

**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
2016 - 17**

Respected Master of Serampore College, Rt. Rev. Dr. John S. Sadananda, Members of the Council, Members of the Senate and Members of the Board of Theological Education, Graduates, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to extend a hearty welcome to all of you to the 89th Convocation of Serampore College, hosted by Trinity Theological College, Dimapur. We are grateful to the Principal, staff and students for their dedicated service during these days and the warmth of hospitality extended to us. Special welcome to Rev. Christopher Mackie Ferguson, Prof. K. M. Kuriakose and Mr. H. S. Rotokha, whose contribution we acknowledge and confer them the *Honoris Causa*, the Doctor of Divinity.

We are happy to welcome all the Principals, Registrars of affiliated colleges and Federated Faculties and Heads of Institutions accredited to the Board and all special guests and friends attending this Convocation.

A. Change of Administrative Heads in affiliated Colleges/ Federated Faculties:

1. Dr. Lanuwabang Jamir, Acting Principal, Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, in place of Rev. Dr. Shekhar Singh.
2. Dr. M.M. Abraham, Registrar, ARRC, Hyderabad in place of Dr. T. Swami Raju.
3. Rev. Dr. Y.T. Vinayaraj, Registrar, NJPGRC, Faridabad in place of Rev. Dr. P.P. Thomas.
4. Dr. Aswathy John, Registrar, NIIPGTS, Serampore, in place of Dr. Limatula Longkumar.
5. Rev. Devakrupa Varakumar, Principal, MCT, Visakhapatnam in place of Rev. D. Paul Augustine.
6. Rev. Dr. Marnungsang, Principal, CTC, Mokokchung, in place of Rev. Dr. Takatemjen Ao.
7. Rev. Manoj Kate, Principal, United Theological Seminary of Maharashtra, Pune in place of Rev. Sonal Christian.

8. Rev. Paras Khosla, Principal-in-charge, OCTC, Gopalpur in place of Rev. S. K. Nanda.
9. Rev. Dr. Israel David, Principal, Calvin Institute of Theology, Hyderabad, A.P, in place of Rev. Dr. G. Jacob.
10. Rev. Dr. Brightstar Jones Syiemlieh, Principal, John Roberts Theological Seminary, Meghalaya, in place of Rev. Dr. M. J. Hynniewta.

B. Obituary:

- a. Rev. Dr. K. C. Abraham, Former Director of SATHRI on June 12, 2016.
- b. Rev. Dr. V. M. Gnanaraj, Former Principal, Bishop's College, Kolkata on June 11, 2016.
- c. Rt. Rev. Maqbul Caleb, Former Bishop of the Chandigarh and Delhi Dioceses of the Church of North India on July 1, 2016.
- d. Dr. Hunter P. Mabry, Former Professor at the United Theological College, Bangalore on July 9, 2016.
- e. Rev. Dr. Edward Williams, Former Professor of Serampore College, Friends of Serampore, UK on July 23, 2016.
- f. Rev. Wilhelm Jung, Christian Education Fund, Kassel, Germany on November 16, 2016.

C. Affiliation Cases:

I. New Affiliation

- i. Believers Church Theological Seminary, Thiruvalla, Kerala - BD programme
- ii. St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI), Kottayam - Diploma course in Syriac Studies

II. Upgrading to BD programme:

Gossner Theological College, Ranchi - Upgrading to BD programme

III. Confirmation of Affiliation

- i. Witter Theological College, Wokha, Nagaland - BD Programme
- ii. Missionary Training College, Aizawl - B.Miss Confirmation
- iii. Bethel Bible Institute, Danishpet - B.Miss Programme

IV. External Programmes offered by the affiliated Colleges:

- i. Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai – BCS
- ii. Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur - BCS, Dip.CS, D.Min

V. New External Examination Centres other than affiliated colleges:

- i. Good News Service Society, Bhopal, M.P.

- ii. Beulah Ministries of the Rhema School of Missions, Ongole
- iii. Biblical Institute of Leadership Training, Krishnagiri
- iv. NITO Theological College, Zunheboto, Nagaland

D. Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS):

The Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) was held from 18th to 22nd April 2016 at Kochi. The event was jointly organized by Christian Conference of Asia and the Senate of Serampore College. It was attended by nearly 110 delegates. The Senate was represented by all its officers, the President and the Master. Rev. Dr. P G George served as the Coordinator of the programme.

