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President's Message

The recently concluded Triennial Conference of Catholic Colleges drew together a large number of teachers and senior students who enthusiastically discussed issues of such vital importance to the campus life in our colleges. This zeal to pulsate and vibrate, to learn and lead, to consider and commit must be vigorously pursued by college managements.

In preparing our students for the Third Millennium, let us be alive to the problems of today, be they political or economic, global or local. Let us strive to train men and women who will grow with a system of values that makes them sensitive to the needs of so many around us.

Respect for human life is slowly but relentlessly being eroded, with so many skirting around vital issues like abortion, infanticide and euthanasia and sometimes pretending that they are non-issues. The forthcoming National Conference "Celebrating Life" at Bangalore on October 1 & 2 is a wonderful opportunity to interact with committed international & national experts and strengthen our knowledge, attitude and values towards human life. Catholic colleges may register many participants and benefit from the same.

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CHALLENGES FACING CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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1.0 Paradigm Shift

Thomas Kuhn's book 'The structure of Scientific Revolution' is a highly influential landmark book because of the term "Paradigm Shift" introduced by him. Kuhn shown how almost every significant breakthrough in the field of scientific endeavour is first a break with tradition, with old ways of thinking, with old paradigms. For Ptolemy, the great Egyptian astronomer, the Earth was the centre of the Universe. But Copernican created a paradigm shift by placing the sun at the centre. Suddenly everything took on a different interpretation.

The issues in Indian Higher Education identified in this paper - each of them - challenge us to enter into a new paradigm; It calls for a shift away from our traditional pattern of thinking to something different, more in keeping with the present day realities both national and global.

2.0 Evangelisation

You will surely agree with me that the only *raison d'être* of catholic institutions, is evangelization, understood in its broadest and richest sense. Every Christian institution, has to be an instrument of evangelization. It is to give God's life in Christ to the people we serve. To give life in all its fullness, in all its dimensions, that is evangelization.

Historically, in countries where the vast majority of the population are the followers of their faiths, Christian educational institutions have been primarily meant to witness to the Gospel of Christ, like the leaven, like the salt, like the light. Secondly, these institutions have aimed at building up christian communities, through faith formation, training of leaders and enhancing the employment potential among christians. Thirdly, christian institutions have been second to none in making a contribution to nation building by forming a band of educated and

enlightened leaders.

If we accept the truth that evangelization is not so much a process of adding to the numbers of Christians by more or less authentic Christians, we must undergo a paradigm shift with regard to our notion of evangelisation. Evangelization is understood today as cooperating with God who is active establishing His kingdom on earth. It is building common human communities imbued with the kingdom values or in the words of an Asian theologian, "building communities of love, fellowship, freedom, justice and harmony is authentic evangelization". It calls for focussing on issues of poverty, justice, human rights, environmental degradation, displacement of people and other ills of society. It calls for greater cooperation with all people of goodwill; and hence we are summoned to greater interreligious understanding and interfaith dialogue. We must also enable students to grow up with an interreligious understanding giving them a new type of faith formation (as distinct from mere value education) in which while one remains rooted in one's own faith, one is open to other faiths as well.

3.0 Dual System of Education

The most obvious issue with regard to our system of education is that it is a dual system operating in society with a strong class bias. While over 80% of Indian children go through an educational process of the lowest quality provided mostly by government schools, nearly 20% benefit from a parallel system which offers education of a comparably far higher quality provided mainly by private agencies for a price. The former form the bulk of the lower socioeconomic class while the latter come from the higher professional technical and other elite classes.

Both the classes of students knock at the doors of higher education and if admission policies are not tilted in favour of the poor and the disadvantaged and if quality were to be the sole criterion, students from the elitist sections will have a clean sweep of the seats. Education as a subsystem of society will then be perpetuating the deep divide between the

rich and the poor. Government therefore adopting a policy of positive discrimination in favour of the disadvantaged, has introduced 'Reservation Policies'. Catholic institutions too have adopted a policy of preferential option for the poor which is reflected in their admission policies. A sincere attempt is being made to admit poor students into our institutions lowering the cut off marks so that more and more students from disadvantaged and underprivileged sections could get into our institutions.

But if the response to the prevailing dual system of education is to be really effective, paradigm shifts are to occur in three important areas; These are the notion of excellence, our target groups and the nature of our educational service to the poor. These paradigm shifts are today the real issues in Indian Higher Education.

3.1 Notion of Excellence

A paradigm shift is to occur with regard to our notion of excellence. A good many of our institutions, still cling to the traditional notion of excellence - such as obtaining a very high percentage in university exams taking pride in public examination ranks, and superiority in athletic and cultural activities. These continue to be the hall mark of our institutions. If we have to contextualise the educational apostolate in terms of the emerging national needs, we have then to make a definite paradigm shift from this traditional notion to a notion of excellence that would keep social concerns in the forefront.

One yardstick of excellence of our educational institutions would be the profile of the student we would like to come out of our institutions. We will have failed in our mission of running our institutions of higher education, if a student, rich or poor, leaves the portals of our institution with high grades in academic subjects, but without having grown in his sense of the Divine, reverence for the sacred, respect for human life, compassion for the poor, concern for justice, awareness of oppressive social structures and commitment to help build a more just and more

human community. Every student who graduates from our college at any level should go out into the world equipped with "competence, conscience and compassionate commitment".

