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CONTEXTUALISATION OF THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

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Abstract

This article briefly surveys the a-historical theology of the past and what has led to the inculturation and contextualisation of theology. For centuries theology had become a-historical. In response, South America developed liberation theology; in India besides poverty the presence of many religions forced us to rethink our theology. The recognition of the significance of the context in any learning, and following Vatican II inspiration, the General Congregation of the Jesuits spoke of the need for inculturation, knowledge of the context, and insertion into the culture and life of the people; the South Asian Assistancy of the Jesuits started regional theologates at Ahmedabad, Madras and other places affiliated to either Vidya Jyoti, Delhi or JDV, Pune. They emphasised the context, language of the place, life situation of people, etc. Their basic thrust is to attempt a theology from below, from contact and involvement with the people, especially the poor. A certain degree of involvement in the context has been achieved, experiencing the condition of the life of the people, involvement in their struggles, and the use of the local languages. T.K. John has made significant contribution to theologizing in India.

Keywords: Context, Formation, Inculturation, Indian Culture, Jesuit Formation, Mission, Option for the Poor, Theological Formation

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1. A Critique of the Past Approaches to Theology

In this short paper I shall survey briefly the a-historical theology of the past and what led us to the inculturation and contextualisation of theology.

Vatican II, especially in its document *Gaudium et Spes*, made an effort to base its reflections on the life experiences of people. That had not always been the approach in theology. For centuries theology as rational knowledge had become a-historical, busy with eternal truths, valid for all, every place and time. This a-historical theology ignores and plays down history, people, their struggles, their actual concerns. Its function was to define, explain and teach revealed truths authoritatively, and denounce false doctrines. Similarly, Underpinning such an understanding of theology is a classicist notion of culture, which tends to affirm, "There really is only one culture, and it is both universal and permanent."¹

The Third World countries, especially South America, confronted with massive poverty of the masses and the irrelevance of current theology to address the situation of poverty, oppression, silencing of human rights, etc. developed liberation theology. In India, besides the above fact of poverty, one faces a situation of many religions with claims similar to our own, and very much alive. This has led to a rethinking of theology and inculturation thrust came into being.

Besides Vatican II, various other developments led to the present-day thrust in theology.

2. Factors and Events Leading to the Inculturation Commission

2.1. Developments in the Society of Jesus

The recognition of the significance of the context in any learning has become an established fact today.² The 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits (GC 32),³ Decree 4, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice" had already spoken of the need for inculturation, knowledge of the context, and insertion into the culture and life of the people, as knowledge of the context is essential to such a mission.⁴ GC 32/5 gives the reason for such a call to Inculturation:

¹S. Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, New York: Orbis Books, 2000.

²J. Mattam and P. Parakal, ed., *Creative Ministries, Exploring New Frontiers in Mission*, Mumbai: St Pauls, 2004, especially, J. Mattam, "Need for Creative Ministries," 9-24.

³*Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977.

⁴GC 32, D 6/21, no 153, D 6/8 no 140; D 6/27 no 159; D 6/29 no 161. GC 32, D 6/26, no 158.

Our formation must be such that the Jesuit can be one with the people to whom he is sent, capable of communicating with them. He must be able to share their convictions and values, their history, their experience and aspirations; at the same time, he must be open to the convictions and values of other peoples, traditions and cultures.⁵

In the stage of theological studies, inculturation is of prime importance for the future ministry of the Word. The kind of dialogue demanded by GC 32 (Decr. 6, 26) between theology and culture will only be possible if there has already been inculturation in the areas and to the degree already described: in language, life-style, apostolic experience, etc., and if theology itself is conceived as a reflection by the Church on present life as much as on its past history and teaching.⁶

2.2. Developments in the South Asian Assistancy

Certain developments among the South Asian Jesuits also led to a rethinking of theology in India. After the *Regional Order of Studies* (1968) there was "The Jesuit in Modern India" Report and plan of the Ad Hoc Commission (1969).⁷ This report had already suggested vernacularisation of formation, especially in philosophy and theology. The Assistancy 'Formatores' Meeting at Pune, in 1973 recognised the need for early acquaintance with realistic apostolic situations as well as for a well planned and duly evaluated apostolic experiences.⁸

