

Modalities of Witnessing

[Indigenous approach to Christian Way of Life: A Study]

Fr Dr Jacob Kurian

(Divyabodhanam Book Series 17)

Statement

Dear ones,

By God's abundant grace, the first stage of Divyabodhanam program has concluded successfully. The preparation of ten books on our faith related topics itself is a good achievement.

The program that commenced only in 1984 had 49 centres associated with it. There were 130 women and 210 men who participated in this exercise. His Holiness Catholicose is distributing certificates on August 9, 1986 to those who have completed the course (10 subjects).

Now, we are coming to the second stage. Apart from accepting participants for the second batch of the preliminary stage, new courses are being formulated for those who have completed first stage.

The target for the second stage too is to deepen the knowledge of church members in their understanding of faith. This would be useful equally for parents and youth possessing basic education. This process is a basic requirement for all Sunday school teachers.

What is being looked forward to is ten thousands of members completing this course within the next few years resulting in an all-round progress in the faith centred life of our people. Let these books be instrumental in Holy Spirit to experience the love of God that is expressed with the God coming down as a human in Christ. Let there be showering of Blessings from the Almighty to all of you.

Kottayam,

July 3, 1986

Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso, President, Divyabodhanam

Author



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He joined Orthodox Theological Seminary as a Member of the Faculty in 1978 and retired as its Principal in 2014. In 1979, he was ordained to Priesthood and took charge of 'Malankara Sabha' magazine as its Chief Editor. He took his doctorate from Serambur University. He associated himself with inter Church relations and served as our Church's Inter Church Relations Secretary. He has been working with WCC's Faith and Order Commission as its Standing Committee member. Even after retirement, he lends his time and wisdom to the Orthodox Theological Seminary.

From the Publisher's Desk

PREFACE

This book is being presented as the second part of 'Cloud of Witnesses'. But looking at the contents, it may be noted that this book has been prepared differently from the indications given in the Preface of the earlier book.

It was mentioned in the Preface of 'Cloud of Witnesses' that the second part would contain narrations about the architects of the Church traditions we have in the Malankara and Syrian Church fraternity. However, it is seen that in some other texts of Divyabodhanam programme as well as in some Sunday school texts, there are adequate explanations about many of such fathers; it is also seen in Divyabodhanam seminars at a few centres that the participants are keen to get information about Indianisation of our Church. Therefore, it is thought to discuss the indigenisation of Indian Church in this text. Moreover, a crucial message of the Cloud of witnesses is indigenisation which certainly is a challenge before us. To explain indigenisation in one sentence would be responding sensibly to the ancient and contemporary realities in relation to the prevailing circumstances of that particular area. Those who belong to the Cloud of witnesses are those fathers who had been responding sensibly to such realities from time to time. In other words, the path of witnessing is nothing but the path of indigenisation.

It is hoped that the Christians in India would move forward through the path of witnessing based on the discussions being carried out in this text at least to some extent. Seeing the 'Cloud of Witnesses' around us, let us move forward through the 'Modalities of Witnessing' confidently.

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Unit 1

Basics of Indigenisation

Lesson 1

Architects of Church Traditions and Indigenisation

Indigenisation as we see in Holy Bible # Later Day Architects of Christian Traditions and Indigenisation

The architects of Church traditions have played their roles in the history of Church in its most sensible manner. How did they do it? They carried out this task by meaningfully addressing the situations of their time in their Christian wisdom and experience without any dilution. Meaningfully addressing the situations has to be understood as accepting what has to be accepted, discarding what has to be discarded and opposing what has to be opposed to proclaim the Good News looking into the culture, philosophical insights and the pattern of religious life prevailing in their respective areas. This process can be called indigenisation in Christian tradition. The architects of Church traditions tried their best to align themselves in its deepest sense so that they are part and parcel of that area ready to produce fruits as expected of them.

Indigenisation as we see in Holy Bible:

Son of God taking flesh as Son of Man itself was indigenisation in principle. “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2: 6 – 8). Indigenisation is the principle of Divinity taking concrete nature of Humanity. Jesus Christ has chosen himself to be called Son of Man. Indigenisation was the essence in this qualification. Any contemporary Jewish thinker would have had in him an enlightening image of Messiah as Son of Man. The reason behind this was the way the forthcoming Messiah was pictured as Son of Man in the Apocalyptic texts of Jewish scripture like Daniel (7:13, 18, 22, 27) and Enoch (46, 48, 62, 69). However, Jesus Christ accepting this name gave a new dimension to the concept.

Jesus Christ was enthusiastic to take up contemporary expectations and desires of people seriously and address them sensibly. Whenever he spoke to people, he chose suitable metaphors familiar to those people listening to them. Metaphors of a farmer sowing seeds, fishermen casting their net, women kneading flour, host pouring wine for guests during a feast are all examples. Whenever he was with people, he liberated them from their bindings such as illness, hunger, death and the like. In whichever community he lived, he opposed publicly the exploitations, inequalities and fake devotion. Such instances are seen in Luke 11: 42 – 52; 14:7; 19: 8 – 10; Matthew 6:24; Mark 10: 23 – 25. In short, the nature of Jesus Christ’s service was to enter deep into the life of those communities and to address various issues they were confronting.

The style of functioning followed by the Apostles was a continuation of this. When they served among the Jews to begin with, they presented Jesus Christ as fulfilment of the expectations of

Jewish populace in totality (Acts 2:14 – 36; 3:12 – 26; 7: 1 – 53). However, they used varying methodologies to introduce Jesus Christ to those Jews who grew up in Greek culture not being familiar to Hebrew background as well as to the gentiles. The concept of Logos was used among Greeks as a mediator between God and man very commonly. St John succeeded in presetting Jesus Christ to them through an effective integration with Logos. Therefore, he said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Further to this, he attracted listeners to the truth that the Word became flesh. St Peter was clinging on to conservatism till he was awakened to a new awareness through a revelation.

“But accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all” (Acts 10: 35, 36).

In the Jerusalem conference, it was decided by early disciples that when gentiles believe in Christ, Jewish religious rituals should not be imposed on them (Acts 15). This was a sort of recognition to indigenisation.

When we examine the epistles of St Paul, it can be seen in each of them that, whomever the epistle is addressed to, there is an attempt to contain their situations, problems and culture centred in Jesus Christ. He says, “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law” (1 Corinthians 9: 20, 21). So he exhorted others like this: “Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the Church of God—even as I try to please everyone in every way. I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved” (1 Corinthians 10: 32, 33).

The sermon St Paul does at Athena is another example. “Men of Athena, I see that in every way, you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found alter with this inscription - TO AN UNKNOWN GOD - Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim you” Acts 17:22 – 23). Thus he preached Jesus Christ. (What St Paul has said in 2 Corinthians 6:14 have to be understood based on 1 Corinthians 5: 9 – 12 and 1 Corinthians 10: 27).

