A CASE STUDY OF AIZAWL THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, MIZORAM INDIA

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Abstract: The study is a case study which mainly concerns with the history, aims and objectives, the courses offered and the criteria of enrolment of Aizawl Theological College. It was established in 1907 with the name ‘Aijal Theological College’ and the first principal of the college was Rev. D.E. Jones (PuZosaphluia). It celebrated its centenary in the year 2007. The courses offered are Licentiate in Theology (L.Th), Bachelor of Theology (B.Th), Bachelor of Divinity (BD), Master of Theology (M.Th), Doctor of Theology (D.Th), Diploma in Clinical Pastoral Counselling (D.C.P.C), Bachelor in Christian Studies (B.C.S), Diploma in Christian Studies (Dip.C.S) and Doctor of Ministry (D.Min). The college also has specific aims and objectives and criteria for enrolment.

Keywords - History, Objectives, Courses offered, Criteria of enrolment, Aizawl Theological College.

Introduction:

Theology is derived from two Greek words ‘theos’ meaning ‘God’ and ‘logos’ meaning ‘word’. So, the word ‘Theology’ means “word of God”. Richard Hooker defined ‘theology’ as ‘the science of things divine’

The overseas missionaries from United Kingdom brought Christianity to Mizoram by the last quarter of the 19th Century. Due to the need of the Church and the demand of the people, the first Theological School in Mizoram was established in 1907 which eventually became a full-fledged College now called Aizawl Theological College (ATC). The ATC is the oldest and the biggest religious or theological institution in Mizoram.

ATC is one of the constituent colleges of the Senate of Serampore College (University), Kolkata which is the leading theological institution in India.

Need and Importance of the Study:

Religious Education is necessary for our entire life. It moulds us to become a better person. It helps us to see the goodness in every situation. Theological institutions are important and are rare to find as compared to secular colleges. In India, only 165 theological colleges are there. ATC being one of the most leading theological colleges, the researcher felt that an in dept study about ATC must be taken. The progress, development and unique role played by the college as compared to other theological colleges and secular colleges needs to be trace. Why, when and how it was established and how old is the institution is an important thing to know in order to have a case study.

What kinds of courses are offered and what kinds of criteria are used for enrolment of different courses offered in this college are important to know as well.

So, it is a challenge to carry out an evaluative study on ATC and try to find out the history, aims and objectives, courses offered and criteria of enrolment of the college. Keeping in view of the above, the present study is taken up. Objective of the Study:

1. To find out the history of the College,
2. To find out the aims and objectives of the College,
3. To find out the main content of the courses offered in the College.
4. To find out the criteria of enrolment of the students of the college.

Research Methodology: Case study method was used by the investigator.
Tools used: ATC official and academic records and ATC magazines were made used for collection of data. Besides these, the investigator prepared interview schedules for the Office staffs, faculty and Principal.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Analysis and interpretation are done in accordance with the objectives of the study as follows:

1. **Historical Sketch:**

Aizawl Theological College (ATC) can be regarded as one of the most prominent theological institutions in India. It celebrated its centenary in 2007. It was first started by the first Welsh Missionary that came to Mizoram, Rev. D.E.Jones (PuZosaphluia). It was started as a school named ‘Aijal Theological School’ with five students in the year 1907. One of the uniqueness of ATC as compared to other theological institutions is that is an ecumenical seminary of the Presbyterian Church in Aizawl, Mizoram.

Due to several factors, the theological school was closed in 1937 and reopened in 1951 again. In 1951, Rev. J.M.Llyod was appointed as Principal of the College. The college was first situated in Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl. The Senate of Serampore College granted affiliation to the College at the level of Licentiate in Theology (L.Th.) in the year 1965. At that time, the medium of instruction was the mothertougue i.e. Mizo.