The Goregaon I (1975) convention of Provincials and Formators, along with Father General Pedro Arrupe (Oct-Nov 1975) is another important landmark in the process of the regionalization and inculturation.⁹ The Declaration of this Convention says: "We commit ourselves to promote the Inculturation of Christian life in India..."¹⁰ After this convention the major superiors of the Indian Assistancy set up an Inculturation Commission (IC) in January 1976 with the task of preparing "a concrete plan for a phased and realistic programme of formation and studies for scholastics and brothers from the novitiate to tertianship."¹¹

The Commission found that "in general there is little contact and hardly any vital link between Jesuit formation and the fields of Jesuit

⁵GC. 32, D. 6/27, no 159.; GC 32, D 6/29, no 161

⁶*Jesuit Formation and Inculturation in India Today, Final report of the Inculturation Commission and Conclusions of the Jesuit Conference of India*, (Delhi 1978), ed. J. Aixala, SJ, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1978. (henceforth: *Jesuit Formation*) 204.

⁷*Jesuit Formation*, 29.

⁸*Jesuit Formation*, 32.

⁹*Jesuit Formation*, 32.

¹⁰*Jesuit Formation*, 34.

¹¹*Jesuit Formation*, 17.

apostolate in India.”¹² It also noted, “The men in the field express much discontent with, and disapproval of, training patterns in the houses of formation.”¹³ Similarly the formators also had their complaints, “there is little or grudging help forthcoming from the apostolate when it is requested, and little sympathetic understanding for the difficult work of training that the ‘formators’ must undertake.”¹⁴ The Commission expressed the fear that this situation leads to “a sort of mutual cleavage and distrust between the men in the field and the houses of training, particularly Faculties of Philosophy and Theology.”¹⁵

The Provincials and the Formators met at Goregaon from 2-6 January 1978 (Goregaon II). It discussed regionalization, vernacularization and contextualization in life-style. It saw theology as “*a vital interaction between faith and life: it is at once interpreting concrete Indian and local reality and experience in the light of the gospel, and understanding the gospel in the light of the concrete Indian and local reality and experience.*”¹⁶

This Commission recommended: “Theological formation, therefore, should take place in the Province or Region to which a scholastic belongs as it saw that the regional, cultural and religious traditions have to become a stimulus for theological reflection. It also recommended vernacularization as it saw language as the vehicle of culture as a whole.”¹⁷ It insisted that theological formation should increasingly employ the medium of the regional language.¹⁸ *The Regional Order of Studies* held that formation has to take place in the diverse apostolic contexts wherein the one mission of faith that does justice is carried out.

3. Regional Theologates

As we saw above, the formation personnel and the Provincials at Goregaon encouraged Jesuits of the Assistancy to start regional theologates to ensure more contextualized formation in the vernacular. At the request of my provincial at that time, Fr Joe Aizpun, I started the first Jesuit regional theologate at Premal Jyoti, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in 1978, as an extension centre of Vidyajyoti,

¹²Jesuit Formation, 26.

¹³Jesuit Formation, 26.

¹⁴Jesuit Formation, 26.

¹⁵Jesuit Formation, 27.

¹⁶Jesuit Formation, 79-80.

¹⁷Jesuit Formation, 138-9.

¹⁸Jesuit Formation, 125.

Delhi. Fr Arrupe was a strong supporter of this venture and continued to take a keen interest in what went on at the theologate, and guided its progress. At his request, regularly I sent him reports of what we were attempting, and at his suggestion, we discontinued various attempts like staying in the slums, in the poorer families and in a city parish. He thought some of these attempts prevented the students from serious academic, intellectual work.

Exposure to the context, involvement with the people, the use of Gujarati and serious study were the main thrusts of the theologate. Accordingly, we had some of the courses in Gujarati. Students wrote their assignments in Gujarati. They had ample opportunities to be involved with the people through the one month exposure at the beginning and then through the weekend ministries in the city parishes, villages/mission centres or slums. They remained in constant touch with the context of their future ministries. Besides, there were also field study courses during the academic year.

In the following years, Madurai, Patna and Ranchi provinces started their own regional theologates. A little later, Bombay, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra also started their regional centres. All except Kerala were extensions of Vidyajyoti; Kerala was an extension of JDV, Pune. Later on, Bombay closed its theologate; Karnataka kept its theologate in suspended animation for a few years and later restarted it. I hear that Kerala might close its regional centre, due to lack of students. The first regional theologate (of Gujarat) became a regional seminary in 1998 to cater to the needs of the region at the request of the bishops of Gujarat. It, however, continues the thrust of the erstwhile regional theologate. The change over to the regional seminary was also due to the reduction in the number of Jesuit students. In the present year we have not a single Jesuit in the first year!