Another yardstick of excellence would be the way we place rational knowledge, the unique instrument of university education at the service of the poor. We become distinctly catholic through our commitment to faith and justice in the very central teaching, research and publications and extension services. Our colleges should conduct quality research pertaining to basic issues that affect the life of the people, particularly the poor. Thus, environment and ecology, globalization and the impact on the weaker and disadvantaged sections of the people of the neo-liberal model of development, the problems of the disadvantaged sections of the society and the ways of empowering them are some of the issues that could usefully be studied in depth.

3.2 Our Target Group

The next paradigm shift is to occur in the understanding of our target group. It is a fact that caste, poverty, illiteracy and oppression are closely related factors. In the 1991 census, the male and female enrollment figures for the SCs were : 29% and 12% at the secondary level; 5% and 1.2% at the higher level.

Apart from educational backwardness, they suffer unjust social discrimination. The Annual Report (1991-92) of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India states "The Scheduled Castes still suffer from social discrimination and economic deprivation. The stigma of untouchability continues to haunt them. The bulk of the bonded labourers in the country are all from Scheduled Castes".

The fear is expressed in some quarters that by adopting caste categorisation, we would contribute to the strengthening of caste forces in the country. When society is patterned on caste, we cannot transform the system if we do not accept the caste paradigm. If we do not have this target group of

SCs and STs consciously in focus, we may end up educating the more affluent and powerful castes in society, forward or backward and our practice of the preferential option for the poor will be only rhetoric devoid of reality.

3.3 Empowerment of the Poor

The next paradigm shift required with regard to our service to the poor, is a shift from mere admission of the poor students to their empowerment; The Government and we in turn are preoccupied with statistics of those admitted. We have been considering whom we serve. But it is hightime we also consider how we serve them. A good many of the students admitted from deprived and disadvantaged sections are unable to cope with the curriculum offered. The dropout rate is high. Quite a few feel lost. There is tension on the campus owing to the problem of maladjustment to an alien campus culture. We, no doubt, offer remedial classes. But students are not motivated to attend them. Is there a possibility of building remediation into the curriculum itself so that slow learners learn at their own pace with materials properly graded to their ability levels with an interactive methodology suited to them and with individualised attention? It calls for radical innovations in curriculum restructuring. Apart from enabling them to cope with the curriculum and obtain a degree, is the university education offered to the disadvantaged such as to promote their social mobility? To achieve this aim, these students are to be equipped with certain job related skills such as effective communication skills in English, computer literacy, book keeping and accountancy, personality development etc.; Special camps for social conscientisation and training in leadership are to be thought of. Access to effective student counselling is a must. The agenda facing us is formidable.

4.0 Value Education

The next area of concern and paradigm shift is in the area of values and value education. We admit that there is a crisis of values on university campuses reflecting the overall deterioration in the society

outside. But we relegate the inculcation of values to our value education classes which are often peripheral to the important subjects that are taught and learnt in the class room. In this context THE INTEGRATED PEDAGOGICAL PARADIGM properly understood and effectively implemented would be of immense help. There are four aspects of this paradigm that merit attention :

- 4.1 First and foremost, IPP focuses attention on the process of learning and not merely on learning content. It views education not as mere transmission but as transformation. It promotes not mere cognitive growth but human growth.
- 4.2 Secondly, it brings value education to the centre stage by showing how values can be infused dynamically into every aspect of the curriculum.
- 4.3 Thirdly, apart from this infusive approach, IPP also suggests a pedagogical practice that is concrete, logical and sequential taking learners through steps of context - experience - reflection - action - and evaluation.
- 4.4 Fourthly, IPP can also be extended to other non academic areas such as extra curricular activities, community service programmes, and retreat experiences. It serves to give an extensional notion of curriculum including all activities on the campus and makes them serve as resources for personal growth and development. Given the prevailing limited view of education in Indian Universities that identify curriculum with covering the syllabus and passing the exams and the confusion and conflict of values among the teachers, THE INTEGRATED PEDAGOGICAL PARADIGM is thus a true and effective paradigm shift in the way we approach value education.

5.0 Neighbourhood Community

Catholic colleges are already involved in some meaningful programmes in the neighbourhood such as literacy campaign, environmental education, community development etc. Such an involvement was already suggested by the challenges of education

document 1985. According to the document, a right involvement with the community is meant for two purposes - to link the community with the college where the community would make available the skills within it for education programmes and the educational institution in the process learns to be socially relevant through modifying its curriculum and pedagogy and contributes to the growth of the community. This involvement of the institution in the neighbourhood community calls for certain shifts in our mental outlook.

5.1 Scientific Temper of Involvement

The involvement of colleges in the neighbourhood does not often reflect the scientific temper proper to an institution of higher learning. The involvement is generally impression based rather than data-based. Statistical information, data analysis and reflection undertaken prior to the involvement and during the period of involvement is a must. Such a scientific involvement will make us go beyond the symptoms of social ills and come to grips with their underlying causes by making us realise the workings of the social and economic structures of society, their power over people's lives and what power people themselves can exercise over these structures. A data based analysis and reflection leading even to socially relevant research will heighten not only our social consciousness but also make us issue based rather than merely programme oriented.

