



CHRISTIAN  
MUSICOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF INDIA

**SOME  
SELECTED CANONS FROM THE SYNODS  
OF THE CHURCH OF THE EAST**

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## INTRODUCTION.

*A few canons concerning the election, consecration etc of Patriarchs, Metropolitans and Bishops of the Church of the East.*

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*We have of late come across a pamphlet "Rules collected from the Synhados (Canonical Law) of the Church of the East and Patriarchal Decrees" supposed to have been published by H. H. Mar Eshai Shimon Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East, for the information of our congregation in America, but circulated in India too. The subject is, as is evident from the title, some canons quoted from different synods. But prominence seems to have been given to one Canon of the synod of Mar Dadeesho, which states 'whatever a Patriarch does, should not be questioned or judged by anybody.' But we should like to present before you some canons which we had the good fortune to read and digest.*

*Whatever a Patriarch does, nobody should question or judge" means that a Patriarch is never expected to do anything contrary to the laws of the church. Therefore so far as the activities and dealings of any Patriarch are lawful and canonical nobody will dare and nobody has any right to oppose and complain. But, if it happens that any Patriarch does anything contrary to the laws and canons, we see canons restricting and judging him. For, by the synods, nobody is exempted from the scope and operation of the laws—not even the Patriarch. If a Patriarch could not be judged by the canons, the holy synods would not have formulated rules and canons for his judgement. Such canons are still existing and in force and have not as yet been counteracted by later synods.*

*These canons have authority to judge any man from the Patriarch to the lowest member of the congregation according to his misdeeds and the canon concerned, as we learn from the canons quoted below. They are many in number but we have selected a few only for the general information of our congregation. Some of these canons were formulated after the synod of Mar Dadeesho.*

*We pray and request His Holiness in all sincerity and humility to enlighten us as to which of these canons—that of Mar Dadeesho or of others—is to be rejected or accepted.*

*An article "Assyrian Patriarch" by Mr. J. A. Douglas is given as appendix which will throw some light on the matter,*

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## Canons regarding the consecration of Patriarchs and Bishops.

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- i. **The first General Council—from the collection of Mar Oudeesho, Metropolitan of Suva and Armenia (Page 96) Chapter IV.**

No Episcopa, while alive, is allowed to appoint a successor for his See, either from his disciples or from those who are nearby in relationship to him, or from the rich people of the city.

It has pleased the General Synod to decide that no Episcopa is permitted, while alive, to chose any man to succeed after him. Again no congregation is allowed, as a custom, to elect any man from the leaders and rich people to be their Episcopa; but when their Bishop is demised and is departed from this world, they must find out a man from the clergy or from the monks or from the laity who are educated and of good deeds, though he is a stranger. (This means only that they are not in orders, but not strangers as such). But there is no stranger in the church to be the Episcopa of that See. The same is also applicable to the rich people, if he is worthy. And (when offered) he must not decline it.

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ii. **FROM THE SYNOD OF  
MAR GHEEVARGHESE CATHOLICOS.  
CANON III.**

*Regarding the election of Church Ministers:-*

Persons of good deeds and who have a fair knowledge about the teachings of the truth of the faith

and who are competent enough to execute their duties should be elected. It should not be extended to persons, as respectors of persons (hypocrites) do, and it should not be by crooked gifts offered for receiving the service of the Apostleship wherein is hidden the salvation of mankind. But when a Bishop of a certain diocese is dead and passed away from the life of this world, arrangements must be made for the election of another one, as stipulated by the canons of our blessed forefathers. Thus according to the Law of the Apostles, the election for the service of priesthood must be made with the general consent. He should be elected because of his good and excellent deeds, and the faithful clergy of the Episcopal Council, should intimate the case to the Metropolitan to make him know who the person is whom they suggest to be elected for this service and to be known and consecrated. His case should be submitted to the Patriarch communicating with the will of the congregation to the Patriarch and according to his command, the consecration may be conducted and it should be done with all necessary arrangements. But with human tendencies and hypocritical means, to conduct the election of a person for divine service, by corruption, bribery and crooked gifts is unlawful and such elections as this will be invalid by the terrible words of our Lord.

