Editorial

The Programme for Theology in Culture in Asia (PTCA) is a theological movement that aims to recover and interpret Asian cultural and spiritual resources for promotion of life. The sub-regional South Asian consultation was organized under the theme “Religious Fundamentalism, Minorities and Interdisciplinary Education” from 25-28 November, 2009 in SCEPTRE, Kolkata. This theme was chosen keeping in mind the ongoing religious conflicts in South Asian countries to explore new ways of doing theology, inter-religious collaboration and interdisciplinary theological education, and institutional cooperation with secular institutions for ensuring quality and relevant theological education in Asia. We thank all the resource persons for sharing their wisdom and expertise in the field.

There is a vacuum in both theological and secular learning. While theological education is detached from the secular context, there is a lack of awareness of spirituality that is dynamic, liberative and life affirming value in secular learning process. One option is to explore an interdisciplinary theological learning within secular context for common good. As such, the consultation explored various options of interdisciplinary education in multi-religious context.

The consultation began with a public lecture at Serampore College on 25th November, 2009. Professor Huang Poho delivered the lecture on the theme “Re-confessing Christian Faith in an Indigenous Cultural Setting in Taiwan – A Discussion on Gospel and Culture”. Poho underlined the importance of locating the incarnation of Jesus in the local cultures and traditions of the people. Education will have no value if it is not liberating for the people who are struggling for selfhood and right to life on the streets and in the slums of Kolkata and in many cities in Asia.

The first day of the consultation focused on the challenges of religious fundamentalism. Dr. Lalchungnunga from Serampore College spoke on the political perspective of religious fundamentalism. Dr. K.P. Aleaz of Bishop’s College spoke on revitalization of religions in contemporary context especially challenges posed by Sangh Pravar, a Hindu fundamentalist group who assert Hindutva ideology undermining the right of minorities in India. Professor Amartya Mukhopadhya from Kolkata University gave an analysis of the interface between religious fundamentalism and market fundamentalism.

The second day explored the cultural and religious resources for furthering interfaith education. Professor Huang Poho reflected upon Christian theology from cultural perspective. Dr. M.T. Cherian explored the resource of interfaith study in Hinduism and Dr. Prahhakar Bhattacharyya spoke on various of models of interfaith education in Hindu traditions. Then, we moved on to analysis colonial education and its impact in South Asian society. The Serampore College model was chosen as a case study for interdisciplinary education. Dr. Marina Bahera gave the history and rationale behind the founding of Serampore College - Implications for theological education today. Dr. Ravi Tiwari examined the Interdisciplinary studies adopted by the Senate Serampore College especially in the new B.D. curriculum.
The third day deliberated on four main themes: Dr. Bonita Aleaz explored interdisciplinary studies from the discipline of social sciences and Dr. Limatula Longkumer dealt from theological education perspective. Dr. H.G. Mitra spoke on the importance of restructuring and integrating value education in changing secular society. Dr. P.C. Gine suggested various possible options of teaching theology in multi-faith context.

I hope the readers will find papers stimulating in our search for a relevant interreligious study. We record our appreciation to EMW in Germany for the generous contribution which enabled us to carry out this important activity.

Wati Longchar
Editor