E. GlobeTheolib Consortium meeting in Geneva:

GlobeTheoLib Consortium meeting was held on 9th and 10th of September, 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. The members of the Consortium shared their programmes and objectives. The Globethics, which is the parent body of the GlobeTheoLib has made certain changes in the administration. Dr. Christoph Stuckellburg has been replaced by Fr. Dr. Obeiro Ike as the President. Mr. Andreas Wald serves as the Secretary of the GlobeTheoLib.

F. Bi-centenary (2018) celebration of Serampore College: Senate programmes

All preparations are on for the celebration of the Bi-Centenary of the Serampore College. There are three broad categories of celebrations:

1. Arts, Science and Commerce (ASC) departments of Serampore College shall prepare programme and Projects.
2. Theology Faculty of the Serampore College shall also chalk out their programmes and projects.
3. The Senate shall separately and jointly prepare programmes, at regional and National levels.

G. A Summary of total number of Graduates: 2016

D.Th	12
D.Min	10
M.Th	158
MCS	04
MCP	12
B.D	1077
B.C.S	92
B.Th	50

B.Miss	20
D.C.P.C	28
Dip.C.S	126
Dip.B.T.	10
DWM	14
Total: 1613	

H. New Registration

New Registration to the various programmes in 2016 is given below:

D.Th	32
D.Min	24
M.Th	189
MCS	57
MCP	09
B.D	1188
B.C.S	389
B.Th	58
B.Miss	24
D.C.P.C	31
Dip.C.S	197
Dip.B.T.	44
DWM	45
Total: 2237	

Department of Research - SATHRI

The Department of Research/SATHRI of the Senate of Serampore College functions at Serampore, giving opportunity for academic interaction and enabling mutual learning for research scholars, under the guidance of the Committee for Research of the Senate of Serampore College (University). The Committee of Research receives progress report of students enrolled through Doctoral centres and SATHRI, scrutinize them and ensure that the research programme continues without compromising its reputed standard.

The Department of Research/SATHRI initiated the following programmes:

- a) The D.Th Methodology Seminar was conducted at the United Theological College, from May 23 to June 03, 2016, where 31 research scholars attended. Thesis Proposal formation, Doctoral level Theological Research in Indian/Asian context, Current trends in Theological Research and Methodological Interactions, were the main components of the seminar.
- b) National Colloquium was held at Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad, from August 9 to 11, 2016, based on the theme "Reclaiming Religions in the context of Religious Fundamentalism".

Academic Programme:

The students were admitted for Doctoral programme through the Common Entrance Test conducted by the Senate of Serampore College and attended the D.Th Research Methodology Seminar and Orientation Course organized by the Department of Research/SATHRI.

This year 32 new students were admitted for research out of which 9 are direct SATHRI students and the rest are through Senate affiliated Doctoral Centres.

Department of Research/SATHRI continues to publish 'SATHRI JOURNAL' and published the book on Methodological Issues in Theological Research, Vol. 111 - a collection of the Methodology Seminar papers.

Scholarships were given to 62 students in the form of full scholarships or as one time grant/bursary. The Department of Research/SATHRI building is in the process of completion. The Research/SATHRI building will serve as Research Centre of the University with all facilities for the research scholars both national and international. Along with the Jubilee programme, the SATHRI Alumni Fellowship was officially launched. Hope this will help in mutual fellowship and learning, as well as to foster collaborative initiatives in theological research and resource sharing.

Rev. Dr. P. G. George serves as the Dean of the Department of Research/SATHRI. I appreciate his earnest efforts in organizing various programmes under the Department of Research.

Senate Centre for Extension and Pastoral Theological Research:

The SCEPTRE continues to engage in equipping and empowering the lay people for formation and transformation of the whole community towards building a just and inclusive community through the extension programmes.

SCEPTRE involves in organizing,

- BCS contact seminars
- MCS Seminars
- D.Min Seminar and Colloquium
- Non-formal and continuing theological education and
- Coordinating SCEPTRE Programme Centre for various Senate and Church-related programmes

Diploma in Christian Studies (DCS) is open for all. Bachelor of Christian studies (BCS) focus on equipping Christians who are in different forms of ministry and leaders in various secular vocations. Five BCS contact seminars were conducted for the benefit of BCS Students at different regions. Faculty members from different colleges and seminaries facilitated the seminars.