When Rev. J.M.Llyod returned to Wales, he was succeeded by Rev. C. Pazawna who became the first Mizo Principal of the College. Rev. C. Pazawna was the principal of the college for 17 years and there were many significant developments in the College. In 1971, the College was upgraded to the B.Th.(Bachelor of Theology) level by the Senate of Serampore College and L.Th programme was abolished. The medium of instruction for the B.Th. programme was English.

ATC started becoming a missionary training centre in the late seventies as well. The fast changing context of Mizoram and its challenges to ministry led the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod in 1993 to upgrade the College to a B.D. Degree Status. Meanwhile, the strength of the College increased and the old campus did not allow further expansion. The Theological Education Board sought a suitable site to establish a new campus. With a grant from the State Government, an area of 21.6 acres on a mountain top to the north of Aizawl at DurtlangLeitan was acquired.

With the contribution of the Church, and the support of partner churches, friends and well-wishers, the Gospel Centenary Building was constructed at Durtlang (the present campus) to serve as the main College Building. It was inaugurated by the former Principal Rev. J.M.Lloyd on January 11,1994 to mark the Gospel Centenary Year in Mizoram.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Theological Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rev. D.E.Jones</td>
<td>1907-1923</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rev. F.J.Sandy</td>
<td>1923-1926</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rev. E.L.Mendus</td>
<td>1926-1937</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rev. J.M.Lloyd</td>
<td>1951-1964</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rev. Lalchhuanliana</td>
<td>1981-1986</td>
<td>BA(Hons)</td>
<td>BD, M.Th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rev.Dr. Zaihmingthanga</td>
<td>1994-1999</td>
<td>BA(Hons)</td>
<td>BD, M.Th, D.Th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rev.Dr.H.Vanlalauva</td>
<td>1999-2007</td>
<td>BA(Hons), MA</td>
<td>BD, M.Th, D.Th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From table 1, we can know that the first 4 principals of the college are the Welsh missionaries that came to Mizoram to preach the gospel. Among them, only Rev. J.M.Lloyd has a theological qualification. Rev. C. Pazawna was the first Mizo to become the principal of the college. Rev. Dr. Zaihmingthanga was the first principal with a doctorate degree. There have been quite a number of principals in this college from the year 1907-2019 and the present principal is the 16th principal of the college.

At present, there are 174 students out of which 112 are BD students, 56 are M.Th students and 6 are D.Th students. There are 39 female students and 135 male students at present. Other than the students within Mizoram, there are a number of students who came from different parts of India i.e. Manipur, Tripura, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Myanmar. The students come from different denominations such as Presbyterian Church of India Mizoram Synod, Bieteram Synod, Evangelical Church of Maraland, Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran, Cachar Hill Tribe Synod, Salvation Army, Manipur Presbyterian Church Synod, Isua Krista Kohhran, United Penticostal Church, Independent Church of India, Evangelical Free Church of India, Evangelical Churches Association, Seventh Day Adventist, Sumi Baptist Church and Kuki Baptist Church. Student’s exchange programmes with Bishop’s College, Kolkata began in 2012 and is successfully continued and from 2019, the programme has been started with John Roberts Theological Seminary, Shillong. 2 students came from Princeton Theological Seminary, USA in 2019 to do their International Field Education at ATC which was a remarkable programme for the College.

There are 25 Regular faculty members, 5 Contract workers and 6 faculty members who are in study leave. At present, there are 5 (Old Testament), 5 (New Testament), 7 (Theology and Ethics), 5 (History of Christianity), 3 (Missiology), 4 (Religions and Society), 5 (Christian Ministry & Communication), 1 (Church Music) faculty members in each department.

Visiting Professors are invited as and when necessary. Laiu Fachhai (Old Testament) Shillong, O.L. Snaitang (History of Christianity) Shillong, O.V. Jathana (Christian Theology) Bangalore, Cherian (Christian Theology) Bangalore, Sathian Clarke (Christian Theology) Bangalore, K.V. Matthew (Old Testament) Kottayam, Mrs. Gudgrun (New Testament) Germany, Prakash Jin (Missiology) South Korea and V.V. Thomas (History of Christianity) have come to ATC as visiting professors.

