

LITURGY OF THE HOURS & ITS THEOLOGY

(ST 32) Cr.3

INTRODUCTION

1. ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS

a. Origin of Liturgy of the Hours

Temple

Synagogue

Home

In the first century A.D

Clement of Alexandria

Tertullian (d. after 220) in Apology 16: Ad nations 1:13

Cyprian (d. ca.258)

The apostolic tradition

b. Evolution of Liturgy of the Hours

i. Cathedral

ii. Egyptian monastic

iii. Urban monastic

iv West Syrian Tradition...

(Explain with the help of *S'himo*).

2. THEOLOGY OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Liturgical terminologies

3. LITURGY, THE EXPRESSION OF DOCTRINE

1. Liturgy and the Trinitarian Doctrine

2. Christological motive of Liturgy

3. Mariological themes

4. Pneumatological motive of Liturgy

5. Ecclesial Motive of Liturgy

6. Eschatological motive

4. CERTAIN SYMBOLICAL THEMES IN THE ORIENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Evening and the Darkness

Lilyo

Morning-dawn

Themes of the liturgical Hours

Ordo

Themes of the days and hours

Prostration / Kneeling

Incensing

Liturgical space

➤ Vat. II on Sacred Liturgy (No. 14-17; 83-100) – assignment as discussion

5. *BHAKTI YOGA* AND *JNANA YOGA* CONCEPTS IN THE HYMNS OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS

a. *Bhakti yoga* (path of devotion/love)

i. *Vatsalya Bhakti* model

ii. Bridal model

iii. *Guru-Sishya* model

iv. Penitential model

b. *Jnana yoga* (path of Knowledge)

i. Creator-creature model

ii. Light analogy

6. Hymns are the interpretation of the signs of the time

Mar Ephrem (306-373):

Simeon of Gesir /*Semaoon Quqoyo* (1<sup>st</sup> half, 6<sup>th</sup> century)

## LITURGY OF THE HOURS & ITS THEOLOGY

(ST 32) Cr.2

### INTRODUCTION

“The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night-to-night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world” (Psalms 19, 1-4).

For praising God words are unimportant because the ‘whole being’ praises God. Words cannot comprehend the ‘whole being’. The ‘whole being’ becomes the ‘speechless speech’ and through this speechless speech it praises its ‘cause of being’. The whole cosmos praises God without words, but through its own ‘music’. It is the ‘worship’ of the cosmos. Praise has a meaning that transcends our comprehension. Praise determines the being. A sculpture praises the artistic talent and phantasy of the artist. The whole creation praises its creator. A beautiful rose flower in the garden praises the Gardner. When this praise is expressed through words and symbols it becomes worship, liturgy, liturgy of the Hours (*divine office*).

What is liturgy?

The Church views the Liturgy as the expression of her faith, her *lex credendi*.

“The West Syrian fathers have not given a definition of liturgy. Perhaps it is felt unnecessary to define something self-evident, and so intimate to one’s experience. For the west Syrians, worship is the vocation of man, the very purpose for which he was created. He was created to live in communion with God, as a liturgical being. This idea is fundamental to understanding the meaning of *leitourgia*, as lived and expressed by the West Syrian tradition. Liturgy is not something external to Christian witness. It is not an ‘accessory’, but an essential element of the Christian tradition.” (Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, p 8). He explains Psalms 139:5 further to support this view. “*You created me and placed your hand upon me*” The Syriac phrase ‘placed your hands upon me’ can also mean you have ordained me (as a priest). Therefore according to the West Syrian tradition Adam was created as a priest, with a vocation to stand before God and behalf of the whole creation (Cf. M. Wurmbrand, *Homilie de Jacques de Saroug sur la mort d’Aaron*, *L’ Orient Syrian*, 196, 255-78). “Worship is the expression of our longing to live in communion with God, and to regain our former inheritance and dwelling place” (Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, p 8). The theology of the liturgy is in its contents which include hymns, readings and prayers.

The liturgy is that system of prayers and rites traditionally canonised by the Church as her own prayer and worship- Louis Bouyer.

[Indebted to: Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical theology*]

## 7. ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS

### c. Origin of Liturgy of the Hours

The Church is a worshipping community. Israel as the fore - shadow of the Church was in essence a worshipping community. In this worshipping community the folk of Yahweh sings and praises Him who is the ground of being. Many of the psalms are composed in the context of worship. Happiness, thanks, victory, fear of enemy, spiritual indifference, anxieties, repentance etc. can be traced in the psalms. These are composed in such a manner that they can be used in feast days, during pilgrimage, victory in war and in the days of danger. Even though most of the psalms are attributed to King David, from the context it becomes clear that they are composed in a context of worship.

Psalms of praises are sung during sacrifices, procession etc. They begin with the invitation for praising God and they narrate the reason for praising God. Ps. 8, 19, 29, 33, 46, 47, 48, 76, 84, 87, 93, 96-100, 103-106, 113, 114, 117, 122, 135, 136, 145-150 There are psalms in praise of Kings and there are psalms in proclaiming the coming of the Saviour: Ps. 2, 18, 20, 21, 28, 45, 61, 63, 72, 89, 101, 132. Psalms of lamentation are also sung in the worshipping community of Israel. In catastrophes and dangers in groups or as individual they pleaded for Yahweh's help. There were national lamentations during the time of defeat in war, natural catastrophes, draughts etc. sickness, fear of the enemies etc. were the theme of individual lamentation: 3, 5-7, 13,17,22,25,26,28,31,35,38, 42-43, 51,54-57,59,63,64,69,71,77,86,102, 130, 140-143. In thanksgiving for the favours received they went to the temple of God and praised God. All the psalms portray the relationship between Yahweh and His people. The Jews had a custom of praying at fixed times or *set times*'. There were different schools of thought: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes.

Jews prayed at *set times*. The first Jewish Christian converts may even have recited the same prayers at the same time as their Jewish contemporaries. Morning and evening seem to have been the most constant and important hours of Jewish prayer. This shows that the Jewish Christians used the Old Testament types and even texts as the stuff of their prayers (cfr: Robert Taft. *The Liturgy of the Hours in the Christian Orient*).

Jewish prayer is centred in Temple, Synagogue and home.

**Temple:** There were two daily sacrifices in the Temple - morning and evening. In the NT we read that the first Christian community was continually praising God in the temple (Lk.24:53). "And day by day attending the temple together... (Acts 2:46). These Christians gathered at the portico of Solomon to preach Jesus Christ and the other Jews persecuted them for it. This shows that the text they used there was not of Jews and they did not follow the Jewish cult.

**Synagogue:**\*It is not clear what synagogue prayer comprised during the first Christian century, or on how many days it was held. But there were public synagogue services

---

\* Synagogues do not figure in the OT literature. There were different opinions as to just when they came into existence. As the Greek root of their name indicates (syn=together; agein=to lead, to bring). They were meeting places where people gather together not to sacrifice but to pray, meditate or to devout in reading the scriptures. They certainly existed in the post-exilic period and it seemed to be an institution during the exile when the people were cut off from the temple... its origin remains obscure.

at least on market days (Monday and Thursday) and of course on Sabbath. Beckwith postulates a pattern of four services: Morning Prayer, additional prayer (at any hour), afternoon prayer and evening prayer. On Sabbath there were morning and afternoon services. St. Luke. 4:16-30 gives evidence of Jesus' participation in one such service. St. Paul frequented the local synagogues on his missionary journeys before 61 AD, but as then text shows he went there to preach Christ and he was persecuted for that (Act.9:20-23; 13:5-14: 7; 16:13-24; 17: 1-17; 18:4-19; 19:8-10). This indicates to the fact that there was hardly any evidence for Christian worship in the synagogues. It seems that they themselves had formed a synagogue of themselves. The letter of St. James addressing Jewish converts, around 49-58 AD, refers to 'your synagogue' (2:2), and later (around 70-80) in Mathew's Gospel Jesus advises his followers to pray at home rather than in the synagogue (6:5-6), and this apparently leads to the fact that there was tension between synagogue and church at that time (10:17; 23:34).

**Home** It is very clear from the scriptures that they were gathered in homes and prayed (Acts 1:14), and that this prayer was sometimes in common, in private homes (Acts 2:1, 46; 4:23-31; 12:5,12). There are several distinct systems that can be taken as evidence. Recitation of the *Schema* at the beginning and end of the day: it is more a creed than a prayer, comprised four passages summarising the Law-the Decalogue, Deuteronomy (6.4-9; 11:13-21) and Numbers (15:37-41). These pericopes were preceded by two benedictions of thanksgiving, for creation and for revelation. The whole prayer session was concluded by benediction in thanksgiving for redemption from Egypt and, in the evening, by a prayer for rest. *Tefillah* or benedictions was the prayer par excellence of Jews, which was recited privately three times a day (Dan 6:10). It seems that the Qumran community (Essenes) also prayed three times a day - morning, noon and in the evening.

Christian fathers as Clement and Origen testifies to the prayer of thrice – daily. Flavius Josephus (37BC—ca. 101 AD), in his Jewish Antiquities 4, 21ff refers to prayers in morning and evening.

**In the first century A.D** the *Didache*\* refers to a system of daily prayer in the primitive Church (Didache 8) that tells the Matthean 'Our Father' with the doxology, 'For yours is the power and the glory unto ages', followed by the rubric: 'pray thus three times a day'. Clement of Rome's first letter to the Corinthians give witness to the fact that the primitive Church has prayed at 'set times'.

We should do in order everything that the Lord commanded us to do at set times (*kata kairous tetagmenous*). He has ordered oblations (*prosporas*) and services (*leitourgias*) to be accomplished, and not by chance and in disorderly fashion but at the set times and hours (*orismenois kairois kai horais*)... (1 Clem. 40:1-4).

Another instance:

---

The 'Church Rules' regulated the whole liturgical life or its important parts, especially the liturgical services. These writings are attributed to the Apostles.

\**Didache*: (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century). They are called teaching of the 12 Apostles. They contain the materials from 1<sup>st</sup> century. Most probably they have a Syrian geographical background.

*Die Syrische Didaskalie*: From the first half of 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is of Syrian origin. The Greek original is lost. What remains is a Latin version.

*Traditio Apostolica*: This writing is called the Egyptian Church Rules. This is identical to the 'apostolic tradition' of Hyppolitus of Rome, around 220AD.

Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually manifests to us the resurrection to come, whose first fruits he made Christ by raising him from the dead. We see, beloved, that the resurrection was accomplished according to the time. Day and night make visible to us a resurrection. Night goes to sleep, the day rises; the day departs, the night follows (1 Clem. 24:1-3).

