

INCULTURATION OF THE SEMINARY TRAINING: AN ACTION PLAN

Thomas Manickam*

Introduction

My presentation here is an action plan of the programmes of "inculturation" in the seminary training long contemplated after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council and to some extent carried out in a number of Indian Seminaries. The concept of *Inculturation* may need more clarification in this regard. *Inculturation* in the Christian vision of formation of the seminarians for the proclamation of the Gospel message is a dynamic process of growing oneself in the cultural milieu of the people and learning to communicate the Good News of the "Project of the Kingdom of God" in the cultural symbolic structures of the people for whom one is a missionary. Inculturation of the seminary programme has many facets, such as living in the culture of a people, sharing their life-style and learning to live with the struggles of life of the people in view of helping them to solve their human problems with Christian ways and means.

Further, *Inculturation* as applied to the process of knowing how to interpret the word of God in the words, symbols and realities of the life of the people is a two way process of growth for a seminarian, namely, assimilation of the Christian message and Christian values of the Gospel into the life of the person in close contact with the culture of the people for whom he is training himself to be a minister of the Word. Then by means of a mutual give and take method assimilating the local cultural body of symbols as the vehicle of the Gospel message, a seminarian should learn to preach, teach and get to know the religious responsiveness of his people in the midst of their other human problems of life. This twofold approach of the Seminarian towards understanding the meaning and message of the Gospel while learning to interpret them to the taste and temperament of the local people is an inculturational programme of training in the field of his pastoral and missionary life.

*Dr. Thomas Manickam, cmi is Professor of philosophy at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore.

The prototype of such inculturational formation of the seminarian is the incarnation event of the Word of God. As St. Paul states in his letter to Philippians 2:7, the humanization of the Word, known as "Incarnation", the truth that "the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14), itself had been a process of the insertion of the Word of God into the culture of humanity, a self-emptying act of God, indeed, for the integration of the humanity unto God's divinity, an assumption of the human nature and human culture unto the wholeness of the reality of the Word of God, becoming a perfect human being, Jesus of Nazareth, a man like any one of us, becoming a "servant of humanity." This *kenosis* made him feel with the humanity to the extent of fully identifying with everything that is human, except sin (Heb.4: 15). This is the great Christian prototype of *inculturation*, insertion of the Divine into the human in view of bringing about all that is truly human into a divine-human harmony. *Inculturation* of the Gospel message into the cultural values of a people and integrating their positive values into the Gospel message is a continuation of this prototype of the divinisation of human cultures and the values thereof.

This has been proposed as the new Programme of Christian Education, both in the Seminaries and in the Christian Media of Education, formal as well as informal, which the second Vatican Council envisaged in its Constitutions of *Divine Worship, Divine Revelation, Church in the Modern World* and in the decrees of *Church's Mission* and *Church's Relationship with Believers of other Religions*. In order to gear up this new programme of inculturated seminary training in the light of the directives of II Vatican Council in India, we had the great National Seminar, called "Church in India Today" held in Dharmaram, Bangalore, May 15-25, 1969.

Quite a good number of practical resolutions were taken in this National Seminar in view of applying seriously the directives of "inculturation" especially in the areas of the formation of seminarians, renewal of religious life, inter-religious dialogue, liturgical renewal, mission-work, catechetics, Christian leadership training etc. Thirty seven years after closure of the II Vatican Council and thirty three years after the National Seminar of "Church in India", we have now another occasion for a retrospection and a prospection of the implementation of the proposed programmes of "inculturation" in seminary training.

1. Culture and Inculturation

In any discussion on the inculturation of the seminary training in India, the implied question raised for the sake of clarity is this : What are the elements of our culture that can be integrated into the training programme of the seminarians in India? The culture of a people is generally described by anthropologists and sociologists as the integral way of people's life, lived with a world view of a "collective unconscious" to which they give traditional submission by means of their language and signs of communications, myths and symbols, customs, traditions and manners, hospitality gestures, beliefs and worship forms, sacrifices and sacraments, rites and rituals, prayers and recitals, annual feasts and festivals, sacred times and auspicious moments, blessings and benedictions, habits and attire, folklores and popular arts, music, dance and dramas, narratives of ancestry, wisdom sayings of the forefathers, mystery celebrations, incantations, ancestor memorials, ethical practices, family occupational traditions, trade and commerce, eugenics and hygiene, habitat adaptation to environments, sense of the sacred space, sacred ceremonies, sacred medicine, futuristic and eschatological imaginations etc.

Inculturation as a programme of insertion of the Gospel values and Christian vision into the above mentioned aspects of human culture has to pay sincere attention to integrate them into a certain perfection according to the human-divine vision of Jesus Christ who came to perfect and not to destroy that which his Father has planted and his Spirit has inspired and nurtured from the foundation of the world and humanity. In the process of inculturation there are four dynamic stages : (i) *presentation* of the Gospel message to a people according to their cultural receptivity, (ii) *interaction* between the cultural values of the people and the message of the Gospel, (iii) *integration* of the message of the Gospel into the life of the people in their cultural symbols, (iv) *hermeneutical enrichment* of the Gospel message itself. At the last stage a missionary develops his own catechesis, homilies, educative tools for his new community as well as programmes of social change, all in tune with the cultural expectations of his new community, and not a blind copying of the Jewish or Geek symbolic texture of the Biblical message. Inculturation thus becomes finally a tool for new hermeneutical enrichment of the Gospel

message itself, as the latter gets "re-incarnated" in the newer human settings of culture, while every culture offers a new *sitz im leben* for the Gospel message to get implanted in new human situation.

