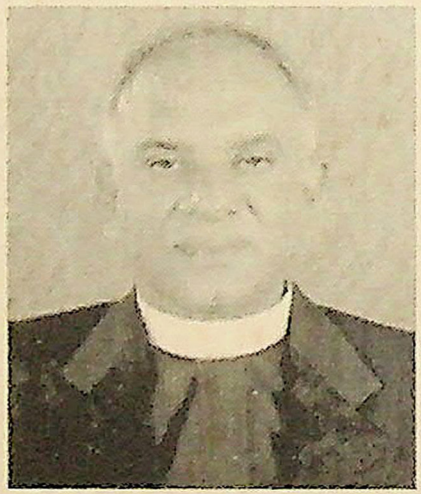
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THE PLACE OF MUSIC AND SYMBOLS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF A MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY:



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Music and symbols form an intergral part of education in any culture, as aids in communication and teaching. In India, knowledge was taught and preserved through slokas, mantras, songs and a variety of religious symbols. Jews used the medium of psalm singing in their everyday life. Chanting and symbols of worship were invariably used in churches. Different church traditions like Orthodox, Anglican and Catholic continue to use them while in the protestant tradition chanting is replaced by hymn singing. In some denominations in Kerala,the traditional church festivals are replaced by church conventions. Both of them have educational values. Education is related to the growth of a person. Religion also is concerned about growth. Hence we see that all great religious personalities are great teachers. Jesus Christ himself was a famous teacher.

Proper Educational Principles and Methods

Any religious movement is meaningless without proper educational principles and methods. In religion the main values concerned are incorporated through relevant media of music, art and architecture and the symbols. Vice versa a balanced holistic primary education needs to have art, music, religious and physical education within the content of education.

Three Dimensions of Cultural Influence

1. Tradition

Cultural attitudes of the modern man are influenced by his tradition, his surrounding environment as well as the global environment. We cannot deny our past traditions. They are at the root of our culture. Even our faith is rooted in the past. Faith of our fathers is transferred to us. The media of faith, namely art and music, are very much a part of our belief. eg: Beads and symbols of the Cross. For many people media is the message and the media of faith is faith itself . For example, if the Syrian chanting of the Orthodox Church is replaced by the Hindu "mantrocharanam"

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using Christian faith, the average worshipper who doesn't understand the language will feel that the church is turned into a temple. This will not attract the Hindus either. In popular cinemas, where they want to portray the value of goodness, often time a church may be presented with organ music, which shows the deep-rooted image of art and music within the minds of ordinary people.

2. Neighbourhood and Society

A scene of great influence is our environment. We cannot deny the fact that art and music of the area, inspite of caste, religion or culture is highly influenced by the popular religions of the area. Even prior to ecclesiastical hierarchy preaching on ecumenism, people shared each other's religion and cultural festivals. It is a common sight to see a Hindu going to a church festival or a Christian going to a Hindu festival. More than religious harmony, a festival becomes an area festival organised probably by a community of one particular religious background. Places like Velankanny, Malayattoor are examples of this in South India. People of any religion can go there, participate in the prayers and festivals. Even the famous Maramon Convention of the Mar Thoma Church on the banks of Pamba River has a place name attached to it and is not limited to Mar Thoma people alone. **Worship should be related to life and in true worship we cannot deny what happens around us. We should be able to receive the good elements from other cultures while trying to give what is good in us.**

3. Universal Cultural Context

A third dimension is that of the universal cultural context. The interaction of the different life patterns and cultural values is more than ever before in our time. Christianity has contributed greatly to the universal culture. The Church has not been a static phenomenon but has adapted greatly by accommodating and accepting the cultural heritage of the place in which it was growing. For example, Christmas is a festival celebrated all over the world by people of all creeds. In origin, it is very much a Roman Festival and it is very difficult to prove that Jesus was born

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