The basic thrust of these centres is to attempt a theology from below, from contact and involvement with the people, especially the poor, while ensuring that this experience goes along with a serious theological reflection. Each centre has its own specific thrust. I mentioned above some of the things we attempted in Gujarat. Tamil Nadu emphasized the being with the people and on involvement in their liberation struggles, especially of the Dalits.

How would one evaluate this 'experiment'? We have achieved a certain degree of Involvement in the context, experiencing the condition of the life of the people, involvement in their struggles, and the use of the local languages. However, one area where we have not

succeeded sufficiently is the area of reflection on the experience, and this experience has not radically affected the content of our theology and the life-style of the theologians to any remarkable extent. The content of theology remains largely the classical, traditional Judeo-Christian materials, as is demanded by the Roman authorities. The interaction between the Judeo-Christian tradition and the realities of the place and people is slowly leading to a synthesis in the lives of many, but at the official level, the content remains the traditional material. The demand of the 'Faculty,' which has to give a degree to the students, restricts largely the freedom to change the content radically. This dream of the 'radical revision' has not happened yet, so, T.K. John expresses his disappointment: "the formation as it exists now in our formation centres is largely unsuited to achieve what the people of God in India want to receive from the Christian community's service, and, what the Church in India wants to achieve."¹⁹

On 18 October 1971 Father Arrupe wrote to the Rector of St Mary's college when he allowed the transfer of St Mary's Kurseong to Delhi:

The fundamental reason for the transfer to Delhi must be sought in the quest for an apt milieu for priestly and apostolic formation. The modern Jesuit must be a man who effectively lives the spirituality of the Exercises, and like the Word, incarnates himself in this world of ours, so as to lead it to God. To accomplish this salvific mission he must acquire an empathic knowledge of contemporary realities. He must understand the new values and ideals, to aid in achieving the good; he must discern problems and difficulties, to search for the most satisfying solutions... It is necessary for Christianity to become incarnate in the culture of your ancient land, this need is perhaps all the more evident in the vast regions of the north.²⁰

The recognition of the significance of context in any learning has become a generally accepted fact today. Learning is the result of the individual interacting with the context. The context is also important for deciding the nature of mission. This recognition has been the significant contribution of T.K. John to theologizing in India.

Due to the multi-religious context of India, T.K. John emphasizes the importance of Dialogical relationship. He notes with satisfaction that the Church has moved from its exclusivist existence to a "dialogical relationship with the religions of the country."²¹ T.K. John

¹⁹T.K. John, "Formation in Context," in *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, ed. T. D'Sa, Bangalore: NBCLC, 2005, 714-730, at 714.

²⁰Vidyajyoti Institute of Religious Studies, *VJ Evaluation Report, Assessment and Vision*, Sebasti Raj (Convener), 1996, Delhi, 8.

²¹T. K. John, "Formation in Context," 714.

believes that every sector of Christian theology, spirituality, liturgy, pastoral theology and Missiology stand challenged by this multi-religious context.

He believes that there is urgent need for an innovative method in theology. As the present method is found inadequate, T.K. John argues for a new method whose “components of the merging theological method, however, are experience, commitment, theological reflection with the assistance of exegesis and hermeneutics of the Word of God, subsequent action or involvement.”²² T.K. John proposes criteria for a revised syllabus and method. For TK John “mission determines the formation.” Hence, he suggests Creative fidelity, revisioning of the original vision and formation for and in mission. Creative fidelity deals with our discernment as to how much of the old we preserve, while being open to the new context, how to let the new insights confront the heritage. A radical re-orientation of the original vision is often needed. Formation in and for mission becomes the guiding principle in all formation.

The conviction behind T.K. John’s theological explorations is that not only are scripture and tradition the source of theology, but the actual religious, social, political, economic, cultural and historical conditions of the country also form a “*locus theologicus*” understood in a broad sense. Hence, he held that during the study of theology students should get opportunities for guided exposure, reflection and action.