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iii. FROM THE SYNOD OF MAR ISAAC  
CATHOLICOS COMPILED BY MAR OUDEESHO

*(Page 108)*

If a Catholicos, Metropolitan or Episcopa is found to be impure in faith and of a tendency to follow the heretical teachings, and in his movings and

dealings he is hard and truthless and behaves himself contrary to the vocation, he has been called for, and does not keep up the dignity as is expected of him for the fear of God and he is being the cause of ruin from inside and outside, he must be suspended from his rank and exiled, for. Such destruction shall be spread amongst many others as well.

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iv. CANON VI (*Page 108*)

If, when a complaint is brought to the Catholicos, Metropolitan, Episcopa, Archdeacon or Priyadotha, he counteracts the judgement while he is fully certain on whose side the justice remains, for the sake of bribery, respect of persons, or friendship or because of fear or of the greatness of personality, he should be suspended and should not be allowed to function as his rank requires, after enquiry of his dealings and is found deserving of suspension, but should not be exiled.

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v. THE SYNOD OF EKENIA (IN ANTIOCH)  
CANON XXIII.

It is not right and just for an Episcopa while he is alive, to appoint one to succeed him.

There is no permission for an Episcopa to appoint one, while he is alive, to succeed him on his demise and departure from this world. If it so happened, such a consecration is invalid, because it is essential to honour and observe the Canons of the Church which command that there should be none other but by the Episcopal Council and its enquiry, for they are the people authorised to bring one who is worthy for the consecration after his death.

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vi. CONCERNING THE ELECTION OF  
EPISCOPAS AND THE CONCECRATION BY  
METROPOLITANS

(From the collections of Mar Oudeesho)

When an Episcopa of any country, consecrated for that place dies, the Metropolitan of that diocese is authorised to summon all the Episcopas under him to that city (place) and ask and enquire about the man (candidate) from the general public whether he has any care for the poor, whether he receives the strangers, whether he encourages the suffering people; whether he maintains orphans and widows, whether he lends his money on interest and whether he receives bribes. Further he should not be a hypocrite in judgement and should be one who gives off his pomp and pride and keeps far from loving and growing his own belly. He must be educated by word and wisdom and should be studying divine scriptures day and night. He must have a knowledge and mind for discrimination and to correct all the duties of the services. While conducting this enquiry all the Bishops of the Church of Lord must be with him and in front of the altar of Christ and at the time of the preparation of the Holy Communion, must place on his head the Gospel and they all must place their hands as well on him, while the Head (the senior in consecraation) says 'the Imposition of Hands' on him After that the consecrated one must go to the great Catholicos Patriarch of "Selucia—Otesiphone" carrying documentary proof from those who consecrated him, for obtaining confirmation.

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vii. THE SYNOD OF MAR YOUSIP  
CATHOLICOS AND THE BISHOPS WITH HIM.

CANON IV.

Again it is stated by the council that when an Episcopa of one of the countries passes away the congregation of the locality are split into parties, each one, because of human tendancies and covetness, trying to assert and acheive their own desires (being carried out.) The laity and even some of the clergy and monks are gathering round these and taking part with them, without the faithful clergy and Bishop of the diocese. These people, in secret, between themselves, are making elections for the person whom they want and swear and promise saying that "until death we wont give up our idea", Because of such incidents many a time, many a confusion and heavy destruction have been caused to the Church in general. Therefore we decide against those who will create such an atmosphere that they are cursed and suspended from all communion of the Holy Mysteries and from associating with the faithful. As for the person whom they have been supporting, though he was ignorant of what they have done, but afterwards came to know and gave his assent wantonly for the same, he too must be suspended from all the mingling in church affairs, as is worthy of his foolishness. If he has deliberately encouraged and influenced the people to do so and if he is not prepared to retract from this point of view he is untied, emptied and dismantled from the rank he has thus received

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### viii. CANON VII OF THE SAME SYNOD.

Again it is stated that persons who are entrusted with the great rank of Fatherhood (i. e. Patriarchate) are doing things quite autocratically (i. e. from themselves by themselves) by writing, folding and sealing (letters) not showing them to the Bishops nor reading them in their presence, but asking them to sign them. If they refused to acquiesce some false charges are framed against them and they curse them and deprive them of their bishoprics.