In the third century only we see set times for prayer at the third, sixth and ninth hours, as well as on rising, before retiring and during the night.

**Clement of Alexandria** insists that the true Christian must pray always. It became clear from what he said that the fixed time for prayer were already an established custom in some circles. The Gnostic tradition of unceasing prayer also had an influence. In *Stromata* vii, 7, 43:6-7, Clement witnesses the early Christian custom of orientation in prayer, based on the theme of Christ, light of the World and Sun of Justice, symbolized by Sun rising in the East. Dawn is the image of the day of birth, and the place from where the light, which shone forth first from the darkness, increases, there has also dawned on those wrapped in darkness a day of the knowledge of truth; prayers. Clement is also our patristic witness to the eschatological character of Christian prayer at night. This is also a trait of Christian vigils.

**Origen** (d. ca. 254): (in his treatise *On Prayer* 32) He also refers to the custom of praying facing East, "Looking towards where the true light rises." In chapter 12:2 he referred to only four hours of daily prayer: morning, noon, evening and night.

**Tertullian** (d. after 220) in *Apology* 16: Ad nations 1:13). We find the first description of what was to become by the end of the fourth century the classic system of Christian daily prayer: obligatory prayer at the beginning and end of each day, with prayer highly recommended also at the third, sixth and ninth hours and at night. Chapter 25 of his treatise *On Prayer*, written between 198-204:

Concerning the time [of prayer]. I mean those common hours that mark the intervals of the day: the third, sixth and ninth, which are found to have been more solemn in the scriptures. At the third hour the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the gathered disciples (Acts 2:15). Peter on the day he experienced the vision of the whole community in that small vessel, had gone upstairs to pray at the sixth hour (Acts 10:9). The same one was going into the temple with John at the ninth hour when he restored the paralytic to health (Acts 3:1). Although these hours simply exist without any command for their observance, still it is good to establish a presumption that might reinforce the admonition to pray, and tear us away from our affairs for this duty as if by law, so that we at least pray not less than three times a day, which, as we read, Daniel also observed in accord, certainly, with Israel's discipline. Of course this is in addition to the obligatory prayers, which are owed without any admonition at the beginning of light and of night.

Tertullian even advises Christians to say prayer before and after meals or before going for bath... The two statutory prayers in the morning and evening probably referred to two daily sacrifices in the temple. Tertullian was in the opinion that Christians have chosen the day hours as prayer times because they were signalled publicly: "these three hours, as more significant in human affairs, which divide the day, distinguish business affairs, which resound publicly..." Twelve hours were normal divisions of the day as we see the parable of the labours in the vineyard (Mat 20:3-5). As we see in the patristic text the four watches of the night, it was customary to divide these twelve hours into groups of threes. Thus the third, sixth and ninth hours became the normal points of reference in the ancient world especially in Rome.

**Cyprian (d. ca.258)**: in his treatise *On the Lord's Prayer*, written about 250, confirms

Tertullian's testimony concerning the prayer system of the third century North African Church (cf. p.21). Like Tertullian, Cyprian uses Daniel, various other texts of the Old Testament, the image of the Trinity and the traditional texts of Acts support the custom of praying at the third, sixth and ninth hours (Acts 10:9; 3:1; 2:15; Dan 6:10, 13).

The apostolic tradition (ca. 215): A third century liturgical source, Greek text written presumably by Hippolytus of Rome around 215, an early morning catechetical instruction:

The faithful as soon as they have woken and got up, before they turn to this work, shall pray to God, and so hasten to their work. If there is any verbal instruction, one should give preference to this, and go and hear the Word of God, to the comfort of his soul. Let him hasten to the Church, where the spirit flourishes.

**The apostolic tradition\*** refers to the prayer of the third, sixth and ninth hours. It also speaks of the prayer before going to bed and midnight prayer (p.25, 26). From the North Africans and the Apostolic Tradition we get the full series of hours:

- On rising
- [common catechesis in Ap. Trad.]
- 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> hours
- Common evening agape
- On retiring
- During the night (midnight and cockcrow)

There is no evidence for what kind of prayer service they had used. From the writings of Eusebius and Tertullian it can be derived that they used hymns and psalms for the prayer services.

To sum up: In this period –evening and morning, at the setting and rising of the sun remind us of Jesus' Passover from death to life. Clement, Origen and Tertullian used the symbolism of Christ as Sun of Justice and Light of the world, as well as the eschatological expectation of the second coming of the Lord ("for as the lightning comes from the East and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the son of man" (Matt 24:27). Christians prayed whether they did it alone or in company depended not on the nature of the prayer, but on who happened to be around when the hour for the prayer arrived.

#### **d. Evolution of Liturgy of the Hours**

During the reign of Constantine (313) the Church acquired freedom in all the public ministries. The worship that was a secluded affair of a persecuted minority became an integral part of the daily public life of the Roman Empire. The change that occurred in the Church is not revolutionary but evolutionary- evolution of that which was already practiced. The development of the office in this period is to be taken as three types:

**i. Cathedral, ii. Egyptian monastic and iii. Urban monastic.** The first two evolved simultaneously from the mid-fourth century. The third is a synthesis of the two, which is visible in the last quarter of the same century.

**i Cathedral...** It is the office of the secular churches. It was not called *parochial* because for centuries it was the bishop's church that was the centre of all liturgical life. This was a popular service characterised by symbol and ceremony (light, incense, procession etc.), chant, different ministers -- bishop, priest, deacon,

---

\*Third century liturgical source, a Greek text presumably written by Hippolytus of Rome (ca.220).

reader etc. it was mainly a service of intercession not a liturgy of the Word. There were no scriptural lessons in the normal cathedral office except in Egypt and Cappadocia, if at all they were later development. Eusebius is the first witness to the cathedral office.

Athanasius of Alexandria (295-373) testifies that the cathedral vigils were attended by monks as well as laity, which comprised readings, responsorial psalmody and prayers. In the canons of Hippolytus, a medieval Arabic document around 336-340, it is written: *Canon 21* 'Concerning the gathering of all the priests and people in the church everyday. Let the priests gather in church every day, and the deacons, sub deacons, readers and all the people, at cockcrow. They shall do the prayers, the psalms and the reading of the books and the prayers'. From this it is clear that there was no daily Eucharist in Egypt in this period. The word of God was an integral part of the cathedral office in Egypt. In Cappadocia the cathedral office was with lucernarium-with light, which was adapted from the pagan rite. In Cyprus Epiphanius (ca. 315-403), a monk in Judea for thirty years before becoming bishop of Salamis, also refers to the "morning hymns and prayers".

It is from Antiochia that we get a very strong evidence for the cathedral offices. Chrysostom in Antioch around 390 gives the motivation for the two daily cathedral synaxes in his *Baptismal Catechesis* VIII.17-18

The morning hour of prayers was a service of thanks and praise for the new day and for salvation in Christ Jesus. The vespers were the Christian way of closing it, thanking God for the day's graces, asking God's pardon for the day's faults and beseeching His grace and protection for a safe and sinless night. The basic symbol of both services was light. The evening lamp recalled the Johannine "light of the world" shining amidst the darkness of sin. Christians did it in common because as Chrysostom and the *apostolic constitutions* affirm, their sole power was the body of Christ. To absent oneself from the synaxes is to weaken the body and deprive the head of his members.

### ii Egyptian monastic...

The Egyptian monastic office in the 4<sup>th</sup> century

While the cathedral liturgy was flourishing in the secular churches, a parallel series of offices was evolving in monastic centres that had sprung up in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Syria and Cappadocia at the same time. These monastic offices can be divided into two families: 1) the pure monastic office of the Egyptian desert and 2) the hybrid office of urban monasticism.

In the fourth century, morning and evening were the two obligatory offices.

There are different traditions of office among them the **Pachomian** Office was a prominent one. The cenobitic foundation initiated by Pachomius around 320-346 was very strict in the office. In the *Precepts of Our Father Pachomius*-Ch.8 describes an office as psalmody, prayer and reading. "If it happens that during the psalmody or the prayer or in the midst of reading anyone laughs or speaks, he shall unfasten his belt immediately and with the neck bowed down he shall stand before the altar and be rebuked by the superior of the monastery" (p.76). In the Pachomian system the offices in the morning and the evening before retiring were held in common. The night vigil was a private practice except in Easter.

The pure monastic office was not a liturgical ceremony but a meditation in common on Sacred Scriptures. In both cathedral and monastic tradition there were two common services one in the beginning and one at the end of the day. The Lower Egyptian monks went to bed at nightfall and rose again after a brief rest. So their



morning office actually began in the second half of the night and was over by dawn. The monks just began the day earlier because they slept less. So it is not always right to take the monastic nocturnal prayer for the common night vigils.

**iii Urban monastic...** In the urban centres the liturgy of the hours was evolved into three steps further: 1) they had filled out the daily horarium by creating common synaxes or formal liturgical hours - the 'little' or 'day hours' of Christian private prayer 2) they made a synthesis of cathedral and monastic usage by adopting elements of cathedral morning prayer and evensong, while retaining the continuous monastic psalmody at the beginning and end of the monastic order of the day. 3) They introduced a new office – a bedtime prayer duplicating vespers in both the cathedral and pure monastic offices.

#### **iv West Syrian Tradition...**

This tradition includes the Syrian Orthodox in the Patriarchate of Antioch and in India and the Syro-Malankara Catholics. (The Maronite Rite, once considered a Latinized variant of the Syro-Antiochene tradition managed to establish themselves independently of the Greek speaking coastline and to preserve their ancient Syriac usage. Later, most of these Syriac-speaking Chalcedonians were Byzantinised, however the monks who had taken refuge in the mountains of Lebanon preserved the ancient Syriac tradition).

The Maronite and the West Syrian tradition have the seven canonical hours: Nocturnes (Lylyo), Matins (*safro*), Terce (3<sup>rd</sup> hour), Sext (6<sup>th</sup> hour), None (9<sup>th</sup> hour), Vespers (*Ramsho/Santhyā*), and Compline (Suthoro).

(Explain with the help of *S'himo*).

Influence of monastic tradition... The monastic movement swept the fourth century world giving a thrust on personal edification in Christian worship. There were private meetings, agape etc. but these were not common assemblies. The private prayers, which were developed by the monks in the fourth century, led to the introduction of services of praise into the public worship of the secular churches. The older worship was ecclesial in nature. The new offices, though done in common, are intended chiefly for the devotion of the individual worshipper.

