Chapter V
The Multifarious Activities of the C.M.S.

Introduction

The C.M.S. is always alive and its multifarious activities bear ample testimony to this fact. It is not a religious organisation as many people think. Though religion is a part of it, it takes much interest in the amelioration and the uplift of the downtrodden and the oppressed in the society.

The researcher had the opportunity to meet and to have interviews with both religious heads and leaders who have connections with the various Units of this Organisation. Of these, the pride of place goes to the former C.S.I. Bishop Rt. Rev. G. Christudas, M.A., B.D.

The C.S.I. Bishops

Rt. Rev. G. Christudas had the chance of meeting Dr. Kowski in December 1966. He took him to his Church at Irenipuram where he was then a pastor. Dr. Kowski participated in a fancy sale and contributed Rs. 1,000/- for the Irenipuram Church extension work. It was then a costly gift because in those days the cost of one sovereign was just 100 rupees. Bishop Christudas had a chance of becoming the Convener of the C.M.S. Council. In his autobiographical work Paathachuvadukal (Footprints) he writes, “The C.M.S. has been helping the C.S.I. Diocese in a number of ways. In addition to building houses for the poor, it has been helping the work done by
D.M.P.B. It has built a school at Cherapet and constructed a house for the children there. It has also helped the C.S.I. to build rooms for the school at Karimani, besides permitting the C.M.S. worker Mr. T. Christudhas to serve as a Superintendent of the School”.¹ Through him Mrs. Joy Gnanadason came in touch with Dr. Kowski and when the latter went on furlough she was in charge of the Mission for a short period. The present Deputy Moderator of the C.S.I. Synod and the Bishop in the Kanyakumari Diocese, Rt. Rev. G. Devakadasham, M.A., B.D., M.Th. has also very close relationship with the C.M.S. In an interview he had much to say about the activities which are being carried out by the C.M.S. and its various wings. He has told Dr. P. Samraj: “Since the inception of CMS, thousands of underprivileged and downtrodden children have built their lives for a better future. Besides, hundreds of people are employed to serve in the various institutions”.² He was invited to bless and commission the Deacons during a service in the Azhakiapandiapuram chapel. His wife is also in touch with the Mission and she was invited to preside over a number of meetings.³ In the Child Care Trainees’ Commissioning Service his wife, Mrs. Lalitha Devakadasham, the President of Women’s Fellowship (C.S.I.) delivered the Lord’s message on

¹ Bishop G. Christudhas, Paathachuvadukal (Footprints), Palayamkottai, C.M.S. Printing Press, 2005, pp. 442-443.
³ Spangles Newsletter 68, May 27, p. 22.
1 Timothy 4: 6-16. “This message was really inspiring and thought-provoking”.⁴ The close association between the C.S.I. Diocese and the C.M.S. has never dwindled. As per a request made by Rt. Rev. G. Christudhas, the C.M.S. donated more than Rs. 20 lakhs to the Diocese to open a Nursing School in memory of Mrs. Koswki with the condition that every year the Diocese should be willing to admit 5 students from the C.M.S. The relationship continues. The Bishops and the pastors and the C.S.I. congregations have great admiration for the C.M.S. and they endorse the multifarious work going on in all its Units.

**Dr. P. Samraj**

Dr. P. Samraj, a retired scientist who had worked in various parts of India is now very much connected with the C.M.S. In his house at Nagercoil, near Parvathipuram, he has opened a research centre to provide materials to students and scholars who are interested in studying the various aspects of the organisation. However, the materials available with him are not much. He was able to provide only a few News Letters and a book he himself has written about the C.M.S. The title of the book is “Christian Mission Service: A Father of the Orphans”. This is the only book available about the activities of the C.M.S. Units and the present research scholar has amply quoted from it to support her views. However, being a scientist he has

⁴ Spangles, Newsletter, 72, July 2008, p. 17.
at his disposal all the materials which may help those students who are interested in studying the mountain plants, herbs, animals and mineral sources.

The researcher tried her level best to collect information about Sr. Ursula who came from Germany in the year 1978. Till 2010 she was in Kanyakumari District running up and down, visiting the schools and orphanages which are under the care of the C.M.S. She did much work at Glenbeck and in the Girls’ Home at Nagercoil. The strong buildings with capacious rooms, the gardens, the coconut and the rubber plantations will ever speak about the hard work she had done in the two campuses.

**Retreats and Camps**

The C.M.S. continues to hold retreats and camp activities both for the benefits of the students and the staff. In 2008 the C.M.S. organised a retreat / Conference for the wardens and managers at Stella Mary’s Social Centre, Kanyakumari. The retreat went on for 6 days from 25\textsuperscript{th} to 30\textsuperscript{th} August. The theme of the retreat was “Bring each one – as a mature individual in union with Christ”\textsuperscript{5} The participants were the Mission leaders and the Mission friends. The “Spangles” says that there was a large gathering which had the benefit of listening to a number of speeches which highlighted the usefulness of the Organisation both to the society and to the Church. People in and

\textsuperscript{5} Spangles News Letter, 72, July 2008, Palayamkottai. p. 2.
around the Kanyakumari seashore now came to understand that they could
send their poor children to the Homes under the control of the C.M.S.,
educate them and give them a very bright future.

The Child Care Workers’ Retreat was held from 12th – 16th May 1998
at Azhakiapandiapuram. The theme of the retreat was “What Must I do to
Inherit Eternal Life”.  The main speaker Mr. M. Raja Thiagarajah, Director,
Global Outreach dealt at length with the Unity that should be found among
the staff and the management of the C.M.S. and pointed out how the workers
could continue to do wonders through spiritual inspirations and insights that
come from God the Almighty.