T.K. John’s theological thrust is the same as the one formulated by the Kathmandu Statement. Our commitment to form human communities imbued with the values of the Kingdom that Christ came to inaugurate implies today an option for the poor, namely a commitment to “All socially and economically marginalised groups, particularly the dalits, tribals, women, unorganized labour, illiterate, whom we seek to empower by participating in their struggles”²³ Based on this document T.K. John emphasized the need for a well-informed social and cultural analysis and theological reflection. He wrote, “The social-cultural analysis will be incomplete without the faith reflection, carried on in a context which is both interdisciplinary and genuinely integrated with the culture in which it is done.”²⁴

²²T.K. John, “Formation in Context,” 715.

²³*Formation in Mission: The Final Report of the Formation Review Commission and the Conclusions of JCSA*, South Asian Assistency, 1992, 110.

²⁴*Formation in Mission* 121.

In T.K. John's theology, there is a shift from the acquisition of conceptual knowledge to the complex of experience and reflection; and a shift from learning and teaching through lectures and other academic exercises to learning through praxis. Here he is drawing upon GC 33, no 411 that says, "a transformation of our habitual patterns of thought through a constant interplay of experience, reflection and action"²⁵ has to take place. Therefore, he pleaded that "Young Jesuits should not, during their time of formation, be oblivious of the actual living conditions of the people of the regions in which they live... Accordingly an experience of living with the poor for at least a certain period of time will be necessary for all."²⁶ That is why T.K. John pleads passionately that a radical revision of the Content should take place.²⁷ What is the foundation of inculturation of Christian faith and life in India? According to T.K. John it "is inspired and guided by the very pattern of the Incarnation in its three dimensional expression of *faith, history* and *society*."²⁸ With this foundation for his efforts, T.K. John called on messengers of the Gospel,

To insert themselves *into* the culture of the people and live in solidarity *with* those whom they serve. If participation in the struggles of peoples, aimed at liberation from all that is hindering them from moving towards their God-given goal, is a constituent element of the mission entrusted to every apostle, then it would seem the Society of Jesus should re-orient her strategy in India.²⁹

For him, participation in the struggles of peoples is an important constituent element in the proclamation of the Good News.³⁰

For T.K. John commitment to Christ means an 'option for the poor.' He says, "Opting for Christ implies opting for the poor, and it is a delusion to think we can opt for Christ without opting for the poor and the justice they seek."³¹ Though this is what Jesus had taught (Mt 25:31 ff) Christians had largely overlooked this for centuries. This option "demands empathy – to feel with the poor, to identify oneself with them as they live and suffer to enter into their inner world of feelings and emotions as they live a life of rejection, deprivation, humiliation and forced silence."³² I wonder, though, if we can

²⁵*Formation in Mission*, 122.

²⁶*Jesuit Formation* 171, GC 32, 141-142.

²⁷T.K. John, "Formation in Context," 714.

²⁸*Jesuit Formation*, 143.

²⁹T.K. John, "Formation in Context," 150.

³⁰T.K. John, "Formation in Context," 153.

³¹*Formation in Mission*, 109-134.

³²*Formation in Mission*, 109-134.

'experience their rejection' – we can come to know about it compassionately. The 'experience of rejection' is so personal that no one but those who have gone through it will 'know' it.³³ However, one does not deny the importance of T.K. John's commitment to this cause. This option "demands of us to read and interpret social, economic and political processes of the subcontinent through their perception," and it "calls for an active, effective espousal of their causes making their aspirations our own."³⁴ It demands also a conversion on our part. "It invites us to abjure and discard as unethical and immoral, even untruthful, our embracing values that oppress them, our alliance with structures and groups that are responsible for the continued maintenance of their poverty and degradation."³⁵

T.K. John often focused on the challenges facing Christian insertion into the culture and life of the poor. He pointed out that Christian insertion into the life and experience of the poor in India will be relevant only if it contributed to the creation of a new social order. He describes the new social order as marked by search, creativity, innovation and progress, especially in the realm of knowledge; exploration of natural resources geared to human development and freedom; equality and fellowship in human relations; spiritual and ethical values that inspire, ennoble and perfect human endeavours. This would lead to participation in the struggles of peoples. Hence, theology in India would not be a carbon copy of theology in the West, but "flow out of the religious and cultural heritage of the nation while answering at the same time the needs of the country and its people."³⁶ Such formation for mission seeks the integration of life style, human development, spiritual growth, intellectual formation and participation in the struggles of the poor as they seek to build up a more just and humane society.

