpose of conversion, and also for the children of Christian families. In my home town Mangalore, missionaries from the Evangelical Missionary Society, Basel (Basel Mission) came in 1834 to establish a catechist school for the training of ministers who would be involved in the task of conversion. The Basel Mission was also involved in establishing several primary schools in Karnataka. Besides education they were involved in direct

evangelization, printing and publication, promoting language and lexicography, medical work, industry etc. Educational institutions also provided jobs and educational opportunities to Christians as well as people of other faiths. Christianity in India can be considered as a movement for the search of the spiritual, and social liberation. Education provided practical wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. Over the years the evangelistic thrust has lost its relevance because the Government has better control over the educational system and provides special facilities to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as to women today.

***It has been 6 years since Right to Education (RTE Act 2009 which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010) has been a law in India. A key provision of this law is reservation of 25 per cent of the seats in schools to underprivileged students. It is the Right of all children in the age of 6 to 14 to free and compulsory education in vernacular.***

The following questions fall in place: Why should the Churches need to run educational institutions when the Governments and other NGOs are doing the same job seriously with the needed resources? Why should we be involved in education when there is no scope for Christian instruction? Are we, through our educational institutions, proclaim and practice the value of justice and solidarity? Has education become a commercial venture and enterprise of the Churches? When the schools were started, the Church was spending money on educational programmes, but now it is the opposite. Christian educational systems, with an exception of vernacular schools, are supporting the Churches. The educational contribution of Christian missions to India will continue dwindling as the nation makes progress and the Government along with other groups and organizations enter the field aggressively. In this changed scenario, the Churches should venture into opening schools where we do not have schools and colleges for the underprivileged. The importance of running primary schools in vernacular languages needs to be recaptured to enrich the renaissance of Indian languages and literature.

Education is something that shapes one's life and personality and defines success. There are many people in India who are deprived of higher and quality education due to poverty. It is true that technology and globalization have increased the accessibility to higher education in recent years. Massive on-line courses are a recent trend in distance or e-learning with prestigious institutions and universities. Students can also watch the lectures on line which prove to be useful in acquiring knowledge and passing the examinations. At the same time the current system of education continues to be governed by bookish culture and theory-

oriented teaching which always do not instil independent thinking. Participation in learning programmes in other contexts locally/nationally/internationally, practice and experience, is of great significance. Opportunities should be provided to have a radical frame of world-view in different dimensions to improve inter-cultural knowledge and competence. Learning experience in other contexts marks an important transformation and it can shape the life style of a person to understand the purpose of life and living in a community. It is a challenge to our entire value and belief system.

*According to a recently published report on International Education Exchange, the number of Indian students headed to the US for studies rose up to 29.4 per cent in 2014-15. The number of students going to the US was around 100000 annually for a few years, has now risen about 30,000 in 2014-15. There is an increased sentiment among the wealthy parents to send their children to the US and international schools. Apart from wooing of Indian students to institutions abroad, there is also the trend of foreign institutions selling their business on Indian soil. But what will be in store for the majority of Indian students who come from rural and economically poor background?*

*There were 33.3 million students enrolled in 757 Universities in India in 2014-15, as against 32.3 million enrolled in 723 Universities in 2013-14. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of total enrolment in Higher Education has moved up to 23.5 per cent in 2014-15 from 21.5 per cent in 2012-13. For men the ratio is 24.5 per cent and it is 22.7 per cent for women.*

*None of the Indian Higher Education Institutions feature in the top 100 in the prestigious lists. Now the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has made it in the global ranking of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings of 2015-16 for Engineering and technology. The Government of India has taken it up as a challenge to see some of our Higher Educational Institutions feature in the top 100 in the prestigious lists. 10 institutions will be concentrated so that they emerge as world class teaching and research institutions. Government has also proposed courses on Entrepreneurship education and training through massive open online courses. In order to encourage vocational training and institutes the Government has established a National Board for Skill Development Certificate in partnership with the industry and academia.*

Transformation is not about accumulating more knowledge, but about seeing the world in a profoundly different way, one that calls for commitment, solidarity and action. It is translating the experiences and awareness to meaningful action. It is a shift from knowledge-based education to value-based education. To build a society with sensible character it is vital that value education is introduced already in pre-school and continue it in primary, secondary and higher education. Transformation is possible through enhanced performance and accountability at all levels. Capacity-building of students, teachers, administrators and

members of school boards through continuous quality up-gradation and human resource management is of vital importance. Involvement of the community, parents, old students, village and city administration is to be given importance to make them feel that the institution belongs to them and that they owe a responsibility to the school to fulfil its objectives and to see that the schools show development. Environmental and ecological concerns need to be given due importance in order to protect the nature surrounding the campus. Thus a shift takes place here from a human-centred development to a life-centred development involving all the stake holders.