In 2008 the C.M.S. had the chance of organizing another “Child Care
Workers’ Annual Retreat” in the Girls’ Home Chapel at Nagercoil. It was
held from 12.5.2008 to 16.5.2008. The theme of the retreat was “Be ye
transformed” Lady Child Care Workers from all the different children’s
Homes / hostels in the various State Units attended the retreat. The conduct
of the retreat was a positive step taken towards the welfare and well being of
the C.M.S. as it clearly expounded to the audience the multifarious activities
which were and are undertaken by it. A major part of the audience was from
Nagercoil and the neighbouring villages. There were people belonging to all


\[7\] Ibid., p. 17.
the Christian denominations and also non-christians. Mr. D. Sam Santhakumar, Area Manager, in his key note address amplified the services rendered by the Organisation to the people of the District, particularly to the destitute children and women. Prof. D.S. Spurgeon gave 6 inspiring Bible studies and dealt with the theme elaborately. The speeches “helped the delegates to understand the theme and strengthened their faith to improve their spiritual standard”. There were also lectures on health and DTRP (Dropout Reduction Educational Programme). These special lectures and talks helped the delegates and the public “to gain better understanding about their part to mould the needy children and trainees”.

The special feature of this retreat was the presence of the Administrator Dr. Horst Kowski and his wife. Dr. Kowski gave his valuable advice and answered all the questions put to him by the delegates.

The C.M.S. continues to conduct retreats for the benefit of teachers. The first retreat in the District was held at Azhakiapandiapuram under the leadership of Mr. D. Sam Santhakumar, the Correspondent of the School there. In his address he explained the various benefits the Azhakiapandiapuram Unit was enjoying. He said they were mainly due to the teachers there who were working with the needed Christian spirit. What

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8 Spangles Newsletter, 17,
9 Ibid.
is special about the retreat was that it discussed not only religious matters but also matters concerning the different Units that come under the C.M.S. in the District. In one of the sessions the Elementary Education Officer “gave a useful talk on the problems faced by the teachers in the class rooms”.

The Unit Heads are also given chances to have retreats for their benefits. The first retreat for them was conducted at the Animation Centre, Thiruvananthapuram. Though the theme of the retreat was a religious one, there were discussions about the problems of the teenagers in schools, the experience of running Homes and the difficulties in handling the mentally retarded children. The retreat was a very useful one and it rightly pointed out the various activities that were undertaken for the benefits of the destitute children and adults.

**Refresher Courses**

The C.M.S. very often conducts Refresher Courses for the staff. Such courses have definitely added a new dimension to the growth of the Organisation. The Refresher Course conducted at Kothagiri was attended by almost all the teaching and non-teaching staff working in the various Units of the C.M.S. in the District. Special emphasise was on teaching and teaching methods. There were lengthy discussions on the following:

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10 Spangles, 54, p. 23.
• Preparation of Teaching Aids
• Talks Preparation for Children
• Learning Arts and Crafts
• Methods of giving Quality Education
• Availing facilities from other agencies
• Zero Dropouts and run-aways
• Bringing out the hidden Potentials
• The importance of Christian Education in Child Care
• Sporting activities
• Performing arts
• CMS Accounts Procedures
• FSD Correspondence and Communication
• Debate on Dropouts.  

The presence and the involvement of the Director, the Educational Officer and the Assistant Area Manager in the Refresher Course had a stimulating effect on the organizers and the participants. With God’s blessings and a vow for more vigorous commitment the participants departed from the campus happily.  

This Refresher Course was, as informed to the researcher, very useful particularly to the teachers to handle class room situations very effectively and to introduce new teaching methodology.

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Seminars for Children

The children, particularly the school-going boys and girls are not neglected. As often as possible special seminars are conducted for their wellbeing and character development. In such seminars the participation given by the other Christian denominations is very much appreciable. It is said that one of the seminars for the grown-up children was sponsored by Billy Graham Ministries.\footnote{Spangles 73, January 2009, Palayamkottai, p. 8.}

Seminars for the Women

The working women in the Units are also given opportunities to participate in special seminars. The researcher came to know about a seminar conducted for the women who discussed the status of women in the District. It was an eye-opener for many of them. They understood very clearly the male domination in families. Some of them had declared that religion is an ‘important tool’ which puts women down.\footnote{Christian Mission Service Golden Jubilee, January 2007, p. 23.} The Seminar came to the conclusion “Self-help Groups, school syllabi and government support to marginalized women could not be part of the solution”.\footnote{Ibid., p. 24.}

Seminar on Conflicts Resolution

Peace, calmness of mind and cooperation at all levels is a must for the successful running or any institution, be it government or private. The
C.M.S. has well understood this fact. As such, it often conducts seminars on “Conflict Resolution”. A seminar of this nature was organized by the Peace Trust at Kanyakumari from 13.10.2006 to 15.10.2006. It was said in the seminar that “conflicts can be resolved in two ways, one is Accommodation and the other is Assimilation. Any kind of conflict may turn dangerous in nature. Therefore it should be curbed at the initial stage”.\(^\text{17}\)

**Relationship with Parents**

The C.M.S. understands the necessity of having close relationship with the parents of the children under their care and concern. Annual Parents' meet is conducted regularly. The organization considers such meets as outreach programmes to inform the parents about the progress of their children and the facilities available in the Units for their all-round development. In Spangles 70, the importance of having a healthy relationship between the Units and the parents is explained in great detail. The multifarious activities to be done with regard to this is outlined below:

- Present God’s Love/the Gospel in a simple and understandable way.
- Provide opportunities for the mingling of parents with children and staff in an atmosphere of love and oneness.
- Enable parents to express their feelings, problems and sort out the difficulties in an amicable manner.

• Due emphasis should be laid on minimizing the drop out of children from the Institutions.

• Give short reports on the importance of technical education for boys and girls after their 10th standard studies.

• School heads should speak to the parents individually/collectively for motivating them on their children’s education.

• Motivates parents to participate in games to have better association with the Mission.

• Illustrate the care taken by the CMS by referring to the witnesses given by successful ex-students.

• Discuss the various benefits given by the Mission to have clear knowledge and understanding about its multifarious activities.

• Stress the importance of discipline, orderliness of children.