Later Day Architects of Christian Traditions and Indigenisation:

Subsequent architects of traditions had accepted the principle of indigenisation. For example, Tertullian from Carthage (155 – 220), Hippolytus of Rome (died in 235) and Cyprian (200 – 258) had attempted to establish a Christian tradition in tune with the contemporary Roman culture. Tertullian had raised a pertinent question, “What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?” The background of this question was that once Roman culture had taken deep roots in Africa, their old Greek culture had become insignificant. Alexandria was a confluence centre of different religions and philosophies where attempts were made by Clement (150 – 215) and Origen (185 – 253) to interpret truths of Christianity in the above background. Origen has written to Gregorise, his closest disciple, also known as the miracle doer, as this: “You can use Greek philosophy for creating opening to Christian truths..... It is similar to the incident where Israelites borrowed gold ornaments from Egyptians and used them to prepare the place of Holy of Holies for Jehovah. But some among us pick up Greek thoughts to formulate schisms”.

St Athanasius (295 – 373) combined contemporary thoughts with utmost care to formulate a Christology. ‘Equal in essence’ may not convey much sense for us, but in Greek background, ‘homo ousio’ carried much sense and significance. The interpretation for Holy Trinity by Cappadocia fathers too had this peculiarity. When we say one in essence and three in persons, we may not get any deep insight, but the Greek equivalent one Ousia and three hypostasis were more meaningful. In other words, such word usages were indigenous interpretations to Christian truths. When such words were used, no one blamed them as being adventurist or propagating schism or forming an overdose of Greek language. Even if there were critical analysis of such usages, the relevance of their interpretations overshadowed the relevance of criticism. However, in Eastern Church traditions, such trends of indigenisation did not progress as it should have. May be, we can say that indigenisation continued to some extent in worship and Church life. At the same time, indigenisation was active for a much longer period in the Western Church tradition. Scholastic theological thought is an example for this. But for them, indigenisation in worship and Church life were very slow.

Questions:

1. ‘Indigenisation’ is another name for Christian witnessing. Explain.
2. Clarify some of the indigenisation models of Jesus Christ and Apostles.
3. Find out the ideological obstacles while interpreting the following verses: Acts 10: 35, 36; 1 Corinthians 7:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Romans 2:26, 27
4. Should it be that what was relevant in Greek background is relevant in Indian scenario? What all issues are surfacing in such a discussion?

Lesson 2

Church that was indigenised: in Social Life

The Basics # A Common Name # Names of Christians # Social Status # Vocation # Attire # Rituals # Feasts and the like # Day to day life # Evaluation

History points out that the nature of indigenisation we have seen in the lives of Jesus Christ and the Apostles have been very much present in the ancient Malankara Church. At least till the Udayamperoor conference, Malankara Church used to be indigenous. In this lesson, we are discussing the characteristics of this indigenous nature reflected in the social life and religious life of Malankara Nazarenes. The basics for this discussion are the Copper Plates given to Malankara Nazarenes, the decisions of Udayamperoor conference, letters and notes of those who had visited Malankara and the traditional songs and social rituals prominent among this community.

The Basics:

- a. Copper Plates: There four known Copper Plates. (1) Emperor Veera Raghava had given a Copper Plate to Iravikorthan, who was a Nazarene leader of that time. This is known as 'Iravikorthan Copper Plate' and is kept at Catholicose Palace at Devalokam, Kottayam. (2) Cheraman Perumal had given one to Kanai Thoma and all Malankara Nazarenes which is called 'Kanai Thoma Copper Plate'. Though the original of this is lost, a translation in Portuguese language is kept at the British Museum. (3) One high official of the State namely Sthanu Ravi had given Copper Plates to Tharisa church at Kollam. This is called 'Tharisa church first Copper Plate'. There were three plates in this of which one is lost. Of the remaining two, one is in possession of Malankara Orthodox Church and is kept at Catholicose Palace, Devalokam. The other one is kept at the Mar Thoma Church Central Office at Thiruvalla. (4) This is 'Tharisa church second Copper Plate'. There were four plates of which one is lost. Two are kept at Catholicose Palace, Devalokam and one at Mar Thoma Church Central Office, Thiruvalla. We can say beyond any doubt that all these plates are written before 10th century.
- b. Canons of Synod: The decisions taken at the Udayamperoor conference in 1599 AD had crucial impacts on the social life of Malankara Christians. Different forms of these canons are now available as study materials.
- c. Notes and Narrations: The notes and narrations about Malankara Nazarenes and travelogues written through different viewpoints are useful. These are some such important narrations: 'Universal Christian Topography' by Cosmas who visited Kerala in 6th century; 'Mirabilia Discripta' by Jordan of Severak who visited Kerala in 10th century; narrations of people like Carnero, Ferdinand Pass and Nunez Barito who visited Kerala before 16th century are all very useful documents. Similarly important are the notes of foreigners who visited Kerala after 16th century like Antonio Deguvayo and others.
- d. Songs: There were many types of songs popular among Malankara Nazarenes like Villiarvattom Pana, wedding songs, Margam kali songs, Ramban songs, pallippattukal and so on. All these songs throw light to the living styles of early Malankara Nazarenes.
- e. Old Rituals: Many of the rituals we follow now have their origin from the very early days; our rituals at home in connection with a birth or a marriage or a death are all having a very ancient heritage.

A Common Name:

It is not quite clear as to by what name Malankara Nazarenes were known here. Whether they had a common name to identify them during those early days is also doubtful. Iravikorthan is generally accepted as a Christian, but the Copper Plates do not carry any notation to identify him as a Christian. [The book by Z M Parrett titled 'Malankara Nazarenes: Padaviyum Jatyacharangalum' carries a Malayalam version of Kanai Thoma Copper Plate. Here, the terms Nazarene and Mappila are used, but they are not seen in the original translations in English and Portuguese] What one has to infer here is that just like the Christians of Palestine, even the Christians here did not want to be identified by a separate name to be different from the mainstream. [The name Christians was formed at Antioch as we read in Acts 11:26. But this name was attributed to them sarcastically by others]. In the Iravikorthan Copper Plate, there is a term 'Vadukappara' which has made some people think that there would have been perhaps a name 'Vadukan' from ancient days. However, this term 'Vadukan' has no connection with Christ or Christian as

understood. But by 9th century, there is a fair chance that based on Tharisa church Copper Plate, Christians would have been called people of Tharisa church at least during those days. The term Tharisa has its origin in the Syriac term 'threesai', which means 'one that is right' or 'one that is straight'. The terms Nazarene and Mapillai would have come later. Matthew 2:23 calls Jesus as Nazarene. Acts 24:5 calls Apostles as Nazarene sect. It would have been in this background Christians in Kerala had come to be known as Malankara Nazarenes. However, it is not known how long it took this name to get established. 'Mapillai' is said to be formed from Maha Pillai which is an indication to their vocation as traders. But this too is not clear as to since when it got established. It is reasonable to assume that both these names were in use well before Udayamperoor conference. The term Christian has come to Kerala much later.