This new emphasis on faith and justice, and option for the poor calls for a new spirituality. The new thrust forces us to evaluate our

³³Here, I may share a personal experience. I had believed that I 'knew' the condition of Dalits until one day at Nadiad (Gujarat) in a meeting of Dalit leaders I had organized to plan action against the Patels who had attacked and burned down about 200 houses of Dalits at Uttarsanda. When I emphasized the need for standing up to them, one of the leaders said: "Father, you do not understand what it means for us to face a Patel; when I stand in front of one, my knees give away and I tremble; how am I to stand up to them?," This was in 1980. I had no idea how he 'felt' as a Dalit.

³⁴*Formation in Mission*, 125.

³⁵*Formation in Mission*, 125.

³⁶*Formation in Mission*, 144.

spirituality and the ministries we carry out. The traditional spirituality based primarily on uniform religious practices does not equip a person to work with groups that aim at structural changes and initiate mass movements.

To initiate actions aimed at eventual transformation of values and structures, the qualities and skills required are quite different. One has to create new platforms, build up a fraternity with whom one shares the vision and gain acceptance and collaboration. One has to be adequately acquainted with the dynamics of the social, economic and the political processes of the country.³⁷

The new spirituality demands that we redefine all sectors of our ministries and ensure that the preference for the poor is necessarily present in all of them. It also demands from us that we “be ready and prompt to denounce any kind of injustice committed against the poor, particularly when they have no voice to express their protest.”³⁸ He deplores that our institutions remain mute and dumb when the poor are oppressed. This commitment also implies that “we could in a corporate way raise the consciousness of the poor, showing to all the mechanisms and structures of oppression and deception, and make them aware of their rights and duties and the ways of regaining them.”³⁹ T.K. John further suggests that we place at their disposal the resources like schools, playground, etc. and join in their festivals and victories, espouse their religious culture and festivals.

T.K. John argued that the developments commencing with GC 31 and culminating in GC 33 led to a certain transition. He notes the following shifts: A shift from the Church to the Kingdom, from individuals to structures in society, from individual virtues to the collective, and to the structural or corporate needs and values like an egalitarian society, justice and respect for the rights of all, a shift from individual conversion to change of structures in society and finally, from exhortation and preaching to involvement and participation in the struggles of the affected groups, and solidarity with the oppressed.⁴⁰

For T.K. John, another important aspect of a contextualized, inculturated theology is the religious context. The Kathmandu Declaration says our mission is a call “to share the riches of our Christ-experience with our country men and women, by respectful dialogue with them” and by collaboration with them for a better

³⁷*Formation in Mission*, 123.

³⁸*Formation in Mission*, 125.

³⁹*Formation in Mission*, 126.

⁴⁰*Formation in Mission*, 121-122.

human community.⁴¹ The development started with Vatican II of recognizing the salvific value of other religions has to be continued. What would our mission mean in the multi religious context?⁴²

T.K. John laid great emphasis on dialogue with the religions of India. According to him, this dialogical approach implies the following elements. 1) We continue to proclaim the Good News. We do not hesitate to share the good news with everyone, leaving the response to our presentation to his or her conscience. 2) We accept the salvific value of other religions, even when they respond positively to our proclamation. 3) The role of the Church is to “serve the Word in the world” and not just saving their souls. 4) We serve the Word by making our own the words, deeds and attitudes of the Word Incarnate, which would mean that we take as our ministry to work for the goal God has in mind for the world, namely “inviting all men and women to grow towards the divine stature.” 5) We understand that the formation of “human communities imbued with the values of the kingdom does not exclude ‘evangelization’ as understood in the recent Papal documents. T.K. John argued that, “From the rigid and exclusivist existence Christianity was persuaded to enter into a *dialogical relationship with the religions* of the country. A major contributory factor has been the discovery of the rich treasures in these religions, ignored for centuries, compelling our respectful attention.”⁴³

Though T.K. John is well versed in Sanskrit and Hinduism is his specialization, he takes seriously the warning given by *Formation in Mission* against the danger of equating Indian culture with Sanskrit culture; he remains open to the diversity of cultures in India,⁴⁴ to which he adds the dimension of poverty in India and the option for the poor. This openness is seen above all in his efforts at dialogue between the people of India and Pakistan. He is a member of the *Pakistan-India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy* and has been involved in its activities. This initiative and the many meetings that he attends in Delhi and elsewhere show his universal vision of not limiting his attention to just Hinduism alone, but being open to all types of people, problems, situations and respond to all situations with creativity, compassion and love. He holds the view that civil society and movements from below have much to contribute to the

⁴¹*Formation in Mission*, 126.