• Seek the co-operation of parents to abide with the rules and regulations of the Unit/Mission.

• Make parents thank the Mission/God individually in open sessions.

• Let the parents enjoy a happy meal with their children, with the group staff and the Warden.\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\) Spangles, December 2007, p. 15.
Celebrations of Festivals

The C.M.S. celebrates all the festivals and functions connected with its origin and its activities. “The Mission Day” is a very special day for C.M.S. friends, for children and staff.\(^{19}\) In the special message sent by Dr. Kowski on the occasion of the 45\(^{th}\) C.M.S. Day Celebration he has said: “As a token of our appreciation for the staff who are working for many years in Christian Mission Service, we have sent certificates, medals and gifts to those of you who have served Christian Mission Service for more than 10 years”\(^{20}\). During the celebration most of the leaders connected with the C.M.S. in India paid glowing tributes to Dr. Kowski, Mr. E. Richter and the other German philanthropists who took special interest to respond to the spiritual and physical need of the children living in India. Dr. Kowski also had sent a brief history of the Organisation he planted in India. The report contains the money he had collected from various sources for the expansion and the multifarious activities to be done by the several wings of the C.M.S. in India. It is worthy to note that all the children, trainees and staff of the Units in Azhakiapandiapuram campus joined in the celebration. The Industry Unit Head Mr. A. Amirtharaj, Superintendent, Coordinator Mr. M. Ramaswamy and the Jr. Warden of Azhakiapandiapuram Children’s Village joined together and made all arrangements for the success of the celebration.


\(^{20}\) Ibid.
The special invitees were Rt. Rev. G. Christudhas, Bishop in the Kanyakumari C.S.I. Diocese, and the Principal of Catherine Booth Hospital Nursing School, Nagercoil. In the evening there was a special public meeting presided over by Rev. Jacob, pastor, C.S.I. Ettamadai Church. It is interesting to note that the pastor himself was an ex-student of the Azhakiapandiapuram Home. “He gave his thanks to the Mission for the education, training and the help he received from the Mission while as a child”. This public meeting attracted the attention of the common men and women in and around Nagercoil and helped them understand the interest the organisation was showing for the welfare of the poor people under poverty line.

Every year, in all the Units Christmas, New Year’s Day, Easter and Mission Day are celebrated with much enthusiasm. All the occupants, teachers, Unit Heads, local pastors, and people in and around the Unit participate in them with a spirit of oneness. Every Unit celebrates these days with cakes, carols, chimes and good feast. In one of the Christmas Day functions on 22.12.2009 all the inmates of the C.M.S. met at Azhakiapandiapuram. They celebrated the Christmas with the poor people invited from various places all over the District. Nearly 272 poor people assembled in the chapel and after having songs, prayers and sermons, both

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the inmates and the poor were sumptuously fed. All the Central Office staff were involved in serving the special food. In addition, “96 blankets, 100 sarees, 74 towels and 2 lungies were issued. All the people departed happily after receiving the gift articles”. Mr. M. Kumar remarks: “We are very proud to inform the readers that every year we allot special funds during the Christmas season to help the needy people around our units”. At Thadikkarankonam every year the children themselves go out and collect money in their leisure time. They also generate money from the income they get from the work they do - gardening, watering coconut trees and papaya trees. During a Christmas occasion they had built a house for a family near the centre. The family had earlier a small hut which, due to some reason, was burnt down. The local Panchayat did not come forward to help the suffering family. But the Organisation has aptly helped this poor family through its selfless service.

**Celebration of National Important Days**

In addition, all nationally important days like Independence Day, Republic Day and Gandhi Jayanthi are also observed very happily in all the Units. The students and staff hoist the National Flag and speakers are called out to speak about the importance of these days. Students come to know

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23 Ibid., 19.
about the past history of our country and they are encouraged to become patriotic citizens. Sweets are served to all assembled and also to the public who observe the functions. Gandhi Jayanthi day is celebrated every year in one of the centres with much enthusiasm. Students and staff from all the Units assemble there. The whole expense is met by the ex-students. This year also it was celebrated in the Thadikkaranonam Unit with much pomp and glory by the ex-students. Mrs. C. Getzi Leema Amalini, M.A., B.Ed., P.A. to Collector, Nagercoil addressed the gathering. Details of this celebration is appended to the Appendix.

The importance of Counselling

The C.M.S. organizes “Counselling Sessions” both for the staff and children. This definitely helps them to choose the path of righteousness, understand their spiritual and social responsibilities and grow up to be worthy citizens in future. While commenting on this, C.D. Aruldhas observes: “The effectiveness of Counselling is judged by the process and not by the results”.24 For the purpose of helping the children who are coming from broken families, the depressed, the traumatized and the children with psychological problems, the Counselling Unit was started in the Mission.25

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25 Ibid.
According to Mr. C.D. Aruldhas a typical counselling has three sessions. The first one is “One-To-One Counselling”. In this, teachers have dialogues with special children, problematic children, full orphans, etc., share their backgrounds, their problems, needs, their likes and dislikes with regard to dress, food, games, subjects, teachers, friends, etc. “Sometimes they are made to play certain games, draw some pictures, paintings, to rearrange the puzzles, etc. to understand their activities, their attitudes, their psychological and emotional behaviour”.  

In the second type called “Group Counselling” the girl students are taken around the school campus, estate etc. and the counsellors talk with them, play with them and joke with them in order to lighten their burden. This helps the counsellors to find out the students’ attitudes and feelings. Sometimes questionnaires like “Who am I?” are given to them to elicit proper answers. They are given chances to see TV programmes in National Geographic channel or encouraged to debate on important issues. These chances help the students to open up their minds and to have acquaintance with fellow-students. Elementary children are encouraged to tell stories by looking at pictures. They improve their memory power through memory tests etc. The counsellors are so well trained that they help the children narrate their stories with all their own past unpleasant experiences.