By this kind of mutual integration of the Gospel message and the culture of a people, a new Christian community may discover its new way of living quite in line with that of the other participants of the same local culture; and the new Christian community need not feel any cultural alienation from their fellow human beings living as neighbours in the same cultural setting. They together can share a common world vision which is still part of the whole Christian vision of life which is salutary and liberative as well as enriching the life of the whole human community of the local culture, and it also makes the Christian community feel united with their neighbours in all matters human and cultural interactions even though the Christian community may keep their faith identity, as distinct from that of other believers, but lived and expressed in more cultural affinity and good sociality with other people having a common bond of belief in the loving providence of one God who is the "Father figure" of all of them. This is the ideal result of inculturation. How far it has achieved its destined goals especially in mission countries like India is a matter of study, especially after the National Seminar on "Church in India"(1969). We will make this study briefly on some specific areas.

2. Theological Inculturation

"*The Church in India*"- Seminar of 1969 recommended to theological writers and seminary professors to develop an indigenous theology in the cultural idioms and symbols of India. The recommendation was highly hierarchically motivated as it was phrased as follows: ... "*under the creative guidance of the magisterium* directed by the Holy Spirit, all be encouraged in the spirit of freedom to enunciate our faith in the richness of the Indian traditions, using its thought patterns, concepts and symbols, ... against the background of Indian culture; devout meditation on our spiritual inheritance of the Bible and of Indian Scriptures be encouraged, in order that our faith may be deepened and *a truly Indian theology* blossom out of this experience."¹

Unfortunately, so far nothing substantially theological in the Indian categories or idioms has come to surface, "*under the creative guidance of*

the magisterium of the Church" in Indian seminary teaching or curriculum planning, as there is not much of 'culturally respecting India' to expect as "*creative guidance from the magisterium of the Church.*" Theologians themselves, almost all of them, trained abroad and had their doctoral dissertations on some fundamental western theological issues in the historical contexts of the western Christianity are no more promising teachers on theology in Indian perspectives or Indian idioms and symbols. Their mind-set is western and far strange to the burning realities of the suffering millions of people in the Indian subcontinent. Except some professors of Indian Philosophy who are to some extent committed to the understanding of our Indian culture because of their India based higher studies, all others are experts in western philosophical traditions and they repeat parrot like the teachings of the western masters to the students. Therefore, there is not much achieved in Indian-Christian theological or philosophical inculturation as inspiring for our people. May be, another century of anti-Christian challenges from outside the Christian fold in India may awaken in us some new urgency to develop something culturally indigenous and meaningful to Christian existence in India.

3. Inculturation of Arts and Cultural Symbols

Regarding the integration of Indian art forms and symbols "The Church in India" Seminar recommended to take "*every effort to encourage real literary and artistic talent in our youth and provide a proper formation for them particularly in our schools and colleges so that those who have the talent and vocation may attain personal fulfilment in their way of commitment to Christ.*"² The Seminar further elucidated regarding this point that in the development of Indian Christian art, emphasis be laid on the deep spirituality and rich variety of Indian music and dance, on the sense of mystery and symbolism of Indian painting, carving and architecture giving creative expression to the feelings and yearnings of contemporary humanity in India.³

In these areas also not much has been significantly achieved, neither in the formation oriented religious institutions nor in the academic programmes of training in a professional way, though some initiatives have been taken in some regional language groups by some educational institutions of Christian management. Nor any significant national level institutes of Christian arts, even for music and dance have come up to cater

to these needs. However, a big leap into the composition of charismatic hymns mostly with the traditional western Christian theological content in many regional languages is a significant contribution of charismatic movement as such. But hardly there is any Indian wisdom, genius, poetry, imagination and symbolism traceable in any of such hymns, rather most of them are stuffed with mediocre and outdated theological jargons of the medieval European Scholasticism, which boosts up superficial devotional piety.

4. Liturgical Inculturation

The third area of inculturation which the National Seminar of 1969 (Bangalore) strongly recommended was *liturgical inculturation*. In the same national seminar there was one day a celebration of the Indian liturgy (*anaphora*) developed by the liturgical experimentation centre of Dharmaram College, presided over by the late Cardinal Joseph Parecattil. The Seminar participants were very much impressed by the celebration of that liturgy in which the Indian rituals and objects of worship, such as *anjali* (greeting style by folding together both palms), *pranams*, (reverential prostrations) *arati* (triple offering of incense, flower and light) and a *saffron shawl* replacing the Roman and Chaldean vestments were used. The Indian style of peace greeting (*shanti*), *anaphora* incorporating into the Canon the creation story of the Vedic Scriptures, pauses of silent meditation, benediction in the Indian style etc. were adapted as elements of inculturation. After much appreciative discussion the National Seminar then resolved:

