Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute  
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Consultation on the Future Ministry of Gurukul with the Gurukul College  
Council Members  
Partners and the Faculty

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Strengths of Gurukul as seen by a Partner  
By  
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I Introduction  
Gurukul College as an institution for educating theologians and pastors is a meeting of different streams and dimensions: one is theology itself, another one the churches, for which Gurukul prepares pastors, another one is the Indian society (with its many religions, cultural traditions, political and economic power, its highly distinguished social situation) and last but not least the students and teachers themselves. Each of those dimensions has its special influence through their distinguished conditions, expectations and interests. To be the place where all those dimensions meet together is both a challenge and a very interesting task to work out the curriculum. In the same way I find here hints for my reflections on the ministry of Gurukul in the last 25 years. That is indeed an impressive performance. Because those four analysed items are the same back home in Germany. They are basic items for every educating system.

Therefore I’d like to divide my reflections in the following sections:
1. Theology  
2. Churches  
3. Society  
4. Students and Teachers  
5. Curriculum  
6. Economic basis  
7. Further tasks for Gurukul  
   Academic continuing education  
   Pastoral care/ pastoral counselling

II Remarks about theological education in Germany  
I feel at home with such discussions, because I’m involved in Germany not only in reflecting but also in organising or deciding on different curriculum for more than 30 years within university and churches.
I’d like to introduce myself My function in the Church office of the Braunschweig Landeskirche is to be the Director of Department for Theological Education and Pastoral Training of students and Interns; I’m the Chairman of the exam commission for the first and the second theological examinations. That function includes especially the responsibility for the subjects and criteria of our second term (internship), which takes place in our own Preacher’s Seminary as we used to call it. Apart from this for the past fifteen years I am member of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in which all the directors for Theological Education of the 22 protestant churches in Germany
are members. In the Commission we reflect and decide on the policy of theological education including the curriculum of studying theology, criteria and regulation for exams. The regulation form is accepted from all theological faculties and churches in Germany. EKD is the communion of all 22 Lutheran, Reformed and United evangelical churches in Germany with ca. 25 Million members and roughly 22000 pastors. (Evangelical in the sense of protestant not of fundamental evangelical.)

In Germany we have a special system for educating and training our pastors. It is a kind of a consecutive training: It starts – normally after High School/Gymnasium - with studying theology at a faculty of a public university (roughly 6 years) and finishes with MTH. (In Germany no one with BD could become a pastor.) After university the academic theological formation will be continued by a postgraduate and advanced training at a church run Preacher seminary (roughly 2 years) and finishes with a second Theological exam. That period is focused more on practical exercises of all the fields, which belong to a congregational ministry: liturgy (singing, leading the worship and administering the holy communion), homiletics and preaching, Pastoral Care and counselling, administration and Personal leadership training, concepts for mission work, diaconia, training on discussions with non-Christians faiths. These years in the Preacher seminary are formed by academic reflection, spiritual formation and practical exercises.

During that period the Interns are supervised and trained by senior and well experienced Pastors. The Interns live in the congregation of their supervising pastors. From there they go for periodical courses to the theological seminary. This means that both teachers of the preaching seminary and experienced pastors within congregation are involved in the training of the incoming pastors.

III Theology
I’d like to talk about my understanding of studying theology. It refers to the competences and skills, to the knowledge which should achieve a student of theology. And those questions are connected with the question: What does he need for his ministry in the field of his church and in his congregation? Questions which have to be raised beforehand from College and Church boards: But which have to be individually answered by the students in their theological exams. That’s how we tackle that whole issue in my Church and Country. We have therefore worked out and distributed to all our students a catalogue which shows all the different knowledge in the five theological disciplines (OT, NT, Church history; Systematic Theology, Practical Theology.) All the 19 faculties and all 22 evangelical churches in Germany have agreed on this regulation form for the first Theological exam.