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The third type named as “Group Retreats and Refresher Courses” is for the staff. These courses help them understand the importance of giving counselling to the children. The counsellors are advised to create interpersonal relationships with the children. The C.M.S. hopes that “these inputs will work within the staff to bring a counselling atmosphere in the units”.  

The Problems of Students

The C.M.S. has well-understood the psychological problems of children. It has rightly felt its responsibilities. There are children who are tempted to commit suicide by consuming poison and swallowing needles. Some, run away as often as possible. There are children with moral problems and indiscipline. Some are quarrelsome and problematic. These students are given special counselling by the C.M.S. All these challenges rightly prove that the C.M.S. has an enormous task in shaping and moulding the future of the children entrusted to their care.

Mr. C.D. Aruldhas says that the C.M.S. has a number of future plans to avert the problems faced by students. These plans, according to him, include “a) Conducting follow-up programmes in the units as many as possible, b) Conducting Counselling classes for the School for Deacons trainees, c) Bringing the special children and the counselled children to the

Central Office, may be once in two months according to necessity, d) Improving the Counselling Resource Centre in the Central Office, e) Making the staff realize the importance of Counselling”.

Having understood the importance of giving proper counselling to children, the C.M.S. organizes Counsellors’ Training Programmes in different Units. Mr. C.D. Aruldhas in an article entitled “Sub-Counsellors’ Training Programme” observes that the training programmes are conducted with the following objectives:

1. To enable the identified Sub-Counsellors to understand the need and importance of initiating a grievance cell.

2. To evolve a structure of the cell.

3. To help the Sub-Counsellors handle grievances.

4. To train the Staff to make use of the skills; listen and attend to the grievances of the children.

5. To teach them to identify the special children and help them accordingly.

6. To give the basic knowledge of counselling through theory and practical sessions.

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29 Ibid., p. 5.
The training programmes are conducted for three days in each area and the following are usually the contents of the programmes.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bible Study</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Attract and attend</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Skills of counselling</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Stages of counselling</td>
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<td>5. Structure of a grievance cell</td>
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<td>6. Building up self-esteem</td>
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<td>7. Grievances’ redressal</td>
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<td>8. Dealing with the grievances</td>
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<td>9. Facing educational grievances</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Grievances in different stages</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Qualities of a good counsellor</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Practical counselling</td>
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**Religious Activities**

The C.M.S. is not a full-fledged religious Organisation like the C.S.I. and the other Protestant Organisations. It is fully committed to the services of the poor. However, it never ignores or neglects the spiritual education of

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the children entrusted to their care and concern. As such, the official news letter “Spangles” in every issue bears two to four pages dealing with a “Praise and Prayer Calendar”. The Calendar indicates as to the nature of the prayer to be conducted by the Units everyday of each month. Staff and students strictly follow the items for which they have to pray every day. A model of this calendar is annexed to the appendix at the end of the thesis.

**Bible Schools**

Vacation Bible Schools are conducted regularly in all the Homes, in addition to morning and night worship. Generally, the Vacation Bible School has four important items. The first one is the “singing session”. Each day’s activities start with one hour of singing. The students learn new songs based on the particular theme of the day. All the students show much enthusiasm in learning new songs along with the track music and actions. Sometimes, they sing and dance. “Feast of the King’s Palace” is a song well-known to all the students in all the Units of the C.M.S. in India. The lyric says “We’ve got the King’s invitation for a feast at His palace; we all accepted and enjoyed His feast. . .”31 At the end of the singing session the day’s theme is introduced by the V.B.S. Directors with a skit.

The next one is the “Teaching Session”. The children are divided as per their age group as Beginners, Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior

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31 Spangles 75, 2009, p. 11.
Groups. Each session is divided into a class with a maximum of 15 children. All the Home staff, their wives and Christian friends from outside serve as teachers. These teachers sit together and frame a syllabus for 10 days. They include Bible story, Memory verses, Class work, etc. Each student has his/her workbook for writing the questions and answers and memory verses and for drawing pictures to be coloured.

The third one is the “Devotional session”. In this the children gather together as Beginners and Primary in one group, and Junior and above as another group to have devotional thoughts. The children are taught Bible stories and the story of a Missionary based on the particular day’s theme. At the close of the session the children vow that they will lead a God-pleasing committed life. The last one is “Special Prayer Session”. It is known as “Santhiya”, meaning “Meeting”. It is observed in the evening at the time when the day and the night meet. The children and trainees are given time to be with the Lord individually. On the final day, the children stage varieties of programmes based on what they have learned. They are encouraged with prizes.

Every year special training for the V.B.S. school teachers is given at the Azhakiapandiapuram Unit. It goes on for three days. The trainees then become Directors and they are deputed to impart the messages and experiences they have received to a group of selected teachers. A special
training was held on 16th April 1998 under the guidance of Mr. Paul Viswanathan, Tamil Nadu Promotional Secretary. He chose the theme “Know this Love”. He taught the theme through stories and action songs. He illustrated how to direct the teachers and use visual aids. On the 19th the trained staff went to the various Homes fully equipped with the needed knowledge of V.B.S. ministry. In the different Homes, these trained teachers introduced various themes like “Day of Labour”, “Day of Giving”, “Love Feast Day”, “Day of Beauty”, etc. Mary Varghese who underwent the training writes: “The reward was the children’s enjoyment and the testimony of some, that they had understood and experienced the love of God in a new way”.32

**Services in Churches and Chapels**

Almost all the Units of the C.M.S. in Kanyakumari District have their own chapels to be used by the students as well as the staff who stay in the campus. Local people also attend the special services conducted in these chapels on Sundays and on other important days. The Azhakiapandiapuram Unit, the Puthenkada Unit and the Thadikkarankonam Unit have special chapels. Of these, the Azhakiapandiapuram chapel is a marvel, wonderfully built by an expert architect. The students at the Ramanputhur Unit, the students of the Girls’ Home and the Child Care Training Centre at Nagercoil

go to the local Churches. The Ramanputhur boys go to the C.S.I. Church at Kurusady and the girls in the Nagercoil Home, and the Child Care Training Centre go to the Ramavarmapuram C.S.I. Church or they attend the worship in the chapel in the campus. The wardens of the three centres affirm that they never compel the students to go to the Church on Sundays. But what happens is that the students themselves, irrespective of their religion, caste and colour join the Christian students and attend the Church services in one particular Church. The wardens also confirm that the students do not attend the services in Catholic Churches and Pentecostal Churches.