⁴²*Formation in Mission*, 128.

⁴³*Formation in Context*, 714.

⁴⁴*Formation in Mission*, 11-12.

improvement of relationship between the peoples of the two countries who want peace and harmony.⁴⁵

The question that T.K. John asks at the end of his paper in *Formation in Mission* is a serious challenge to all Jesuits, especially those in India.

Will the Jesuits be able to lay aside roles, works, functions and other stagnation-setting areas, and create space and time for the engagement in the most wanted and the most needed occupation: enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom relevant for societal living to humanize an extremely dehumanized society in which we live?⁴⁶

What T.K. John asks educationalists is equally true for the teachers of theology. He asks them, "Are you a humanizing and liberating force for the suppressed humanity in the land, or an effective tool in the hands of vested interests? Will the 'born-to-be-misery-fed' masses of India receive substantial help from your hands? Can you help the nation to become a true human community?"⁴⁷ His conviction about the educated people is applicable to the students of theology as well. "Not without foundation is it said that the educated are more cruel, more unjust, more uncaring and unsharing than the illiterate in the villages..."⁴⁸ "for he is convinced that an "other-oriented perception is absolutely necessary for a sound civilized community."⁴⁹

5. Conclusion

Such contextualized formation will lead to forming men rooted in God and truly men for others. By now, we have a large body of trained theologians in India. I think it is time that we assert our responsible freedom and build up an Indian theology that will be at the service of our mission in our multi-cultural, multi-religious and poverty-stricken situation, and relevant to the people of today. Our theology today has to be necessarily pastoral and evangelical, and responsive to the actual context in which people live. T.K. John rightly insisted on people reflecting on the situation.

T.K. John has helped inter-religious dialogue, justice-oriented theology and active participation of staff and students in justice-

⁴⁵T.K. John, "'The Karachi Express': Impact and Implications of a Peace and Democracy Convention in Pakistan," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 68 (2004) 259-276.

⁴⁶*Formation in Mission*, 134.

⁴⁷T.K. John, "Social Change and Education," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 61 (1997) 784-799, at 784.

⁴⁸T.K. John, "Social Change and Education," 785.

⁴⁹T.K. John, "Social Change and Education," 798.

related issues at the local and national levels. He has taken seriously inter-religious dialogue, communal harmony, integral mission, liberation, inculturation of theology. He has helped various regional theology centres. He has been animating the Gujarat Vidya Deep staff get together at Abu for the last few years. He has helped in the setting up of the theologate of the Indian Missionary Society (IMS) at Varanasi; and has helped in the evaluation of the Khristu Jyoti Mohavidyalaya of Sason, Sambalpur, Orissa.

Today's theological training programmes should aim at the integral formation of the ministers of the Gospel at various levels: on the personal and spiritual, the intellectual and academic, the affective and emotional dimensions, all adequately based on both the Christian and Indian traditions and perspectives. Today's formation aims at forming men and women who are anchored on and imbued with the values and outlook of Jesus, gained through a deep experience of personal prayer and community life so as to serve as a transforming leaven in India and specially in the particular context of Gujarat or any other.

Formation houses should aim at training ministerial priests and other ministers of the Gospel committed to proclaiming the Word of God in any particular region of India. It will therefore, take into consideration: the Christian communities of that place, with their faith, their social and cultural backgrounds, with particular reference to the situation of the more deprived classes, the believers of different religious and social groups, with their spiritual and cultural heritage. The formation centres ought to be very much alive to the situation of the people, their sufferings and pains; hence, involvement with the marginalised will be of great importance. The overall result of theological and pastoral training is a holistic approach to reality, one's personal transformation, the ability to work for the transformation of persons, institutions and society and professional competence for mission and experience of their participation in the joys and struggles of the marginalized. T.K. John's contribution towards this goal is very remarkable and outstanding.