Those are four main issues:
1. A student should win an excellent knowledge of the bible, the mainstreams of philosophy and systematic theology, the Church history especially the reformation time
2. A student should win a good understanding of theology as a system of thinking, reflecting and therefore able to teach people in the Christian faith on his own in his congregation
3. A student should be able to work out on his own his theological (dogmatic and ethical) position for public discussions of important questions in the society
4. A student should be able to explain and defend the Christian faith and the bible in a discussion with other faiths and secular ideologies

Those defined aims are related to Luther’s understanding of theology, namely to accept only the Holy Scripture as the guideline for teaching. Lutheran theology doesn’t need a teaching
office like the Roma-catholic Church. But to be independent from a teaching office a Lutheran theologian has to be enabled to work out on his own a biblical theology. The fundament must be an excellent understanding and knowledge of the bible. But in a historic-critical way, what means to realise that the bible is Gods word, but spoken and taught in concrete contexts and very different political and historical situations. To be educated to analyse every single text (paragraph, verse) and book in such a way is for me the most important competence of Lutheran pastors and theologians. Because it keeps the gospel independent from all once for all fixed traditions or interpretations (like in the Roman-catholic Church). And it keeps the gospel alive and guarantees its use and relevance in every cultural and religious surrounding, even in every country. I’m convinced that only such a basic understanding of theology and that only to work with the bible on that basis will be the fundament for all our mission work. Hence we need an agreement on that in every Lutheran and evangelical College and faculty. So that Gurukul and every Lutheran College can educate its pastors to work and act as biblical missionaries in every small village – in India or in Germany or in Namibia or in Japan.

The challenge for Gurukul College: To reflect on the understanding of theology and of the aims for their students:

What are the aims of the study and of the education? Is it concentrated on taking over a ministry or leading in a parish? What skills and knowledge does that include? Is it also a goal to educate theologians as academic people? Should they be accepted in the society as advanced and highly educated people? That’s what the case in Germany is. Theologians are on the same academic and social level and salary as teachers on High Schools and universities or colleges. Is Pastor a very accepted job in our society?

**IV Churches**

In the same way every church (Bishop, Governing board/Church Council, Synod) has to reflect on those questions: Which competence and knowledge of our pastors do we need for our church, for our congregations, for proclaiming the gospel in a multi religious and multicultural society? It needs reflection and clarification on the self-understanding of the church, of its position within and its relevance for the society. Connected with such consideration are those of the task and work of every congregation. What are our goals for our congregations? And what is the understanding of the ministry in the church: There is a variety: Proclaiming the gospel, to make new members, to counsel the members, to teach bible lessons, to educate children in catechism, to be able to discuss ethical issues with teachers of other religions, to represent the church, to support members in diaconical demands etc.

Depending on those answers about the general relevance of the church for the society and position within the society, about the ideas, plans and concepts for their congregations now a new description of the type and kind of pastors should be possible. Challenge for the church itself: To reflect and decide on its self-understanding, on its description of ideas for the task of their congregations and of its understanding of ministry. Depending on what is decided we need to work out a job description for their pastors.

Eventually the church should be ready to discuss its reflections with all theological College, especially with Gurukul. That’s how it works back home in Germany. We have a lot of such joint commission of teachers of faculties and church leaders to reflect on the curriculum for students of theology. Every second year takes place a 4 day consultation on theological education of Bishops and church leaders with teachers of theological faculties.
Even the prescription of all the competences and knowledge of a student is defined in a joint exams form, which is accepted - as I already said- from all the faculties and all the protestant/evangelical churches.

Last but not the least: It’s obvious and evident, that every Lutheran Church has to be fundamentally interested in their College. That includes in the same way, in its curriculum and its financial needs. Financing Gurukul should be firmly guaranteed by the Churches in India. We are satisfied in Germany that the entire protestant/evangelical churches feel obliged to support the theological faculties but respect them in the same way as independent. Like Bishop Radananda says:” Lutheran churches have town Gurukul but not to control.”

V Indian society
Every Church is part of the society with all its dimensions, conditions and different demands and possibilities: like cultural traditions, religions, parties, political power, social situation and frictions. That’s true even for India and the churches here. You know better than me the Indian situation, with its system of casts, its growing economic power, its well educated engineers and scientists, its multi religious landscape, its different Christian Churches etc. That complex situation will influence every Church, its image and relevance as well as the real and practical work in every congregation. All these need to be taken into consideration when reflecting on the situation of the Christian Churches and on the necessary competences of their theologians and on the education of the pastors. The curriculum of Gurukul has to refer to the Indian reality. I’m convinced that it is good, to have teachers of sociology, psychology and pedagogy and religious sciences involved in the education and training of pastors. And that should also work for refreshing courses for pastors.