The Warden Mrs. T. Yesther of Nagercoil Girls’ Home in an interview held on the morning of 1.9.2011 said that there are two Muslim girls named Parkasa (10 years old, studying in 6th standard) and her sister Parveen Pathima (13 years old, studying in 8th standard) also attend the Church services very regularly and they always proclaim that Jesus is their Lord and that they will never change their mind. Mrs. Yesther also said that the students do not attend the Sunday School classes in the Ramavarmapuram Church, as they have their own classes in their Homes. She strongly believes that all the girls of the Home believe in Christ and in future they will continue to be very staunch believers.

33 Interview with Mrs. T. Yesther, Warden, Girls’ Home, Nagercoil on 1.9.2011.
Mr. Noble, Warden of the Children’s Home at Thadikkarankonam said in an interview that his students attend both C.S.I. and H.M.S. Churches. He said, sometimes, the students do not go out, but assemble in the chapel in the premises and offer prayers and have meditation on some verse in the Bible along with the local people.\(^{35}\)

**The Chapel at Azhakiapandiapuram**

The Chapel at Azhakiapandiapuram needs special mention. It is a very beautiful chapel dedicated to the Lord on 15\(^{th}\) November 1972. It is in a serene surrounding of mixed hills and rocks and it is hoped that it would be the centre of the life of all those who are in the campus.\(^ {36}\) “The Chapel is used for Special Services, Worships, Retreats, VBS meetings, Deacon’s Ordination service, Thanks-giving service, Family prayer meetings and Family get-together, Farewell functions and parents meeting”.\(^ {37}\) As the chapel is used for various purposes, local people who visit it come to know more and more about the services the C.M.S. renders to the poor in the society. In this chapel, a number of memorable services had been conducted in the past. Two of them need special mention. One is the service conducted in honour of Dr. Kowski’s “40 years of fruitful service in India among the

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\(^{35}\) Interview with Mr. S. Sathya Noble, Warden, Children’s Home at Thadikkarankonam on 1.9.2011.


needy and destitute children”.

The other is the services of the 50th anniversary of C.M.S. which went on from 5th January to 7th January 2007. The chapel was renovated and rededicated on 28.8.2008. Money collected from all the C.M.S. Units, staff and the public was utilized for this purpose. The involvement of the public, mostly Hindus, in this venture can never be forgotten.

The C.M.S. felt that every Unit should have a chapel of its own. There was a great need for a chapel in the Nagercoil Girls’ Home campus. This was discussed in the Housemothers’ Retreat held in 1995. They came forward to contribute a small amount of Rs. 1,011/- in that retreat itself. With this meagre amount the foundation stone was laid on 9.7.1995 for the construction of a chapel. Contributions came in from all the C.M.S. Units, from the students and staff. The part played by the staff and students at Thadikkarankonam was highly appreciable. The construction work was finished in October 1999. An additional room for the Chaplain was also constructed. The dedication was held on 21.10.1999. Rt. Rev. M.I. Kesari, the C.S.I. Bishop delivered a special message. Various Unit Heads, Administrators, Managers, Pastors and people in and around Ramanputhoor and Simon Nagar came in large number and attended the inaugural function.

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A feast was arranged for all. It was also an occasion for the general public to come to know about the varied activities undertaken by the C.M.S. Units for the sake of the poor.

**Spiritual Meetings and the Spiritual Work done by the Staff and Students**

“In C.M.S., children’s spiritual needs are met along with their material needs. The Sunday School classes are a systematic Bible learning ministry”. Generally classes are divided according to the age group of the children and syllabus designed accordingly. Generally the CEEFI syllabus is followed. Bible stories and lessons, songs and Bible verses are taught using different kinds of visual aids. Annual examinations are conducted and the students are encouraged with prizes. The children participate in Scripture Memory Verse Competitions sponsored by the Scripture Union and they get prizes and certificates every year. Children are also encouraged to participate in different Bible competitions and meetings outside. VBS, Bible Study Classes, Bible Quiz Contest etc. also help to lead the children towards Christ. Such classes inspire both the public and the parents who come forward to have more involvement in the affairs of the C.M.S.

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The children and trainees are given opportunities to support the Missionary work through prayer and offerings. United Christian Missionary Society of India (UCMSI) is getting continuous support from the students and trainees. The staff members are really serving as “Spiritual Parents” with the great burden of winning the souls for Christ.

Students who finish the School for Deacons Course are commissioned on special days to serve the Lord. On 6.1.2007, at the Azhakiapandiapuram chapel 11 students who completed the course were commissioned by the Rt. Rev. Devakadacham, Bishop, C.S.I. Kanyakuari Diocese. The Administrator of Azhakiapandiapuram Unit conferred the Diploma and Dr. Siromony, the Principal of the Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, delivered the Word of God. There was a mammoth gathering consisting of parents, relatives, C.M.S. Council Members, Area Managers, Central Office staff, Unit Heads and staff members and the children from various Homes.  

All these clearly indicate that the C.M.S. has not completely put aside the Church and God. However, it is not a Church organization. Its primary intention is not conversion, but making the children lead a happy, spiritual and God-fearing life. It encourages Church worship because that alone can make the children learn the need for leading a spiritual and moral life. The Church activities outlined in the preceding paragraphs also point to the fact

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that the C.M.S. is never at ease or slothful, but always alive and acting by
doing this or that for the benefits of the students and the staff.

