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## BISHOP JEROME FERNANDEZ, AN IMPLEMENTER OF INCULTURATION- SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

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**Abstract:**

*The term Inculturation is used in Christianity, especially in the Roman Catholic Church. It is the exchange of culture or acceptance of native culture. This means Christianity in each land imbibes native culture, tradition and practices without moving away from Christian ideology and faith. By this, the Christian communities will have connection with other cultures. Inculturation became a world-wide practice. In each land, Inculturation is done in support of native culture, customs and practices. In India, Inculturation is done mainly as an adaptation of Hindu practices and customs. The concept and importance of Inculturation came after the Second Vatican Council. Inculturation was emphasized in the council, for the existence of Christianity in the modern world.*

**Keywords:** *Inculturation, Latin Catholics, Quilon, Diocese, Second Vatican Council.*

The Second Vatican Council or Vatican II was addressed to the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. It was held in the St. Peters Basilica in Vatican. The council was opened under Pope John XXIII on 11 October 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI on the feast of Immaculate Conception in 1965. The vernacularisation of Mass was done in this council. Inculturation is a concept said in its sixteenth chapter. It is a term used by the Roman Catholic Church in-order to mingle the Christian Gospel with the ordinary native culture. It announced that each Church has to agree with the native culture in active. In the Council, the term Inculturation is not mentioned anywhere. Only about the modern man and culture is said. This is said in the chapter II of Twasse Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today. The Chapter dealing with culture in the document is 'The proper development of Culture'. Church welcomes all changes occurring to mankind. But the faith in him must not be lost.

Bishop Jerome is the first native Bishop of Quilon diocese. His tenure as Bishop spanned from 1937 to 1978. He has raised Quilon diocese to its horizon. He not only indulged in the duty of the Church, but also in the social, educational and cultural activities in Kerala. He established many educational institutions, many churches, made many alterations in liturgy and enhanced many activities in churches. He was a promoter of inculturation in Quilon diocese. In the present paper about Inculturation, the most valid person to be discussed is surely Bishop Jerome. But Inculturation is generally discussed with reference to regional Churches like Syro Malabar and Malankara Catholic and non-Catholic Churches like Orthodox Churches. Generally Latin Catholic is not noted for Inculturation. But Bishop Jerome is relevant for the study; for many reasons. The very first reason is; the Second Vatican Council took place during his tenure as Bishop, the Second reason is his nationalism, patriotism, cultural sense and his interest in the past. The primary aim of the paper is to analyze how Bishop Jerome has implicated the concept Inculturation.

Bishop Jerome founded Trinity Lyceum English Medium School in January 5, 1966. It was Bishop Jerome, who designed the emblem of Trinity Lyceum. In it 'The complex distinction between 'God' and 'Trinity' is portrayed eminently' (Karmayogi 346). Three equal circles which are linked together equally. In the image, 'Pitha', 'Puthru' 'Athma' is depicted in Hindi. It signifies 'the Father', 'the Son' and 'the Holy Spirit' of the Catholic Faith. The deep thought in the word God is portrayed in Hindi as 'Sath' 'Chindh' 'Anand'. These words are taken from Sanskrit. 'Sath' means spirit or athma which is spread everywhere and which is there. 'Chindh' means thoughts, knowledge, intelligence and wisdom. 'Anand' means delight, happiness and luck. God, according to Indian thought, is a mixture of 'Sath' 'Chindh' 'Anand'. And so, he is called 'Sachidhanandan'. This word has all the three ideas in it. These representations are Indian in thought. Moreover, Holy Trinity is represented in Hindi alphabets. Here Bishop Jerome has distinguished the Holy Trinity in Catholic belief and God according to Indian thought. In order to adopt the native culture, the Bishop has made a very rare combination of Trinity and God from Catholic faith and Indian thoughts. The middle portion of the emblem, there is the Hindu religious symbol 'Oom'. According to the Indian belief there are three sounds in it. The sound 'Aaa' signifies Lord Vishnu, the sound 'Uuu' signifies Lord Shiv and the sound 'Mmm' signifies Lord Brahma. The three deity of Hinduism is contained in this single word. So, the word is also called 'Bhramathinte Vachakam' or 'The word of the Universe'. The Hindu symbol 'Oom' which is used to signify 'Lord Vishnu', 'Lord Shiva' and 'Lord Bhrama'. The same 'Oom' is used by the Bishop to signify 'God the Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit'. None others have compared the three deity concepts of Christian and Hindu religion. The base of the emblem is depicted with 'Holy, Holy, and Holy'. This is taken from The Book of Isaiah Chapter 6 verses 3. The particular verses say the Angels surrounding God the Almighty, praising him as Holy, Holy, Holy. The entire emblem signifies both God in Indian thoughts and Trinity in Catholic faith deserve to be worshiped at most. This particular emblem is a perfect example of Inculturation.

