Chapter VIII

Problems and Prospects of CSI Tirunelveli Diocese
CHAPTER VIII

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF CSI TIRUNELVELI DIOCESE

In this chapter the researcher aims at highlighting some of the problems and prospects of the CSI Tirunelveli Diocese. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the problems of the Diocese and the second part with the prospects of the Diocese.

8.1 Problems of the Diocese

The CSI Tirunelveli Diocese have many problems in the field of ministry, administration, education, medical, social work, revenue, expenditure and foreign contribution.

8.1.1 Ministry of the Diocese

Most of the methods which the Diocese is adopting at present for the Gospel work seems to be outdated. The clergy is unable to spend enough time with his congregations.

The clergy’s wife too plays a vital role in ministry. In CSI Tirunelveli Diocese almost all the clergys’ wives are working as teachers in the Diocesan Schools with government salary. So they are unable to conduct young girls’ meetings, house visits, hospital visits and social work.

The Diocesan catechists are mostly working in Diocesan Schools and they have to conduct services in the villages also. This has its own implications, regarding performance and efficiency of the catchiest-cum-teacher in both the areas of teaching in the school as well as in the congregations.

The youth in the Diocese move away and are caught in other distractions such as the media. So the level of participation of youth in the Diocesan activities is low.

8.1.2 Administration

The Diocesan administrative structure is divided into three levels. The top level administration consists of the Bishop, office bearers, executive committee members. The Diocesan Church council is the middle level administration and the Pastorate Committee is the lower level of administration.

Almost in every pastorate there are more than five primary and middle schools. The pastor is the correspondent for all the schools in his pastorate. So the pastor could not pay effective attention to both the school administration and the church activities.

8.1.3 Education

The present status of education in Tirunelveli Diocesan Schools in rural areas is not upto the expectation. The following are the important reasons for this sad state of affairs.
i. The Tirunelveli Diocesan Elementary and Middle Schools face dire dearth of funds. Due to resource crunch, they are not in a position to maintain good buildings with adequate number of class rooms.

ii. Although teacher - students ratio on an average is 1:40, there are some schools where this figure exceeds even 1:80 and in some schools it is very low.

iii. In Tirunelveli Diocesan primary and middle schools there is an unending list of non-teaching works. All these non-teaching activities involve a lot of time and energy and the headmasters are left with little time for the teaching activities.

iv. Primary and middle schools are giving much importance to learning and cramming rather than real understanding. Method of teaching is such that involvement of students remains minimum and does not develop the spirit of enquiry.

In the past teachers were the most respected persons in the society. However, now-a-days, few teachers lack dedication and do not work with missionary spirit. They do not bother for the professional ethics. Only a very few teachers are committed to work and to coach the students free of any tuition fees.

All powers of recruitments, transfers and taking administrative decisions are being centralised day-by-day. The Elementary Schools' Manager and the High Schools/Higher Secondary Schools Manager do not even have a vehicle to make a visit to the Diocesan Schools in two revenue districts.

The mushroom growth of Matriculation Schools affects the student strength in the Diocesan Schools. The Matriculation School buildings and the transport facilities provided by them attract the students. Few Diocesan primary school buildings are in a dilapidated condition. This will affect the student strength in Diocesan Schools.

The Parent-Teachers' Associations in the Diocesan Schools are not properly functioning. Only in few schools the Parent-Teachers' Associations and the Old Student's Associations are helping the school developmental activities.

8.1.4 Medical Services

The CSI Tirunelveli Diocese has eight Hospitals. But the benefits of these hospitals are not available for all Pastorates in the Diocese. The Diocesan Hospital does not have specialised doctors in all the hospitals.

The number of cots and beds are not sufficient in the Diocesan hospitals. The rooms are not upto the expectation of the patients.

The Diocesan hospitals are not playing any active role like providing organised voice against entrenched vested interest or public ignorance in areas of public policy and health development.
The Diocesan hospitals failed to undertake urban health care services. The urban health care services are hospital care-oriented. It comprises hospitals catering to the requirements of their out-patients and in-patients.

The funds of the Diocesan hospitals are drawn from abroad. But the funds received from foreign donor agencies have declined over the years.

The researcher has found that the accounts of the Diocesan Hospitals have had only a deficit budget in all financial years during the period under investigation excepting three years.

8.1.5 Revenue and Expenditure

The Diocese adopted different strategies for fund raising. Due to these efforts the Diocesan revenue increased. But the Pastorate contribution does not increase in direct proportion to the increase in the number of membership. The foreign contribution decreased from 1996 onwards. The Evanglestic and Mass Movement Work fund also decreased. The congregation members are extending their financial support to the independent pastors than the Diocese mainly due to the following reasons: (i) They like the order of service in the independent churches, (ii) They may be affected by the transfer policy of the Diocese, (iii) They dislike quarrels in the congregation and court cases, (iv) The misuse of power by the party in power.

The expenditure pattern of the Diocese is shown in table 6.3. The Bishop/ clergy salary and allowances have increased. The Diocese frequently increases the salary from term to term. The expenditure on Mas Movement and Evangelestic Work is at a lower level.

The interest paid to missionary bodies have increased steadily. The Diocese also borrowed money from missionary bodies which has to be repaid along with simple interest.

The expenditure on pension to the retained clergy decreased steadily. The clergies retire from Diocese service only at the age of 65. The pension amount to the retired clergies is meagre.