Names of Christians:

It doesn't seem that the names of Christians in Kerala during the early days were Biblical. Iravikorthan was then a Christian leader, but his name was Dravidian. In the discussions of Udayamperoor conference and findings thereof, objections were raised against the use of unchristian names. Later, using Biblical names became the order, but even then, a local touch was attached with names or Biblical names were indigenised. For example, Abraham was made Avira or Itty, Joseph was made Outha, Elizabeth was made Eli or Elachi, Hanna was made Annam and Sarah was made Thanda. In addition to these, there were qualifications such as Kochu, Kunju, Achan and the like for men and Amma, Kutty and similar ones for women.

Social Status:

The Malankara Nazarenes dovetailed naturally with the social scenario that has been prevailing here. This can be understood from the fact that Christians were accepted by the society as second only to Brahmins (at least from 6th century) in status; for the same reason, they were accorded 72 positions in the system of governance. According to the Tharisa church Copper Plate, Nazarenes had the unusual permission to enter the market place and inside the fort to carry out their usual works. They were able to keep up a system to govern them to a reasonable extent in many respects. They were given landed property free of tax on many occasions and were authorised to collect taxes from others. They were building their dwelling places with a 'gate-house' as the Brahmins used to do. What is stated about Nazarenes in their social dealings was that they used to be very trustworthy and maintained their cool always. They were hard working and by and large, teetotallers. Moreover, their dealings with those who were below them in social status were extremely sincere and decent that such people were always happy to work for Nazarenes. It is not sure whether all these were reasons found good enough by Brahmins to have a touch by a Nazarene for getting cleansed of any incident of untouchability occurred to them.

Vocation:

Nazarenes were wise enough to find out vocations centred on indigenous agricultural produce. Coconut trees were growing in Kerala far and wide; Nazarenes resorted to cultivate coconut trees largely and took up allied industrial activities related to coconut trees and their products. Christians had a monopoly of Pepper cultivation and trade. They were found to be very strong in the armed forces; the army of the local ruler used to have a considerable number of Christians. May be these

were reasons for a chieftain or king of a province being honoured and respected by others based on the number of Christian soldiers he had.

Attire:

The pattern of clothing followed by Nazarene men and women was not much different from those of the higher caste Hindus, particularly, Brahmins. Men used to grow a tuft of hair that was fixed with a bangle that had a cross with it. They used to wear ear studs. Normally, their attire had a single dhoti with a large towel. Men used to carry a weapon with them always. Women were wearing dhoti like clothe of ten forearm length with pleats. Brahmin women were also wearing the same, but the pleats of Brahmins were on the front while Christians had them on the back. Christian women used to cover their breasts while going out like Brahmins and were using palm leaf umbrellas. They were wearing ornaments like those of Brahmins including anklets and a banyan leaf shaped tiny locket (if married) similar to Brahmin women; however, this tiny locket has a cross with it which is the only difference with that of Brahmins. Generally, men and women were not wearing sandals even while moving out.

Rituals:

By and large, the rituals followed by Malankara Nazarenes were Christianised adaptations from those of the Hindus around them or those of their earlier generations. Most of the procedures during a wedding ceremony were similar to those of Brahmins. [Child marriages, four generations separation for marriages between relations, the term 'Manthrakodi', making a thread using fibres from 'Manthrakodi' to tie the knot of marriage, dowry system, laying a thatched shed for marriages, artistic drawings with rice flour, loud musical sound produced with mouth during festivals and the like]. The wedding eve had indigenous celebrations including like applying henna on the bride, placing sweet, singing wedding songs and then, traditional reception of bride and groom after marriage and so on. Once a baby is born in a family, there have been rituals such as applying gold and honey on its tongue and naming the child; these are also adopted from Brahmin systems. Remembering the departed on certain particular days as also every year has also been quite ancient. Most of these rituals adopted from local customs were made to look Christian with the presence of cross, peculiarities of prayers and leadership of priests.

Feasts and the like:

Malankara Nazarenes were very particular to maintain harmonious relations with other religions and castes. The feasts in churches and temples used to be conducted with mutual cooperation. The churches and temples were constructed with some similarities in their appearance and both invariably had a flag post on their courtyards; of course, the one at the church would certainly have a cross on it. During the feasts at churches the invariable sideshows were processions with traditional musical instruments, as well as ancient art forms like margam kali, parichamuttu kali and chavittunatakam. These are indications of Malankara Nazarenes having become quite indigenous by aligning close to contemporary culture. Onam is the national festival of Kerala and the Nazarenes give lot of importance to celebrating this. Udayamperoor conference had strongly discouraged the then Christian rituals of participating in various games associated with Onam as we understand from the available records thereof.

Day to day life:

The normal living styles of Nazarenes had reflections of indigenisation to a good extent. In choosing apt locations for cattle shed, well and house, and their pattern of constructions, Christians had been respecting local precedence and understandings. Nazarenes were, by and large, vegetarians. Whenever they took part in common meals, Nazarenes used to fold the plantain leaf at its left edge as an indication of the special status conferred on them. Each and every incident that takes place in a family like birth, wedding and death were associated with many indigenous rituals. They had been following systems such as searching for appropriate day for a wedding to be solemnised, looking at the mutual consonance of stars of the boy and girl, using an oil lamp for all auspicious occasions, looking for good omen and such things. According to the system prevailed then, Nazarene boys used to go for army training during their age 8 to 20.

Evaluation:

Based on what were discussed above, the social life of Malankara Nazarenes for sure, was quite indigenous. But, there is a critical question here. The Nazarenes were following a life as a high caste, as one observing untouchability and slavery and as one closely associating with Hindu rituals; being so, how Christian were their life? Had they been leading a true Christian life, they should have fought against slavery and untouchability. Had they lived a true Christian life, would they have followed 'good day', stars and omens? But, the criterion for assessing Christianity of ancient days need not be as rigid as they are in these modern days. What was the stand adopted by Jesus Christ and Apostles in a community where slavery and belief in evil spirits were quite common? They were attempting to bring about a gradual transformation by inculcating conviction of the power of God and the feeling of justice rather than trying to change the community at one stroke. Likewise, Malankara Nazarenes too could be true witnesses of a new order for the period when they lived. For this, we have solid proof that the Christians were accepted as a class of people who were trustworthy to the core. The Christians then were at the highest level of ethics. They were dealing with those people below them and under their care most admirably. If we observe them like this, it can be understood that rather than enthusing a feel of gospel, they were good witnesses of Christ through their calm and quiet dealings evidenced through their social life.

Questions:

1. 'The social life of Malankara Nazarenes then and now': Conduct a comparative study.
2. 'When the Church becomes indigenous, gospel work would turn insignificant': Sum up your response to this statement.