Fatima Mata National College was founded by Bishop Jerome in August 6, 1950. The word 'Mata' is an Indian word signifying 'Mother'. The word 'National' is used to show interest as a nationalist. The Catholic figure St. Mary of Fatima is given a native outlook by incorporating it with the words 'Mata' and 'National'. The logo of the college:- Per Matrem Pro Patria which means 'Through Mother to Jesus'. The very logo also means "Through Mother to Motherland'. This very well shows his patriotic love for the nation. In Ramayana, it is said:-

'JannaniJanmabhumicha  
SwargathapiGariyasi'.

The couple of lines mean that motherhood and the nation is mightier than the Heaven'. (Jerome Thirumayni- 36). The Christian ideology is intermixed with the knowledge in Indian mythology, Sanskrit and culture.

St. Raphael's Seminary Chapel, Kollam was built adjacent to St. Rappels' Seminary by Bishop Jerome. He assimilated the Christian ideology and Indian architecture. The structure of the chapel is of a Buddhist Monastery with Hindu elements. The chapel is named 'The Temple of God'. Before entering the chapel, there is a small well like structure on two sides of the door outside. This structure is to wash feet, before entering the chapel. These are similar practice before entering a temple. There is a lotus like structure made of stone on the either side of the door. The Altar of the chapel is in the shape of a lotus which is made of black granite. Lotus is the national flower of India. In the altar, words like 'Neer', 'Sheer' and 'Vivek' are scripted along with a White swan in a white marble background. Here 'Holy Spirit' is depicted as swan. The lectern is also made in the shape of a lotus, made of wood. This may be the reason that he named it 'The Temple of God'. Just below the Crucifix, there is structure made of Sunflower petals. This is made in the structure of 'Sudarshana Chakra' of Indian mythology. On the top the tomb like structure which indicates the Buddhist monastery, has a lotus painted pink. Above the lotus there is a cross. Here Indianism

is incorporated very minutely.

Bharatha Rajni or Mary Queen of India is the rare blend of Mother Mary, the mother of Christianity and Bharatha Mata, the representation of 'Mother India. Bharatha Rajni is wearing the attire sari, which is the national dress of Indian women. She is wearing a crown in her head. The right hand is in 'Abhaya Mudhra' with indicates protection and peace. With her left hand she gifts the Child Jesus Herself to the devotees. Behind her, there is a royal throne. On her two sides, there are two lions which callout the royalty of the throne. The halo around her is in a traditional Indian way, which is in the shape of the sun. The halo is not in the usual oval shape. On the two sides of her feet, there are two Ashoka Chakras, which is the very sign of Ahimsa. On the top of her head, there is a royal umbrella, decorated with pearls and beads. On the top of the umbrella there is a globe, where the map of India is seen. On the top of it, Holy Spirit is seen, in the form of a white dove. These are the Indian elements of the Portrait. The usual Christian elements seen with Mother Mary are the moon, which is used as her feet-rest; the sun, which is behind her head, twelve stars, which is the representation of twelve disciples of Jesus, which surrounds her head and the snake, which is stabbed by her, the representation of Satan. These elements are also there in this picture also. Child Jesus is also wearing royal attire and is wearing a crown in His head. Since it is named Bharatha Rajni or 'The Queen Mary of India', it must contain all Indian elements which up-holds the power of its rich tradition. But during the portrayal of rich Indian elements, he did not forget to portray the elements of Christian faith. The representation of Mother Mary has both Christian and Indian elements.