Finally it is observed that every year the Diocese has kept certain amount that is from 0.43 per cent to 6.74 per cent of the total expenditure as closing balance.

8.1.6 Funds of the Pastorates

The funds of the Pastorates is very low. Only a few Pastorates have surplus funds in the Local Church Funds (LCF). The Sangam, Harvest Festival Collection, Wedding fees, Baptism fees and the Funeral fees were very low. Regarding the Sangam, the Diocesan workers and the Church workers must pay 2% of the basic pay as sangam whereas the lay people pay only Rs. 25 to 60 as stipulated sangam for the concerned Pastorate.

The receipts of the Central Fund increased steadily and it is shown in table 8.5. The contribution to the central fund increased but it is not in direct proportion to the pastorate
membership. It is shown in table 8.7. The Diocese does not receive any home grants in 1957-58, 1987-88 and also in 1997-98. It is mainly due to the foreign exchange policies of the Government of India. The Diocese does not receive any income from property. Only from 1967-68, the Diocese has received income from the Diocesan property.

The expenditure pattern of the Diocese from the Central Fund is shown in table 6.8. The expenditure on Pastorate work was very high in 1957-58 and it was 72.54 per cent of the total expenditure. The expenditure on theological college study decreased in 1987-88 and 1997-98. The Diocese limited the strength to study theology. The expenditure on educational work in 1947 was 17.89 per cent of the total expenditure and it decreased continuously.

The expenditure on establishment, administration and office expenses increased steadily and in the year 1997 it was 30.36 per cent of the total central fund expenditure. The expenditure on medical work was fluctuating. The Diocese received funds from abroad for the Diocesan medical work. The expenditure on women’s work and children’s work is of a very smaller percentage of the total expenditure.

The Diocese received only few grants from the government. So the grants paid to educational institutions in 1997 was only 1.71 per cent of the total expenditure. The Diocesan Mutual Benefit Fund and the Diocesan Reserve Fund helped to reduce the interest burden of the Diocese.

8.1.7 Social Welfare Activities

The Diocese took the first step to meet the urgent needs of the congregation members and their upliftment. The Diocesan Social Welfare Programmes were adult literacy campaigns, famine relief measures, digging more wells, growing more food and rural uplift campaigns.

The Diocesan Thrift Society helped the poor to improve the socio-economic status of the members. The Diocesan Employees Deposit Scheme (DEDS) and the Diocesan Employees Family Benefit Scheme (DEFBS) helped the Diocesan workers. The Diocesan Deposit Scheme helped the Diocesan finance. The Family Benefit Scheme was beneficial to the members but the amount of Rs.40,000 per deceased employee is very a small one.

The Diocesan Scholarship amounts help the students but the scholarship amount is very small. This is sometimes not able to help the students to pay their fees for their study. The Department of Mission and Evangelism and the Social Welfare Department of the Diocese are doing wonderful job to promote the welfare of the people. They are helping the poor needy people and are paid only in kind.
The Women's Fellowship and the Men's Fellowship are doing more social work. When compared to Men's Fellowship, Women's Fellowship Work is much appreciable. They are doing religious work, educational work, medical work and also social work.

8.2 Prospects of the Diocese

Eventhough the Diocese has more problems it has more prospects for development.

8.2.1 Ministry

The clergries must be free from Diocesan politics. The clergy must be given church management. The lay leaders should be given the power to manage the schools. This will allow the clergy to spend more time with the congregation members.

The clergy's wife should not be an employed one in the Diocese. The Diocese must give her an amount equivalent to the secondary grade teachers. The present clergy's wife's allowance is not sufficient. The Diocese must give secondary grade pay to them and they must in turn lead the Young Girls Meetings and Women Fellowship meetings.

The Diocesan Catechist must be given free accommodation by the Pastorate within the pastorate limits so that he can perform his duty as an effective catechized.

8.2.2 Administration

The party politics should be avoided in the Diocese. The Diocesan administration should be remodelled. There is also a real concern that the new insights in administration and should be incorporated to avoid ambiguities.

8.2.3 Education

The Diocese is having larger number of schools. The primary school buildings are not good. The student strength in Diocesan schools are declining. So in order to attract the students the Diocese must start more Matriculation Schools.

In order to improve the standard of education in the Diocesan Institutions, the Diocese through Human Resource Development Department can start coaching classes for the various competitive examinations and remedial coaching classes for English.

8.2.4 Medical

The Diocesan hospitals have more prospects for development. They are having many buildings. So they may start new hospital courses.

Most of the Diocesan hospitals are running with deficit budget. It should be avoided. The services of the Diocesan hospitals were not up to the satisfaction.
8.2.5 Revenue and Expenditure

The revenue of the Diocese is increasing. So the expenditure is also increasing. The Diocese must raise the revenue still further. The Diocese must increase all the fees and sangam of lay people. The Diocese must also control the unproductive expenditure in the Diocese. The Diocese should not give medical concessions to the clergy if the clergy’s wife is a working lady. The Diocese must find ways and means to increase the revenue. The Local Church Fund in hand should not be more than five thousands.

8.2.6 Social Welfare Activities

The Social Welfare Activities of the Diocese is much appreciable. Any how the Diocese may start novel social welfare activities to improve the socio-economic status and the quality of the people in the Diocese.

The Diocese, eventhough it is having problems, has much prospects for development. The Diocese by providing better ministry, better medical facilities, better education and better social welfare activities can promote socio-economic development of the Diocese.