5.2 Institution as the Focal Point

The institutions of higher learning in the country very often remain at the periphery of the community or neighbourhood; They are sometimes 'Ivory Towers'. They are never the focal point for the development of the neighbourhood, as suggested by the N.P.E. (1986) and the subsequent "A perspective paper on Education".

This is illustrated by a telling example from a paper presented by Fr. Jose Kannanaikal S.J., at a National Seminar on Education. He asks the question: "If a neighbourhood slum is burnt down, will the slum people spontaneously think of coming to the school

or college to tell you about what happened and to consult you about what action they should take? As things are today, the slum people normally will not think about the school or college people as their friends. What is worse, they might even suspect that the educational institutions side with those who are their enemies or that they have even caused the fire in the slum...". This may sound exaggerated. But we can still ask the question, "Will the poor in the locality really consider the catholic institutions as their own?"

There are various ways in which educational institutions can become a focal point for the development of neighbourhood. These are encouraging staff and students to familiarise themselves with the social problems of the neighbourhood through survey and analysis, taking a stand on various issues affecting the neighbourhood, supporting the literacy movement, working toward interreligious dialogue and worship in the neighbourhood for the promotion of communal harmony, placing our infrastructural facilities at the service of the grass root movements and making educational institutions, centres where people can imbibe genuine democratic values and feel that they are supported in their struggle for justice and equality.

5.3 Community College

"THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE" is an attempt to link the neighbourhood community to the college. It starts with making a survey of employment opportunities of the local community and by interacting with the potential employers in the neighbourhood, identifies the relevant job oriented and life skills. These skills are offered to students through systematic training either immediately after their plus two stage or while they are acquiring a degree through correspondence courses for which also necessary academic help is given by the community college. The concept of 'COMMUNITY COLLEGE' contains immense potential and offers a breakthrough in a university system where thousands of graduates are turned out year after year without any employment potential or usefulness

to the country in general or to the neighbourhood in particular.

6.0 Global Concerns

We have often heard the cliché "Think globally and act locally". Let me now proceed from acting locally to thinking globally, from local concerns to global concerns.

6.1 The Global Village

We are now just two years away from a watershed, the end of the second millennium of recent history and the opening of the third. The twenty first century will be marked by a unique phenomenon known as the "Global Village". As Saul Mendlovitz says very well in his book, 'On the creation of a just world order' (1975) "It is necessary to seriously accept not only the rhetoric but the reality of the term, "The Global Village". The fact that the overwhelming majority of humankind understands for the first time in history that human society encompasses the entire globe, is a phenomenon equivalent to the acceptance of the fact that the earth is round rather than flat. The cultural unification of the world is already reflected in ideas and values and also in many of the areas as music, cinema, sports. Pop singers from America and other countries are heroes to teenagers in places as far apart as Holland, Hongkong, Mumbai, Moscow, Seoul, Rio de Janeiro and Paris. Four major historical processes or revolutions have accelerated this process of global and cultural unification. These are the ideological revolution of egalitarianism, the technological and scientific revolution, the cybernetic and electronic information transmission revolution and the market economy revolution. These revolutions are sweeping the entire world and hastening the process of globalisation.

6.2 Our Role in Facing the Third Millennium

We of the developing countries are to be aware of this new world we are entering into and for which young people are to be prepared. One of the important preparations for globalisation would be to foster a sense of solidarity among our students.

Human solidarity is what will distinguish the third millennium from ages past. Solidarity is an attitude that implies : a consciousness of other people, of their needs and their dignity; a conviction that every human being is my brother or sister, leading to a feeling of being co-responsible for the future not only of my own country or community but of the whole world; a real and active desire to share with others, so as to ensure the development of all. It is an intellectual and spiritual attitude, fostered through education of mind, heart and conscience. We have to foster human solidarity among the student population through every means: the structure of their courses, the international nature of our student bodies and faculties and the nature of the research they do.

In this changing scenario, institutions of higher learning have to play not merely a reactive role i.e. preparing people for a particular kind of world but rather a proactive role i.e. helping to share the preferred world of tomorrow and this is achieved through research, reflection and publication. Alvin Toffler's books were not just an attempt to foresee the future. They have helped shape it. In particular we should conduct research on viable economic and social models for the future; models combining freedom, democracy and social justice - models for individual countries and for the world community. We cannot do it alone.

The word 'net-working' is the key word of the future. In this global task of building viable models, we have to work in solidarity with like minded catholic and other institutions in our country and outside.

7.0 Lay Partnership

There is one important issue that calls for serious reflection and concrete plans of action from us in higher education. That is, to give concrete shape to the commitment of the religious congregations to partnership with the laity in their mission. You know how much our educational institutions depend upon the laity, catholics and others, for the successful carrying out of their mission. Our commitment, however, is not so much to establish better employer-

employee relationships, which of course is the basic minimum. Rather our aim must be to foster a real partnership in a common mission. This implies that there is a radical change of vision and attitudes among us, religious running the institutions. It calls for an attitude and readiness to cooperate, to listen and to learn from others, to share our spiritual and apostolic inheritance. This last is very important. We cannot have real partnership with the laity in our common mission unless we enable them through programmes of ongoing formation, to share our spirituality, our vision and ideals.