*As a first step towards giving our liturgy a more Indian character we recommend that all concerned should, in addition to following an Indian way of life, create an Indian atmosphere in worship, by adopting suitable Indian decorations, postures, gestures etc., by composing prayers and hymns which may also take their inspiration from the cultural heritage of India.*⁴

Taking inspiration from this resolution, the Commission for Liturgy of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) and the National Liturgical Centre at Bangalore (later named as the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) lead by D. S. Amalorpavadas, introduced a phased programme of liturgical

inculturation on occasions of renewal - seminars at NBCLC. As a preparatory step in view of creating an atmosphere of meditative worship Indian traditional postures of squatting, greetings of peace in Indian "namaskar" style, objects of worship such as *thali* (plater) for offertory, use of triple *arati* of flower, light and *incense* (*agarbatti*), veneration of the Bible with flower garlanding and *anjali vandana*, simple saffron shawl replacing chausible or cope etc. were introduced and followed up almost regularly for all Eucharistic celebrations during the various seminars conducted at NBCLC.

The use of indigenous cultural symbols in liturgy was introduced gradually and optionally as people got used to them, and as they discovered the meaning of the native symbols of their cultures of the local Churches. Therefore, the pedagogical and catechetical training of the people for following a new symbolic system in worship replacing the old non-indigenous symbols needed a much awaited pastoral training from the Church administration. For this purpose diocesan pastoral and catechetical centres were set up, and the National Centre (NBCLC) at Bangalore was commissioned with the tasks of animation, co-ordination and extension of expert service to local and regional centres while offering experimental inputs to trainees of various catechetical centres in India; and these centres, in the course of time, were very helpful and instrumental in implementing the ideals of liturgical inculturation to a great commendable degree in the local churches of the various Ecclesial Communities in India, especially in the local churches of North Indian Missions.

What is yet to be done as an action plan in the seminaries is a systematic training programme in Liturgical Inculturation showing the possibilities of developing new indigenous liturgies and other worship forms in a variety of designs, in which even the believers of other religions also can participate without inhibition and fear; and this may gradually develop inter-religious worship forms in which the entire human family of God living in a particular cultural setting can participate with a wider sense of ecumenical faith-fellowship.

5. The Gurukula Model of Living, Learning and Growing

The insights and structures of the ancient *Gurukula* (house of a

Master) had been often proposed on several occasions, in the National Seminar and thereafter, as the right model for seminary training in India, where the ever present *Guru*, the authentic formator is Jesus Christ, in whose presence and premises the disciples live, learn and grow together with the guidance of a master/ rector physically representing Jesus Christ in a fraternity on the bond of consecrated *brahmacharya*, *swadyaya*, *ashrama seva* and *sravana-manana-nididhyasana* (listening to the teachings of the Master, understanding His vision and mission, and realizing by contemplation the truth of His revelation). In fact the founding fathers of Dharmaram had visualized such a Gurukulā model of seminary training here in Bangalore as suitable for the Missionary Church in India. How far this model is achieving it set goals in Dharmaram is a matter concerned observation and revision.

The Indian educational and formative ideals and practices were generally conceived on the principle that they should offer the best scope for the integral development of the individual as their main concern, though it may be argued that the means adopted had not always been as sound as the ends. Formation of a human individual with the appropriate *sadhanas* (means) of self-discipline in tune with the four traditional human values of life, namely, *purusharthas* was the backdrop of the training of students in the ancient Indian *Gurukulas* in general. The disciples in a Gurukula had to follow their own respective individual aptitudinal choice (*adhikaribhedam*) of *sadhanas* for the integration of disciplines and values of life. The Guru, in turn had to help the disciple to discern the appropriate *sadhana* to suit to the taste and temperament of the latter. A Guru is primarily a spiritual guide of a disciple, and as such he enlightens the disciple regarding the ideal values of individual personal growth as he himself realized to some extent. This had the highest goal of personal growth as the realization of the inner peace (*shanti*) achieved in intimate union or communion with God and maintained as such in some degree of settled consciousness (*sthitaprajna*). However, the sense of the common goal to be achieved by the united fraternal and communitarian growth of all individuals according to certain set model and goal of life with a common mission was absent in the training programme of the ancient Indian *Gurukulas*. However, Life and its value system had been conceived as one integral whole having various levels of realization, the highest of which being the final liberation of the spirit in man. According to the perception of integration of the various

values of life of an individual to be lived in a community setting as that of a religious congregation as in Dharmaram, the process of adjustment of oneself to the life-style of the community was not left to chance, or to the raw impulses or instincts of the individual, or to the changing patterns of fashion and fads, but it was planned to have a balance of every human values that contribute to make the life of an individual to grow with healthy disciplines, physical, spiritual, cultural, intellectual and pastoral with a sense of future mission.

In order to achieve some of the finest goals of a religiously disciplined life of the individual, an integral realization of the ideals and values of formative culture as accepted in Indian ways of living was emphasized from the inceptions of Dharmaram vision of religious formation and seminary training. In this the model of Indian *ashram* style of life was envisaged and to a great extent the daily routine of the house was patterned accordingly, with sharing the chores of the house by the students, contributing towards the maintenance of the community by doing significant agricultural activities in the campus, cleaning the premises of the house both interior and exterior and taking up some shared responsibilities of the daily management of the mess and environment etc.