On the shores of Lake Ashttamudi; Bishop Jerome found out; Ashta Jala Rani or the 'Queen of Ashttamudi'. 'Ashta' means eight. Lake Ashttamudi has eight branches. 'Jala' means water. 'Rani' means queen. Mother Mary is named in accordance to Indian tradition. He made the mother of Christianity, the 'Queen of Ashttamudi'. Moreover, in its depiction, Mother Mary is wearing a sari. She is wearing a Crown and the halo is a round structure which is of Indian form made of wood. Her right hand; like Bharatha Rajni, is in 'Abhayamudra', a helping hand to guide and protect the needy. Like Bharatha Rajni, she is gifting, Child Jesus to the believers. Child Jesus is also wearing a crown. He too stretches His both hands to help the seekers. She is standing above the globe, which is the representation of the world and the men in it. The globe comes out from a bloomed lotus, which is the national flower of our nation. These are the Indian elements of Ashta Jala Rani. The usual Christian symbol of Mother Mary is also there in the portrayal. Behind Her there is the Sun. She is standing over moon. She has stabbed a snake, with a fruit in its mouth; the very representation of Satan.

Fatima Mandir is a shrine of 'Our Lady of Fatima', founded by Bishop Jerome. The structure of it is in a Muslim architecture, with a round ceiling from inside and outside. A tomb like structure is on its top. The whole building is a round structure like a temple with a half wall all around. This is the style of traditional Hindu architecture. 'Mandir' is an Indian word for temple. Here Bishop Jerome has incorporated the Hindu and Muslim elements to Christianity.

Bishop Jerome, has done inculturation not only in new concepts and portrayals, but also in naming of institutions. Here he has named many institutions in the diocese with Malayalam literary names. They are 'Karmala Rani Training College', Kollam is an educational training College. 'Rani' is a Malayalam word for queen. It can be named 'Our Lady of Mount Carmel'. But he gave it a Kerala touch. The purpose was may be to show oneness of Mother Mary with the native people. Though the portrayal of Bharatha Rajni; Bishop has drawn a parallel line between Mother Mary and the concept of Mother India. 'Vimala Hridaya Higher Secondary and 'Kristu Raj Higher Secondary School' are other examples. It can be named as 'Our Lady of Immaculate Heart' and 'Christ, the King' respectively. But the national sense of the Bishop did not let him to do that. 'Fatima Mandir', which is a Shrine, 'Jyothi Nikethan', a women's college, 'Cheru Pushvam Nivas', Ghandhi Smaraka Yesu Nivas, Ashta Jala Rani, a portrayal of Mother Mary as the queen of Lake Ashttamudi; 'Vimala Niketh'; Bharatha Mata ITC, Shanti Dhan, an old age home run by sister of

Missionary of Charity and Shree Yesu Shishu Bhavan are all names associated with Malayalam words. He has further coined out other names for Mother Mary like 'Deva Mata', which means the mother of God-the name of a Convent in Kollam; 'Upakara Mata', the name of a Convent in Koduvilla, Kollam, 'Fatima Mata' or 'Our Lady of Fatima', 'Sagara Mata' or the 'Mother of Sea', Balika Mariyam or the child Mary is the name of a school; 'Lokha Rakshaka' or the Lady protector of the world is the name of a hospital in Koivilla, Kollam and Arogya Mata or 'Our Lady of Good Health' is a Shrine, Kollam. He has named a Christian institution as 'Bharatha Mata'. He wished that every student, despite his religion and caste, must have a patriotic love and faith to the nation. The word 'Shree' is used as a word of respect in Malayalam. 'Gandhi', the father of the nation is read along with Christ. Such rare combinations can be only seen in the coinages of Bishop Jerome. He coined the Forty days fasting of the Lent season as 'Mandalopavasam'. The very word identifies the fasting of the devotees of the Hindu God Lord Ayappa, before going to Shabarimala, his abode. In the 'Bishop Benziger Hospital' founded by him, the children's ward is named as 'Shishu Deva Stanam'. The word indicates Child Jesus, but said in Malayalam. This is the very example of Indianization. He brought inculturation in naming of institutions and on representations of Mother Mary, so that the ordinary people may feel a oneness with the foreign Christian religion. This is the very purpose of Inculturation said in the Second Vatican Council.