Lesson 3

Church that was indigenised: in Religious Life

The church # Religious governance # Religious rituals and observance # Position of Priest # Doctrines of Faith # Evaluation

The Malankara Nazarenes have been reflecting an indigenous Christian tradition in their religious life. The fact that they ventured to live without idols in this land of idols and to have a cross wherever they were indicates that they possessed their own intrinsic religious stand.

The church:

A church was very important in the life of a Nazarene. As temples were, churches too were exempted from taxes on their assets. Such assets or properties were known as Pallippuram or Pallichandam. Pillars were set up by followers of Buddhism and Jainism in front of their places of worship; following this style, huge crosses made of granite were erected in front of churches which were called 'Nazarene Pillar'. These crosses were carved out in true Indian nature. On the courtyard of a church, there used to be a tall flag post on the top of which, a cross was affixed. Prior to the commencement of any feast, flag hoisting was done like what they did in temples. Churches were mostly constructed similar to the architectural structures of temples. The main building for a church would be constructed using stones and wood suitable to the climatic conditions of Kerala. Main parts of church were the facade also called space to play dramas, the facing room, the prayer hall or hykkala and the Holy Sanctuary or Madbaha. Rooms were made adjacent to the church for other purposes such as for serving food, for storing weapons, a veranda, a balcony and the like. The crosses erected on the top of its roof as also on its front were marks to distinguish a church from a temple. Like in temples, churches too had oil lamps with wicks which were kept lighted always. Most churches had ponds on their western side. Believers used this pond to clean themselves before they enter the church for worship. Use of flags, lamps and decorated umbrellas had indigenous character reflected in them. On special feasts, meals were arranged for mass participation similar to what was done in temples. This is practiced even now in churches in Kunnankulam area.

Religious governance:

Metropolitan was the spiritual supreme for Malankara Nazarenes. He enjoyed a status close to that of a king. As Nazarenes had authority of self governance to a certain extent spiritually and materially, the Metropolitan and Arch Deacon wielded immense powers. At the grassroots, churches enjoyed self rule for which the Kasheesha or the priest was the responsible person holding adequate authority. Parish assembly was the body that took decisions from time to time for the welfare of Nazarenes at the spiritual and material fields. A Parish assembly consisted of priests of that parish and the male members who were major in age. Such parish assembly would have come up as a parallel to the local gathering of people to take appropriate decisions affecting their day to day life. The parish assembly used to impose punishments publicly to those who committed sins in the open. Any decision taken at a parish assembly can be appealed before Arch Deacon or Metropolitan if there was anyone who felt aggrieved.

Religious rituals and observance:

Most important among religious observance was participation in Holy Qurbana. For celebrating Holy Qurbana, it has to be presumed that an Eastern Syrian order was in place. There was the custom of preparing Bread using wheat flour, oil and salt and to cover it in lotus leaves; this used to be offered in Holy Qurbana. There also was a system said to be practiced in those days that reminds us of Holy Confession. It was also customary for the priests to apply oil on the sick. For conducting Holy Baptism for children, a container was carved out of granite with attractive decorations engraved on it; sometimes, these were shaped as a blossoming lotus flower. The Nazarenes followed observing Lents, fasting on Wednesday and Friday and observing Passion Week as part of their ancient religious rituals. For centuries, they had a feast commemorating the martyrdom of St Thomas. Again there was a function within each family recalling the Last Supper, led by family heads. This has been continued in many families even now.

Position of Priest:

Among Nazarenes of ancient days, priests had a very high status. It would be interesting to understand some aspects of the lifestyle of priests as seen in the canons of Udayamperoor conference.

1. The attire of priests and male Nazarenes were the same except when the priests entered a church for worship
2. The priests too had hair grown like other males
3. Priests used to go for fishing and hunting
4. Many priests were engaged in trading activity as a vocation
5. Even the priests used to wear weapons like other males
6. Some of the priests were paid by local chieftains as soldiers and therefore they had to go for battles whenever the need arose
7. Most of the priests were married; remarriages were also usual at the demise of wives
8. Wives of priests enjoyed a prominence in church
9. Parish assembly was selecting the candidates for priesthood; once such selected candidates come to the parish as ordained priests, they were accorded a very warm reception.

As we see them today, many of the above characteristics may look funny, but they were quite normal as far as the people then were concerned.

Doctrines of Faith:

The doctrines of faith were simple but they contained the essence of Christianity. Along with faith in one God, belief in Holy Trinity and the mystery of God taking flesh as man were deep rooted in early Nazarenes. As they had relations with the Persian Church, there would have been traces of Nestorian ideologies in their worship language as the days passed on; yet, many visitors to Kerala had witnessed that Malankara Nazarenes had within them a strong insight of true Christian faith. Malankara Nazarenes never were affected by any sort of schisms as it was for Christians of the Roman Empire. Fr Nunes Barreto, a Jesuit priest had sent a letter to Europe on December 31, 1961 (before Udayamperoor conference) which states thus: "I love to be among these Christians; I am happy that they know the doctrines of faith as I gathered from my talks with them. I have seen them

as having stood firm in the mysteries of faith such as Holy Trinity, God having taken flesh as man and Holy Qurbana”.

It is worth noting that they made attempts to spread these doctrines of faith through their language and media of art; some such example are: a song carrying the message of the fall of Adam and Eve, another song glorifying Holy Trinity, another one illustrating God taking flesh as man and yet another song covering the redeeming passion experiences.

Evaluation:

In the religious life of Nazarenes, one can see the essence of Christianity mingled with the glamour of indigenous characteristics. Our study of them is not intended to have a literal return to that pattern, but go forward accepting the principle behind their systems. In their religious life, Malankara Nazarenes never possessed an alien individuality, which is a fact that would be exciting for every Christian. It may be recalled here that all other Orthodox Churches have worked towards protecting their indigenous character.

Questions:

1. What are the basic principles that could be found in Malankara Nazarenes having been indigenised in their religious life?
2. Write a paragraph about the doctrines of faith held by ancient Malankara Nazarenes.
3. Carry out a study to ascertain what all facets of the ancient religious life of Malankara Nazarenes are still sustaining.

Lesson 4

Obstacles in the Path of Indigenisation: Control of Churches from Abroad, Now and Then

Little bit of History # Latinisation # Syrianisation # Anglican Reformation # Evaluation

Little bit of History:

Malankara Church was totally indigenous and it was like that till 16th century. Though, there were relations with Persian Church during these years such a relationship never turned out to any sort of supremacy. Not only that, relationship with Persian Church was good enough for Malankara Church in as much as that it could stick on to its indigenous nature without hindrance. This scenario underwent changes with the coming of Portuguese in the 16th century. Subsequent centuries witnessed increasing interference from foreign Churches thereby the indigenous characteristics of this Church getting slowly declined. The goal of that infamous conference held at Udayamperoor in 1599 was as simple as to make Malankara Church surrender totally before the Roman Church for which, the Portuguese brutal political power was utilised. And their attempt succeeded to a certain

extent. Their Arch Bishop Menezes and his subordinates initiated steps to revamp many of the rituals and doctrines being practiced here on the guise that they were heresies.