Developing Leadership Qualities

The C.M.S. has deeply felt its responsibility to give all-round training
to the growing children. The children have to be in future the pillars of the
society and the nation. So, in addition to giving spiritual nourishment, they
mould, shape, sharpen and develop their leadership qualities. For this
purpose, they off and on conduct camps and training programmes. Social,
spiritual and political leaders participate in these programmes and give
proper instruction to the students as to how they can become better citizens
of our beloved country. In one of the programmes, it is said that the speakers
laid special emphasis on (i) the leader who is committed to people, (ii) the
leader and his responsibilities, (iii) the leader and his vision, (iv) the leader
should be a role model, (v) the leader should transmit his vision to others,
(vi) the leader should have correct information about the organisation in
which he works, (vii) the leader should equip himself with all kinds of
knowledge he needs, (viii) the leader should be trustworthy and the leader
should be humble in all respects.42

Character Development

According to the Mission, the essential qualities of a leader are (i) Character Development. Character, does not mean goodness or holiness or morality with honesty and integrity, but it is the ability to love others. Hence the students in the Units are taught as to what they should do to develop this special quality. (ii) Passion for excellence. The passion for excellence leads one to do everything with the best possible effort. It also helps one to do everything with an understanding. It also helps one to study one’s subjects very deeply and (iii) Developing trust in God. The leader has to trust that God gives everything and believe that He would work all things for our good.43

The C.M.S. is essentially a social organization without losing Christian validation. The leaders are very much interested in educating the poor children, teaching them some job-oriented programme and shaping and moulding their character. In this respect the C.M.S. is one of the best Organisations in the country. Everybody knows the future of India depends on the disciplined character of God-fearing youngsters who will put the country on the right track. In this respect the C.M.S. Units all over India pay much attention to both the character development of the boys and girls which alone can give them a happy and a bright future. The Units in Kanyakumari

43 Interview with Mr. C.D. Aruldas, on 1.9.2011.
District do not, in any way, ignore this service they have been called to render to the poor and the needy.

To shape and mould the character of the children, the Units in the District organize various programmes. The main objectives of these programmes are to inculcate in the children the importance of imbibing good virtues and values of life. In an interview with Mr. Bensingh who is working at Glenbeck, the research scholar came to know that a special programme regarding this was conducted to the 10th standard boys at Glenbeck from 14 – 16 July 2008. The resource persons were Mr. & Mrs. Aruldhas who were then functioning as Counselling Coordinators. A systematic study of subjects taken from the book of Proverbs was given to the boys and teaching was done through exposition, quiz, word hunt, games, skits, nature, animals etc. The topics handled were

i) Listen and obey the advice of the elders

ii) Good and evil ways

iii) Good and not so good words

iv) Be enthusiastic: Don’t be lazy

v) Be truthful and never lie

vi) The ill effects of mockery

44 Interview with Mr. Bensingh, on 2.7.2011.
vii) The evil effects of using Liquor and narcotics

viii) Be wise, not foolish.\textsuperscript{45}

In addition, certain environmental topics like Birds, Animals and Insects were also exposed to the students. They came to know that they have to love them and treat them kindly and keep the environment clean.

Students were taught how the various organs function in the human body and how they have to preserve their health to live a long life and serve humanity and God. The teachers emphasized the do’s and don’ts of life and the use of the various organs of the human body. Finally, a test was given to the participants to know how much they have learnt. Many of the boys scored good marks. The Educational Officer remarked that the students committed themselves to follow the good lessons they had learned all through their lives.\textsuperscript{46} He showed the research scholar the records in which all these details are found.

Records available at Glenbeck centre show that a seven day programme for the 10\textsuperscript{th} and +2 boys was conducted from 22\textsuperscript{nd} July to 28\textsuperscript{th} July 2009 at the Glenbeck Retreat Centre. The following topics were taken for discussion:

\textsuperscript{45} Interview with Mr. Bensingh on 2.7.2011 (Data collected from records).

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.

2. Practical expositions on the Biblical topics.

3. Character building.


5. A scientific study of the human body from Biblical perspective.

6. Do’s and don’ts in life situations.


8. Quiz, games, learning new songs, etc.\(^\text{47}\)

107 students participated in this. They were divided into 10 groups. They did well and learned a lot about how to behave in class rooms and outside the campus. It was a very useful course for the adolescents.\(^\text{48}\)

Good education always leads to good behavior changing the attitudes of the students. When students come to know that they are learning something very important for their life, they listen carefully and take a vow to change their earlier pattern of lifestyle. Realising the importance of education in the life of students, the C.M.S. has built up various educational and job-oriented institutions in the various Units in the District. The C.M.S. children are from villages, rural areas and from deserted families, where there are a total block of exposure. They live in a poor environment

\(^{47}\) C.M.S. Counselling Department Records.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.
deprived of opportunities for Education. The C.M.S., therefore, offers plenty of opportunities to the children to develop their character based on real life situations. The Homes and the teachers create these opportunities by making them do some work in the garden or in the kitchen. The youngsters clean the toilets, and wash their clothes. On holidays, some of them, particularly the sturdy boys do a lot of work in the campus – planting trees, collecting coconuts, manuring the plants, watering them etc. In the class rooms they develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The teachers encourage the students to shed their inhibitions and mix freely with the other students. This helps them to have many pleasurable exercises. The students are constantly taught to have and to possess (till the end) basic human values like love, affection, compassion, pity, politeness, softness, and a positive attitude towards life. Much stress is placed on these, because these values alone induced the German leaders like Emil Richter, Philip Ullrich and Dr. Horst Kowski and a number of German and Swiss sponsors to come to India and save the life of thousands and thousands of young children. The leaders make the children learn and imbibe occupational, strategic and creative skills. Quality communication skill is found to be very important in these days of Globalization. The Educational officer reiterated that “motivating and training the children to function effectively in today’s world

49 Interview with Education Officer, Azhakiapandiapuram on 4.7.2011.
50 Ibid.
has become an urgent need”. After referring to his diary he said that the staff working in the C.M.S. have the following responsibilities which will certainly instill in students good qualities and develop their character. He pointed out that the staff have to

i) Develop the habit of using the dictionary, atlas, etc.

ii) Inculcate the habit of reading newspapers, English story books and Bible related books every day.

iii) Enable to memorise the formulae in mathematics and Science.

iv) Locate places in the Maps, using the Atlas.

v) Practise drawing, scientific diagrams and graph and geometry in Mathematics.

vi) Encourage self-learning.