The ancient masters of the *ashrams* of our country strove to impart to their wards a comprehensive plan of learning, meditating, and realizing some of the finest values of life. They construed a scheme of formation with the methods of sharing their forefathers' experience of revealed truths as listened by their *Rshis* and later on transcribed for them as the Vedas and the Upanishads known as *Sruti* (the heard Word); the students in the ashrams had regular reading and meditation over this Word, and this *sadhana* was so well known as *swadhyaya*. Even Patanjali, the great master of *Raja yoga* integrated it as part of *niyama*, the second step of *ashtanga yoga* with a view to help concentration of the candidate on the Word of God. This is the same purpose instilled in the programme of spiritual exercises to be performed by the candidates by means of daily scriptural reading and meditation thereon.

In complementary perspective, the Christian view of life lived with fraternal bonds in a community of disciples under the tutorship of Jesus as the common Master of all disciples, the above mentioned state of mind (liberated state of consciousness or *sitaprajna*) of a disciple is achieved by

surrendering the goal of his personal fulfilment and all his cherished desires in view of achieving the mission and vision of his Guru, Jesus, whose model and goal of life is translated as far as possible into the life of the disciple. The highest goal-satisfaction of the life of a Christian disciple is this following of Jesus and sharing of his mission. This itself has been conceived as the specific orientation of formation in Dharmaram Gurukulam, where a disciple is invited to aim at a personal realization of the values of life as taught by Jesus the *Sadguru* while cherishing an intense desire to communicate His message of love and service as his life-mission, a mission shared in communion with the other disciples of the same Gurukulam.

Another item of the holistically integrated formation was *nishkamakarma* – doing one's prescribed duties of the community in good spirit and motivation coupled with right disciplines of punctuality, perfection and finish. This was considered to be one of the real achievements of character formation geared in view of achieving the right performance of one's duties (*dharma*) without having much selfish interests as hidden agenda but the service of the human family. This training for the selfless service in the community as well as occasional extension services in the neighbourhood human communities, such as sanatoriums, slums, remand-homes, certified schools, old age homes, hospitals, prisons etc., was planned to be socially service oriented programmes of the holistic vision of formation envisaged in the Dharmaram Vision of integral training. This was also intended for arousing real pastoral consciousness in a candidate for effective service oriented mission in the Church and in the human communities of the nation at large. Training of candidates for selfless and dedicated service for the good of the "people of God" has been considered to be the real mode of holistic formation achieved in a community of fraternity dedicated for realizing the vision and mission of Jesus Christ, the great Master who brought Justice, Peace and Joy, the lasting fruits of the "Kingdom of God on earth" (Rom. 14:17).

6. Philosophical Training

Darsanam, the right word for philosophy, had been prized and pursued not for its own sake but for the sake of the final spiritual liberation of the seeker himself. It was conceived and put into action-form as a means for achieving the wholeness and simplicity of human life here on earth

known as *jivanmukti* according to Shri Sankaracharya. This integration was not conceived to be a monovalent orientation to one's own self-satisfaction, rather it had ambivalent opening to the various goals of life (*purusharthas*), all of them ultimately serving the attainment of the supreme enlightenment in life. This is achieved not by denying any of the dimensions of real life but by discovering in every aspect of life the impression of the really Real. Intellectual pursuit on any frontier of knowledge, secular or sacred, should finally terminate at this finishing point which makes sense and meaning to any discipline, even to medicine and archery, music and dance, economics and politics; and hence these are all classified under the eighteen sastras of the Vedic tradition of education.

Philosophical training in the Gurukulas of ancient India was never a mere information flow from the teacher to the student, but a transformation process of the seeker of wisdom (*jijnasu*) sharing the vision (*darsanam*) of the teacher while aiming at realizing (*sakshatkaram*) the truth one seeks and discovers. Experiencing the truth rather than objectifying it was the major concern of philosophical enquiry. It was not a coaching for a career to make a living as it is usually the case in the contemporary Indian Universities. It was a matter of cultural discipline of a person who belonged to a group of enlightened people who lived and worked in a society with some common goal to achieve, such as *lokasamgraha* (welfare of the world). The ideal set-up for such a socially oriented educational programme was also a *Gurukula*, a community of disciples living with a master. Education was not a mere "reading test" nor a "listening submission" nor a "correspondence course", to obtain some degree of nominal value. Intellectual training was integrally linked with spiritual realization and orientation for right and dutiful action for the welfare of the people. This was the cultural expectation of a meaningful education imparted to common people enabling them to discover meaning for everything they observe and do.

In this scheme of value oriented philosophical training, nothing was considered to be alien that alienates a true seeker of truth from reaching the ultimate realization of the Truth, that enlightens everything else in proper perspective. Hence the most fundamental question often asked to the seeker of truth by his teacher was this : "What is that, knowing which everything else is known." This was also the ultimate question of every seeker of Truth, who wanted to discover the meaning of his search and his struggle

for the liberation of his earth-bound life. Rationality and its critical application was central to all branches of *darsanic* pursuits. Nyaya and Vedanta darsanas are typical critical sciences of epistemology and theology. Hence philosophical pursuits in Indian culture had been ever an open ended path of search for higher and higher wisdom.