## **8. THEOLOGY OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

The Liturgy of the hours in the Antiochian tradition/Malankara tradition consists mostly of hymns composed by Mar Ephrem, Mar Balai, Mar Jacob of Sarug, Semaon Quqoyo etc. Most of these hymns are capsules of the fundamental faith of the Church. Through singing these hymns one proclaims his or her faith together with the Cosmic Church, the Universal Church. The Church that originally based on the Trinitarian theology is the major thrust of all these hymns. Christology, Mariology and Ecclesiology of the Malankara Church are portrayed in the hymns and chanting. The theology of the Orient is in its Liturgy (*locus theologicus*). The theology of the orient is to be celebrated in liturgy and in the day today life. The theology has been interpreted in the liturgical texts and hymns and they can be called the interpretations of theology or they can even be considered the commentaries of liturgy. These are called mystagoga – an introduction or initiation to the mystery. “By the third century,

the tradition to give symbolic interpretation to the rites became normal. In the fourth century, we find a distinction between the catechetical homilies addressed to the Catechumens and the mystagogical catechesis delivered to the neophytes.”

Fourth-century Syriac writers like Aphrahat or Ephrem have not left us any commentary on sacraments. Ephrem’s hymns on nativity, epiphany, lent or Passover are in fact liturgical commentaries in the form of poetic meditations, probably composed to be sung on the corresponding feasts or seasons. The type of literature known as ‘mystagogical commentaries’ reached the Syriac tradition, probably through the non-Chalcedonian who maintained continuous contact with the Hellenistic tradition of the ‘West’. Among the Syriac writers, it was Narsai who wrote a memro for the first time entirely dedicated to the sacraments, and he made use of the homilies of Theodore. We have four memre on Baptism and the Eucharist attributed to Narsai. They were most probably composed for the instruction of the faithful. However their composition in twelve-syllabic meter suggests that they were intended for the liturgical use as well (cf. Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*. P 18). Among the West Syrians, Jacob of Serugh was one of the first to write liturgical homilies in Syriac. His memre on baptism, the eucharist or dominical feasts are not commentaries in the strict sense. However, on Baptism, Jacob’s three homilies are of particular importance: ‘on the three Baptisms (of the law, of John and of Christ), ‘On the baptism of Christ and ‘An Exhortation on Baptism.’ There are four homilies of Jacob, which gives us an idea of Jacob’s Eucharistic Theology: ‘Homily on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries’, another homily on the same subject’, and ‘Homily on the commemoration of the dead and on the Eucharistic bread’.

The first known west Syrian mystagogical treatise is a short commentary on Baptism and the Eucharist, attributed in the two oldest manuscripts to St. John Chrysostom.

### **Liturgical terminologies**

*Rozo*: mystery, sacrament, seldom used as symbol. Its root *raz* means to conspire, to be shown forth mystically’, and the passive derivatives mean ‘to be instructed, to be initiated into mysteries or spiritual realities, to symbolise, to celebrate, to be shown forth, to signify, to point to, or to narrate’. No other Syriac word seems to contain the various nuances of the liturgical phenomenon. *Rozo* is never used in the limited sense, as in the Latin word *sacramentum*.

*Teshmeshto*: equivalent to *leitourgia*. It refers to a liturgical celebration as a whole in the sense of *ordo(tekso)*: eg. *Teshmeshto d- denho*=order/ service of the Epiphany. *Teshmeshto* can also signify a part of a celebration, e.g. The funeral liturgy has four parts and each of them is called a *teshmeshto*. It does not imply a slavish service, but it implies the discharging of a work or a responsibility entrusted to a trustworthy servant. It denotes the disposition of availability, a proximity to the sovereign, an attitude of humble and loving readiness to obey and to fulfil his will.

The word *teshmeshto* is also used in the sense of priestly ministry. It is in this sense that it has generally been used in the west Syrian liturgical texts.

Liturgy as *teshmeshto* means to stand near God and enjoy his presence (Cf. Rev.5:8-14; 6:9-11; 7: 9-17).

*Qurobo*; *Qurbono*

The meaning of these words is somewhat the same; means oblation, offering, gift, Eucharistic Liturgy etc. *Qurobo* also means the consecrated bread, access, being brought near... The word *Qurbono* is used for sacrifice, but it has a broader sense.

The Syriac word for sacrifice is *debho*: the Eucharist has been called *debho* in a figurative sense. Though the sacrificial meaning is common, it is not the key concept to understanding the Eucharist: assembly (*knushyo*), communion (*shawtoputo*), access (*qurobo*), oblation (*Qurbono*), Mysteries (*roze*), perfection of perfections (*gmirut gmiruto*),

It is called access(*Qurobo*) because by it they that were far off and they that were near, and they of heaven and they of earth, have been brought near(*erthqarabw*) to one another, as Paul has said: “In him we have access(*qurobo*): that is, the people and the peoples, heavenly and earthly beings. It is called oblation (*qurbono*), because He has made an oblation to God the Father for our sins, as the apostle said: ‘he who offered himself for us’ (Heb. 9:14), etc. And in the Law of Moses also they used to call *qurbono* those sacrifices which were offered for sin (Connolly and Codrington, *Two Jacobite commentaries* P 24,25).

Other Important terms

*Sluto* (Prayer):

It can refer to a liturgical hour, a liturgical formula or to simply a prayer. In the *peshitta* version of psalms, it is used in the sense of the Hebrew word *tephilla* (ps. 141:1; 143:1). Its root *slo* or *Sali* means *to slope, to lean towards* or *to prone to*. Thus *sluto* can also mean reconciliation and readmission to communion. A prayer is an act of ‘loving inclination.’ Thus prayer as such is readmission into God’s presence and is an act of communion with Him.

*Taudito* (confession, praise, thanksgiving, religion, doctrine): the root meaning is ‘to confess’, ‘to assert’, ‘to acknowledge’, ‘to profess’, ‘to assert’, ‘to believe’, ‘to praise’ etc.

*Dehlo* or *Dehelto* (fear, awe, worship, religion): this word implies that the essence of a religion is worship.

## 9. LITURGY, THE EXPRESSION OF DOCTRINE

In worship the faithful see and experience their faith or the faith of the church. The tradition of expressing the doctrine in liturgical texts was inherited from Judaism. The great things that God has done for the fathers or the community, were evoked not for the sake of God, but for each member of the community, so that he might understand who Yahweh is, whom he worships. The Eucharistic prayers were first composed in the interests of doctrinal, not liturgical, uniformity. The Eucharistic prayer itself, with its account of salvation history, is the proclamation of the community’s common faith. Doctrines are ‘lived’, that is, expressed, celebrated and transmitted in and through the liturgy. Dogmatic definitions are not final and definitive statements which exhaust the being of God. They serve as windows which open into a world of inexhaustible richness and amazement.’ (A.M. Allchin, *The Kingdom of Love and Knowledge. The Encounter between Orthodoxy and the West*, London, 1979. P.200)

The dogmas are principally soteriological declarations, their object is to free the original eikon of Christ, the truth, from the distortions of certain heresies, so as to help the Church to maintain the correct vision of the Christ-truth and to live in and by this presence of truth in history. The final intention of all this is to lead to communion with the life of God, to make truth into communion and life (J.D.Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*. SVSP, New York, 1985), pp.116-17.

## 1 Liturgy and the Trinitarian Doctrine

The characteristic of the eastern Christian Liturgies is their Trinitarian emphasis. Liturgy has its foundation in the revelation of the triune God, a 'community' of three divine hypostases that exists in mutual love and adoration. In the New Testament, the redeeming death of Christ has been pictured *Leiturgia* offered to God the Father, through the Eternal Spirit. In the Spirit, the members of the Body of Christ address God 'Abba, Father! (Gal. 4:6; Rom.8:16).

The goal of Incarnation was the reintegration and the restoration of the unity of humanity in Christ. The unity of humanity is achieved, manifested, continued and sealed in the worshipping community.

Cf: Wednesday, Sapro, *S'himo, Shubaho* p 140: *Glory to the Holy father who sent is only Son and he descended and dwelt in a pure and holy womb in a holy manner...*

[Indebted to: Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical theology*]

The faith in the Trinitarian God is the core of Christian life. Though Christendom is divided into many denominations, there is always a unity in this Trinitarian teaching.<sup>1</sup> Without the difference of east and west, usually every liturgical celebration begins and ends with the praise of the Trinity – 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit' or a blessing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Malankara Liturgy the Trinitarian spirituality is very much emphasised especially in the prayers and *Promion- Sedro*. Though most of the hymns used in the Holy Qurbono and other liturgical feasts are Christological there are hymns that explain Trinitarian theology. A Liturgy of the hours begins with the *Qaumo* that is based on the Trinitarian teaching. The *Qaumo* contains the Trinitarian theology, Christology, Ecclesiology and Mariology.

- Trinitarian theology: *In the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit one true God forever and ever... Amen.* It is a proclamation of the faith that the *ground of being* of every Christian is the Trinity. In the Trinitarian proclamation one confesses that the Father who is revealed in the Son in the 'giving out' and is lived out in the Holy Spirit is the source of everything. The glory of this Triune God fills the whole cosmos.
- Christology: In chanting the Trisagion the faithful proclaims the Christology. *Christ is died for us.* But He is deathless-a mystery- True human being and True God.
- Ecclesiology: In chanting the prayer 'Our Father in Heaven...' one proclaims that the Church of God is where the will of God is done.
- Mariology: The prayer 'Hail Mary...' is not merely a repetition of the praises of Gabriel to Mary but it is the expression of one's desire to become Holy like Mary who is the *Symbol of the Church*.

The *Qaumo* is compared to a seal of a document. A liturgical hour is sealed in the beginning and end with a *Qaumo* [what is the relevance of reciting '*angelus*'- a prayer borrowed from the Latin liturgy - immediately before the *Qaumo*???]

---

<sup>1</sup> Reference: Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe, Verlag Styria, Austria, 1987. P. 1075

The Trinitarian structure of the Anaphora...  
*Assign to find out.*

## 2. Christological motive of Liturgy

The Christian liturgy has its foundation in the incarnation of the second person of the holy Trinity. Incarnation is an act of God's philanthropy, to restore us to communion with himself. God became man in order to restore God's image in man that was impaired by the fall.

Glory to the holy father who sent his only Son...(s'himo-shubho, Wednesday, sapro, p140)

Trisagion in the *Qaumo*...