Many Bishops from Antioch landed in Malankara beginning from 1665; they never had any political power, but they tactfully exploited the sincere desire of Malankara Nazarenes to maintain their Eastern tradition at its full depth. This initiated a Syrianisation in Malankara.

The English missionaries made all sorts attempts to convert Malankara Nazarenes as part and parcel of their Anglican Church under the leadership of Bishop Daniel Wilson; they had political support, and their strategy was to discard all the indigenous rituals and doctrines practiced here by propagating them as irrational and superstitious.

Thus the westernisation methodologies initiated by the Portuguese and the English coupled with the Syrianisation efforts from Antioch resulted in Malankara Nazarenes losing many of their indigenous facets. All these three foreign segments had one character in common; that is nothing but material exploitation. Portuguese and English were mostly successful in their attempts as they had political power to back them. They wanted the Malankara Church to be totally westernised. Their missionaries worked hard at that. As the Syrian Bishops had no political backing, they had to have their material exploitation done through the Church itself. These interests are live even now in one form or other to a good extent. Because of these, the indigenisation of the Church is confronting lots of issues.

Latinisation:

The Udayamperoor conference was one that forcibly attempted to introduce Latin interests on Malankara Church. Many of the innocent rituals followed here were banned using their political clout under their 'rituals and deeds of old system'. Some of them are summed up below:

- In the Holy Sanctuary, Holy Objects are to be arranged on a stone tablet and the tablet should be covered by clothe that shall not be weaved out of cotton; the same for clothe that covers the chancel also. Instead, Portuguese made clothe are to be used. No other types are allowed.
- The believers and others should be distinguished from their attire; therefore Christian males should not pierce their ear henceforth and should not grow their hair long; they should not wear studs. Those who do not fall in line should be pulled up by the Bishop and punished.

The Latinisation methods and the restrictions were reflected strongly in issues related to patterns of worship and social customs. Thus, using political power, many Nazarenes were latinised. Their successors have now in them an inculcated Latin Church life style consequent to their centuries of submission to those ritualised patterns. There are people among them who desire a change in these, but there are many practical hindrances. Most important among these hindrances is even if foreign, it is not easy to leave a particular system that has been part and parcel of a social and cultural life for long. Even those who object to Latin tradition now have their priorities set on ecclesiastical self governance as well as for more rights. Just to establish their independent stance, they rely on Syrian tradition. More than this, those who appreciate an indigenous individuality of Church is too minimal.

Syrianisation:

Malankara Church had its relationship with the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch commenced with the visit of Mar Gregorioso in 1665. But the process of Syrianisation was initiated in its true spirit by Mar Ivanios who came here in 1685. 'Mulanthuruthy Synod' held in 1876 under the leadership of Patriarch Peter III was the uproar of trumpet indicating Syrianisation to a great effect in Malankara. One of the decisions taken in this Synod was to take efforts to ensure that 'Literature of Antioch' sustained in Malankara. The indigenous system of tying knot with 'thali' during the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony had been prevailing here since long. But when the Bishops from Antioch used to be celebrants in Matrimony services, they detached themselves from this ritual, but made a local priest to hand over 'thali' to the groom. Moreover, this Syrianisation has a localised background too.

There was Coonan Cross oath against Latinisation of Malankara Church; similarly, Malankara Nazarenes took strong stands in their moves against reformists as we see in the Mavelikkara Synod of 1836 and Mulanthuruthy Synod of 1876; however, these two synods opened the doors to Antiochian domination and our submission to them. Many of our people understood that the Syrian tradition was rich in spirituality, strong in theological base and Eastern in nature and therefore favoured it rather than embracing Anglican reformation which too was foreign. Moreover, most of the Antiochian Metropolitans who visited Malankara did not object seriously to the indigenous characteristics prevailing with many rituals albeit their dislikes. Contrary to such soft stands, there were a few Metropolitans who vehemently objected to such rituals. But the unfortunate aspect of this relationship with Syrian tradition was that a segment within Malankara developed an overzealous submission to Antioch as worse as a mentality of slavery.

Therefore, even now, efforts are live to regain our indigenous nature and grow in that direction by checking the limitless Syrianisation in the Church. In the Roman Catholic Church, there are moves against Latinisation; likewise, there must be moves in our Church also against Syrianisation. But similar to the scenario in the Catholic Church, here too, deviation from what has been followed for a few centuries and cemented within us that is not very easy. In other words, there are obstacles to introduce any fundamental changes as our mind set sticks on to prevailing practices.

Anglican Reformation:

In 1816, Malankara Church received Mission help through CMS missionaries which indeed was aimed at the Anglican reformation to be implemented here. In its reality, what the Anglican missionaries could not digest about Malankara Church was its indigenous Christian culture. The young missionaries from Puritan tradition who were products of the 18th century reformation moves could not understand a Christian culture that was firmly set up in Indian cultural scenario. What the Portuguese called 'heresy' was inferred 'superstitions' by the English. But they could create a segment in Malankara to glorify their findings without much difficulty. The memorandum submitted by twelve priests from that group to Col Frazer in 1836 is good example for that. These are some of the issues they raised:

- In the feasts of saints, it is right to teach the believers to emulate them, but there are pieces of advice prevailing that for observing such feasts, flag has to be hoisted and dramatic presentations are to be made as done by gentiles.

- During the evening of Maundy Thursday there observances in houses reminding the Last Supper of our Lord where breaking of bread is done under the leadership of the family elder.
- All churches practice a ritual of praying for the departed and lighting candles at their tombs.

The sum and substance of these complaints rest with the detachment to indigenous Christian way of life. This detachment grew up and ended with the formation of CSI and Mar Thoma Churches. The reformed Christian style formulated due to these developments emphasise cultural differences rather than theological differences. There is a cultural reorientation reflected in their approaches to construction patterns of churches, setting tunes to hymns, structural orders of worships and attitude towards Christian art forms. However, the contributions of missionaries in the linguistic field had encouraged promotion of indigenous literature quite substantially, which cannot be forgotten. Once we think about the indigenous nature of the Church in the background of Anglican reformation also, the real difficulty is nothing but a reluctance to leave what has been practiced for quite a long period.

Evaluation:

The Malankara Church that was indigenous contained certain rituals those were irrational or superstitious and this has to be admitted. Therefore, what good services were done by foreign missionaries in this direction must be thankfully acknowledged. The Missionaries raised their voice against omens, untouchability and such other practices; they worked hard in the field of education. They were also active in the area of literature. However, these positives can never justify their efforts to distort the indigenous nature of this Church.