7. The Dynamics of Teaching and Learning

Regarding the dynamics of teaching and learning, the time-old method of inquisitive enquiry (*jijnasa*) into the objectivity of realities under observation (*pratyaksha*) and the method of meditative realization of the truth of revelation (*Sruti / Sabda*) had been proved to be very effective in an interactive way of teaching and learning, both by the teacher and the student in view of understanding and realization of the truth of the realities seen, heard, touched, smelt and tasted as well as intuited upon. As a starting point of rational enquiry into the truth, meaning and value of realities observed by the enquirer a full scale use of the five senses (*panchendriyas*) of the human person has to be employed in order to get a comprehensive perception of the details of the realities under observation. This is an integral part of the holistic approach to learning by direct exposure to realities. Then some introspection into one's own inner level of consciousness opening it towards the grasp of the truism of the same realities affecting the enquirer, accompanied by reflection on the meaning of both the objective and the subjective inter-relationship of realities which are open to the observer, followed by silent contemplation in view of realizing the relevance and value of the realities to one's own life in relation to the life of all fellow beings, has been the full holistic method applied in the *Gurukulas* of our country for forming the intellectual bent of mind of the students. This holistic method has its prime model in the Indian Upanishadic style of teaching and learning, which consisted of three important steps : *sravanam* (listening/ seeing / touching etc.), *mananam* (grasping / understanding) and *nididhyasana* (contemplation / realization). It is at the third step of the realization of the realism of reality that one gets *darsanam*, an experience of a vision of the wholeness of Reality as related to oneself. This method has to be applied in both philosophical and theological training in our seminaries so that our seminarians may become persons endowed with experienced knowledge and become "men of wisdom."

8. Theological Formation (*Brahmajijnasa*)

Coming to the theological formation we may observe the following salient features specifically to be insisted having in view the future mission of the Church in India as well as the concerns of the Universal Church and that of other Ecclesial Communities the world over. Before stating the details of the above mentioned missiological, dialogical and ecumenical concerns of the Church in India, which have to be well taken care of in the theological formation, let me point out some of the spiritual dispositions that are supposed to be acquired by the candidates in the tradition of Indian spiritual culture. Basically this is part of what is known as 'faith-vision' in Christian tradition and 'spiritual dispositions' in the Indian Spiritual formative traditions. The spiritual dispositions I mentioned here are known as a package of fourfold *sadhana*, known as *sadhana chaturshaya* as pre-requisites for *Brahmajijnasa* (enquiry into the knowledge of God / theological investigation). They are: (i) *nityanitya vastu viveka* (discernment between the eternal and the non-eternal realities), (ii) *phalatrushna vairagya* (detachment from the desire for rewards of actions here and hereafter), (iii) *shadsampath* (practice of the sixfold virtue), and (iv) intense desire for spiritual liberation (*mumukshutvam*). The six virtues (*shadsampath*) that a candidate of *Brhmajijnasa* must cultivate before the commencement theological investigation are: (1) *sama* (calmness), (2) *dama* (self-control), (3) *uparati* (detachment from sensuality), (4) *titiksha* (ability to balance views even of the opponents), and (5) *sraddha* (faith – faith in the teacher and in the revelation) (6) *samadhana* (peace of mind). Without acquiring these pre-requisites one shall not venture upon theological investigation; because besides being an intellectual discipline, theology itself has been respected in Indian spiritual culture, as the most sublime means (*sadhana*) for the realization of the ultimate truth of life while reflecting over it. Theology in this perspective has been considered as a meditative reflection on and realization (*sakshatkaram*) of the revealed truths of life with reference to the ultimate Reality, God., who is ever living, ever revealing and ever present every where.

Theology is also a faith guided reflection on all truths related to human life in relation to this world and ultimately to God. A theologian cannot be a detached speculator on the truths of life distancing himself from the truths that affect his own life and that of the community of believers to

whom one is interpreting the truths of life in the light of Divine Revelation. In other words a theologian must also be a fellow believer with his community, share the faith concerns of the community and live it authentically as a witness to the community. Hence such theologising must be holistic in nature which takes into account both the aspects of life and the demands of faith-vision, as well as the factual knowledge of the realities of life and related human situations. This will require from the part of the theologian a sequence between theory of reality and theory of morality (rules of action). The former is generally defined as the vision of life while the latter is described as the scheme of actions to be performed in view of achieving the goals of life. This implies the fact that true learning is aimed at achieving perfect harmony between the perception of truth and its application in actual life. Such a scheme takes holistic view of the fact that life includes also death and both form the whole truth of living one's life authentically. This gives an integral vision of life as well as a sense of proportion in which the theoretical and the practical, the physical and the spiritual, the perishable and the permanent interests and values of life are clearly defined and proportionately differentiated in actual life.