ATC faculty members such as Rev. Prof. Vanlalchhuanawma, Rev. Prof. Lawmsanga, Rev. Prof. Vanlalnghaka Ralte, Prof. T. Vanlaitlani, Prof. Lalgakhuami and Rev. Prof. K. Lallawmzuala have also went out to different places as International Paper Presenters.

2. Aims and Objectives:

The primary concern of Aizawl Theological College is to train young men and women for various full-time ministries in the Church. The College seeks to inspire the students to adopt its motto, ‘Service to God and Humankind’ as the guiding principle of their lives. In all its academic degree programmes the College maintains the standards laid down by the Senate of Serampore College (University).

The following aims and objectives have been formulated to achieve the mission:

Aims:

- To deepen, strengthen and enrich each student’s faith and commitment to Christ.
- To help the students develop the ability to assess by addressing relevant issues.
- To challenge them to grapple with the prophetic thrust of Christian faith.
- To help them discover and develop their ministerial skills, gifts and abilities.
- To teach them the Word of God and help discover the will and call of God.
- To train young men and women for various full-time ministries in the Church.
- To edify the Church and Society through its lay theological education programmes and other ministries.
- The College seeks to inspire the students to adopt its motto, “Service to God and Humankind” as the guiding principle of their lives. In all its academic degree programmes, the College maintains the standards set by the Senate of Serampore College (University).
- The College endeavours to train people to become theologically mature and to be committed to Christian Discipleship in the world.¹

**Objectives:**

At the end of the programme, the students are expected to be competent in the knowledge of:

1) The Bible, for a transforming ministry and their own Christian heritage.
2) Practical theology and aspects of Christian living.
3) Basics of Christian doctrines with special emphasis on Reformed, Evangelical and Charismatic perspective.
4) The content and interpretation of the Bible.
5) The major concepts of missiology.
6) History of Christianity to give a conceptual framework for their understanding of the Christian mission and doctrines.

- The major world religions, traditions and cultural trends in order to equip the students to minister in a pluralistic context.

But the weakness of the objectives is that the College cannot give/ provide any placement for their students after they pass out, especially the female students.

3. **Main Contents of Courses Offered:**

The College offers the following courses:

1) **Licentiate of Theology (L.Th):** It was the first course offered in this college. It was started in 1965 and abolished in the year 1971.

2) **Bachelor of Theology (B.Th) & Bachelor of Divinity (B.D):** B.Th was offered in 1971 i.e. as soon as L.Th was abolished. The B.Th programme was phased out in 2003. BD was in 1994 as the Senate of Serampore College allowed ATC to start the B.D programme on a provisional affiliation basis. Rev. Dr. Zaihmimgthanga was made Principal and the College began to run two degree programmes (B.Th. and B.D.). Bachelor of Divinity is a four-year degree course under the Senate of Serampore College. In June 1998 the Council for Academic Affairs of the Senate of Serampore College granted ATC the status of a full-fledged B.D. College. Graduates and Post Graduates from recognized Universities and B.Th. graduates are eligible to undertake B.D. studies if they pass the ATC entrance examination and interview. There are around 710 students who have pass out B.D. from the past 13 consecutive years. When they pass out the students can opt for probationary pastors and after three years they can become ordained pastors.

3) **Master of Theology (M.Th):** Master of Theology is a post-graduate degree course offered by the Senate of Serampore College. The duration of the course is two academic years. Candidates holding a B.D. degree (with B Grade, i.e., 60%) or its equivalent, along with required specialization papers, are eligible to undertake M.Th. studies. The Master of Theology (M.Th) programme in Christian Theology was introduced in 2002, New Testament and Missiology from 2007, History of Christianity in 2009, Old Testament, Religions from 2011 and Christian Ministry (Counselling) from 2018. There are 210 students who have pass out from the year 2007 within different departments.