Questions:

1. Write a paragraph each about the Latinisation, Syrianisation and Anglican reformation in relation to Malankara Church.
2. Briefly give your responses to this statement: 'Malankara Church acquired discipline from Portuguese missionaries, Liturgical tradition from Syrians and social outlook from Anglicans'.

Lesson 5

Indian Christians Again in the Path of Indigenisation: History and Challenges

Missionaries and Indigenisation Thoughts # Thambaram Conference and Indigenisation Movement of Reformists # Exploring the Path of Indigenisation # Limitations # Peculiarities of Integrated Approach # Main Challenges

The Christians in India can be seen belonging to two categories. First among them are those of the Malankara Nazarene tradition and the second are those became Christians consequent to the missionary works of westerners. Among these, most of the indigenisation initiatives had been taking place in the latter category and are taking place even now.

Missionaries and Indigenisation Thoughts:

Thoughts of indigenisation came up in modern era as a means to spread the gospel among the non Christians in India. The Roman Catholic missionary Robert d Nubile reached India in 1605 who learnt Tamil and Sanskrit to work among natives and lived like an Indian, dressed like a Brahmin. He attempted to spread gospel in the Veda and Upanishad diction. In 1706, Lutheran missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg tried to spread gospel through Tamil media. In 1793, William Carrey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward who were missionaries from the Baptist Church took initiatives for indigenous translations of Holy Bible and also established a School of Theology to train natives that an indigenous leadership could be raised. All these efforts resulted in many people becoming Christians. But once getting baptised to Christianity, what awaited them were westernised life style, worship orders and doctrines of faith. In short, the missionaries spread gospel through local languages, but did nothing worth mentioning to inculcate an indigenous Christian culture or Church identity.

Thamaram Conference and Indigenisation Movement of Reformists:

The missionaries belonging to reformation movement used to meet together regionally as well as at national level to discuss various issues confronting them. By end 19th century and early 20th century, the main issues they were addressing related to the importance needed to be attached to indigenous culture, religious life and philosophical stands in a Christian way of life. There were reasons for them to apply their mind on these seriously. Though accepted Christianity through the gospel works of these missionaries, there were a segment among them who possessed great pride about the Indian culture; some of them started writing and speaking in different forums highlighting the need for an indigenous Christian culture to come up. Venkal Chakkarachetty and Pandippady Chenchayya are names worth mentioning in these contexts. Therefore, it was decided to discuss this issue at the Thamaram conference of 1938. Henry Cramer was one of the main speakers of the conference who presented a paper, 'Christian Message in an unchristian world'; but his paper sent discouraging notes to bringing up indigenous thoughts in Christian culture. He affirmed that there is no relevance to indigenous religious thoughts or culture or experiences in Christianity. But many reformist Christians from India stood up against him and started engaging themselves individually and as a community in indigenous experiments.

Exploring the Path of Indigenisation:

There were many indigenous explorations before and after the Thamaram conference. Here, one notable fact is that among these explorers, there were a few foreign missionaries too who were attracted to Indian religious life style and philosophical thoughts. These types of explorations can be classified into five categories based on the basic approaches they adopted.

- a. Philosophical, Etymological Approach: What was being attempted here was to give shape to a Christian thought process and spiritual tradition in a totally indigenous concept; for this, they were relying on their inspirations from the Vedas, Vedanta and other philosophical insights in Indian background. In such contexts, these works are noteworthy. (1) 'Satchitananda Realisation Thoughts' of Brahmabandhava Upadhyaya (2) 'Christian Devotional Thoughts' of Bishop Appaswamy (3) 'Returning to the Centre' concept by Bead Griffith (4) 'Alignment with the inner heart' thoughts of Swami Abhishikthananda (5)

'Manthramanjari', a thought formulated by Raymond Panicker related to Veda enlightenment. [Please refer to the notes attached towards the end of this text].

- b. 'Liberation' Approach: There are many who emphasise 'Liberation Movement' as one crucial way for indigenisation as a Christian response to contemporary realities of life. The concept behind this approach is to see and understand Christ as inspired through processes of liberation and participating in movements of liberation from injustice as Christ himself is the liberator.
- c. 'Humanisation' Approach: This is an approach commencing with the reality called 'man', to align with Jesus Christ, the man in fullness, as model and goal. The attempt here is to explore a humanised spirituality and an indigenised Christianity that would contain such a spirituality that would be independent of traditional theology and established structures for which new dictions like Humanisation and Quality of life are relied upon.
- d. Approach through Eastern Christian Fraternity: Through this approach, what is being sought is an indigenised Christian Theology that is Indian in nature by assimilating what are common in eastern Christian thoughts and Indian thoughts.
- e. Approach to a sort of technical Indianisation: In this approach, what is envisaged is to transcribe Christian truths through usages of Indian words and ideas; language for spiritual rituals and observance, setting of music to liturgical hymns, musical notes, attire for worship, meditational system and in matters of such similar nature, an Indian image is necessary.

Limitations:

It has to be taken note that the above approaches have lots of limitations.

- Very often any terminology associated with an 'Indian' concept gets linked to any particular religious thought process in India; usually, these are limited to Hinduism.
- These approaches do not have much scope to keep cordial relations with common human life; therefore, their relevance gets limited to theoretical levels only.
- Often, Indianisation gets limited to external factors; some such external factors might be ancient, yet irrelevant now.
- Most of the spiritual movements we have in India are individual centred; thus, social responses are turning irrelevant.
- Excessive importance given to regional background results in ignoring the universal traditions of Christian truths.

Peculiarities of Integrated Approach:

When Christianity in India is indigenised, it can be qualified as 'Indianisation'. Indianisation is something that has to contain two crucial backgrounds namely (1) the ancient heritage of India and (2) the contemporary realities of life.

The following characteristics are evident in the ancient tradition of India.

- The authoritative nature of a religious life that has been formulated in the background of a family life that is concurrently mediation oriented and individual centred
- Though the religious life is individual centred, the discipline maintained within that has been integrated with social and family ways of life

- Art, literature, science and political thought processes have been reflections of the religious life pattern
- The reading of scriptural texts and performance of rituals in worship have been in such a manner that there is an enchantment and a satisfaction in their presentation itself
- A living style that has been simple to its core
- It used to be quite common to have a feeling of tolerance as well as a respect or regard to the accepted social order that has been coupled with an etiquette of hospitality

There are certain factors needed to be taken care of while the realities in contemporary way of living are looked into.

- The secular culture seeking freedom from a religious pattern of life for its independent sustenance
- An economy that has been a failure in the social scenario
- A practical life where tendencies of disintegration are rampant through considerations based on religion, caste, language and locality
- An over influence of western culture that has been found malicious
- A system of governance that is powered by corruption and injustice

When we think about Indianisation or indigenisation, what we should have in mind is a system that is righteous to the ancient traditions so as to have a sensible response to the realities of today; the new value wealth based system that challenges our ancient ethics and moralities has to be addressed in its right sense. The umpteen challenges in this path has to be confronted and tackled judiciously.