Worship and the sacraments are part of the remedies used by the good and heavenly Physician. 'David prophesied and said: the Lord will come and heal the broken hearted'...(Monday,S'himo Sapro, p 71, stanza 5)

## 3. Mariological themes

Hail Mary, Full of Grace... in the *Qaumo*..., Liturgy of the hours on Wednesday

## 4. Pneumatological motive of Liturgy

In the economy of salvation, the activity of the Son and the Holy Spirit is 'complementary and reciprocal' (Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books, 1975), p.234

The Pentecost has placed the Church in a new situation. Henceforth she lives in the spirit and worships God 'in Spirit and Truth', which makes her the new Israel and the bride of Christ (Rev.21:1-2).

"The Word took flesh that we might receive the Spirit" (St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation and against the Arians*, 8. PG.26: 996 C.

Worship in the Spirit is the one that always pleases God:

*God is Spirit and seeks those who worship in the Spirit; blessed is he who worshiped him in Spirit and in Truth; the prophets worshiped him in Spirit and the apostles in the Holy Spirit; and behold, the Church and her children worship and sing praise* (Shimo, Men'olam p 275, stanza 2).

*The presence of the Spirit in the Eucharist*

*By the descent of the Spirit, the bread and wine are sanctified and made the body and blood of Christ. However this does not mean that in the anaphora of Saint James, epiclesis is the 'moment of consecration'. Although the eastern tradition always insists on the reality of the change of the bread and wine after the consecration, it has almost never attempted to specify the 'moment' a 'manner' of change. The anaphora as a whole is a moment, a single liturgical rite, in which the worshipping community experiences the presence of the Triune God and enters into communion with Him the presence, is gradually unfolded through a series of prayers and symbolic gestures, and each of them is an inseparable part of that liturgical 'moment'. The change of the Eucharistic elements cannot be understood with the reference to the Son or to the Holy Spirit alone. It is Trinitarian action, for salvation is always Trinitarian.*

*Dionysius Bar Salibi writes: "Although it is the body of the Son, it is given to us by the Father through the Holy Spirit." (Bar Salibi, Commentary on the Eucharist.)*

*St. Athanasius says: "The Father does all things by the Word in the Holy Spirit." (Athanasius d' Alexandrie: Lettres 'a Serapion, I, 28; SC 15 (1947), 133-35)*

*The epiclesis does not imply that the spirit is added to the consecrated gifts. The aim of the consecration itself is to make the bread and wine the pneumatized body and blood of Christ. The Syro- Antiochene tradition has always insisted on the presence of the Spirit in the Eucharistic elements. This tradition has left its traces of influence on the institution narrative found in Vaticanus graecus 2282, a ninth-century text of St. James, which says that Christ filled the cup with the Holy Spirit. See Tarby, La priere eucharistique, p.178*

#### *Meaning of Consecration*

*Consecration implies that the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit is extended by the Church over the whole of nature. The destiny of nature is allied to that of man. Corrupted because of man, she awaits with him for healing (cf. Rom 8:19-23). In Christ everything has been restored and sanctified. There is nothing in all creation (outside of evil and sin) that remains foreign to his humanity. By the act of sanctification, the Church incorporates everything into its mission in the world. Thus it brings back to God the elemental principles of the material world. Consecration makes a thing or a place a symbol, a means and a place of manifestation of the divine presence in space and time.*

*Consecration is an act of restoration to the pre-lapsarian (a state before the fall of man) condition. It is an act of liberation. The Church proclaims something to be free from the bondage of sin, evil and corruption. For example in the consecration of water, it has been restored to its primordial condition. By the epiclesis the spirit of God broods over it and makes it life giving. The water becomes a symbol of divine presence and operation.*

### **5. Ecclesial Motive of Liturgy**

Liturgy of the Hours is a worship of the People of God. The concept of worship is both personal and communitarian. It starts from personal experience and extends to a community. This can be explained through the following example. I get up early in the morning and sit under a tree. Birds sing on its branches. I sit there and meditate and praise the creator of this beautiful universe. I cannot hold this experience to myself. So I share this experience to my friend and the next day we sit together under the same tree and meditate and praise the Creator. The next day my friend comes with his friend and we together praise God. As days pass it becomes a community of praise and worship. This community fixes (set apart) a time of gathering and share their experience among themselves and thus a bond of unity is built up. This community-worship increases the intensity of the bond of unity among the members.

The Liturgy of the Hours is ecclesial. Liturgy is the official worship of the Church. No faithful is alone in the Church. Whether one praises God in private or public it has an ecclesial nature because in Baptism he or she is born in Jesus Christ and bound to the whole Church that includes both the dead and the living. Liturgy of the hours includes doxologies, petitions, repentance, thanksgiving etc. Liturgy of the hours in the Oriental tradition especially in the Malankara liturgy is a celebration and a proclamation of faith. The Orientals do not *study* the theology but *celebrate* it.

Celebration is pedagogy. In celebration, the object of celebration comes closer and it becomes familiar to the one who celebrates. That is why we say that the theology of the orient is in its liturgy (comparison with the festivals of Hindus: The festivals /celebration are the strong basement of the faith of a Hindu). A theology that is meant only for the intellectual gymnastics has no place in the orient.

In chanting the prayer 'Our Father in Heaven...' as part of the Qaumo one proclaims that the Church of God is where the will of God is done.

#### The Festal Gathering: The Church and the Communion of Saints

Liturgy is the common action of the Church, in which the head and the body are involved. The nature and vocation of the Church find their best expression in a liturgical celebration. In the Pauline Epistles the word *ecclesia* denotes the community of believers gathered together in a particular house for worship. Cf. 1 cor. 11:17,18,20.

The Church is a Eucharistic community. Moses Bar Kepha in the opening words of his commentary writes: "It is called Assembly (*knushyo*), communion, access (*qurbono*), Mysteries, Perfection of Perfections. It is called Assembly because it assembles the scattered faculties that are in us into the unity of one God..." (Bar Kepha, *Eucharist*, p.24).

(Cf. *Qudosh Edto*- Liturgy)

Rev:7:14-15

The Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of communion, perpetuates our oneness in Christ even after the end of our earthly life. It is through prayer that we live in communion with Our Lord, because the Spirit never ceases to intercede for us (Rom 8:26). The Spirit of God a believer receives in Baptism and Chrismation unites him or her with the body of Christ, the communion of saints. His/her prayer even if it is feeble, is joined to the prayers of the saints, which ascends to the presence of God (cf. Rom.8:26-27; Rev. 8:14).

In the Eucharistic celebration, the whole Church is present in its oneness and catholicity. It is out of this awareness that this prayer speaks of the saints as 'those who are standing and praying with us.' The idea that the saints pray with us and for us appears regularly. Eg. In the Ramsho of Wednesday, the eqbo addresses the Mother of God. Cf. Sh'himo p115

Those who have pleased God... Thursday, Ramsho, Shehimo (p 355, st.5), The life of saints, both of the old and new dispensations, is a guarantee of God's promises and the Transfiguration of humanity. The awareness of their company assures us that we are in the faith and company of all who have pleased God.

#### Anamnesis and commemorations

Commemoration is a basic and essential element of anaphora. In the Eucharistic, the Church commemorates the whole economy of salvation and realizes its integration into it. The anamnesis evokes the death, resurrection, ascension, the second coming and the last judgement. The past events and those to take place are commemorated\*<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>ANAMNESIS is a word of Greek origin meaning remembrance, memorial, or commemoration and as such part of the liturgy for the Eucharist. Greek versions of the scriptures use the word to translate various forms of the Hebrew root *zkr*, which in Arabic is pronounced *dhikr*. The text of the anamnesis reminds the faithful of the Lord's salvific work through His sufferings, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. The Eucharist is not only the mystery of the crucifixion but is also the fulfillment of the Lord's instruction to His apostles, "Do this in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24). It is also related to the Passover that was ordered to be celebrated by the Israelites every year as

## 6. Eschatological motive

Christian worship points to Eschaton. The liturgy points out that the last days have already begun with the Incarnation: "The Father begot Him without beginning, and at the end of time, he came forth from Mary" (Wednesday, *sapro, qolo, shehimo*, p 140 st.2).

The characteristic of the time of the Church is the permanent presence of the Risen Lord and consequently that of the Father and the Holy Spirit (Andre Feuillet, 'Le temps de l' Eglise d'le quatrieme evangile et l' Apocalypse', *LMD* 65, 1961, 60-69; Louis M.Dewailly, 'Le temps selon Saint Paul', *ibid* pp.133-43). When the Church gathers together for worship, the time transforms into a 'now', 'today', a 'moment' of Christophany. It is precisely this presence of Christ makes the liturgy an eschatological event. The liturgical time is the anticipation of the 'fullness of time in which Christ will unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph.1:10). The 'decisive time' of history was the resurrection of Christ. In a liturgical gathering the risen lord is present in Spirit, the hour of his glorification has been re-presented. Every moment of the day, week and the year is centred on this glorification. According to the story of creation, the week is the fundamental unit of the liturgical cycle. The week is rooted in creation, the two acts that constituted the covenant. The Sabbath commemorates the creation of the world by God in seven days (Exod:20,11) as well as the liberation of God's people from the bondage(Deut.5:15), which itself is a pre-figuration of the final and full salvation in the messianic age.'(W. Rordorf, 'Sunday: The fullness of Christian liturgical time', *SL* 14, 1982, 90-96). In the Rabbinic and Apocalyptic literature, the weekly Sabbath rest points to the final consummation Sabbath (A. T. Lincoln, 'Sabbath, Rest and Eschatology in the New Testament', in D.A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day, A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI,1982, pp.197-220, here p.199). Sabbath means that the divine ordering of time has a goal, a consummation, which is to be celebrated, anticipated and prayed for in community. The liturgical gathering on the Sabbath anticipates the eschatological gathering on the day of Yahweh.

Cf. Mar Ephrem, On this day of Sunday... (Third Hour on Sunday, *qyomtho*)

This Sunday, on which we worship, is transitory. It is the image and foretaste of the 'great Sunday' that never passes (*On this passing Sunday...* Cf. Monday, *Ramsho, Shehimo*, p.255, st.8).

---

a commemoration of God's salvation, insofar as the Lord made Himself the true Passover of the new covenant replacing the symbol or figure of the old covenant (I Cor. 5:7-8). In the three Eucharistic Divine Liturgies used by the Coptic Orthodox Church (Saint Mark's, or the so-called Cyrillian; Saint Basil's; and Saint Gregory's), the anamnesis comes before the words of consecration, and in most of them is also summed up after the consecration and immediately before the EPICLESIS. Hence, in a Coptic context, the anamnesis does not only have the sense of the remembering, but also the representing of all the main events and of making them present in the minds of the faithful. This is why the anamnesis is preceded by the remembrance of the Lord's incarnation, birth, and teachings.