8.0 Challenge to Change

All the above issues either local or global call for paradigm shifts in our thinking, innovation, creativity and a positive attitude towards change. Indian universities, given their bureaucratic structure, are very reluctant to change. In one of his presentations, Prof. V.C. Kulandaisamy, Vice Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University, has this observation to make: "Our cupboards are full of reports of working groups, committees and commissions, extremely well written, comprehensive, often quoted, but awaiting implementation for periods ranging from a decade to half a century". Institutions do not easily change and our institutions are no different. Therefore one of the main problems facing us is to assist institutions to change".

8.1 The imperative to Change

The U.G.C. document on development of Higher Education in India and the challenges of education (1985) have suggested a radical reform in the educational system. "If the present system is allowed to continue, the chasms of economic disabilities, regional imbalances and social injustices will widen further, resulting in the building up of disintegrative tension (Challenges of Education, 1:2)". The CRI Cochin document, reminds us that "To be a prophet today is not optional for us. Further it is the evangelical imperative of the hour. It means that we creatively reorient our ministries to fulfill the functions of religious commitment" Fr. Michael

Jeyaraj, the former Jesuit Provincial of Madurai in an address to his collegemen (1988) stated "in the light of the world context, the socio-economic political realities in India that affect higher education and the urgency of the prophetic role we have to play, I wonder whether what we are doing in terms of reform and restructuring is adequate or 'useful". He points out that "many of the reforms are inward looking and superficial, slow of achievement and maintaining the status quo. They will not meet the urgent demands of the reality today".

8.2 Dynamics of Change

I could once again refer to the presentation of Prof. V.C. Kulandaisamy. He says, "We know what has to be done; but have not done it. It is a question of bringing about awareness among the teaching community and getting its cooperation for the change. It is a question of adapting and transforming into implementable steps in our environment, certain concepts and practices that are in vogue in advanced countries. We are able to expand but have not been able to change. What is needed most to bring about these reforms, is academic leadership which unfortunately is the desideratum".

One way to trigger would be to provide alternative and viable models of change. We could bring together human resources from our institutions, integrate old and new insights, work out models and propose them. Some institutions could then try out these models and publish their findings.

9.0 Conclusion

My review of the issues in Higher Education is not complete. Some more issues, perhaps more important ones, may be articulated and we may also think of ways of concretely grappling with them. But one thing is sure. We are passing through a critical phase in our country's development. The challenges are many and massive. The ideal of Catholic Higher Education today calls for a life of intellect, a life of integrity and a life of justice and loving service to our fellowmen and women and to our God. That is the call of Christ to us today - a

call to growth, a call to life. Who will answer? Who if not you? When if not now?

INITIATION DAY AT ROSARY COLLEGE, GOA

Prof. NEWMAN FERNANDES

Principal

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The new academic year 1998-99 and the introduction of the Bachelor of Computer Application course, at Rosary College of Commerce and Arts, Navelim, was solemnly inaugurated by Bishop Filipe Neri Ferrao, Auxiliary Bishop of Goa.

Principal Newman Fernandes expressed his gratitude to the University for permission to introduce the BCA course. He said that unless the colleges diversify and offer relevant courses, the number of students for traditional courses will decrease. He then briefly reviewed the growth and progress of the college from its inception in 1990 with barely 36 students. The Principal shared his visions and 'dreams' towards making the college "a centre of excellence". They include a plan to introduce Value Education lectures which is the need of the times in view of the deterioration of values today - one of the lacuae in our society. He also expressed the aim of making the concept of "Rosary Community College" a reality. It will offer job oriented courses. It also aims to cater to the areas of personality development that the syllabi fail to cater to. The Principal commended the efforts of the enthusiastic faculty, considering the challenge they accept in catering to students from a cross-section of larger population. He also appreciated the co-operation of the students, and urged them to be imbued with 'work ethic' and values such as respect for parents and teachers etc. Each of the staff members were then introduced to the students.

Each of the BCA students received their identity cards at the hands of Bishop Filipe Neri Ferrao who stressed the importance of young students in the society, country and Church at large. He said that

while gaining knowledge is an important part of education, what is also significant is the development of one's potential and talents. He encouraged the students to inculcate the values of truth, justice, honesty, hard work and discipline which he considered the keys to success. He also said that God is the greatest 'Value' and a person's religion should help him be a better human being. He commended the efforts of the Principal, Staff and students of the College for achieving "commendable heights of success" in the past few years. He ended his address with a wish that the College may continue its endeavours in the pursuit of excellence; and hoped that the flag of success of Rosary College flies even higher.

The Inaugural function culminated in the eucharistic celebration for Catholic students during which the Bishop invoked God's Blessings on all the students and those associated with the College.

GREAT TEACHERS - THE VANISHING SPECIES

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The university scene in India presents a sorry spectre of animated debates about almost everything other than the role of the teacher vis-a-vis the cascading new technologies in the world of education. The concept of a college as a vibrant community of thinking minds is passe. In its place, a more democratic model of the college as a tool for the economic empowerment of the disadvantaged has taken shape. The complaint that the clamour for equality of opportunity has resulted in a perceptible dilution of quality is hard to invalidate. Nevertheless, the disturbing spread of anomie among students in our centres of higher learning cannot all be ascribed to the quantitative explosion which has come in the wake of an educational policy which has itself gone way-ward, mistaking as it has done, straitjacket uniformity for progress. Contrary to all the claims made by educational planners, universities and colleges continue to be obsessed with stereotyped curriculum and obsolete teaching methodologies.