In an interview with Mr. A.P. Robertson, Senior Home Officer, C.M.S. Area Office, Azhakiapandiapuram on 5.7.2011, he said that the Azhakiapandiapuram Centre’s main concern is developing and improving both the personality and the character of the students under their care. During the interview, he emphasized 8 points:

1. Regularity

2. Mental balance

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51 Interview with Education Officer, Azhakiapandiapuram on 4.7.2011.
52 Ibid.
3. Good nutrition
4. Self-denial
5. Cheerfulness
6. Trust
7. Self-discipline
8. Relaxation.\textsuperscript{53}

While pin-pointing these 8 qualities, he explained each with verses taken from the Bible. It was a very interesting session.

The C.M.S. has a special wing for developing the character of students. It is called “Character Solution International” (C.S.I.). This wing puts special emphasis on personal responsibility which he explained as integrity, conviction, self-discipline, diligence and wisdom and interpersonal respect which means loyalty, courage, humility, kindness and thankfulness.\textsuperscript{54}

Enough has been said about the efforts taken by the C.M.S. in improving the attitude and behavioural-pattern of the students so that in future they may have a well-balanced, healthy, moral and spiritual life.

The above discussions reveal without any shadow of doubt that the C.M.S. is specially interested in uplifting the poor boys and girls who

\textsuperscript{53} Interview with Mr. A.P. Robertson on 5.7.2011.
\textsuperscript{54} Spangles Newsletter 75, July 2009, p. 8.
flounder in poverty and filth. Its activities, as learned, from the preceding paragraphs are multifarious and multifaceted.

**The Evangelistic Dimension of the C.M.S.**

The C.M.S. is a great organisation. Though it is not overtly a Missionary organisation in the strictest sense of the expression, it has both social and evangelistic dimensions. It considers that the service given to the poor is the service given to the Lord. As Donald A. McGavran has remarked “The missionary giving a cup of cold water, entirely as an act of mercy, may be seen by someone as a witness to Christ. The churchman adding up accounts may be indirectly evangelistic even while not conscious of proclaiming Christ in any way. The Christian carpenter by the honesty of his work may bear witness to His Lord.”\(^55\) The observation made by Kenneth Scott Latourette is true in the case of the C.M.S. in India and in Kanyakumari District. He observes: “The story of Christianity is not only old: it is also ever new”.\(^56\) In each age Christianity must be retold to the public. That is, in every era a new Chapter about the “ongoing currents of events”\(^57\) must be added to it. It is because at every stage of mankind’s march fresh perspective is gained. The perspective gained by Richter,


\(^{57}\) *Ibid.*
Ullrich and Dr. Horst Kowski is a new one and they have opened up a new chapter in the social and religious history of India and Kanyakumari District. In other words, according to them, Christ lives among the poor and any work done to the poor to lift them up from the pits of society is a great service to God, the Creator. Viewed in this sense, only people like Dr. Kowski and others “undertake for their fellows the scroll [The Bible] as it has thus far been unrolled” are the true Christians.\(^\text{58}\)

**The Indian Fostership Scheme**

The C.M.S. formed the Indian Fostership Scheme in January 2003. The formation of Indian Fostership Scheme is a milestone in the life and work of Christian Mission Service.\(^\text{59}\) The C.M.S. work had been started by the overseas friends from Germany and Switzerland. From 1957 onwards, needy poor children had been benefitted. For their benefits the C.M.S. generates foreign and indigenous funds to carry out its objectives more effectively.\(^\text{60}\) The Indian Fostership Scheme was started in Kovalam. The Rt. Rev. G. Christhudhas, the Retired C.S.I. Bishop of K.K. Diocese was elected as the Convener. Mr. D. Lazarus the Assistant Administrator, Mr. Y. Nadarajan, Senior Finance Manager, Mr. D. Sam Santhakumar,


\(^{59}\) Spangles, Newsletter No. 61, September 2003, Palayamkottai, p. 32.

\(^{60}\) *Ibid.*, No. 72, July 2008, Palayamkottai, p. 27.
Mr. E. Devadas, Rev. K.C. Thomas, Mr. Joseph Ponraj and Mr. Rajan Babu were elected as the members of the Scheme. It functions in accordance with what is said in St. Mathew 25:40.\textsuperscript{61} “Truly I say unto you whatever you do to the least of my brethren you did it to me”.

The Scheme was started with the aim of encouraging Indian sponsors to assist the underprivileged children\textsuperscript{62} and it has been slowly gaining momentum. It was resolved by the Unit Heads of the C.M.S. in Kanyakumari District to allocate children for Indian Fostership scheme.\textsuperscript{63} It was also resolved that follow-up action should be taken with the ex-staff of the C.M.S. for their continued support to the Scheme.

The Indian Fostership Day is celebrated on 26\textsuperscript{th} January every year. The first Indian Fostership Day was celebrated on 26.1.2004\textsuperscript{64} in India under the leadership of the Area Manager, Council members, Assistant Administrator and Mr. G. Nadarajan, the Senior Finance Manager. A number of well-wishers along with Rev. Dr. Wagner attended the function with their own contributions. Within a year the C.M.S. was able to find sponsors for 32 deserving children.