The whole process of remembrance, whether in the preanamnesis or anamnesis, requires the preparation of the minds of the faithful in order that they may share effectively in worship. The officiating priest and the deacons are dressed in their white and gold vestments, the priest as figure of the Lord, and the deacons as figures of the angels.

Saint JOHN CHRYSOSTOM explains this action in his commentary, "We offer even now what was done then, for we perform the anamnesis of His death."



The daily offices express the attitude of wakefulness and expectation.

Mystery of the Day

The day and night were established for man (Cf. Tuesday, *Sutoro, Sedro, Shehimo*).

## 10. CERTAIN SYMBOLICAL THEMES IN THE ORIENTAL SPIRITUALITY

### Evening and the Darkness

In the Syriac tradition as in Judaism, the day begins with the evening ('And there was evening and there was morning, one day'-Gen.1:23). The evening prayer is a symbol of 'ceaseless praise and uninterrupted thanksgiving' that we are called to offer in our lives (cf. The common introductory prayer of *Ramsho*).

Evening symbolises the end of our life and eternal rest (cf. Common introductory prayer of *Suthoro*). Evening or morning is the time of transition from light to darkness and darkness to light. It symbolises the transitory nature of human life. Darkness is the symbol of the shadows of doubt that get hold of our hearts and also of 'the evil one and his powers' (cf. Revelation of Joseph, *Ramsho, Enyono*: 'Be gracious to us, O God, be gracious as we turn to you at this evening hour, when the shadows of doubt get hold of our hearts, as they seized Joseph, and you send your word to him...'). Divine protection is sought against the darkness (cf. Monday, *Ramsho, Shehimo* p 52: *In the evening Abraham called upon you on the mountain-top and you answered him...*).

Evening and darkness also symbolises ignorance. But the Word of God is a light to our path (cf. Ps. 119:105), *Ramsho, Shehimo, Bo'wutho*, p53.

### Lilyo

In the West Syrian tradition, night has been divided into four *qaume* or watches. The *lilyo* presents sleep as the symbol of sin and death that overpowers man. Slumber symbolises spiritual inaction and indifference to God's living and loving presence. Vigilance on the other hand, is spiritual alertness. God is one who never sleeps. Wakefulness is a 'Paschal' or an eschatological attitude. It anticipates the eighth day, the new age already present in the liturgy. *Lilyo* indicates awakening from sin and death (cf. Common introductory prayer of *Lilyo- Urakkamillatha unarvullavanaya...*). *Lilyo* indicates our eschatological readiness to meet the Lord (Lk. 12:38). Cf. Monday, *Lilyo* 3<sup>rd</sup> *qaumo, qolo*, p 63. 1: *By night let us rise and give thanks to the Son of God...*

### Morning-dawn

The morning announces God's victory. Morning symbolises the beginning of creation with the light. It symbolises resurrection and points to the 'Great morning' which will overpower darkness, sin and death (Cf. The common introductory prayer of *sapro, shehimo*).

Assignment; Find out themes of 'Morning'...

### Themes of the liturgical Hours

The third, sixth and the ninth hours are associated with our fall and salvation (cf. *At the third hour Adam ate the fruit of death...Friday, third hour, qolo, shehimo*, p 419)

Perform prayer in the morning and at the third hour and in the evening and when you go to sleep, and at the compline (*suthoro*) and at the cock-crow. In the morning namely, having made the light to pass and brought the day; and at the third hour because at it our Lord received the Judgement from Pilate. In

that of the sixth hour because in it Christ was crucified, all creatures were shaken, trembling at the audacity which the wicked Jews did; he was pierced by his side by a spear, and shed forth blood and water; in that of the ninth hour because when our Lord was crucified, the sun was darkened in the midst of the noon, and the dead arose from their graves... in that of the evening, however thanking God, who gave us the night for rest from the toils of the day; but in that of compline while you now slumber the sleep of rest from work; but pray that in sleep and in rest you may not leave this world, and if that should happen, the prayer which you have prayed will help you in the way that is everlasting; and at cock crow, because that is the hour which announces to us the coming of the day, and for the service of the works of light (*Didascalia* III,7).

The lay people are exhorted to pray seven times a day:

At early dawn let the bishop gather the people together, so that the service is finished at the rising of the sun. As the bishop says the first hymns of praise of dawn, with the presbyters and deacons and others (the faithful) nearby, let him say thus... (Testament of Our lord, I, 26: Grant Sperry-White, *The Testamentum Domini*, GLS 66, p 32)

## Ordo

The liturgy is celebrated according to an ordo, or an order, a rite established by the Church. It can be called the shape of worship. It consists of liturgical texts, lectionary, gestures, time, music, artistic forms, symbols and architecture. Here we deal with a few themes.

### Themes of the days and hours

Each day and hour has a dominating theme:

#### 1. Days

Sunday - The Resurrection of Christ

Monday/Tuesday - Repentance

Wednesday – The Mother of God

Thursday – The apostles and the doctors of the Church

Friday – The cross, martyrs and the saints

Saturday – The departed members of the church, both clergy and laity

#### 2. Hours

The seven hours are observed on the reflection of the Passion of Christ:

Evening – last supper

Suthoro – at Gethsemane

Night – Before Kaiappas, Hannas and Herodes

Morning – Before Pilatus

Third hour – way to Calvary

Sixth hour – crucifixion

Ninth hour – Death on the cross

#### 3. Year

1 qudosh edtho, hudosh edtho (two Sundays)

2 Advent Cycle (six Sundays)

3 Nativity – epiphany Cycle ( upto seven Sundays, depends on Easter-day)

4 *Kohene* and *Anide* Sudays (Two Sundays preceding Lent)

5 Lenten Cycle (seven Sundays)

6 Easter Cycle (Seven Sundays including Easter)

7 Pentecost Cycle (up to eleven Sundays, depending on the Easter-day)

8 Transfiguration – Ascension Cycle (up to seven Sundays)

9 Cycle of the Feast of the Cross (up to eight Sundays, depending on *Qudosh-edtho*)

Normally each cycle is centred on a principle feast. A cycle begins and ends with a Sunday indication of rooting in the mystery of Easter. The Christmas and Easter cycles begin with a quadragesimal fast. The feast of the Apostles (June 29) is also preceded by a similar fast.

The Advent Cycle consists of:

1. The Annunciation to Zechariah
2. The Annunciation to Mary
3. The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth
4. The birth of John the Baptist
5. The Revelation to Joseph
6. Sunday of the Genealogy (Sunday before the Nativity)

The Ordo (order) of the daily office... structure of an Ordo...assignment  
Lectionary...?

[Indebted to: Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical theology*]

### **Prostration / Kneeling**

Many religious institutions use prostrations to embody the lowering, submitting or relinquishing of the individual ego before a greater spiritual power or presence. Outside of traditional religious institutions, prostrations are used to show deference to worldly power, in the pursuit general spiritual advancement and as part of a physical-health regimen. Shugyo in martial arts, particularly in the Shotokai and Kyokushin styles of Karate, it is a form of extreme spiritual discipline. In modern yoga practice, "sun salutations" (*sūrya namaskāra*) are a regular part of practitioners' routines. Such a practice may be used for both maintaining physical well-being and spiritual attainment.

**Buddhism:**In Buddhism, prostrations are universally used to build confidence to and gratitude for the gifts of the Triple Gem.**Islam:**In Islam, prostrations (*sajadat*, plural of *sujud* or *sajda*) are used to praise, glorify and humble oneself in front of Allah, and are a vital part of the five obligatory prayers performed daily. **Jainism:** In Jainism, there is a great importance placed on prostration, especially when a devotee is in the temples or in front of high souls. It represents the surrendering of ego.**In Judaism,** the Tanakh and Talmudic texts as well as writings of Gaonim and Rishonim indicate that prostration was very common among Jewish communities until some point during the Middle Ages. In Mishneh Torah, Maimonides states full prostration (with one's body pressed flat to the earth) should be practiced at the end of the Amidah, recited thrice daily. Members of the Karaite denomination practice full prostrations during prayers. Traditionally, Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews prostrated during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, as did Yemenite Jews during the Tachanun part of daily Jewish prayer. Ethiopian Jews traditionally prostrated during a holiday specific to their community known as *Sigd*. *Sigd* comes from a root word meaning prostration in Amharic, Aramaic, and Arabic. There is a movement among *Talmide haRambam* to revive prostration as a regular part of daily Jewish worship.**Sikhism:**Sikhs prostrate in front of Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs. Sikhs consider Guru Granth Sahib as their living Guru and the unchanging word of God: thus, by prostrating, Sikhs present their head to their Guru, awaiting command, which is taken in the form of a *hukamnama*, or a random opening of Guru Granth Sahib to reveal an edict for the individual or congregation (similar to the ancient Roman practice of *sortes sanctorum*, a form of bibliomancy).

**Christianity:** In Christianity, the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches use prostrations during the imposition of Holy Orders, Religious Profession and the Consecration of Virgins. In the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, prostrations ("profound bows") can be used in place of genuflections for those who are unable to genuflect. The prostration is always performed before God, and in the case of holy orders, profession or consecration the candidates prostrate themselves in front of the altar which is a symbol of Christ. Full prostrations, lit., "low bows" (*zemnoy poklon*) are common in Eastern Orthodox worship, and are used in conjunction with the Sign of the Cross, at specific moments during the services and when venerating relics or icons. However, the use of full prostrations is traditionally discouraged on the Lord's Day (Sunday), during Paschaltide (Easter season) and on Great Feasts of the Lord. During Great Lent, and Holy Week, prostrations are especially encouraged in all the Eastern Churches (see Prayer of St. Ephraim). Orthodox Christians will also make prostrations in front of people (though in this case without the Sign of the Cross, as it is not an act of veneration or divine worship), such as the bishop, one's spiritual father or one another when asking forgiveness (in particular at the Vespers service which begins Great Lent on the afternoon of the Sunday of Forgiveness.) Those who are physically unable to make full prostrations may instead substitute *metanias* (bows at the waist). In the West Syrian tradition the faithful prostrate during daily prayers. Christians should prostrate during all daily prayers, except on days which the Holy Liturgy is celebrated.

### **Incensing**

The substance of incensing namely, frankincense is anti-inflammatory. The smoke can purify the air.

In the Rabbinic tradition: Since it is seasoned with salt the incense is seen as a combination of sea and earth, incense offering was seen as a token of the whole creation. The smoke of incense veiled the presence of Yahweh in the Holy of Holies. Prophet Malachi speaks of the pure offering (Mal. 1:11) was associated with Christian worship as early as the end of the first century (*Didache 14*).