If there can be such a thing as "painful astonishment", it can perhaps but describe the fact that over the last 50 years, an outmoded system of evaluation, at the university level, has persisted albeit with peripheral modifications in the form of the so-called "objective" questions. The teacher, as a permanent captive of the examination system, has been able to make do with little or no intellectual vigour and without the burdens of scholarship whatsoever.

With a mass of students easily persuaded that a university programme is a compound of rote learning and idle hours, what more can a teacher aspire for than a promised long tenure of imperturbable complacency and scales of pay which will put him/her on par with members of the civil service? There has certainly been a fetish of research at the doctorate level, but that is a different story of devaluation of learning and of mediocrity of guidance. The impetus for research, in the vast majority of cases, perhaps came from the allurements which go with professorships rather than from the compulsions of intellectual fervour or a deep social consciousness. The tragedy of feverish research pursuits by college teachers has often been enacted at the expense of students who felt cheated by such teachers who had little time for their classes not to speak of intellectual encounters. The proud boast of many a university don that he/she has produced an incredible number of Ph.D's ought really to be interpreted as an unintended confession that the mission of teaching got hijacked by "careerist research".

The notion that the university is an intellectual thoroughfare is certainly laughable when it is sought to be applied even to the best in the country. The more prestigious a university is supposed to be, the greater is the casualty suffered by the cause of teaching. Very impressive Who's Who among the faculty often conceals the fact that most of the glittered belong to what the late Professor V.V. John called the category of "orbiting professors", here today and lost for the rest of the year at some national international or even inter-planetary seminar.

Gone are the days when our academics used to be chided for their insular "ivory tower" indifference to the realities of the work-a-day world. There is so much more politic inside campuses today than even during the hectic days of the freedom struggle. But today it is the politics of caste and communalism and very little of the intellectual ferment which generates new ideas and paradigms for social and economic change. Unlike their counterparts of the last generation, today's teachers in universities and colleges, look beyond the confines of the teaching profession, for their own economic advancement even if it involves the negation of their academic responsibilities. Compared to their passion for administrative authority, their genuine commitment to scholarship and to the task of guiding and inspiring their students is abysmally dismal. If the best academics argue that the rapidly changing culture of the college has itself made the "genuine teacher" a misfit, if not a redundant specimen, it can only mean that the institutional crisis afflicting higher education is in fact reaching a terminal stage. But there is reasonable ground for the sanguine view that all colleges have not uniformly sunk into a state of irrelevance to the large cause of preparing the youth for constructive participation, whether in the domestic or the global economy.

The fact is that a large number of Indian students - products of our university system - gravitate towards some of the best universities in the West and that many among them give unmistakable evidence of their mastery of the system of education abroad, often gruelling compared to the undemanding dispensation in India. There is an almost mystical quality about the contemporary "degraded" system of higher education in India. It is that while it mostly operates at rather low levels of efficiency, creativity and relevance, it does nurture the curiosity and the urge for excellence among the few students who set for themselves an agenda for academic and professional advancement. What kind of alchemy is this, in a system which condemns the majority of students to boredom, a culture of leisure and the demoralising prospect of a long wait for the first

job, while it kindles the fire of competitive excellence in a few to such an extent that they dare to register their presence in the most prestigious among the universities abroad? Can this happen at all unless the core of our university system continues to be sound despite all the assaults made on it by a phalanx of forces from within and from society at large? Nor can all the lament about the crisis of quality in the system of higher education ignore the reality that in many segments of national life, in the government, including the bureaucracy, and in business covering industry and commerce, and allied professions, the quality of human resources honed by university education, is comparable to the best such resources available even in the industrially advanced countries.

All this is, however, not saying much about Indian higher education coping effectively with the revolutionary changes in the environment and especially in information technology. Given the acute paucity of government resources, the demand for blackboards for the country's sprawling school system cannot but compel precedence over the requirement of technological upgradation of the universities and colleges. Nor is this a condition which is all too baneful. Adapting the university system to the new age of informatics is not the same as the transformation of a teacher-oriented (dominated?) process of education into one where technology dwarfs the educator. What is called for by the rapid advances in communications technology is that the university does not any longer pretend that it is the repository of all knowledge that is available for the human race but instead opens its data-base to receive instant inputs from all over the world, which would benefit the faculty and the students in a proportion to the extent to which they are intellectually equipped to deal with such new inputs. It is a popular illusion that educational technology will substitute for the "genuine" teacher.