A theologian or even an ordinary believer cannot live his/her life meaningfully unless the person has some glimpse of the whole scheme of life with regard to its origin, growth and final dissolution into something whole about which one can think holistically. He would take the biological process of human life in the context of the total life-process and in relation to one's authentic inner self as well as the final goal of human life. Accordingly one has to situate the theological studies in the context of these perceptions, and according to the depth and breadth of one's vision of the ultimate values of life. In fact this can be obtained only by means of some contemplation i.e., constant meditative awareness and reflection on the truths of life and value based actions. Thus a student of theology must devote himself/herself not only to the critical study of the most fundamental and ultimate truths of life but also to the meditative realization of the same in prayerful submission for the grace - touch of the Revealing God.

Theological investigations, as they deal with the transcendental truths of human life in relation to God, should elevate a person to grow beyond one's petty individual interests in view of preparing oneself for the liberating enlightenment of others who are in the confusion of doubts, lack

of faith, and lack of self-confidence for facing the odd realities of life. Since a priest must develop a personality for the service of the people of God during his theological training, individualistic concerns and all allied feelings of selfish motivations must give way to wider participatory understanding and action-forms. But such participatory method of life may not result from the one-dimensional pursuit of objective knowledge which is discursive, which makes man more and more oriented to the analysis of matter and not to the discovery of the synthesis of matter and spirit in a unit-whole. This discovery of the wholeness of human life in relation to God and all God's creation is holistic theology which has tremendous significance in the socio-cultural and spiritual perspectives of human life in India today.

In general the Indian philosophical and theological traditions always held that the human person is a psycho-somatic-pneumatic integral whole which comprises elements from the three spheres of reality which is described as *jiva-jagat-atman*. The individual has to realize in oneself the convergence of this tripolar reality by awakening his consciousness about the complementary composition of one's very being, one's inner potentiality to grow and be transformed unto the one unity whose centrality, focus and nucleus is God. God-experience (*Isawaranubhava*), then, for a theologian must be an integral part of his life and reflection, preaching and catechising. With such an integral experience of the unity of reality attained by a student of theology, he has to overcome the inhibitions of scepticism often caused by pure rationalization. Theological education in this sense is also a means for achieving a high spiritual culture with the ingredients of the gift of faith supported by right reason which will harmonize a whole lot of value systems in relation to the various aspects of Christian existence. In view of realizing such a harmony of values, a more experiential approach to theological education than an abstract and speculative one has to be encouraged consistently.

9. Theologising Ecologically

Just as theological training involves achieving harmony with one's own interior and exterior realms of being, so also, it involves environmental harmony with Nature and its rhythm of successive mutations. A human being must learn many things from his/her natural habitat. The universe is perhaps the greatest library filled with unwritten but powerfully eloquent source of learning. The ancient masters used numerous objects of this

Nature as illustrations of great mysteries. They were converted into parables and symbols which demonstrated the hidden mysteries of highest learning and speculation. In order to learn from the Nature one should not do violence to his living environment, nor disturb the rhythm of ecological balance. Instead, a theologian must learn to listen to the humming of the dawn, to meditate with the silence of the dusk, to arise with the twilights, to sing with the sparrows in the early dawn, to be appreciative of the colour splashing of the horizons, to feel the pulse of life in the budding saplings in the field; he should also raise his eyes to the heavens and search for the seat of the all pervading One, hidden in the clouds or dissolved in the transparency of the electro-magnetic field of the Space between the stars, planets and asteroids or traversing in the immense milky ways, meditate on the abyss and expanse of the ocean, sense the glamour of the radiant rays of the Sun and the chills of the winds and wonder at the drops of dews at the tips of the blades of grass, because all these bear the foot prints or the finger tips of that One after whom we are all in search.

Nature communicates numerous messages about its Creator to those who are open to listen, see, touch, taste and smell, understand and realize patiently. In India ancient village schools, *gurukulas*, *parnasalas*, and *vidya-peethas* of higher learning were situated on the banks of rivers or in the valleys of the mountains and in the woods near the villages. In all these places man was placed for learning in the laps of Nature offering him scope to grow in response to the challenges of Nature. Alone in the woods or pastures, man gets emotive responses in the form of fear, wonder, joy, or peace which all reawaken in him the consciousness of being authentic to himself, which he would otherwise lose, if at all he had it at any time any where. Such an environmental congeniality of Nature in which an educational centre is situated, helps the students to eliminate the disharmonies and tensions of inner life by providing scope for reflection, meditation, self-integration and deeper awareness of one's alignment with the totality of Reality which manifests in diverse forms in the Cosmic order.

10. Guru -Sishya Relationship

A fourth ideal that made ancient Indian educational system more effective and meaningful was the intimate relationship a teacher and student maintained between themselves. This relationship was initiated by a religio-spiritual ceremony called *upanayana*, meaning "leading near" (the teacher).

This was not a registration formality as it goes in today's schools and colleges, but an initiation ceremonial which was meant for building an intimate relationship between two strange persons who would later become so intimately related for a common purpose namely the promotion of learning and realization of wisdom. The help of the teacher was not a superfluous one, but a necessary guidance for the student to help himself. In this way education was conceived very much a transformation process, and hence very much an inter-personal affair between a teacher and a student.