Master of Christian Studies (MCS) program primarily meant for laity and Christian ministers who wish to continue theological education provides an opportunity for learning for spiritual and vocational growth. This year MCS Seminar was conducted in Kolkata from June 13 to June 18.

Doctor of Ministry (D.Min), helps those who are in full-time ministry, to develop their skills and provide tools to analyze contemporary socio-political, religio-cultural contexts of the society and interpret their missiological implications for Christian faith. D.Min Colloquium on issues in Ministry; Orientation Seminar and Research Methodology Seminar, Specialization Colloquium and Foundational Colloquium were organized at SCEPTRE, and at Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

SCEPTRE facility is used by the churches and church based Non Governmental Organizations. SCEPTRE also took initiative in publishing 'Christian Response to Multi-Faith Society', as study materials for theological students.

Dr. Wati Longchar served as the dean of Extension and D.Min studies till June 2016. We appreciate very much the hard work and committed service of Dr. Wati Longchar, in widening the scope of theological education through extension programs. Dr. M. T.Chерian as Associate Dean and Administrative Assistant served with dedication and now hold the position as Acting dean of Extension and D.Min studies.

Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College

The Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College has completed 42 years in its role as an advisory body to the Senate in ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation. The role of the Board within the 'One National Structure of Theological Education in India' had well defined and we find its results.

It fulfills its responsibility through:

- Reflection and pioneering on new methods and styles in theological education in the context and considering the need of faith communities in the country.
- Promotion of theological literature, particularly in regional languages through the Board of Theological Text book programme of South Asia (BTTBPSA).
- Promotion of the welfare of theological teachers and students, development of ecumenical co-operation among theological institutions and their libraries.
- Promotion of relationship between churches, theological institutions and study centres.

BTESSC in collaboration with other ecumenical bodies organized various programs that helped to build relationship with churches, ecumenical organizations/institutions in order to strengthen theological education. These consultations, seminars and conferences on relevant theological issues as well as socio-political issues, often stimulate theological thinking in students and the member institutions. The consultation on 'Ministries Challenging the Christian Faith' at HMI, Hyderabad, Consultation on "Theological Education as Transformative Praxis" at Kolkata, the seminar on "Hermeneutics from a Palestinian Perspective" at SCMI Centre, Bangalore, Seminar on "Spirituality: Towards a Comprehensive Perspective" at ERC, Bangalore, and on 'Dalit Spirituality' at TTS, Madurai, and Seminar on "Communication for Life, Enablement and Growth" at CSI Synod Centre, Chennai, were joint initiatives of BTESSC, Churches and the Institutions for enabling the Indian Christian theological communities to broaden their perspectives on these issues.

The National Theological Students Conference was organized with the support of SCMI, NCCI and ECC from May 3 to 5 at the SCM Programme Centre, Bangalore. BTESSC also took initiative to continue the Dalit Minjung Dialogue, which was held at Seoul, South Korea, from October 13 to 15. The writers Workshop, on the theme 'The Word and Work' was organized by BTTBPSA in collaboration with CLS and ISPCK. The Publication of Asia Journal of Theology continues to be the responsibility of BTESSC along with ATESEA. Most of the presentations in the Seminars or Consultations are published in book form for the benefit of wider community. The committee on Ecumenical Relations and Church Ministry functions as the executive committee of BTESSC.

Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer serves as the secretary of BTESSC and functions through the office at Bangalore.

Vision and Beyond...

As the Senate, our vision is to enable the theological community to develop contextual sensitivity, ecumenical sensitivity and sensitivity to all forms of injustice so that they may be able to translate the Gospel to their own context. It is our responsibility to rekindle the true theological vision in the Asian context and to sustain our students and faculty as a dynamic truth-searching community for the services of the church and the world. For this they need to discern the signs of our times, to have the wisdom to understand where God is present and what God expects from us in these times and to engage meaningfully in God's mission of transforming this world as God's world.

Theological education has been described as the task of motivating, equipping and enabling the people of God to develop their gifts and offer their lives in a spirit of service to God and the world. For this, theological education needs to be a holistic and an ongoing process of nurturing and transforming people in communities. It cannot be narrowed down to ministerial training programme of the churches, it must aim at equipping the whole people of God for building up a just and inclusive community in the context of the people of other faiths and ideologies. It must emphasize wholeness, integrity and interrelatedness. In every age, theological education has to have renewed vision, mission, and imagination on how we can together be faithful to the call of the gospel for an alternative world which upholds the vision of the kingdom of God.