This brings up the basic question about the role of the teacher and whether it is at all diminishing in the context of a new age of exploding info-tech. Central to the question is whether education, at any level can be designed as a wholly "teacher excluded"

process of acquisition of knowledge with the intention that it should be put to work. Granted that in highly literate societies, distance education has come to be recognised as a powerful tool for life-long learning and for human resource development in its holistic sense, the primacy of the teacher in the educational process is not in doubt even if the "de-schooling" movement (for the liberation of the oppressed) is to replace formal education. In the system of higher education in India, it is perhaps true that the teacher is caught in an identity crisis, not knowing whether one should become an efficient communicator of received knowledge or an assiduous investigator in quest of new knowledge or of understanding the dynamics of the societal process or what is even more difficult, to integrate and harmonise all these roles. Instances are not rare when academics who were totally committed to research became virtually alienated from the process of teaching. An exceptional C.V. Raman who was as outstanding a scientist as he was a communicator to student and general audiences, only proves the dichotomy. The teacher in the scientist and the scholar in the teacher are but complementary facets of a truly dynamic educator.

But the large majority of teachers, in the system today, seem to be actuated neither by an inner urge to excel in scholarship and the ability to inspire their students nor by any norms of accountability which will ensure that they give unsparingly of their knowledge and attention for the benefit of their students. And yet, the complaints about the imposition of work-load norms persist in a system where the criteria of work themselves have eluded definition.

Great educational institutions are not mere architectural edifices. Alumni of colleges who look back proudly on their own educational careers often capture their regard for their alma mater through expressions of gratitude to the teachers who left an abiding impact on them. Even colleges which boast of spacious verdant campuses with modern facilities and all the amenities befitting a large community of scholars, are known ultimately for their unique teachers. It is not necessarily the "golden age"

syndrome which explains why the elder generation continues to glorify the great teachers of the past.

If Dr. Radhakrishna is regarded as the exemplar for the teaching community, it is because he cultivated not only profound critical scholarship of a very high order but also the powers of communication, both spoken and written, which made him a universally acclaimed scholar-statesman.

Times have changed. The teacher and his/her classroom have necessarily to change not only because new gadgetry is at hand but it is a new ethos of a student body which is constantly being bombarded by the electronic media and which is a cultural force in its own right which is capable as much of social synthesis as it is of fragmentation. The teacher of yesterday who swore by the textbook is fast becoming obsolete. The one who pretended that he/she is the only irreplaceable source of information for his students already stands marginalised.

Those who postured about their being the moulders of the destiny of their students have long been forgotten. And "the performing" ones who wrongly identified effective teaching with the stifling of all originality and creativity in the individual have more often than not been dismissed "out of minds" by the students.

The emerging climate in higher education would call for new teaching skills apart from attitudes which make for partnership between the teacher and the learner. The skills of oration and recitation (which are declining anyway) will need to be reinforced by interactive techniques of communication which encourage and instigate dialogue and debate. The teacher as a "know-all" is a disastrous caricature and the "learning professor" represents the vitality of the system much more than that so-called "learned professor". The fashion in current educational philosophy is to describe the teacher as a "facilitator". Have not all great teachers in the past performed this function - by igniting, inspiring and challenging the minds of their querulous and ardent students?

**NATIONAL COMPETITION 1998 -
STUDENT ESSAY ON
"MEDIA EXPLOSION - A BOON OR
BANE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN
VALUES"**

The Xavier Board of Higher Education in India wishes to give urgent and special priority to the issue of "**Media explosion - a boon or bane in the field of human values**" as it exists in India today. It wishes that all Catholic colleges in India should view the seriousness of this problem, should make a positive study of the issue involved, should reflect on the values of media and should involve a concrete plan of action for each college in the coming years.

In order to stimulate this process further, the Xavier Board is happy to institute a national essay-competition for all undergraduate students of catholic colleges in India. We request you to give wide publicity to this essay competition in your college and to enthuse your students to participate actively.

Rules for Essay competition

1. Each catholic degree college in India may send not more than two entries per year.
2. The Essay of 2000 words must be the sole effort of the single undergraduate student (without any help of faculty, whatsoever). The student must give a written undertaking that the essay is his/her original work. All essays must be recommended by the Principal of the college.
3. Completed essays two fair copies typed or computer-printed on one side of good paper, bearing the full name of the student, the class studying, the name of the Principal and name and address of the college, must be forwarded through the Principal **by 10th Nov. 1998 to the National Secretary, Xavier Board of Higher Education in India, 31 Primrose Road, Bangalore - 560 025.**

4. These essays will be judged by a competent panel and the winner will be declared by December this year. **The winner will receive an attractive prize of Rs. 1000/- and a scroll.**

TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES IN INDIA

All roads led to Chennai when a record number of 222 participants drawn from all the states in India, converged to discuss the theme of the Triennial Conference **"Preparing the Catholic University College to meet the challenges of the Third Millennium"**, from 21-24 May 1998. Having accepted the invitation and hospitality of the Jeppiaar Educational Trust, the conference was held in idyllic surroundings in a sprawling campus that houses 3 colleges - St. Joseph's College of Engineering, Satyabama College of Computer Engineering and St. Mary's College of Business Administration and Computer Application, in the outskirts of Chennai.

After a solemn and meaningful liturgy presided by Most Rev. Dr. Arul Das James, Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore, the Inaugural Session was presided over by Prof. P.T. Manoharan, Vice Chancellor of Madras University. In a stirring keynote address, Prof. S. Swaminathan, Business Editor of the Hindu, challenged the Catholic Colleges (which are champions of quality in education) to read the sign of the times and boldly reorient or commence courses so as to prepare the youth for present and future challenges, to be enthusiastic leaders that would improve and ensure the quality of life in our country.

