A Prophet of Spirituality and Inculturation

Fr.Kuriakose Palakkattu, CMI.



by

Fr. Jacob Marangattu, CMI.

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My first memories of Fr. Kuriakose Palakkattu CMI are of him as an expert *Thabalist* of Dharmaram College in the late 1970s. After arriving at the Rajkot mission in 1989, I had some occasions to interact with him while he was the Principal of St Mary's School, Gondal. Later, once again, he went to Baroda for advanced classes in Hindustani music and my experiences with him date from that time onward.

Though we met only occasionally at common programmes there was a certain rapport between us that led us to engaging conversations. And these conversations always revolved around spiritual, liturgical and Gujarati cultural matters. I found in him simultaneously a self-realized person and a seeker. Though I was only 10 years junior to him, I belonged to a different generation. For almost from my novitiate time onwards, a new trend in formation was taking shape in our congregation. The content of this newness consisted in more rational application of mind, more freedom, different styles of prayer, increased openness to the world, etc.

Yet, Fr. Kuriakose was quite enthusiastic to converse with me. I found in him a person who thought ahead of his time. He had his original and authentic ideas on spirituality, which in a way was founded on Jesus' vision of praying in "Spirit and Truth". He had transcended the level of mere 'ritualism' in prayer and worship. For him, what was of greater importance was higher levels of worship, such as, a life of righteousness and justice, as the Prophets proclaimed; a life of gratitude as the Psalmist urged, and a contrite and humble heart as advocated by the Wisdom Literature. Yes, that was Fr Kuriakose, Palakkattu.

He was a man thoroughly convinced of the need of inculturation both in liturgy and in life. The transplantation of liturgy, from other cultural backgrounds into Gujarat as an exact replica, was for him like trying to fit a square into a circle. He longed to experience the liturgy in the soul of Gujarati culture. Bhajans, and chanting in the Hindustani raga were an ecstasy for him. He preferred the Harmonium to the Keyboard for the umbilical chord

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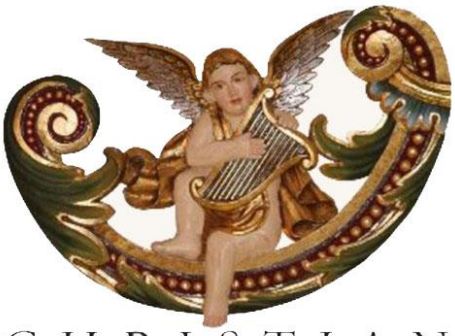
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Christian Musicological Society of India, Josef Ross, Ist Floor, Peter's Enclave, Opp.Kairali Apts, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi, Kerala, India-682036, Phone: +91 9496244981, +91 9446514981, Email - info@thecmsindia.org