VI Students and teachers
I’m impressed by the high standard and motivation of all, especially the Director, Principal and staff here in Gurukul College. That is a very deep rooted basis for your work and job. I learned that it is a special challenge to have so many teachers. I think that proves the good image of Gurukul and underlines its relevance in the Lutheran Churches here in South India.

But it raises likewise questions. How do the teaching staffs from India work together with visiting teachers from so many different countries throughout the world? Looking to the situation in Germany and Europe – which I know a little- we face a variety within the standards of academic, requirements. In Germany for example it’s necessary to learn the old languages of Hebrew and Greek and Latin, but not in all countries. Some countries accept only teachers with PhD and another post doctoral degree (Habilitation) and so on. Due to the visiting teachers Gurukul is a college where all the different academic standards in Europe, USA and Asia, India are collected. I appreciate this situation and want to learn how you cope with such a situation. Are there meetings or exchanges where you can discuss such questions? Are the students involved in those exchanges and discussions, as we are used to do it in Germany?

But it is not only a challenge in terms of the academic variety. It is in the same way the discussion about interdisciplinary issues like theology and sociology, Christian faith and psychology, religious studies etc. Furthermore it is the fundamental debate about the basic understanding of theology. Gurukul seems to me to be a College for teachers and students to experience, teach and study intercultural theology. You may know that we in Hermannsburg just recently installed a master course on Intercultural Theology together with the theological faculty in Göttingen. I am so happy to note that Gurukul is one of the co-operating Partners in this programme.
VII Curriculum
And it’s a question of pedagogy or the pedagogical method of teaching and learning. What are the methods used for teaching: Are the teacher more interested just only in teaching (lecture) and are the students more interested in listening and putting down what they taught? Or is there a system of mutual reflecting and discussing? That’s my position or understanding toward teaching: Important for me is a method of participation what enables students to ask questions, to discuss and argue with their teachers. That’s the way how students were trained to become theologians, who are competent to work out on their own theological and ethical positions and biblical answers. So would be created an atmosphere of openness, which produces a fair mutual feedback for both students and teachers.

The kind of teaching and the understanding of learning afflict the academic and spiritual atmosphere within the College, on the campus and later on how a pastor leads and manages his ministry in the congregations. And its worth to reflect on that, how can Gurukul be the College, where teachers from so many different denominations, cultural backgrounds and understandings of theology and where students from India with their very special background can learn from each other. All those considerations, reflections have to be answered, concentrated and put down in the curriculum. I appreciate, for what you have already done. You are really on a good way of contextual theology and researches, like Dallit theology, women study embedded in reflection on paternalistic hierarchy, green theology and dialog with non-Christian religion in India. But there is still a challenge for Gurukul. What about the understanding of theology as a science? The only reason for a theological faculty to be part of a state university in Germany is the self-understanding of theology to be a specific kind of science. A unique one, which can correlate with several others sciences because Christian theology is an independent system of reflecting and interpreting the immanent and transcendent reality on its own.

Referring to the students I learned from my discussions, that they have to tackle some problems: such as their financial basis or support, their different academic knowledge, their very different experiences with people from other faiths, future in their church (salary, family etc.) A reality, which is influenced by such a variety of individual conditions and personal backgrounds do afflict deeply the readiness of learning.
I see Gurukul has to cope even with all those fears and thoughts of students about their later future in their churches and about their concrete administration of the ministry in a real congregation. Those questions would we put in the period of the preaching seminar. And we give all our postgraduate students (you may remember all our students finish their study with MTh) the chance for more than 2 years to check and experience all those questions in term of their later ministry in a real parish under the supervision of an advanced pastor.

I’d like to ask, whether you already considered involving those well experienced pastors in your courses. Maybe they could offer practical courses and supervision in parishes during the college time? Are those teachers from the field especially trained for such a mandate, both for Gurukul and in their churches?