Main Challenges:

- The first challenge is to remove the misconception that Indianisation or indigenisation is same as Hinduisation. When we use the term India's it shall not be conceived as Hindu's, it must be correctly perceived as something related to the vast geographical area of India. In this geographical area of India, there are a host of cultures intermingled with one another such as those belonging to Aryans and non Aryans; there are lots of philosophies, lots of religions, lots of languages, lots of spiritual traditions and lots of varying issues seen in day to day life.
- Another challenge is to remove the misconception that we have, to discard the religious life in which we are more or less content and satisfied, for the sake of indigenisation. We have to continue in the satisfaction we enjoy and enjoying that satisfaction, grow further; this is what really favours indigenisation. Exploring new ways and being subjected to further experimentations are part of growth process; but a perverse approach can never welcome growth.
- Yet another challenge is confronting the adamant stand that there shall be only one nature for a Christ centred spirituality and theology. There would be various media and different approaches to experience Christ and interpret his redemptive deeds; once we agree to that, there is no need of any anxiety that Christ would be lost from our fold. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not of that nature to get lost.

- Some of the terms and thoughts we rely on while working on experiments on indigenisation or in our approach in that direction are likely to lack clarity in a theological sense. At the same time, it shall be remembered that even the Greek terms 'Ousia' and 'Hypostasis' are lacking clarity to our perceptions in a similar manner. Therefore, confronting the tendency to totally discard new approaches just for a reason that they are not very transparent or not so wholesome to our perception is another challenge. It is a truth that transparency comes out of a situation of no transparency. We grow from imperfection to perfection.
- What we seek through indigenisation is an integrated or holistic spirituality. But many among us are looking at spirituality as something that confines itself to the other world; this lacks a social concern and is not touching our day to day scenarios of practical life. We have to develop a spirituality that satisfies most of us, at the same time, carrying with it an awareness to respond to social situations from time to time. The challenge we have to address in indigenisation here is that such a face in spirituality can be branded even as decline of spirituality by some people.

Questions:

1. Explain briefly the stands adopted by missionaries towards indigenisation.
2. Explain briefly the approaches to indigenisation till now.
3. What are the main challenges in the path of indigenisation? Find out a few practical suggestions to address such challenges.

Lesson 6

Practical Base for Indigenisation: Dialogue

What is a Dialogue? # Life History of Indian Religion # Tangible Goals # Getting to Dialogue # Facts to be Attended to

What is a Dialogue?

If Christianity has to be effectively indigenised, an understanding has to be built up that Christians in India are not aliens or foreigners. Therefore, Christians have to develop meaningful relationships and mutual understanding with the other religions in this country which form a large majority. It is necessary that Christians should take initiatives in this direction. Such initiatives open up dialogues. In its broader sense, dialogues can be seen as sensible co existence with other religions in day to day life. Dialogues can also be explained as a concerted effort to strengthen this way of life in its true sense.

Life History of Indian Religion:

When we examine the history of Indian religions, four distinct stages can be seen there.

- Even before the Aryans entered India, there were religions here; they were what made their way in before the Aryans or what grew up on their own here itself like the Dravidian religious life which have been getting reflected in the Harappa and Mohan Jodaro cultures which can be called Dravidian religious life.
- The Aryans had brought here and formulated religious lives which were based on Vedas and priestly like Parsi religion.
- There was also religious lives grew up in relation with Aryan and non Aryan concepts like Jainism and Buddhism.
- Similarly there used to be development of religious life related to Aryan and non Aryan concepts in general as also independently with them like Christianity, Islam and Sikhism.

The first three stages among the above have been rich with a history of dialogues between Hindu, Parsi, Jain and Buddhist religions. Dialogues between Christian, Islamic and Sikh religions are seen in the fourth stage. We see a peculiarity in all these four stages. Even if there were disputes between religions, the deep rooted culture of tolerance enable co existence very fast in the Indian religious history through dialogues. But it has to be admitted that there are challenges here and there in the modern era.

Tangible Goals of Dialogues in the modern era:

- a. There have to be efforts to ensure peaceful co existence, to avoid misunderstandings and to encourage growth of mutual co operation among different religions. Such efforts can bear fruits only with discussions between individuals and communities on matters related to religions with an open mind backed up with an authority that is strengthened through experience.
- b. There can be conflicts when followers of different religions and ideologies confront each other; but effective and timely dialogues can avoid many of the problems
- c. A social way of life enriched in justice is envisaged by all religious philosophies. Thus, movement of dialogues can take lead in the fight against injustice and in formulating righteous social visions.
- d. Every religion has always something to learn from other religions at least in the practical way of life. Thus, dialogues between religions would be helpful in being mutually complementary to each other.
- e. Dialogues on the above lines can pave way for religions in India to live tuned up with the call they have. For any religion in India to respond sensibly to practical life patterns here, two aspects are to be taken care: (1) the ancient religious traditions we have in India have to be seen positively (2) there shall be live relations with philosophical thoughts aligning with the contemporary realities in India. Both these can be made possible through dialogues between different religious philosophies.

Getting to Dialogue:

It is desirable that the efforts towards dialogues are taking place at three levels.

- There can be localised forums where common men of different religions are cooperating with each other that their friendly relations and mutual accommodation are encouraged at the grass root level.

- There has to be forums of dialogues at a level where people contribute towards thought processes deeply through their vast experiences and their committed interest in such efforts.
- There has to be study groups where men of different philosophical and religious outlooks meet together with an attitude of mutual consensus.

Facts to be attended to:

Let us have quick glance through certain facts needing our preferred attention when dialogues take place in the three levels as indicated above.

- a. It has to be agreed that each religion and philosophy has its own uniqueness.
- b. An authoritative open approach is important. What one experiences and believes has to be shared without dilution. Along with that, there should be an open mind to accept what can be accepted from others.
- c. Let us not forget that the goal is not to enter into a debate, but to reach an understanding as good as possible.
- d. We must be prepared to accept and respect the one at the other side of the dialogue as he is.
- e. Let us be ready to learn more with the conviction that there are more to learn from other religions and philosophies.
- f. A comparative study can throw light on differences and similarities, but a judgment on which is noble has to be discouraged until a correctly enlightened in divine knowledge.
- g. We must have a mental set up for sacrifice that would have little bit of revolutionary characteristics but a fear that our faith may get diluted or we may have to reconcile for a settlement shall not create obstacles to our Spirit.
- h. We have to take care to see that there comes up nothing through a dialogue that would hinder love, the practical base of any religion or philosophy.
- i. With an open mind, one can explore the inner circle of another's faith and experience; however, even one's best efforts may not touch its fullness. This is something that has to be accepted.