As a promotor of Inculturation, he even brought about changes in his own lifestyle and activities. 'In every aspect, he was a good nationalist. Since patriotic love was filled in him, his lifestyle was very simple (Njan..113)'. No other Bishop led life in such a simple manner. 'The saffron robe, we wore was very noticeable (36)'. The saffron is the symbol of simple and acetic life. It is an important symbol of Indian tradition. He insisted on his laity, the importance of silent prayer. 'Through insisting silent prayer, Bishop Jerome pointed out the importance of infinity (145)'. For a successful group prayer, there is a need of the practice of silent prayer. During this, a mode of self-control and patience must be maintained. This patience and self-control must be born out of spiritual maturity. Bishop Jerome used to pray very silently in Fatima Mandir, Kollam. Many laity had seen him praying in the Mandir in Yogic position, chanting the name of Christ in the model of *bajanas* and *mantras*. He not only insisted the importance of Indianization, but also adapted it in his own practice of prayer and lifestyle. Coinages like 'Sree Yesu Maheswara'; 'Sree Yesu Deva' were given as a mode of it. Through silent prayer, he acquired a spiritual insight and experience. 'Before the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Jerome assimilated the elements of Indianization in his personal prayers and deeds (113)'. He was a true visionary of Indianization.

Bishop Jerome was a language scholar. He went deeply inside the ascetic Indian spirituality and altered the traditional liturgy customs into a simple one. 'He had a notion that, when the Catholic Church is introduced in India, it must resemble and favor Indian culture so much (Kaalathinte Karmayogi- 683)'. There was a need of vernaculization of liturgy as per the Council. For that the whole liturgy was modified. Bishop Jerome was the President of Kerala Hierarchy Liturgy Committee. In this committee, he coined words like 'Thelloru Paghalitham', 'Shakthikanmar', 'Bhakthijwalakar', and 'Bhadrasinanmar' are notable. His influence on languages and his new coinages are relevant. In reconstructing the mode of liturgy, he shared the opinion of Cardinal Joseph Puraekattil that the liturgy must contain the elements of daily routine, culture and symbols.... In my opinion, liturgy must involve the novelty must adopt the ascetic tradition of Indian culture and in this way; it must give birth to a mode of Indian liturgy. In the Pastoral Letter of the Cardinal; Liturgy Ente Drishtiyil, Cardinal Joseph Paraekattil, states that:

The various Rites were born by adopting and imbibing certain elements from many national cultures.... What we need now is a liturgy assimilating the twentieth century culture and symbols.... In my opinion, liturgy must involve the novelty of modern Indian culture..... The natives of India will accept the Catholic Church and the growth of Catholic Rite, only the liturgy must have a novelty and timely growth'. (214-215)

Bishop Jerome relied in simplifying the Latin mode of liturgy. Words and verses from Indian texts like Upanishad and Baghavat Gita can be taken into prayers. As a part of it, words like 'Eshwaran'; 'Paramatvamavu' were included in it. Screenplays for dramas and plays must be created with the help of Bible characters. He used the Hindu mode of signing keerthanas which highlights the morality and culture of Indianism. He wanted to modify Christian devotional songs with Sanskrit words and with the Indian mode of narration.

He insisted on celebrating the feast of saints and patrons of each parish with special prayers, traditions and customs. Likewise, he also insisted to give importance to Hindu festivals like Onam, Deepawali, Vijayadashami and Mahanavami. While the Holy Mass, celebration of sacraments, anointing and Eucharistic adoration, traditional Indian adorational devices like Camphor, incense, sandalwood sticks and Indian oil lamp can be used. The adoration can be executed in the manner of Bajanas. In the Christian mode of prayers, he wanted to incorporate the pilgrim journeys, the Indian mode of retreats and penance. He insisted to pray in Yogic position. This practice will create an Indian atmosphere and the main ideology of Eucharistic adoration is not affected. The adaptation of native elements should not affect the basic elements of the Rite. He wanted the New Testament to be written in the narrative mode of Kilipattu. Thus, he wants the faith of Christ to be dissolved in the Indian soil. Thus, Bishop Jerome is the true advocate of Inculturation.

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