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# Editorial

The modern fickle world is constantly moving towards 'inventions of attraction'. Experts of all walks of life are experimenting to invent things and ideas that please the modern world. One can find drastic changes in science and technology, politics, education, business and management, etc., within a few decades. These changes have obviously helped the human family in various ways, especially to have a better living; however, 'the inventions of attraction' have also caused damages to societies, cultures and world at large. It has affected both the human value system and the thought patterns severely. As a result, various movements, like 'The New Nature Movement, 2017: Not Going Back to Nature, but Forward to a Nature-Rich Civilization' by Richard Louv, have enabled many people to realize how the life of human beings as well as of other species has severely been affected by the new inventions. Thus, many people from various parts of the world are shedding light to the leaders of all categories- nations, religions, organizations, etc., to promote a healthy progressivism in our thoughts and attitudes. Moreover, it is an invitation for all of us to recreate a world which becomes a better shelter for everyone.

One can find 'Inventions of attraction' not only in the secular affairs but in the religious circle also. Every religion tries to invent new ways and strategies to present its principles of faith in a more

# The Syriac Heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church: An Essential Component of the Cultural Fabric of India

- Joseph J. Palackal -

Christian Musicological Society of India

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*Abstract: The Syriac heritage of the Syro Malabar Church is an integral part of the cultural treasures of India and the world. The Syro Malabar Church (about 4 million members) is the largest among the eight churches of the St. Thomas Christians, who were evangelized by the missionary endeavors of the Aramaic-speaking Apostle Thomas. From early on, the Aramaic (Syriac) language and music played a significant role in the experience of the Christian faith in India. In spite of the challenges from Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century, the Syro Malabar Christians zealously cherished and preserved the Syriac tradition. In the following centuries, they also adopted many liturgical practices from the Roman rite by translating the respective Latin texts into Syriac, and composing them anew in Kerala, thereby adding another layer to the already vast Syriac chant repertory. With the vernacularization of the liturgy in the 1960s, however, intimacy with the Syriac tradition declined gradually. Luckily, the generation that was born during the transitional period continues to hold, albeit advancing in years, a prolific memory base of melodies and experiences associated with the Syriac tradition. With a focus on the musical and liturgical elements, this article provides an overview of the various aspects of the Syriac heritage, practical suggestions to preserve it for posterity, and recommendations to include it in our conversations on the cultural legacy of India.*

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## Introduction

On Wednesday, June 16, 2014, The New York Times carried the following news item by its staff reporter, Ellen Barry, on the first page of the International section: “New Leaders Stir Hopes for Sanskrit in India.” The team of administrators, under the leadership of the new Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was making plans to promote the study of the Sanskrit language. “In late May,” the article



items briefly. Our goal is to increase awareness and appreciation for the unique cultural heritage of Kerala, to discuss ways and means to preserve it for posterity, and to add it to the broader conversation on the wonder that is India.

## **The Aramaic Project**

With the goals mentioned above in mind, the Christian Musicological Society of India ([www.TheCMSIndia.org](http://www.TheCMSIndia.org)) embarked on the Aramaic Project, in 2012.<sup>2</sup> In the ensuing years, through the concerted efforts of several individuals, the Society has collected a vast body of information through recordings of performances and interviews of resource persons in the Syro Malabar communities in Kerala and abroad. Remarkably, the resource persons include not only priests and bishops, but also ordinary people, who are often sidetracked by official church historians. The recordings come with liner notes on the web site of the Project. The web site will also serve future scholars for a comparative study of the history of the Aramaic language and music in the Middle East and India. Besides, the archive is a current witness to the status of this Semitic language in contemporary India. The Project is also a proactive step toward passing the tradition to the present generation. Even if that attempt fails, the archive will remain as the final chapter in the centuries-long history of a language lying on its deathbed. At this juncture, it is not difficult to envision a future Kerala, where the sound of the East Syriac language is a nonentity. Appallingly, most of the members of the clergy, as well as the hierarchy of the Syro Malabar Church, seem to be already reconciled with that possibility. Using sharp-edged swords of sheer negligence, they are shredding the over-two-thousand-years long umbilical cord that connects the Sunday Eucharistic tables in their churches to the Passover meal in the Upper Room in Jerusalem that St. Thomas the Apostle shared.

The Aramaic project is only a small part of the larger project of creating a digital library of Christian music in India. Christianity in India has interacted with the cultural milieu of the country and has assumed an identity of its own, unlike anywhere else in the world. This unique identity is evident in the various styles of music and lyrics in multiple languages in different parts of India. The ultimate goal of the Christian Musicological Society of India is to collect as many samples as possible and make them available to scholars for further research. These materials are a goldmine for researchers on

# Bishop Mar Chandy Parambil -1687



- Bp. Gregory Karotemprel CMI -

Mar Chandy Parambil of Kuravilangad is the first native of Malabar to become bishop of the St. Thomas Christians. We do not have much information about his early life. Mar Chandy belonged to the Parambil family at Kuravilangad. One Kuriakose Parambil married into Kudukkassery family. The son born to the couple later became the bishop Chandy. He was born in Muttuchira. As a priest, he was the Vicar of Kuravilangad parish.

Mar Chandy died in 1687 and was buried at Kuravilangad. It is believed St. Thomas ordained bishops and priests for the communities he established in India. But we do not have any historical record regarding the immediate successor of St. Thomas who ruled us. From 4<sup>th</sup> century bishops from Persian Church came and ruled us.

## **The Background in which Bishop Chandy became first native Bishop of St. Thomas Christians.**

As we know with the Synod of Diamper in 1599 the Latin missionaries took over the administration of our Church. By the so-called Coonan Cross Oath of 1653 vast majority of St. Thomas Christians rebelled against the jurisdiction of Archbishop Francis Gracia S.J. Twelve simple priests consecrated Archdeacon Thomas as their “Bishop” of course invalidly, in a ceremony at Alangad on May 22, 1653. He took effective charge of the Church. Only a small minority remained on the side of Archbishop Gracia. Then Holy See sent two Discalced Carmelites as Apostolic Commissaries. Fr.

# Mar Ivanios and Bethany Movement



- Sr. Gifty, SIC -

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## Introduction

God, who revealed himself to human beings through various means, sent his own Son in the fullness of time and now He continues His mission through various chosen people. (Heb 1:1) He blesses mankind through them. God, when He called Abraham, said that he would be a blessing. The call of everyone, chosen by God, is to be a blessing. Archbishop Mar Ivanios was such a man chosen by God.

His contribution to the ecclesial communion and reunion has paved the way for a new horizon in the Church. Mar Ivanios was instrumental in the renaissance of the Malankara Church.<sup>1</sup> The theological position of Malankara Catholic Church as an individual Church in the Catholic communion was built upon the common fountain of revelation given forth by its founder Mar Ivanios, and that was based on the foundation of Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition. The splendor of his saintly life and the depth of his ecclesial as well as ecclesiastical life become more and more inspiring and striking to the people at large everywhere. His tireless strive for the truth made him think about the true Church, and his firm decision to stand with the truth made him the founder of the Reunion movement even amidst great pressures both from his own fellow beings and also from outside.

He founded Bethany movement, the *Sanyasa* movement for the first time in the Malankara Orthodox Church, for leading a radical life amidst of all these adversaries.<sup>2</sup> Bethany, as a unique movement that paved a way to the social, missionary and religious changes in the



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St. Mariam Thresia  
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