\textsuperscript{61} The Bible.
\textsuperscript{62} Spangles Newsletter No. 68, May 2007, Palayamkottai, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{63} Minutes of the meeting held at Girls Home, Nagercoil on 6.4.2004, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{64} Spangles, Newsletter No. 62, June 2004, Palayamkottai, p. 8.
The C.S.I. Home Church, Nagercoil came forward to support a child under this scheme. The C.S.I. Church, Kurusady and Ramanputhoor, the Christ Church, Nagercoil and the Concordia High School staff also joined this scheme. Each staff of every Unit came forward to pay voluntarily Rs. 10/- towards this Scheme. The staff of Concordia School, to start with, sponsored one child and promised to help one more male child as early as possible. In February 2008, it was found that 181 children from six States had come under the scheme. In that year it was resolved to conduct the Indian Fostership Scheme sponsors’ get-together at the chapel at Azhakiapandiapuram along with all sponsored children.

The Mission also resolved to open Life Membership Scheme to mobilize corpus funds. Anyone can become a life member by contributing Rs. 1,000/-. All the Unit Heads came forward to become life members and they willingly joined it by paying the stipulated amount. It was encouraging to see that the following leaders immediately became life members by donating Rs. 1,000/- each towards the Scheme. The list include

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65 Minutes of the meeting held at Azhakiapandiapuram Children’s Village on 15.9.2004, p. 2.
66 Minutes of the meeting held at Azhakiapandiapuram Creche, on 17.11.2004, p. 1.
68 Minutes of the meeting held at Child Care Training Centre in Nagercoil on 27.1.2005, p. 2.
69 Spangles, Newsletter 72, July 2008, Palayamkottai, p. 27.
70 Minutes the meeting held at Child Care Training Centre, Nagercoil on 30.8.2005, p. 1.
(1) Rt. Rev. G. Christudhas, (2) Mr. D. Sam Santhakumar, (3) Ms. Punitha Sobana, and (4) Mr. Ambi Arul.\(^{71}\)

Bishop Rt. Rev. G. Christudhas in his “The Indian Fostership Scheme” states: “From 1957 onwards 35000 needy poor children had been benefitted upto date”.\(^{72}\) Dr. P. Samraj is of the opinion: “It is . . . to be accelerated with determined efforts and perseverance to identity more potential sponsors and multiply our corpus fund”.\(^{73}\)

**Foreign Sponsors and their Visits**

Foreign sponsors are mainly from Germany and Switzerland. Mr. M.K. Arul Raj, the Warden of the Home at Ramanputhur, in an interview said that the foreigners come in one large group once in every two years and they stay for 30 days in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.\(^{74}\) When they come to Kanyakumari District they stay at the Guest House at the Azhakiapandiapuram Centre. He added that the Government has now put some strictures on their arrival and stay in any part of Tamil Nadu. He said that these strictures can be seen in the Tamil Daily *The Thinamalar* dated

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\(^{71}\) Minutes of the meeting held at Children’s Home, Thadikarankonam, on 17.3.2006.


\(^{74}\) Interview with Mr. M.K. Arulraj on 1.7.2011.
When they come to Azhakiapandiapuram all the sponsored children are sent there and they spend a few days together. The children are given gifts of all kinds. The Warden said that the foreigners cannot stay in the Home at Ramanputhur because there is no parking place for their cars. They just come and stay with their sponsored children for a few hours and then depart. They send special gifts to the child or children during Christmas time and also when their birthday comes.

The Warden S. Sathia Noble in an interview said that last year when the foreigners came they were received by the students and staff by presenting to each one of them a very ordinary bouquet made by the students themselves. The foreigners do avoid any gifts from the Home children.

The Ex-Students of the C.M.S.

Over the past several years a considerable number of boys and girls have come out of the Units and gone to several places in search of jobs. With a view to maintain and strengthen contact with them, the Mission started the ex-students Department at Nagercoil. It was started in the year 2002. This Unit is functioning in an office attached to the C.M.S. Girls’ home at Nagercoil. A Senior Social worker and an office assistant are

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75 The Thinamalar, dated 1.10.2011.
76 Interview with Mr. S. Sathia at Thadikkarankonam on 1.9.2011.
serving in this Unit. The main function of the Unit is to collect funds and to counsel the former students so that they may help the present children in the Homes. The social worker also visits the former students in their work place and houses and request them to contribute their mite.

The research scholar had the chance of meeting one Mr. Chandran on 11\textsuperscript{th} July 2011 who clarified many of her doubts relating to the ex-students’ Association. As a boy, he was brought up in the Koodankulam Home, Tirunelveli District. Now he is a middle aged man having much confidence in the wonder working powers of Christ and having very good impressions about the services that are being undertaken by the C.M.S. Units in the District. He told her that the present President of the Association is one Mr. Andrews Arumugam, now working in I.S.R.O., Mahendragiri. By birth both were Hindus. But now both are staunch believers in Christ. Mr. Chandran said that the Ex-service Association in Nagercoil has been sponsoring 7 students. In total, he said, 30 students in the State are sponsored by ex-students. They have the headquarter office at Chennai. The most interesting thing he said was that every year on 2\textsuperscript{nd} October they celebrate Gandhi Jeyanthi in some centre with all the students and the staff of the C.M.S. This year, he said, they were going to celebrate it at Azhakiapandiapuram and that they have decided to spend more than 75 thousand rupees. The expectation was that as many as 500 students and staff
would participate in it. They would distribute prizes, gifts and conduct meetings and competitions. He went on saying that they have decided to invite the Collector’s P.A. to preside over the meeting.\footnote{Interview with Mr. Chandran on 11 July 2011.}

\textbf{Conclusion}

In conclusion it may be said that with the cooperation of the staff, ex-students and the general public and leaders, the C.M.S. in the State in general and in the Kanyakumari District in particular has achieved a greater part of its goal. It continues to serve to the suffering humanity and its expansion in different directions and its multifaceted activities have to be appreciated by each and everyone who comes across one of its Homes or schools or Industrial Centres. In the words of Dr. P. Samraj: “The small seed which was sown 49 years ago by Mr. Emil Richter as its founder with his personal commitment and prayers has now grown up into a big tree providing shelter for many children and youth who are in need.”\footnote{Dr. Samraj, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 3.}