The founding of Serampore College is a significant event in the history of theological education in India. The Serampore Missionaries William Carey and his colleagues Joshua Marshman and William Ward founded Serampore College in 1818. The primary aim was to provide education in every branch of knowledge to promote the wellbeing of the people. We have already started preparations for the Bi-centenary of the Serampore College and the centenary of Senate of Serampore College (University) in 2017- 2018. Celebrations are for enlarging our visions and horizons and rededicating ourselves for the larger causes of the kingdom of God.

This year for the first time in the history of Senate, we could introduce the Central Evaluation System, which enabled us to publish the results in June 2016. We experienced great cooperation and support from the colleges which were centers for evaluation and also from the faculty members of different theological colleges.

The challenge we face today in our theological education is to develop a model of theological education that is relevant to the Asian people. It must create space and promote new theological thinking and debate. This year we could revise the M. Th curriculum and one of the key objectives was to transform our theological education into a liberating and creative one, while being sensitive to the gap between the academic and the practical. It also aims at equipping the candidates to be good theological facilitators.

SATHRI focuses on catering to the needs of the churches in South Asia. One of the purposes of theological training is to enable students to learn the posture of engaging deeply with God and with the world. We need to meaningfully combine learning and life, knowledge and commitment, academic learning and appropriate life styles so that the people who are equipped may experience coherence and consistency between what is taught and what is experienced.

Theological education is a part of the life and mission of churches in their particular situations. It derives from God's creative and redemptive works revealed in human history and seeks to understand the significance of the gospel in today's world. It aims to equip people, men and women, to participate in the churches' mission of witness and service to people in the different contexts of the world. Taking this into consideration the Senate is planning to broaden the scope of Theological education with extension programmes. Achieving this closer relationship between theological institutions and churches is essential. Churches and theological institutions should challenge and empower each other with new thinking and actions in theological education and ministry.

Theology and theological education are always inspired by an ecumenical vision of God.

Theological education will thus constantly seek to respond to the most pressing needs in its social setting, and always attempt to be more involved with the problems of human survival and the integration of creation, both locally and globally. In order to perform this prime task of defending life, theological education needs to be contextual, open, willing to engage in dialogue, amenable to change, interdisciplinary and intercultural.

In the present context of South Asia we are called to uphold a vision that affirms life, a vision that inspires us to build alternative communities that are inclusive and respect differences. It is a vision that finally reaches beyond the walls of the church and society and embraces the whole of God's creation.

Let the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ be communicated to the humanity through the called out community.

Thanks

Rt. Rev. Dr. John S. Sadananda the Master of Serampore College is guiding us with his timely involvement and advice. As a theologian and as a leader of the church we value very much his contribution to theological education in India.

We record our thanks to the Registrar of the Senate Rev. Dr. Santanu K. Patro, who is working hard to keep the Senate system perfect.

Thanks to the Treasurer Rev. Dr. Ivy Singh, Secretary of BTESSC Rev. Dr. Mohan Larbeer, Dean of the Department of Research/SATHRI Rev. Dr. P. G. George, Dean of Extension and D.Min Rev. Dr. Wati Longchar, and administrative assistant and associate Dean of SCEPTRE Dr. M T. Cherian for their valuable service and commitment.

I also record our thanks to the members and chairpersons to the various committees for their active participation in the affairs of the Senate and the Board. The Question Paper setters and examiners also deserve our appreciation and thanks. We also record our thanks to the office staff in the Senate office at Serampore, BTESSC/ SATHRI offices and SCEPTRE in Kolkata who have discharged their duties faithfully.

We appreciate the generous cooperation of the churches, Institutions and our ecumenical partners for their support and participation in our journey forward. We express a special word of thanks and appreciation to the EMW Hamburg for their commitment in strengthening and developing the partnership relationships. We record our thanks to the Global ministries division of UCC, ICCO - Kerkinactie Netherlands, Methodist Church in Britain, Christian Education Fund Kassel and all other partners who have supported us in our activities and we look forward their continued partnership.

The Principal of Trinity Theological College, Rev. Dr. Kavito Zhimo, the faculty and students of Trinity Theological College deserves special appreciation for the hospitality and excellent arrangements for the Senate meetings and Convocation. We congratulate all those who receive degrees this year. May God continue to strengthen you to be faithful to your calling and live with the motto, 'Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God'.

04 - 02 - 2017

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos
President of the Senate.