4) **Doctor of Theology (D.Th):** Doctor of Theology is a three-year residential doctoral programme offered by the Senate of Serampore College. Candidates Holding a Serampore M.Th. (with B Grade i.e., 60% and above) or its equivalent are eligible to undertake this programme. The Doctor of Theology (D.Th) programme was started in Christian Theology from 2013-'14 session and, in New Testament and Missiology from 2014-'15 session. 5 students have passed out from 2013 within different departments.

5) **Bachelor of Christian Studies (B.C.S.) and Diploma in Christian Studies (Dip.C.S.):** Aizawl Theological College serves as a local centre for two external study programmes of the Senate of Serampore College: the Bachelor of Christian Studies (B.C.S.) and the Diploma in Christian Studies (Dip. C.S.) programmes. The objectives of both these programmes are to provide persons with an informed understanding of their faith, to strengthen their academic skills
and to deepen their commitment to Christian service in the context of their vocations. Any graduate or above can apply for B.C.S and any person who have passed class 12 can apply for Dip.C.S programmes.

6) Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.): Recognizing the importance of continuing theological education for full time Ministers in the service of the Church, the Senate of Serampore College has offered a special programme for them: the doctor of Ministry programme. Aizawl Theological College has been given the responsibility of coordinating this programme. The college serves as an exam centre for this course.

7) Diploma in Clinical Pastoral Counselling (D.C.P.C): The College has introduced the Diploma in Clinical Pastoral Counselling (D.C.P.C.) to provide skills for pastors and others to engage in the healing ministry of the church in the congregations, institutions and in the society in general. This course was inaugurated in 2016. Any graduate can apply this course.

Criteria for Students’ Enrolment:

ATC accepts students of all race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, denomination and Status. In keeping with the above philosophy, are given due regards to the following:

- The applicant must be a full communicant member and member in good standing with his/her church with a commitment to discipleship.
- The applicant must have a definite call to God’s service.
- The candidate must be able to do his/her studies in English language.

One recent passport size photograph, a non-refundable application fee of Rs.100/-, Attested copies of all academic records, Academic and Ecclesiastical records, Medical Certificate, Financial responsibility form and Recommendation and Confidential reports from the Pastor of the local church are needed to be enclosed with the application form.

Entrance examinations are held covering the areas such as Bible Knowledge, General Knowledge and English for B.D and D.C.P.C applicants and Departmental examination for M.Th, D.Th & D.Min having passed the exam a candidate is required to appear for an interview of the department concerned, faculty and TEB (Theological Education Board). Anyone eligible for studying B.C.S and Dip.C.S can directly be enrolled without entrance examination and interviews as they are correspondent courses.

Discussion:

From the present study we can see that there are certain findings which are in line with the earlier findings of the studies done on ATC. At the same time there are some important new findings which come out of the present study. The basic differences of the studies are that the earlier studies done by H. Remthanga (1975), P.C. Laltlani (2006) and H. Vanlalauva (2007) have been descriptive and that they all give general surveys of the history of the ATC. However, the present study is analytical and here in-depth research is done by a case study. The present study makes a careful evaluation of the College history, aims and objectives, the courses offered and criteria of enrolment of the college.

Conclusion:

Having done an analytical study on Aizawl Theological College (ATC), it is found that right from its inception in 1907, the institution was meant primarily to train young people for the ministry of the church. The study finds out that on the whole, ATC is a well established institution, with clear aims and objectives, served by dedicated faculty and staff, which strives hard for all-round development of the students with a promising future.

References:


31st Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2010-2011), Church and Mission

32nd Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2011-2012), Living Hope

33rd Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2012-2013), Prophecy Today

34th Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2013-2014), Christian Spirituality and Politics

35th Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2014-2015), Cyber Culture and Christianity


37th Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2016-2017), Christianity and Secularism

38th Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2017-2018), Eco-Justice: The Need of the Day

39th Annual Magazine (Student’s Body), (2018-2019), Towards a Healthy Community