### **Theological Education for Empowering the People**

Theological education in India has contributed a great deal to the promotion of holistic life for the community. It stresses the need for a paradigm which respects and affirms plurality in the Church and entire society. Theological education is not meant only for a special group of people who go through theological schools. Members of the Church, children, youth, men and women, both laity and clergy, all need sound theological education and nurturing at different stages. The Reformation brought about a shift from relating to faith passively through rites and rituals to actively engaging in faith through reflection facilitated by education. The reformers were engaged in education through regular preaching and teaching, encouraging self-study and reflection by making the Bible available to the laity translating it into the vernacular. They also introduced hymns in vernacular for public singing, catechism for confirmation and wrote new commentaries on the Biblical books for the use of candidates in ministry and the educated laity. This was followed by writings on various theological and ethical issues from Christian perspectives. Thus the reformers aimed at not only the formation or perfecting the soul of a Christian but also in shaping the mind for fulfilling one's vocation in the world with a sound foundation of faith. Their emphasis was that every vocation has to be shaped by well-informed faith perspectives based on the scriptures. This they thought would happen only through the means of education, and thus education got a special attention in their ministry.

The Indian context is multi-religious and multi-cultural. Christians are called to develop a dialogical approach to people of other faiths in which one's own faith gets further clarified, misgivings abolished and visions are shared. Dialogue stands for a spirit of openness and a new relationship with people of other faiths. The contribution of Christian missionaries to the study of Indian religions, cultures and languages is considerable. However, Indian religions

were first studied and encountered in the context of mission. Involvement in Inter-faith dialogue and missionary obligations of Christians cannot be separated from each other. A dialogical view need not dilute our distinctive faith expressions and betray our missionary obligations. Affirmation of faith can never be considered as identical to arrogant exclusivism. Inter-religious co-operation will go a long way in the fields of development, conflict resolution, peace initiatives and nation building. In all our theological disciplines, whether in Biblical studies, theology and ethics, history of Christianity, religions, society and inter-faith dialogue, an approach of openness to the world of religions will enrich our studies. This way of doing theology imparts relevant education not only to theological students but for all Christians who are called to be people of God among other peoples of God in the world. The Reformation also lays emphasis on people of God doing theology in their particular life situations. People-centred theological education has the objective of empowering through participation in the struggles, hopes and aspirations of dalits, tribals, Adivasis, women, youth and others who are struggling for liberation, due to cultural, social and ecological and other problems.

William Carey is seen as the Father of Modern (Protestant) Missionary Movement causing a great missionary awakening throughout the Protestant world. He was inspired by the Catholic missionaries, the Moravian Brethren and Lutheran Pietists at Tranquebar. The founding of the Serampore College in the year 1818 as an arts and science college is an indication of the comprehensive outlook of the Serampore Trio Carey, Marshman and Ward. The College was considered as the apex of an educational system which had established a whole network of vernacular schools within a 20 mile radius of Serampore. The College was founded for the instruction of the Asiatic Christian and other youth in Eastern literature and European sciences. According to Carey the vernacular literature must assimilate and must become the bearer of new values and insights developed in interaction between classical oriental languages and English literature and modern science and in this way the people might develop a new culture which relates scientific developments to human spiritual values. According to William Carey, Indian youth need to be educated in a setting where the classical Hindu, Christian and Islamic as well as scientific secular cultures can dialogue with each other producing an indigenous synthetic humanist culture. His main thrust was on enrichment of the renaissance of Indian language and literature. Carey wanted theological students to seek truth side by side with their enquiring fellow countrymen. They were challenged to be in dialogue with the Indian and European cultures and develop a concern for the transformation

of culture. Social obligation was part of Carey's Christian obligation along with preaching, Church planting and disseminating the Word of God. As a radical social reformer, Carey spoke against social evils such as caste, Sati, infanticide, self-torture, slavery and human sacrifice. The Serampore Missions' efforts in Education, agriculture, horticulture and industry all were dedicated to the objective of transforming the lot of the poor and marginalized. Carey's influence is widely recognized in many spheres including science, education, literacy, social reform, culture and religion. His practical involvement in every sphere of life with the motto '*Expect great things from God and Attempt great things for God,*' contributed immensely to the liberation and transformation of the peoples of the world beginning in Bengal. In Serampore College, the missionaries imparted theological education in a fertile setting, in creative dialogue with the larger Indian society articulating the Gospel with contextual relevance. Their model of education challenges theological institutions to have interaction with the cultural and scientific dimensions of knowledge and to be in close contact and interaction with the society rather than reinforcing individual piety, religious fundamentalism and communal Christianity.

Theological education takes the contemporary context seriously in order to formulate a vibrant and relevant theology. The context demands clarity of our aims, objectives and perspectives for theological education. The Senate of Serampore College/University with more than 55 affiliated theological Colleges and 8 research represents an ecumenical strand of theological education. Theological educators of Serampore family consider themselves as instruments of the Church in order to equip and motivate the whole people of God for ministry and mission in the world. By working out a framework for curriculum that is paradigmatically different and contextually relevant, the affiliated colleges of the Senate of Serampore College/University are involved in facing the challenges to theological education as well as the ministries of the Church. Similarly there is a clearly exhibited shift in the pedagogical methodology, which gives importance to both classroom experience and field experience, a teaching-learning process. The wide range of theological perspectives expressed in the overall system of Serampore College with sufficient room for a plurality of expressions, are being recognized as the strength of the Serampore system. Thus theological education by theologizing with all God's people in a wider ecumenical sense has an important role in the transformation of God's house in the midst of hopes and struggles of communities who are anticipating and struggling for a new humanity and new world.

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
By narrow domestic walls  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way  
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever widening thought and action  
Into the haven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (Rabindranath Tagore)*

**JOHN S. SADANANDA**