The four main sessions were on "Preparing the College youth for political leadership" by Dr. Ambrose Pinto SJ, "Preparing for the Great Jubilee 2000" by Fr. Anto Poruthur, SVD, "Motivating the college teacher" by Prof Nirmala Jeyaraj and team and "Faith formation in the college campus" by Fr. Raj Paul CSsR. and team. There were Panel Discussions on "Youth, Media and Values" and on "Issues of Concern on Women".

Eight workshop groups discussed various selected aspects of Catholic Higher Education.

The Assembly received greetings from Fr. P.P. George, Secretary of the CBCI Commission for Education and Culture and from Dr. Mani Jacob, General Secretary of the All India Association of Christian Higher Education. There was lively and intense participation from all delegates, which contributed in a large way to the great success of the Triennial Conference.

Five colleges received the Sr. Hedwige Award for excellence in conducting successful programmes in the last 3 years, in spiritual welfare and value formation of students and teachers - St. Thomas College Palai, St. Agnes College Mangalore, Vimala College Thrissur, Holy Cross College Ambikapur and St. Teresa's Autonomous College Elluru

In the Valedictory Address, Fr. Jose Murickan SJ stirred the participants to accept the challenges of the present times and help to create a human phase to counteract the present vitiated atmosphere, by being leaven in the dough to transform present societal values with the cherished values of the Gospel.

The Assembly reelected Dr. AFA Mascarenhas as President of the Xavier Board for a further period of three years. Dr. P.C. Mathew SJ was elected as Vice President and Sr. Beatina Mary OSM, Ph.D, as Secretary. Meetings of the eight regions elected respective representatives as members of the Xavier Board. Sr. Ezechiel CMC, the outgoing Secretary took leave from the Assembly to assume responsibilities of Provincial Superior of the Pallakad CMC Province.

The participants were unanimous in their praise for the hard work put up by the Local Organising Committee and were immensely grateful to Mr. Jeppiaar and his team for hosting the accommodation, transport, food and the conference in a unique and generous way. An evening outing to Mahabalipuram and its surroundings added to the camaraderie and joy of all participants.

**NEWLY ELECTED
XAVIER BOARD FOR 1998-2001**

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Vice President : Fr. P.C. Mathew SJ

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**MESSAGE FROM THE
SECRETARY**

Sr. Beatina Mary OSM Ph.D.

Dear Friends :

Today, as I am penning these few lines, the hot news in the market is 'Clinton's testimony before the grand jury'. Let alone Clinton's stand as a weak human being or the President of a mighty nation, the news is a very big catch for the media. Looking at the various comments and the analysis CNN and BCC are telecasting, one would wonder how educated are we to classify and weigh the various analyses - some as trash and some as relevant. Will it affect our youth of "media culture," millions in number, as the Greek Tragedy of the past did - "catharsis and purgation" - or will it pass just as a piece of gossip or slogans on tea shirts or encourage permissiveness - a big question!

How do we link this with our education especially the higher education in our Catholic Institutions. The business of the Catholic institution cannot just centre exclusively on the intellectual component of the acquisition of knowledge. Many are learned, but few are educated. Education implies - besides learning - faith and conviction in values a few of which are unanimously affirmed: truth, mutual support, social justice, awareness of others, respect for life, nil gender bias and passing on a good and healthy environment to posterity. Values are vital, since they inspire and stimulate action on the individual and collective level - they also express the content of the "good" inherent in any human act. These are the concerns of our Xavier Board too.

The present system of education kills by degrees. Almost everyone thinks that we have to redefine our educational system. A well designed education serves as a powerful tool for instilling values, for the empowerment of the poor and also to promote equal opportunities. The end in view for any education in values can only be to shed light upon, and encourage, free and personal ethical action.

In our 51 years of free India, with increases in literacy rate and number of institutions of higher learning and technology, how much are we liberated and how well are we educated? The explosives and killings, besides natural disasters in India make us question our value system. Our students' contribution to the nation as good citizens after they leave our campuses bear testimony to the type of education they received through our institutions. We too have to ponder - are we educated? Are we educating?

Let our institutions and nation awaken into that system of education, "where the mind is led forward by Thee into everwidening thought and action." Thank you.

**“PREPARING THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY COLLEGES
TO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF
THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**

ARCHBISHOP ARUL DAS JAMES
Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore

I am very happy that the Xavier Board of Higher Education in India is holding its “Triennial Conference of Catholic University Colleges in India” here in Chennai (Madras).

I welcome all to this great city of Chennai that is the gateway of South India and a major trade centre. It has great and delightful monuments of cultural heritage. The temples with Dravidian, churches with Gothic and old colonial buildings take us back to the golden era of architecture. The exquisite stone carvings, shore temples at Mahabalipuram a few kilometers away from here bring wonder and delight to the visitors.

I also welcome you all to this Archdiocese of Madras - Mylapore which has a tradition and history of St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, coming over to this place, proclaiming the Good News, and shedding his blood for the Gospel in the City of Chennai (Madras).

In the field of Education, Chennai (Madras) has excelled ever since colonial age and has premier

educational institutions. The Xavier Board has aptly chosen the theme for this Conference “Preparing the catholic university colleges to face the challenges of the third millennium” as we stand on the threshold of the 21st century.