Concerning this we have decided that whatever the Metropolitan or Patriarch does, must be done through the general council of the Bishops. Because the more Bishops there are in the council, the better will it be confirmed and purified and trusted (what they are doing.) But if the subject is so urgent and necessary that delay till the Bishops assemble could not be brooked and if the subject is most important and necessary which does not allow delay and if waiting for the arrival of the Bishops will cause destruction, because of the emergency of the case, nothing should be done without a council of at least three Bishops, for the council of three Bishops may be considered as a General Council according to the saying of our Lord Jesus Christ who has said "If two or three gather in my name, there in their midst will I be" If any dare to do otherwise he is guilty unto the judgement which will be pronounced against him by the General Council.

### ix. CANON XIV OF MAR YOUSIP CATHOLICOS

This too is stated that when the Father of Fathers who is the Patriarch dies, he who is to be elected

for the Greatness of the Fatherhood of Priesthood must be elected by all general consent. It is necessary that all Metropolitans should take part in his consecration, either in person or by writing, if the time is peaceful and if there are no difficulties or fear to delay this. But in case it happens to be at a time of confusion, revolution and disturbance for christianity from outsiders, out of necessity, by the consent of two Metropolitans, he may be consecrated immediately as the Head and General Governor that the sufferings and persecutions and struggles of Christianity by those who are against, may not be increased and by those who are called Christians by name but are mischief-mongers may not be created any split or parties amongst them as it happened in our time. Therefore, we decide with a good mind and just aim, which is far from hypocrisy and human concerns, that the clergy and faithful of both the cities of Selucia-Ctesiphon with the Bishops of the diocese of the See should elect the Head (Patriarch) by the consent of two Metropolitans and all the other dioceses must accept, with a clear mind and happiness, the one who is elected to be for them Head and Governor by the grace of Holy Ghost.

They, as disciples of justice must offer the honour which is due for the children to pay by way of homage and writings honouring the Spiritual Father who is Patriarch. Even he, in the same way, must honour his brother Episcopas and children in spirit. In case that one of the dioceses stands against this, a hard and strong judgement should be given against it by all the other dioceses, for if by their audacity they have longed their hands against the head they will dare to do so against those who are below them.

## x. SYNOD OF MAR EZKIEL. CANON XXIX

About the wealth, property and other belongings of the Church and monasteries which come under the management of **Episcopas**.

The synod decided that the faithful clergy and the prominent people of the diocese must know about the above, that there should not be any loss to the church after the death of **Episcopas**, from this world. While he is alive the people must know of it and by his command must be kept and managed so that if anything belongs to the **Episcopa** he is free to give it to anybody he wishes and nobody should squander it in the name of the Church. But the things belonging to the Church must be set aside, watched and controlled very carefully that the belongings of the **Episcopa** must be for him and if he wants to give it to anybody in whom he is pleased he may do so. In between the church and the **Episcopa** none should misappropriate anything, sinning thereby.

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## xi. CANON XXX

This also is brought to the notice of the Synod. Some people, sometimes were consecrated to the Church ranks of **Episcopacy** and they used to take from the church properties and give them to their neighbours, to please them, thus leaving the church uncared for. The means which were intended for the maintenance of the clergy and monks from the Church were stopped. Therefore the Synod decided that the **Episcopas** have no right to take the things from the church and give them to their relatives or anybody else. Making this a reason they should

never refuse to take care of the church. But from the things they owned for themselves and was known before that it was theirs before they became Episcopas, they have a right to give to those whom they are pleased with.

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APPENDIX.

## ASSYRIAN PATRIARCH

Sir, — Those of your readers who can remember the twenties, will know of the great service which, in its love for England and her Church, the Assyrian Nation rendered to the British Army in its march to Bagdad, and the price they paid for it.

The occasion of my writing this letter is the arrival of his Beatitude the Assyrian Patriarch and Catholicos of the East, on August 17, to be present at the birth of and to baptize the first child, a girl, of his brother Major Sargon Pasha, who in world-war II won the DCM fighting in our Cypriot lines.

If the child had been a boy, he would have been potentially dedicated from birth (if he rose to his vocation) to be the future Patriarch. As it is, the girl will be potentially desired to fulfil the unique function as a celibate woman leader of the Assyrians which Sama Kharam has fulfilled in the past fifty years, and to which the Patriarch's sister, Provena Kharam, was potentially dedicated to succeed at her birth.

What I hope is that your readers will pray and work that the Assyrians and their Church be not forgotten.

Athenaeum, S. W. I.

J. A. DOUGLAS.

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