VIII Economic basis
On that topic I can be very short and clear. To have well educated and trained pastors is the basis for every church to preach the gospel and administer the Holy Communion according the Holy Scripture. It is the basis for mission and hence the basis for church growth and hence the whole future of the Christian churches, especially in a multi religious society, where Christianity must fight for its acceptance. To provide for that is the task of Gurukul as well as other Colleges and seminaries. Gurukul is one of the indispensable institutions for the
Lutheran Churches in India. And I repeat, indispensable not as an institute on its own but indispensable for every Lutheran church in India. That brings me to just only 2 conclusions:

1. Gurukul has to be properly financed by the churches. The budget shows all the costs. A system, how much every church has to contribute should be worked out.
2. Every church is obliged to pay its contribution automatically according to the budget. The contribution for Gurukul and for the students should be part of the every church’s budget.

In the same way every church should pay monthly its pastors an adequate salary. That is a very serious issue. Students are looking – apart from their personal interests – for a later decent and regular salary when deciding what subject they chose to study. We know from Germany that this works for students of theology as well. To realise how important especially that issue is, look how many of your students are children from pastors? Those figures could be passed to the Bishops and to Church council to underline the necessity of regular salary.

IX Further tasks for Gurukul
I see 2 additional fields for Gurukul, both related to the existing academic standard and knowledge of the teachers and in the same way related to the teachers and their several specialised disciplines.

1 Continuing education
Gurukul should consider and be enabled to strengthen a second branch: continuing education for pastors of all Lutheran churches. After ordination a pastor will serve more than 30 years in his church, in congregation or even as Bishop or General Secretary. For such a long period of his ministry he needs permanently theological equipment. That’s what academic continuing education provides. There is another reason for continuing education: changes happen faster and faster in so many fields of society; ideologies and religions are often on the way to become more fundamental and radical, Christian faith and churches are facing competition in our societies throughout the world, because society is becoming more and more multicultural and multi religious, (India itself is such a multicultural and multi religious society) global economy creates more and more frictions in social situations of every society etc. The churches should be interested to have their pastors proper prepared to react and cope with those challenges. That is the task of continuing education.

2 Pastoral care/counselling – Clinical pastoral education (CPE)
Reflecting on some surveys of pastors in Germany I have to notice that pastoral care and pastoral counselling is the most required contact with a pastor in his congregation. Next to pastoral care and counselling come the requests for special services (funeral, baptism and wedding). That’s not surprising. Because in the time being, which is focused on individualisation and it’s permanently addressing the individual person, people themselves become interested in very individual treatment. Even church members are looking for that by their pastors in the congregation. I suppose it will be the same development and phenomenon in India. The churches have to react on that. To be trained for pastoral care/ and counselling is a subject of the curriculum of Gurukul and should be an important subject in continuing education. It really should be one of the central interests of the churches. CPT is a well established method and works in many colleges and churches throughout the world. But to establish CPE teachers have to be trained. If CPE would be part of the curriculum of Gurukul one of teachers should be trained as CPE teacher. And if CPE
already would be trained during studying theology, it would be only the next step to provide CPE as subject of continuing education.

Continuing education may be could support Gurukul in generating extra money for running and maintaining the College. It is clear that all courses of continuing education for pastors have to be financed by the churches too.

X Resume

I have great respect for the high standard of academic theological education of Gurukul, its great interests in developing its curriculum, its involvement in international ecumenical cooperation with so many universities –among them Hermannsburg with its Master study “intercultural theology”- and its highly qualified and obliged teachers. Incidentally that's what I have realised as well in Tamil Theological Seminary (TTS) in Madurai and United Theological College (U.T.C.) in Bangalore, which I visited in the last days. It would be good, if you together with those could cooperate in order to convince the bishops and church councils in every carrier church and especially in the Lutheran churches to respect and acknowledge the necessity and indispensability of academic continuing education. Hopefully they feel in the future stronger obliged to support Gurukul and the other seminaries financially to establish a system of ongoing continuing academic education and spiritual formation.