Incensing is one of the integral parts of the West Syrian Liturgy. The Jewish liturgical use of incense, especially its offering as part of some sacrifices, has influenced the symbolic explanations given to the incense by the Syriac writers. In the OT it is the privilege of the priests (Num.16:36-48). Here the incense served as a means of atonement to appease God's wrath. It is called as a pleasing odour to the Lord (Ex.29:18). Pauline imagery of Christ's death as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God (Eph. 5:2) was inspired by this type of sacrifice. In the West Syrian prayers of incense (*Ethro*) Christ is portrayed as incense/censer of atonement. Prayer itself was interpreted as an offering of incense by the Jews.

[Indebted to: Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical theology*]

### **Liturgical space**

In the East, the architectural setting of the liturgical space is part of the Ordo and hence it is an expression of the *lex orandi* of the Church. The liturgical architecture expresses the corporate character of Christian worship, which is primarily a synaxis. In the early Church, especially in the first two centuries no special building was thought to be necessary for the liturgical gatherings. By the beginning of the fourth

century it became invariable element for the ordo both in the East and the West. The meaning of the church architecture and the liturgical space integrates perfectly with the meaning of the liturgy, especially that of the Eucharist as a whole.

[Indebted to: Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical theology*]

➤ **Vat. II on Sacred Liturgy (No. 14-17; 83-100) – assignment as discussion**

## **11. BHAKTI YOGA AND JNANA YOGA CONCEPTS IN THE HYMNS OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

In the study of the liturgy of hours it is very important to touch the hymnology of the ML because the main stuff and text of Liturgy of the hours are in hymnal forms. Because of the same reason the musicality – poetry and music – contribute to its mystical nature. As St. Ambrose said, the poetry and the music are like two wings of the Liturgy. They are the two wings that take up the worshipper to the peak of the mountain of mystical experience in the liturgy. This experience is categorised under two terminologies: ‘Bhakti yoga’ or ‘path of devotion/love’ and ‘Jnana yoga’ or ‘path of knowledge’. In the Bhakti yoga or the path of love, devotion and affectivity are important. The Creator-creature relationship, friend-friend relationship, bride-bridegroom relationship, Vatsalya bhakti (e.g. mother-child relationship) guru-sishya relationship etc. are various manifestation of Bhakti yoga. Another aspect that comes under Bhakti yoga is the concept of prayer (Prarthana) and petition. These expressions in the Bhakti yoga can be called anthropomorphic. The major part of the collections of liturgical hymns in the Malankara Liturgy comes under Bhakti yoga. On the other hand Jnana yoga or the ‘path of knowledge’ in its real sense is an approach through intellect, not through affectivity or devotion. In some of the hymns the mystical experience of the composers are indirectly related to Jnana yoga. In reference to Jnana yoga the usual terminologies used in the hymns are Sun, light, morning etc. God is the eternal Sun. The radiance of this Sun enlightens the whole cosmos. This is the general theme of the hymns that can be taken under Jnana yoga. As the Jnana yoga belongs to the intellectual sphere it does not mean that it is merely a speculative knowledge of God, rather it is a contemplation that goes deep into the ground of one’s being. In this respect the Creator-creature relationship will be much more significant to be viewed through the prism of Jnana yoga.

### **c. Bhakti yoga (path of devotion/love)**

According to the Indian spirituality there are three ways to the Ultimate Being: They are Karma marga, Jnana marga and Bhakti marga<sup>3</sup> among which the Bhakti marga is the most important means to be in union with God. The Jnana marga is not that easy for the ‘folk’ because it depends very much on intellectual discipline and physical training. Here we deal with Bhakti marga/yoga and Jnana marga/yoga because they are the prominent motives in the hymns of Malankara Liturgy. Shri Shankaracharya said that among the means to attain salvation Bhakti is the best way. In *Bhagavat purana* it is written: “I do not dwell in *Vaikundta* (≈Heaven in Christian concept) nor in the hearts of Yogis but where my *Bhaktas* sing my name, there do I abide.” God

---

<sup>3</sup>*Karma marga*=way through doing duties; *Jnana marga*=way through knowledge; *Bhakti marga*=way through devotion. *Nishkama karma* (doing the duty without desiring the fruit of it) is the teaching of *Bhagavat Gita*.

dwells in the heart of the devotee who sings praises to God. This concept is not something unique to the Indian tradition, but it belongs to the tradition of the Orient. In this tradition many hymns have been composed, which are used in the Malankara Liturgy. By singing the praises of God one can reach God. That is why it was already mentioned that most of the hymns in the Malankara Liturgy have a motive of Bhakti yoga. When one sings a hymn in the worship, one must meditate on the theme and must try to enter into the devotion and mentality of the characters mentioned in the hymns and the context of the composer. The following paragraphs will deal with the different aspects of Bhakti yoga that can be traced out from the hymns, which are manifested through vatsalya bhakti model, bridal model, Guru-Sishya model, and penitential model.

v. ***Vatsalya Bhakti model.***

*Vatsalya* can be explained as love, particularly, the love of a mother to its child. It is the love that is manifested in many actions like feeding the child, rocking the child, carrying the child on her arms, kissing and embracing the child etc. Bhakti can be translated as devotion. Therefore *Vatsalya bhakti* can be explained as ‘devotion in affection’. Unfortunately there is no proper word in English that gives the meaning of vatsalya in its full sense. So the translation as ‘devotion in affection’ is weak. [*Vatsalya bhakti* can be of two types: 1) becoming a mother/father to God and 2) becoming a child to God. The second type is the general concept in Christian Spirituality. In the fear of repetition it is avoided here]. In the Indian context, through *Vatsalya bhakti* one can reach Moksha. For example Yashodha the mother of Krishna is also named as the devotee of Krishna because she became the devotee of Krishna through *Vatsalya bhakti*. The same context can be compared with the relation between Mary and Jesus. Mary became the devotee of Jesus in her *Vatsalya bhakti*. Through this *Vatsalya bhakti* she reached the zenith of mystical experience. The following is a hymn in which the composer portrays Mary who feeds the Child Jesus:

Behold, it is a wonder that the Virgin has delivered a child.  
The ancestor of all the generations, wrapped in swaddling cloths...  
Him, who holds the mountains, *a young woman carries*.  
He who sustains the poor (one who is hungry), *sucking milk*...

(*S'himo, Shubaho*; p. 126; For more references: *Shubaho*: p.117,152,164,175,185,207)

The composer invokes a *Vatsalya bhakti* in the worshipper who sings and meditates on this picture. Through this *Vatsalya bhakti* the worshipper enters into a mystical experience. In another hymn the composer says that he heard Mary saying to her child in a lullaby:

Walking along the streets of Bethlehem  
I heard a voice in which Mary says to the child in a lullaby:  
*'I am lucky my son that I have become your mother*  
*But I am not even worthy to stand in your presence.*  
(*S'himo, Men'olam*; p275 )

Here the *Vatsalya bhakti* of Mary is very clearly portrayed because in this hymn Mary accepts her motherhood of the saviour and at the same time she confesses her ‘fragility’ to carry the Almighty. *Vatsalya* is the acceptance of the motherhood of God and *bhakti* is the recognition of the presence of God. Most of the hymns in the

Christmas service have the motive of *Vatsalya bhakti*. The composers present very picturesquely the Child Jesus in the manger with Mary and Joseph. A newborn baby is the symbol of human fragility or vulnerability. Concentrating on the fragile nature of the baby and its innocence, a feeling of *vatsalya* is created in the worshipper. The second step is the passing over of the meditative mind from the 'fragility' to the 'all-powerful' God. Here the worshipper attains the joyful experience of *Vatsalya bhakti*. From these hymns one can trace out the purpose of *Vatsalya bhakti*-motive in the liturgy, which is nothing but inviting all to share the joy of *Vatsalya bhakti* of Mary and Joseph.

#### vi. Bridal model

The spiritual thirst of the human being and his/her search for God is without any end. In an anthropocentric sense one can say that God 'lives' in two beautiful 'cities' that are nothing else but *His* transcendental and immanent manifestations. Since God is 'God' *Hecan* reveal his presence in both 'cities' simultaneously. The mystics in their mystical approach to God, as they are human beings, some of them concentrate more on the transcendence and the others naturally on the immanent realities. However in both cases the mystic longs for the intimacy with God. K.R. Sundararajan in his article, *Bridal model in Hindu and Christian mysticism* points out:

The theologians in the Hindu and Christian traditions have sought to maintain a careful balance between the claims of both divine transcendence and the human need for the closeness and nearness of God. By contrast, the mystic tends to tip this balance by stressing divine accessibility, sometimes ignoring the other side of the divine, namely its transcendence. However, by emphasising the accessibility of the divine, the mystic seems to reflect the concerns of popular piety in a religious tradition more clearly than the theologians of the same tradition. Divine accessibility is the very cornerstone of popular piety and it is indeed the sustaining force behind its spirituality.<sup>4</sup>

Both in the Hindu and the Christian tradition the mystic's longing for God is very often expressed in the 'bridal model'. In both traditions one can observe that the bride's seeking for her 'beloved' is endless. In the 'bridal model' God is always presented as bridegroom and the mystic as bride. According to K.R. Sundararajan the only difference in the concept of bridal mysticism between Hindu tradition and Christian tradition is in the degree of agony of separation of the female from male.<sup>5</sup> In the Christian spirituality, more often the 'bridal model' is used to explain the relation between Christ and the Church.<sup>6</sup> This mystical approach is used very lavishly in the liturgical hymns of the Malankara Church especially in the Sacrament of Marriage. Here the composers bring out both 'the seeking of God' and 'the longing of the devotee'. Since most of the composers were mystics as well as theologians it is natural that they have used a holistic approach, i.e. both *God's coming down* and the *devotee's longing for God*. The bridegroom searches for the bride and the bride searches for the bridegroom. Examples:

---

<sup>4</sup> K.R. Sundararajan, *Bridal model in Hindu and Christian Mysticism*, Indian Philosophical Annual, Vol. 17; University of Madras, 1985; Printers: Avvai Achukkoodam, 17, P. V. Koil Street, Madras-600 013. P. 194

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. P. 196

<sup>6</sup> Reference: Ephesians 5, 20-23.

