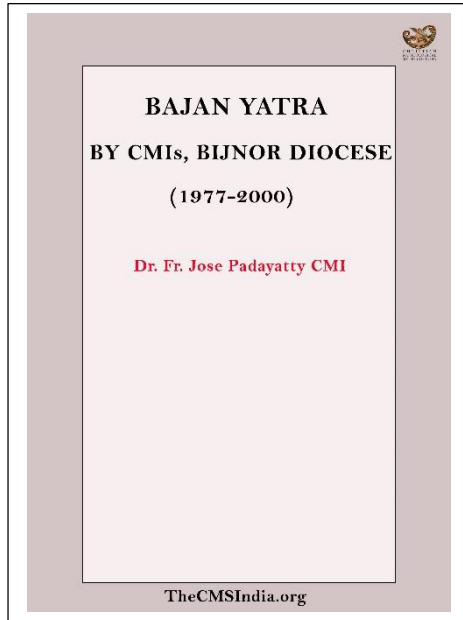


Bajan Yathra by CMIs, Bijnor Diocese



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BAJAN YATRA
BY CMIs, BIJNOR DIOCESE
(1977-2000)

Dr. Fr. Jose Padayatty CMI

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BHAJAN YATRA BY CMIs, BIJNOR DIOCESE [1977-2000]

Dr Fr Jose Padayatty CMI

At Dharmaram College our theology batch had a good group of musicians, like Fr. Joseph Palackal, Fr George Pittappilly, Fr Kuriakose Palakkatt and Fr James Nellikkunnel. I was the Choir Master. Our orchestras were appreciated by all. In our junior batches there was Fr. Raphel Kanjirathinkal, Fr Antony Urulianickal, Fr Paul Poovathinkal and Philip Panjikkaran. Fr Joseph Palackal in consultation with Fr. Mathias Mundadan initiated to bring out an LP record of Christian Bhajans which was recorded in HMV studios, Madras (Chennai). Later more Bhajans and Christian devotional songs were recorded in the Deccan studios at Bangalore.

This was the background in which we thought of venturing to come to Bijnor diocese, the Holy Land of Hindus with a Bhajan Yatra. Bishop Gratian Mundadan welcomed the idea and entrusted the responsibility of organizing it in different parts of the diocese to Fr. Varghese Kottoor who was also a good musician. Thus we, Fr Joseph Palackal, Fr George Pittappilly, Fr Kuriakose Palakkatt, Fr James Nellikkunnel, Fr Davis Manadan, Mathew Chittattil and me travelled to Bijnor in the month of April 1977. To add to our team we called Mr Mathew Napudakom a flute and Clarionette player who was well known to us as Dharmaram College and settled in Delhi. Thus we had a fully fledged team of musicians and instrumentalist who came to Bijnor. Although Hindi language was not much that we were used to singing Hindi was possible with the minimum Hindi we knew. However it was a great challenge to face the people of North India.

We reached Bijnor and stayed in the First floor of the St. Mary's School Bijnor. We started practicing the songs with the musical instruments and were ready for a one hour program after one week. Fr. George Edathiparambil and Fr Varghese Kottoor and the FCC sisters of Bijnor took care of us. Mention should be made of the enriching presence of Sr. Mariusha and Sr. Rani Maria who accompanied us to the villages.

This first music trip to Bijnor was not exactly Bhajan singing. We sang Hindi film and devotional songs, one Malayalam song and an English song. Miss Loreena, the music teacher of St. Mary's School who was a very good singer and few students from the school joined us in the major programs.

Loreena started the orchestra with the beautiful rendering of "He Malik tere bande hum" with a loud applause from the audience at the end. Fr. Joseph Palackal with his Mohamed Rafi patriotic song "Ganga meri Ma ka naam, Baap ka naam Himalay" emotionally lead the people to the Holy Ganga and the snow clad Himalayas. The School students sang an English song "Mother of mine" led by Master Manoj Kumar. In Kotdwar, one KG girl sang "kabhie kabhie mere dil me" which became a popular hit. Other Hindi songs sung by Fr George Pittappilly and Fr Jose Padayatty also were appreciated well by the audience.

We conducted programs at Vardhman College auditorium, Kalagarh Dam Colony, Cinema hall, Kotdwar, Jain Samaj Dharmashala, Najibabad, Mesmer Intercollege, Pauri and many villages of Bijnor, Nawada and Bhikkawala. This first experience of the orchestra which the people appreciated very much who are very fond of music inspired us to further venture for the later Bhajan Yatra in 1987 lead by Fr. Joseph Palackal and later in the years 1988 and 1995 by Fr. Kurian Puthenpurackal.

Fr. Anto Puthussery and me started integrated development program concentrating and adopting few villages nearby all our mission stations in August 1986. This was an attempt to shift our emphasis from the welfare and charity approach to development towards animation, motivation and empowerment.


In this connection we used to spend more than an hour in these villages discussing the problems and issues faced by the people and ending with a half to one hour of Bhajan singing and a relevant Gospel message. This become a regular feature in the villages through which our contact and interaction with the people improved day by day and the people started trusting us and participating sincerely in our activities with an increasing faith in our new approach. They were ready to sit late into the night enjoying the bhajans.

We also introduced these Bhajan singing during the Christmas carols in the nearby villages. Instead of dancing, walking and singing carols house to house to which we were familiar in Kerala, we sat for almost 2 hours singing Christmas Bhajans, reading the Nativity narrative from the Gospel and giving a Christmas message relevant to their lives.

This was the background in which we called Fr. Joseph Palackal a renowned singer to sing Bhajans in many villages near our mission stations, in 1987. Fr. Palackal together with Mrs. Jyothi Bhatt from St. Joseph's School Kotdwar tuned few Bhajans on the occasion more appealing to the people. This Bhajan Yatra in the Diocese of Bijnor was a great success in the ministry of Evangelization.

Later Fr. Kurian Puthenpurackal another renowned singer followed up the Bhajan Yatra in the different villages, when I called him in the year 1988 and 1995 while doing his music studies in Delhi. He was very positive in responding on both the occasions and spent almost a month with us in going to the villages with Bhajan Singing.

The village people of North India have a fond attachment to Bhajan singing and satsangs. They can spend the whole night enjoying and participating in the Satsangs. Apart from the inner healing that takes place to the participants, they feel relaxed and at peace participating in it. Let us try to continue this effective ministry in North India.


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