Tertiary education that follows the 12 years of primary and secondary schooling is popularly referred to as “Higher Education”. Many consider “Higher Education” is the only ladder that helps one to move upward in social status, through one's employability in a highly paid position. This perception has tended to become dominant, as one can see from devaluations of certain kind of knowledge and over valuation of courses in commerce and business management.

A great deal of thought, time and money has been invested in the system of higher education. The objectives of Higher Education are :

- to study a discipline in some depth
- to acquire specific areas of competence
- to sharpen one's intellectual faculties
- to ask questions fearlessly and to seek answers with persistence
- to find out how knowledge is constructed and reconstructed
- to have a sense of shared humanity and the living earth
- to develop individuality and conviviality
- to learn to work for a collective good, above all
- to conserve our environment

If every university college is imbibing all the above objectives, then what is so special about the catholic college? one may ask:

According to Hesburgh, a Catholic University College is a community of scholars, young and old, teaching and learning together, and together committed to the service of humanity. It might be hoped that in the University Catholic College, worthy of the name, the young learn from the old and vice

versa, that the faculty grows wiser as it confronts the questioning, idealism, and generosity of each new generation of students, and that the students draw wisdom and perspective from their elders in the academic community. Any catholic university college should be a place where all the relevant questions are asked and where answers are elaborated in an atmosphere of freedom and responsible inquiries, where the young learn the great power of ideas and ideals, where the values of justice and charity, truth and beauty, are both taught and exemplified by the faculty and where both faculty and students together are seized by a deep possession for the anguishes of humanity in our day and committed to offer a helping hand, wherever possible; in every aspect of man's material, intellectual and cultural development, knowledge and faith.

The manner in which the Catholic University Colleges fulfil the mission of proclaiming the Gospel values, make a unique contribution to the field of higher education. The strength of Catholic University Colleges are :

- 1) greater commitment to students and to the society at large
- 2) greater integrity in the matters of financial and admission procedures
- 3) better facilities provided like labs, libraries and computer education
- 4) Neater surroundings
- 5) A truly pluralistic-religious atmosphere where each student's religious study is respected.
- 6) Better discipline
- 7) Provision for extra curricular activities
- 8) Availability of counselling
- 9) Financial aid for the poor students often from the church sources
- 10) Excellent staff improvement programmes and student programmes

Higher Education is the only answer to all social and economical problems in our Society. The value of education is even greater when it comes to Christian Colleges. In the past decades all our efforts were directed towards the education to empower the students to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Though the worldwide class room is envisaged through internet and computer network systems, there are many challenges before us to be tackled in the field of higher education. The CBCI evaluation report brings out strong recommendations with regard to education of which I would like to point out a few :

- 1) We need to have specialized educational centres in the field of medicine, engineering, IPS, IAS etc.;
- 2) we should work to reduce the gap between the poor and rich;
- 3) the income from the institutions should be utilised by creating scholarships for poor students and job oriented courses. In this regard in this Archdiocese we have taken a step forward in starting and conducting the Madras Community College wherein job oriented courses along with regular degree course are taught;
- 4) we should bear in mind, that when we go for mission work in any state, we go there to serve, love and like the people of that place. Hence it calls for dedication;
- 5) our educational institutions should become more powerful instruments of proclaiming the Gospel (evangelisation);
- 6) instead of insisting only on the academic side, a total value education should be aimed at - to develop the total man;
- 7) our institutions which are a force to reckon within the field of education in India, could promote the christian spirit of charity on a higher level.
- 8) We should ensure that sufficient weightage is given to the weaker sections of the society in

promoting them for higher education; therefore, we should provide higher education in rural areas.

Many of our Heads of Institutions seem to justify that religion is in the curriculum itself. As L P Jack puts it,

"We teach it in arithmetic by accuracy

We teach it in language by learning to say what
we mean — 'yea, or nay'

We teach it in history by humanity

We teach it in geography by breadth of mind

We teach it in handicraft by thoroughness

We teach it in astronomy by reverence

We teach it by good manners to one another and
by truthfulness in all things"

But we must make a strenuous effort to proclaim the Gospel values in our institutions through our life and to inculcate a sense of brotherhood among the students who pass through the portals of catholic institutions.

Finally I would like to conclude with a quotation from the Association of American Colleges: "In a democracy, liberal education should be of value to men and women both as private individuals and as free, self-reliant, and responsible members of the community to which they belong. It should help them, as individuals, to grow in self-mastery and personal depth, to develop wider and deeper appreciations, to acquire an enthusiasm for hard work, to love good talk and good books, to delight in the adventures of intellectual curiosity, to become fair-minded, open-minded, and generous in all their human responses".

I wish each and every delegate from various parts of the country and this Conference all success and very specially appreciate the efforts taken by the Xavier Board of Higher Education in India to organise this Triennial Conference of Catholic University Colleges in India. May the sessions on "Preparing the college students for political leadership", "Motivation of the teachers in Christian Colleges", "Jesus is alive in our campuses", "Towards the Great Jubilee", "Youth, media and values and on women's issue" bring in more understanding of our integrity towards total human development.

God bless you all.