*Your Charm and awe have intoxicated me.  
We have no voice to sing your praise O Son of God.  
On the highs you are seen at the right hand of the Father,  
In the deep among the thieves...*

(Qyomto, (Sunday Evening Divine Office of the Malankara Catholic Church)

Attracted by the charm of the lover or bridegroom the mystic sees him in different places. The bride is not only in the glory of heaven but also in the miseries of this world. Here it is very clear that God is not playing 'hide and seek' as in the bridal mysticism of Hindu spirituality nor is He far away in the heaven, instead He is among the human beings i.e. *Immanuel*, God is with us. Another example: Refer: Shubaho, Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> hour, *Bouto* of Mar Jacob.

### **vii. Guru-Sishya model**

In the eastern tradition the *Guru-sishya* relationship is considered mystical because Guru is the symbol of God. A *Guru* in eastern spirituality especially in Indian tradition is the representative of God. All knowledge comes from God only through the *Guru*. Learning depends fully on the degree of intimacy between the *Guru* and *Sishya*. If the *Sishya* can please the *Guru*, he will pour out on the *Sishya* all his knowledge. Therefore, the most important requirement in the *Guru-Sishya* relation is the devotion of the *Sishya* to the *Guru* and the love of *Guru* to his *Sishya*. The aim of the *Sishya* is to become like his *Guru*. There are two qualities necessary for the *Guru*. First of all he must be a master both in theory and practice and secondly he must be a God-realized person anchored in God.<sup>7</sup> The first requirement of a *Sishya* is a deep faith and trust in his *Guru*. He must not have anything to hide from his *Guru*.<sup>8</sup> Secondly he must be obedient to his *Guru* and thirdly he must commit himself to his *Guru* in respect and in rendering service to him. In Christian spirituality the *Guru-Sishya* model mysticism can be found in the relation between Christ and his disciples. In the Malankara liturgical hymns the *Guru-Sishya* model is also depicted. This model is very prominent in the Hymns of the service of 'feet-washing' ceremony conducted in the eve of Maundy Thursday. In a nutshell one can say that for the *Sishya* the *Guru* is everything. His mental and spiritual growth depends on the union with the *Guru*. Therefore the *Guru-sishya* model in the liturgical hymns also comes under mysticism.

Cf. *Shubaho: Lylyo*, 2nd *Qaumo* Thursday, Qolo; Utter Faith in *Guru: Prabhatam*: 2<sup>nd</sup> *Qolo* after *Quqlion*.

### **viii. Penitential model**

Penitential and mystical motives in the Malankara liturgy are related to one another. The penitential attitude of the devotee is aroused from his/her relation (love) with the *Ultimate Love*. Therefore it is also a mystical experience. In technical term repentance is a reparatory work in the line of the uninterrupted unity between God and man. Repenting on one's sin he or she comes closer to God. In the process of repentance

---

<sup>7</sup> Reference: *Mundakopanishad* 1.2.12. Obligated to: Swami Narendranand; *Hindu Spirituality*; Jyoti Ashram, Sultanpur, UP; P. 130

<sup>8</sup> The great saint Tulasidas said: "There is no wisdom in the heart of the one who hides anything from his *Guru*" (*Ramacharitamans* stanza 57)



the real penitent does not brood over his or her sins but ascends to the love of God. In this sense the penitential model mysticism is very positive. The hymn sung during the consigning-ceremony (*Breaking of bread*) is mystical as well as penitential. Experiencing the Love of God on the cross, the worshipper repents on his or her loveless act that is the cause of the suffering and death on the cross. Repentance and penance have a positive nature in the Malankara liturgy. As already mentioned it is not an act of brooding over one's sins and weakness, but it is a positive attitude of *acknowledging one's own weakness while accepting the greatness and love of God*. The Syrian fathers exhort the faithful to do penance in weeping. In many hymns it is described that weeping and shedding tears can 'extinguish' the 'fire of God's anger'. Mar Ephrem in his *Bo áwotho* exhorts:

Keep vigil and come to repentance O sinner  
And shed tears in prayer.  
Because the tears of your eyes can 'extinguish' the 'Ocean of Fire.'  
So bring them as much as you can...

(*S'himo, Shubahop*. 158 [personal translation from the Malayalam text])

Conclusion: In this short analysis of the mystical nature of the hymns of the Malankara liturgy one can notice that the *Bhakti yoga* motive is very prominent in the liturgy. These hymns are the manifestation of the deep love of the mystic composers for God. Singing the hymns the worshippers can also attain this mystical experience in every liturgical service.

#### **d. *Jnana yoga* (path of Knowledge)**

While *bhakti* (devotion and love) is the medium of mystical experience in *Bhakti yoga*, *Jnana yoga* is an intellectual approach to God. Sometimes the *Jnana yoga* seems to be very 'abstract' for the 'laity' because it uses negation rather than affirmation. In this respect attributes for God are meaningless. The important aspect in the *Jnana yoga* is self-realisation and through this self-realisation the mystic comes into union with the *Real Being*. Compared to the overwhelming *Bhakti yoga* approaches in the Malankara hymns, the instances of *Jnana yoga* motives are very meagre. Another reason is that the liturgy is a worship of the people of God and this worship is deeply rooted in the love of God. In such a context the approach of negation becomes insignificant. However there are instances in the Malankara hymns, which *indirectly* bring out the mystical motive of *Jnana yoga*. This approach is especially expressed in the 'Creator-creature model' and 'Light analogy'.

#### **iii. Creator-creature model**

In the Creator-creature model, the *Jnana Yoga* motive consists in the realisation of God as Creator and human beings as the creatures, created in the *image and likeness* of God. Man as the creature of God depends ontologically on God. He or she yearns for the *Salokya* (living in the 'world' of *Brahma*), living with God in heaven. From this longing, hymns of praise emerge from the creature. This theme is very prominent in many of the hymns. The following hymn points out this motive:

Lord, for your glory, let praises emerge from the heavenly creatures  
And the earthly creatures who are created in your image and likeness.  
The earth and heaven, the land and the ocean will sing your praise.

(*S'himo, Shubaho*, p. 83)

The worshipper who sings this hymn is invited to the realisation that he or she is the 'image' and 'likeness' of God. This realisation inspires the worshipper to enter into a mystical union with the 'Real'. The melody of the hymn is in a prayerful mood and the rhythm is in slow tempo.

Another reason for considering the Creator-creature model as *Jnana yoga* is that in this model one cannot see any other attributes of God except the word 'Creator'. The duty of the creature is nothing else but praising the Creator. In praising the Creator one asserts his or her 'being' in God i.e. the creatures' ontological relation to God. An example can be shown in the *Qolo* of Friday evening:

On the sixth day God created Adam from the dust  
And put in him the 'Spirit'  
And gave him the faculty of speaking  
So that he may *praise Him*.

(Shubaho, Friday Santhya 2<sup>nd</sup> Qolo. p 186)

Naturally a question can be raised, that is, how one can praise God without using attributes. Here the usage 'praise of God' is to be understood in a deeper sense. The real praise is a state of mind in which one comes to the realisation of his or her 'being' in God. It is also a '*salokya*' (living in the world of *Brahman*) experience. It is a *living in God*. As St. Paul says: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal: 2, 20). If Christ lives in 'me', 'I' live in Christ. In other words it is an uninterrupted union with God and the whole life becomes a 'praise' of God.

#### iv. Light analogy.

Influenced by the Gnostic terminology the Syrian composers have very often used 'light' as an analogy for God and divinity. It is also a symbol of intellect or knowledge. In the Indian tradition also light and lamp are considered the symbol of the presence of God. In using this term the Syrian composers were very cautious to avoid the dualism of the Gnostics. That is why Mar Ephrem in his hymn says that the whole cosmos is the creation of God and every creation is a manifestation of His Divine Will. In the light analogy where God is depicted as the light of the world, man is invited to the self-realisation that he or she is also created in the 'image' and 'likeness' of God, that is he or she is also called to be the light of the world. In other words the Eternal Light shines through the human being. However, human beings in his or her sinful nature hide this light that shines in him or her. The self-realisation removes this veil of darkness, and then the Eternal Light shines through him or her. This realisation results in the mystical union with God who is the Eternal Light.

Jesus says: "I have come as light into this world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (John 12, 46). "You are the light of the World" (Mathew 5, 14a). The Syrian composers in the liturgical hymns that deal with the 'light analogy' use these two references. In realising that Jesus is the real Light, the worshipper enters into union with this Light and *lives in this Light*. *Living in this Light* is an uninterrupted union with Jesus, the real Light. This theme is reflected in the following hymn from the divine office on Wednesday morning:

The Lord said to the disciples:

*'I am the true light'.*

*The darkness cannot touch*

*Those who live in this Light.*

*Fortunate are the disciples*

*Who walked in this Light.*

In several places in the world, they are remembered

Let their prayer be a strong hold to us.

(*S'himo, Shubaho*, Wed. *Prabhatham* 2<sup>nd</sup> Qolo, p141.5)

Here one can note that the real fortune of the disciples consists in the real union with the true Light. Jesus is being radiated through the disciples. Thus the disciples become 'the light of the world'.

As a conclusion of this short analysis of hymns in the realm of *Jnana yoga*, one can say that the *Jnana yoga* motive in the Malankara hymns focuses on the mystical union with God as the *Real Being* and as the *Divine Light*. In the liturgy the *Jnana yoga* motive does not limit itself in the negation but it reaches out to the affirmation of *existence* and *conscience*. Through this affirmation the worshipper comes to the realisation that there is only one *Reality* and he or she yearns for the *samipyra* of this *Real Being*.

## **5.1 Hymns are the interpretation of the signs of the time**

Analysing Liturgy of the Hours one can observe that the hymns used there were the *interpretation of the signs of the time*. Most of the liturgical hymns originated in a polemic and apologetic context. Since liturgy is the centre of Christian life it was the best teacher of faith. That is why it is said that the theology of the east is in the liturgy. All the liturgical hymns in the Syrian liturgy are highly theological. This theology was not a speculative theology but a practical theology. Propagation of the Teaching of the Church and defending the faith were the real need of the time or in other words the composers had 'interpreted the signs of the time'. To them the liturgy was not only the worship of God but also a solemn celebration of the faith. They had celebrated the theology and in the celebration the faith of the Church was proclaimed. The themes of liturgical hymns explain the *Sitz im Leben* of the composers.