Experience of the Master was a source of inspiration for the student and not an imposition on him. The pupil had to work hard sometimes in utter loneliness so that he might discover himself to be in the vicinity of the All pervading and permeating Reality of the Divine. The teacher was not a sculptor, but a model of spiritual enlightenment. The student himself was the sculptor of his own personality, to be formed out of his realization of the unity of all realities converging in himself in so far as he is open to the One present in all. In doing so the teacher's own experience served as an inspiration as well as a model giving hope of success for the student to strive for his own set ideal of perfection and not that of the teacher. The supposition in this process is that there is only One Reality or One Wholeness, that links up all aspects of life towards its perfection. Models of achievement, either of the teachers or of the friends (*satirthya*), are helpful indicators for a sincere student on the way to his realization of the harmony of life.

According to the accepted tradition of holistic learning process handed down from ancient *Gurukulas* to our generation is the understanding that, only one-fourth of the entire knowledge (*padavidya*) can be obtained from the instructions of the teacher (*gurumukhat*); and another quarter from the sharing of the wisdom earned by the fellow-friends (*satirthya – samsargat*), and a third quarter of the expected knowledge is to be worked out by the self-study of the aspirant himself (*swadhyayat*), and the remaining fourth quarter of knowledge is to be obtained in the course of one's life-passing (*kalantare*). Hence the share of the teacher's role is as significant as one's own effort or the help of one's fellow-friends. But much more than the quantity of objective informational knowledge, the experiential and personal communication of the teacher to the pupil is of higher educative value. It

implies more of a transference of realized knowledge called "wisdom" to the transparent consciousness of the pupil ; this share of the teacher's wisdom has been euphemistically known as *gurutvam* - "blessing of the master", the good pleasure of the master spontaneously imparted to the pupil, as a sharing of master's patrimony of enlightenment which cannot be obtained from any other source. This links the pupil to the teacher's heritage of a rich wealth of wisdom - experience that comes down from a long lineage of great masters of learning (*parampara*). This tradition of learning directly from the experience of a master, though acclaimed very ideal in the past, in the present technocratic communication flux students go after gadgets which will substitute listening to a teacher in a class room set up; and they are least interested in discussing with a professor personally and get a share of the expertise of a professional teacher. This tendency has become contagious in almost all areas of learning , and philosophical or theological studies are no exception, and for that matter the students of Dharmaram are also submissive to this impersonalised mode of learning in philosophy and theology and all allied subjects, tapping the alien sources of Internet and other audio-visual cassettes and compact discs, distancing themselves more and more from personalized learning process with the help of a teacher, or teacher guided media.

Another factor of great significance in theological studies as search for the knowledge of God with the help of a teacher is the facility to hear "God the Word" (*Sabda Brahman*) resonated from the oral recitation of the teacher. This was so very urgent when the ancient lores of wisdom were committed to posterity mainly by oral transmission before writing became the common media of communication. Sound by itself has its own power to strike the memory much more than visualization. Even today instructions given by native primary school teachers to their little kids to read their lessons loudly early morning or in the late evening when the domestic environment is quiet is reminiscent of the ancient practice of loud recitals (*parayanam*) in the *gurukulas* with the help of the master who knows to articulate every word with proper accent, intonation and rhythm with the simultaneous understanding of the sense and nuances of the words, especially when there was no vowel system or diacritical marks for correct pronunciation of consonants in the early stages of classical languages like Sanskrit. The teacher almost created, as it were, the sense and meaning for the words of the texts of the Scriptures. This was indeed done in the most interpersonal

and intimate way between the teacher and the pupil, a great value of education which is now almost disappearing not only from schools and colleges but even from our seminaries and theological faculties, where we should have kept a few pennies in the balance sheet on the credit side of our various experimentations. But, alas! the balance sheet of the net account of our various well intentioned experiments is on the diminishing scale, not yet reached the zero point, and hence re-workable in newer ways with new means of experiments accommodating to the new challenges of theological training.

11. Interactive Methods of Learning and Teaching

In Indian *Gurukulas* from very ancient times we trace out some of the very effective methods of teaching and learning which are teacher-student interactive as well as student – student dialogical in nature and application. Very often these methods of interactive nature are considered to have been invented, as it were, by some “Western Genius” and imported to our country as new discovery by some western educational specialist who may even claim “intellectual patency” over it. But the simple truth is that the following teaching and learning methods are as time old as the Indian Gurukula systems, where our Upanishadic masters so skilfully experimented these methods with great success, and they continued to hand them down from generations to generations for continued application in effective teaching and learning. These methods also developed acoustic taste for rhythmic chanting and fast memorization, meditative reasoning, contemplative rumination, and the art of creative and critical commentary writing bringing out all possible nuances and evocative meanings of the cryptic expressions of the wise men of intuitive vision.

(i) Inquisitive Discourse (*Prasnottara*)

The art of questioning and answering (*prasnottara*), otherwise known as “inquisitive dialogue” was effectively employed not only in teaching but also in dialectical discourses on serious matters of philosophical or theological interest. *Kena Upanishad* even adopts its name from the very question with which it starts its enquiry into the origin, constitution and end of this cosmic order. This method helps the teacher as well as the student to explore the various issues of the problem under investigation more critically and with curiosity to know more in detail and with clarity and precision.

