



CHRISTIAN  
MUSICOLOGICAL  
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## Sagdīnan mār

A Christological hymn by Mar Babai the Great (ca. 551-628)

**Sagdīnan mār lālāhūsākh**

**Walnāšūākh d'lāpūlāga**

സഗ്ദീനൻ മാർ ലാലാഹൂസാക്

വൽനാശൂസാക് ദ് ലാപുലാഗാ

**Translation:** We adore, my Lord, your inseparable divinity and humanity.

Or

We adore you, my Lord in your divinity and humanity without doubt

This is a unique hymn from the East Syriac tradition that correctly proclaims the mystery of Incarnation. This is the 18th strophe from “Brīk hannānā” (“Blessed is the merciful one”) from the night prayers for Sundays in Advent and Christmas. At some point in the history, the St. Thomas Christians started treating this couplet as a separate hymn. The performance context varied from the beginning of Qurbana on the feasts of the Lord to the conclusion of festal processions. The usual performance practice is to sing the same text and melody three times in three ascending pitch registers.

The earliest reference to this hymn in India is in the acrostic poem in Syriac, written by a Catholic St. Thomas Christian priest, Fr. Chandi Kadavil, popularly known as “Alexander the Indian” (1588- c. 1673). Fr. Kadavil wrote the acrostic hymn according to the meter and melody of “Sagdīnan mār.” It means that the hymn was already famous among the St. Thomas Christians at the dawn of the seventeenth century.

The text is Christological. This hymn may very well be the earliest on the subject of hypostatic union and Incarnation. It is, in effect, a paraphrasing of the exuberant acclamation of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India: “Mār walāh,” “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28). In those two words, the Apostle acknowledged the humanity and divinity of Christ. In the course of history, the manner of the coexistence of the humanity and divinity in the person of Christ became a topic for heated discussions that shook the foundation of the Christian religion. There is a play on the shades of meaning of the final phrase “lā pūlāga.” It can mean “without doubt,” or “without division.” Hence two translations are possible. The hymn resolves the long-standing Christological controversies (Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon). The special significance Syriac Churches in India gave to this hymn is an indication that these churches adhered to the correct Christology.

**Glossary** (courtesy: Zacharias Thundyil) Sagdīnan mār (sagdīn + an) = we adore; mār = my Lord; lālāhūsākh (l' + alāhūsā + akh) = your divinity; walnāšūākh (w' + al + nāšūsā + akh) = and your humanity; d'lāpūlāga (d' + lā + pūlāga) = that which [is] without division/ without doubt.

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