In the beginning of Christianity there seemed to be some sort of reluctance in the use of music and poetry in worship because they were taken as pagan. For example in the Alexandrian monasticism there arose an inimical attitude towards any artistic singing. On the other side the Gnostics and heretics used music and poetry to propagate their teachings because they were convinced of the influence of music on the folk. Later on, being influenced by their non-Christian contemporaries the fathers of the Church also began to use music and poetry to fight against the heretical teachings. [Clement of Alexandria (c.150), Tertullian (c.155-222), Origen (c.185-c.254), Eusebius (c.260-c.340), St. Athanasius (c.298-373), St. Basil (c.330-79) and St. John Chrysostom (345- 407) promoted singing in worship]

### **Mar Ephrem(306-373):**

Among the Fathers of the Church Mar Ephrem is the most important one in the Oriental Churches. He is called 'the harp of the Holy Spirit.' In 306 A.D he was born in Nisibis, one of the territories of the Roman Empire. He accompanied Mar Jacob, the

bishop of Nisibis to the Synod of Nicea in 325 A.D. [He was the chief hymn-writer of Syria. According to the Greek historian Sozomenos (5<sup>th</sup> century AD.) Mar Ephrem was a deacon. Many of his hymns used in the Syrian/Malankara liturgy were to defend the teachings of the Holy Church. He fought against many heresies prevailing at that time. His writings are very theological and mystical. Arius, Bardaisan, Harmonius etc. tried to propagate their teachings through poems. Mar Ephrem also accepted the same method to defend the teachings of the Church against Arianism and Manicheism.]

Let us take a few hymns:

The providence of God and his mercy is revealed in all the creation  
You have provided medicine for each illness.

To overcome the starvation of Egypt You appointed Joseph  
And in the days of Ahab, Elijah

And to the city of Nineveh, Jonah, the prophet as preacher.

When the world sinned and the people turned away from repentance

You sent Your only Son to save the world through His cross.

(S'himo, Men'olam p.326)

In this above-mentioned hymn Mar Ephrem states that there is only one God who is good. The God of the Old Testament and the New Testament is the same because God the Father has sent his messengers to Egypt and Israel and the same God has sent his only Son who is equal to the Father to save the world. The theme of this hymn is also a refutation of Manicheism.<sup>9</sup> The world and the human beings are not something evil but they are the creation of God who is good. The teachings of Gnostics<sup>10</sup> are also used in his hymns where it is implicitly said that Jesus is the Light. One who acknowledges and accepts this 'Light' will be saved.

The Gnostics used the words, sons of darkness for evil. On the other hand they made use of the words, 'Sun' and 'Light' to explain the good. The style of his compositions, both in the poetry and music is very simple and even a child can learn it by heart and sing.

**Simeon of Gesir /Semaoon Quqoyo**(1<sup>st</sup> half, 6<sup>th</sup> century): He was a contemporary of Mar Jacob of Serugh. His poems have the rhythm of 'potter's wheel' because he was a potter. There are many hymns in the Malankara liturgy, which are written in the tune of 'Quqoyo'. Some of them are attributed to him. Anyway the hymns in the 'Quqoyo' tune are very popular among the faithful of the Malankara Church. Normally the life of a potter is very simple. So too his hymns are very simple. The rhythm of the hymns is in a crisp style. It is interesting to note that in whatever tune one may sing the hymns, the rhythm remains the same, i.e. the rhythm of the potter's wheel. The reference of bible passages are lavishly utilised in his hymns. The *Quqoyo* tune can be sung in eight tunes. Some of the tunes are crisp and others are very poetical and

---

<sup>9</sup> Reference: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, sechster band, Verlag Herder Freiburg, 1961 P.1352

World and human beings are evils. Absolute Dualism of human and divine nature even in man. Salvation is possible only by separating the human nature from the divine.

<sup>10</sup> Reference: *Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe*, Verlag Styria Graz, Wien, Köln, Printed in Austria, 1987. P. 393.

Only through Knowledge (Jnana) man can be saved from the evil cosmos and enter into the world of light. The earth is ruled by evil.

mystical. The following example is a mystical tune that is taken from the *qolo* of the *Qyomto* Sunday evening:

The fragrance of *Muron* comes out of your wounds, O Lord.  
Your lips are like the purple line  
*As I came to see you, the soldiers surrounded me*  
But I left them behind and ran to *Golgotha*  
There I saw blood oozing out of your breast (heart)  
Praise and sing halleluiah to Him who saves your servants.

In this poem the poet describes himself as one who is in search of his 'Beloved'. Even if the beloved is wounded and weak the poet saw only the beauty of his 'Beloved'. The tune of this hymn can attract one to the mystical thirst of the poet. The hymns of Simeon have such an attractive nature that they can touch the heart of the hearers (faithful). This experience is nothing else but the manifestation of the simple faith of the potter. It is important to note that this simple faith of the potter was accepted and promoted by the then 'ecclesiastical structure'. Bishop Jacob of Serugh (In 508) encouraged him to write more and thus the potter's writings became a treasure of the liturgical tradition.

In short one can say that the evolution of Syrian hymns was in a polemic context. Mar Ephrem used his poetic talent and his knowledge of the Scriptures and his own spirituality to defend the faith of the Church. He was not simply defending the faith but really living it out. All the hymns of Mar Ephrem were the manifestation of his spiritual life. In Mar Balai's *Bo áwotho*, the theological problems are not directly dealt with. However they were also the revelation of his mystical experience. Mar Jacob of Serugh was a good ecumenist. He did not want to use disputable theological terms, but at the same time he was very firm in his faith. The faith and spirituality of simple and ordinary people are very important in the worshipping community i.e. the Church. Semaon Quqoyo is an example for this. All his hymns reveal his deep spirituality that was most probably influenced by the meditative reading of the Bible.

The Malankara hymns that are the translation of the original Syrian hymns originated and evolved in a polemic and apologetic context. The Antiochian liturgy from which the Malankara liturgy originated has a monastic nature. Some of the liturgical hymns and prayers used in Liturgy of the Hours directly pertained to the monastic ascetical life. The hymns and tunes are the expression of the mystical experience and ascetical lives of saints like Mar Ephrem, Mar Balai, Mar Jacob and Semaon Quqoyo. Though many of them spent their ascetic lives in loneliness, they were open to the external world. They really defended their faith and interpreted their time through their compositions. The then existing problems, schisms, persecutions, crisis in the Church, anxiety, longing for God etc. are portrayed in their hymns and they are revealed through the popular melodies of that time. So naturally some of these hymns are catechetical and others are exhortations or apologetics. In short one can state that the evolution of Syrian hymns was obviously influenced by the '*sitz im Leben*' of the composers.

### **Liturgy is the celebration of the *flesh-becoming Word*.**

Apart from history there is no *flesh-becoming Word*. Since liturgy is the participation and celebration of this *flesh-becoming Word*, apart from history and culture there is no liturgy. As the liturgy is rooted in history and culture, in the liturgical celebration not only the faithful are bound together in this culture but also they are related to all

others who are even outside the community of the faithful. The hymns and prayers of Liturgy of the Hours in the Malankara Liturgy were the interpretation of the faith and theology. They must be able to 'interpret the signs of the time'. 'Interpreting the signs of the time' includes acknowledging the regional cultures too. Through the hymns the Syrian composers have interpreted the faith in their own context and that was the need of that time. As the liturgical celebration is participation in the 'flesh-becoming logos', participation in human history, the liturgical hymns must be able to interpret theology in the context of today. Thus every liturgical celebration becomes not only the commemoration of the salvation event but also the reinterpretation of it in the living context. All the hymns used in Liturgy of the Hours in the Malankara Church are very rich in their mystical nature and theological thinking. However, they are determined by the context of the polemics and apologetics. Most of these hymns were composed in between 300 A.D and 700 A.D and they cannot directly speak to the faithful of the 21<sup>st</sup> century until they are interpreted. Here comes the importance of new hymns because they can directly speak to the faithful of 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in the context of religious pluralism and ecumenism. The Malankara Church must search for and accept the mystical compositions that 'interpret the signs of the time'. As Mar Jacob of Serugh encouraged and acknowledged the compositions of the 'simple potter' Simeon Quqoyo the Malankara Church must be open to the dynamism of the Holy Spirit that renews the Church and inspires even the so called 'simple faithful' of the Church.

Participating in Liturgy of the Hours how can we relate ourselves to the *sitz im Leben*.  
Discussion

E.g. How can we compare and contrast the following two hymns on Mary, the Mother of God?

**Mar Jacob – 5<sup>th</sup>  
Century A.D.**

O the blessed virgin!  
Pray for us so that the Lord  
may grant us grace.

You are filled with the  
grace of God. Pray for us  
who plead for His mercy,  
that the Lord may have pity  
on us.

As you heard the strange  
greeting of the angel, you  
have asked yourself the  
reason for this strange  
greetings:

'You have promised your  
Son, but I am a virgin, how  
can I conceive a child

**Jnanadas – 20<sup>th</sup>  
Century A.D.**

Your *lotus feet* is our  
(*sharanam*) trust, O  
mother

O virgin mother,  
mediator of grace and  
blessings

I venerate your *lotus*  
(*flower*) *feet*,

O the figure of love,  
O the *immaculate*.

O Mother let my  
eyes absorb your shining  
beauty

Let my

without sexual contact?  
Please tell me.'

May He be praised, who  
sent his messenger, may He  
be praised who became flesh  
in her womb, may He, the  
Holy Spirit be praised who  
descended on her.

By Her prayer, may the  
Lord have mercy on us.  
O the Son, by the prayer of the  
one who bore you for nine  
months, let the punishment of  
your anger be away from us.  
(*S'himo, Men'olam*, p.331)

'*karal*'(heart)be filled  
with your *prasada* of  
love.

Whether my eyes are  
closed or opened

Let them see your  
(*Thirumukha darsanam*)  
countenance.

Grant us the blessing  
in your mercy

That I may sing your  
praise.

(*Translated from  
Malayalam*)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BABY Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical theology*

TAFT Robert, *The Liturgy of the Hours in the Christian East*; Printed at K.C.M. Press, Karikkamuri, Ernakulam, Cochin-682 011, Kerala, India.

VYSANETHU Philip, *Musicality makes the Malankara Liturgy Mystical*, SEERI Publication, Baker Hill, Kottayam-686 001, 2004.

BECKWITH R.T, *The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church in Relation to its Jewish Antecedents*, Louvain.

BRADSHAW P, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church*, ACC 63. London: SPCK 1981 and New York; Oxford 1982.

SCHEMANN A, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1966.

VATICAN II, Constitution on Sacred Liturgy: No. 14-17; 80-83

*CODEX CANONUM ECCLESiarUM ORIENTALIUM*: 9, 199, 278, 1, 3; 346:1, 2

**Indebted to: Robert Taft. S.J; *The Liturgy of the Hours in the Christian East* (P.2-87 & 170-218), Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology***

Prepared by  
***Philip Vysanethu.OIC***  
2021