This method had been employed practically by all great masters in all known ancient cultures. The style of inquisitive dialogue was almost a literary genre of classical Sanskrit literature.

(ii) Debate (*Samvada*)

Conferences of elites and argumentative discussions among enlightened scholars were common forums of social education. These types of exchanges of views were known as debates (*samvada*), often organized by great teachers of certain *gurukulas* as well as by enlightened Kings in their royal courts for the entertainment and the enlightenment of the inmates of the royal family, and often such royal *darbars*, as they were called officially, were also open to the enlightened public consisting of poets, philosophers and statesmen. They were the early models of modern seminars or panel discussions or party debates and even of parliament debates. Such debates, discussions, scholarly discourses and public recitals among teachers of various schools of thought swayed over the intellectual climate of this country in the past. Sri Sankaracharya's record of winning in such debates on philosophical questions have gone into our cultural history in indelible letters. Miniature forms of such debates, seminars and planned discussions on serious topics are very useful methods of teaching and learning in a group dynamic way which are always interesting and never make any body bored. Interactive methods in teaching and learning introduced in Dharamaram almost from her beginnings of systematic academics has been vigorously followed up to date.

(iii) Nature-Visualizations (*Dharana*)

Almost all masters of Indian pedagogy applied nature-visualization as a very effective technique for teaching. It may be recalled here that the pedagogy of Jesus is full of nature-visualizations. Every bit of theoretical insight had been primarily drawn from the realities of the natural environment of his movements, his world of ordinary peoples' living milieu. When such insights are transmitted to the disciples the master again referred back to the realities themselves and interpreted his insights using the most simple and natural realities of this world as symbols. This is a pedagogical conversion of reality into a symbol and vice versa, a technique so well artistically manipulated by the ancient teachers of India for effective communication, taking into account the aptitude of students. Continuous

use of illustrations as symbols and parables, as in *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesa* and the *Puranas*, are typical examples of the natural visualization techniques quite often employed by the teachers and commentators for facilitating the understanding of the students. The moral and religious motifs of such illustrations were easily grasped by the students. Examples are so numerous in the writing of the great teachers of the Indian classical schools of philosophy, that we need not venture to bring in an array of them here.

(iv) Illustrative Logic

Depending on the *adhikaribhedam* (aptitude-difference) of the aspirants of knowledge, the teachers applied illustrative logic in expounding abstract doctrines. Proceeding from the concrete visualizations to abstract derivations the masters of ancient Indian *darsanic* schools often applied a combined system of logic having the benefits of both induction and deduction. The *pancavayavi nyaya* (inference in five propositions) is so well known in the Indian logic as the typical example of illustrative logic. Even in strict logical derivations which are usually abstract in nature the usefulness of illustration has been correctly understood and applied, a thing which Aristotle did not care very much in his syllogism. The system of logic best suited for pastors and spiritual guides is the *nyaya* of classical Indian philosophy and not Aristotle's deductive logic. I feel that in our seminary training the basic courses should be initiated with a thorough grasp of the Indian system of logic and illustrative methods. They presently get only a marginal treatment in our curriculum as far as I could survey in many of our Indian seminaries.

12. Contemporary Challenges demanding a Holistic Curriculum Planning

We are living in an age of tremendous changes in every sphere of life. Communication technology and management skills make human life and its opportunities beyond all calculations and predictions. The social demands from a theologian-preacher-teacher-administrator-prophet-priest are so much that it is high time to think about our Seminary training programmes in more holistic terms, i.e. taking note of the function of every unit or part of our social means of communication and management skills to get integrated in the curriculum of the academic programme of training personnel for the service of the people of our country while helping them to

form themselves to be useful and efficient ministers of the Church. Appropriate subjects selected from specialized areas of mass media, management studies and other social sciences have to be included in the curriculum of future seminary system for effectively equipping the future ministers of the Church for meaningful service for the people of God, while in no way minimising the need of the spiritual *sadhanas* in which a priest has to be thoroughly trained.

I have argued here that in the planning of the curriculum for the students of the contemporary seminary system an integrated vision of life had be proposed as goal setting. Though the ultimate concern is spiritual realization, our Indian masters thought it was necessary for students to know also the value-scale of other realities of this world including that of economics and politics, sexuality and eugenics. Hence *Arthashastra*, *Kamasutra* etc., were made part of the study programme of the students. The integral approach to the value system according to the scale called *purusharthas* (human values) has been the underlying force and the anticipated goal of training. The ideal of *sthitaprajna* to be achieved by a balanced way of life of renunciation as well as of right enjoyment of the goodness of this world assures eternal peace also. This had been the integral ideal of education for life and the systems implied a corresponding psychology of integration of all values in life: reading, learning and work (manual and menial), meditation, prayer and performance of one's dutiful action for the co-ordination and development of the society (*lokasamgraha*) were all conceived to be integral ingredients of a holistic approach to the training of students. Some of these aspects were completely given up or even forgotten by modern systems of schooling in our country because of our inclination towards blind imitation of western impersonal patterns and uncritical continuation of the "left-over" system of the colonial times. It is high time that we try to restore and re-define our goals of training as well as their proper ways and means, while accommodating them to our present needs of priestly and missionary formation