Questions:

1. What is the relevance of dialogues in indigenisation?
2. What should be the goals of dialogues?
3. Discuss the practical aspects of the process of dialogues.

Unit 2

A Probe into Indigenised Christian Religious Life

Lesson 1

Spirituality

Spirituality: Analysing the Term # Main Dimensions of Spirituality # Core of Spirituality

Spirituality: Analysing the Term:

We should have clarity on what is really meant by the term 'spirituality'. Linguistically, it can be understood as something that gives importance to spirit. If we look into the ancient religious texts in our country, spirit can be understood as the essence of an individual. This is not different from the essence of universe which is the eternal truth. This is neither in variance with or in contravention to body or flesh; it indeed is the essence of body as well. Thus, spirituality can be understood as the concerted effort to seek spirit that is the essence in an individual. This makes us realise that spirituality has a wider and deeper meaning than what is transpired through Greek and Latin traditions. In an Indian scenario, any particular facet of religious way of life cannot be named as spirituality. Spirituality cannot be limited to ascetic life or enlightenment of self or liturgical rituals, but it has to be understood as the splendour of different dimensions we have in our life enriched through ethical doctrines.

Main Dimensions of Spirituality:

Theology: Spirituality has its presence reflected most in theology. Theology is influenced by spirituality and spirituality is influenced by theology. Therefore in the backdrop of Christian spirituality in Indian situations, theology has its importance which would be quite prominent. Here comes up a question; should we restrict the theology that is aligned with an Indian scenario of Christian spirituality as something matching with any Indian or any foreign philosophy thought processes? What we have to look into here is that theology needs to have a far wider canvas for expression. Hindu theological thoughts could accommodate philosophies of non duality as well as various devotional approaches; likewise, Christian theological thoughts would have to be broad enough to contain different traditions of interpretations centred in Christ. This may result in the formulations of new traditions of spiritual enlightenment in line with such interpretations and we have to contain such traditions also.

Liturgical Rituals: A religious life that has been manifested within the backdrop of family life, which is meditation oriented and individual centred, is an Indian heritage from very ancient days. Any liturgical rituals developed attaching importance to the above aspect would have an Indian touch, be them individual centred or commune centred. Usually, Indian liturgy has a meditational diction associated with it that though there is no compulsion for confining to only one diction. Indian liturgy is associated with a classic touch of hymns with traditional accompaniment of indigenised composition of music. Such liturgical hymns and prayers should have reflections of an Indian life merged with them. The ritualistic presentations matching an ascetic life or the thoughts of one who has renounced worldly life would have no relevance to a common man. Therefore, common family

life issues and circumstances of a social life have to be manifested in liturgy and rituals that a common man can find solace in worship.

Aesthetic Enjoyment: Primarily, aesthetic enjoyment depends upon individuals and therefore, it would not be possible to insist that everybody has to have it in a very same manner. Yet, the aesthetic enjoyment traditions deep-rooted in ancient India have some common characteristics. It can be understood as an aesthetic tradition that has no association with mental or physical excitement, but confined to self denial, self discipline and meditation. May be, the congruence with such traditions would have made Malankara Church more comfortable with Syrian liturgical rituals rather than Latin rituals.

Use of Scriptural Texts: In the Indian religious life, scriptural texts were used more for mediation rather than for interpretations. This is not to advocate that interpretations should not be seen as important. Indian Christian spirituality has been known for having more opportunities to read from scriptural texts devotionally as also reciting them as hymns which provides greater aesthetic nourishment. Malankara Nazarenes have a tradition to recite or sing scriptural truths in the form of hymns. We have many examples for this such as 'Adathinte Vattakkali', 'Poorva Yousppinte Vattakkali', 'Kanni Ummayude Pattu', 'Younan Nivyayude Pattu', 'Mar Yuhanon Mamdanayude Pattu', 'Mooshayude Vattakkali' and 'Cheriyathobiasinte Pattu' and so on. It is common tradition of Eastern Churches to recite Psalms as hymns. Interpretations to scriptural texts are also important. The Christian tradition here has to devise an interpretation style for scriptures that is purely Indian in nature. Russian Church and Greek Church have already formulated their own pattern for interpretations based on which they deliver sermons. But what is mostly seen among Indian Christians is a pattern akin to Protestant culture. Shouldn't we make specific mentions of Indian religious texts with reference to their searches and findings too, parallel to Old Testament scenarios or even outside that? Shouldn't we look out for metaphors or examples related to Indian way of life? Shouldn't we give emphasise to comprehensive Christian responses on day to day situations while interpreting scriptures?

Core of Spirituality – Divine Vision:

Generally, in Indian thought processes, core of spirituality is realisation of God. It can be transcribed as Divine Vision in Christian thoughts. The image of God possessed by man is a covenant that he is divinised through Jesus Christ. Entering the presence of Father is freedom of the new status of children. When we succeed in tasting God in His person, man is divinised and experiences Divine Vision. How best we have known God, we can never claim that we have His vision in its wholeness! The path of experience in that line is so limitless or endless. But, the deeper one knows Christ, that much one knows Father. Christ has said that the one who has seen him has seen Father.

Questions:

1. What are the important dimensions of Indian Christian spirituality?
2. Write a text for speech based on any Biblical portion of your choice giving interpretations in Indian background.

Lesson 2

Worship

Basic approach to Worship # Indigenous Worship through Words # Indigenous Worship through Rituals

We have already seen that liturgical rituals are most important when we think of worship and that indigenised rituals would have certain notable peculiarities as we can see in them. However, traditional oil lamps or sandal sticks or camphor or paddy filled measuring vessels seen as an indication of indigenised worship is wrong. Such rituals may be branded as efforts towards moving to Hinduism. Even in modern Hindu way of life, such rituals are gradually losing significance.

Basic approach to Worship:

In worship, the basic approach is very important. An attitude of total submission before the Almighty, the epitome of mercy in abundance, with utmost sincerity and above the limitations of time and space can be the approach to worship. The aesthetic feeling one has in such an approach has more eloquence than any feelings we experience through words or deeds. It carries more communicative power. But once we are immersed in such aesthetic experience, it is just that we cannot pull back from uttering certain words or performing certain deeds. Yet, such words are not getting reduced as just supplications. Such words carry with them glorifications of thanks giving flushing out of our hearts. There would be sobbing of helplessness. There would be confessions filled with repentance. There would be supplications of our needs before His will. In those deeds, our performing organs take part; our sense organs take part. We can submit everything to Him which we value. Through our gestures, we can present before Him the blessings we have and the tranquillity we experience in our fellowship with Him.

Generally, we see an approach and usages of words and performance of deeds as illustrated above in Eastern Christian worships as also in the ancient religious life in India. What we have to work out now is how this approach can be refined as more meaningful, relevant and pleasing.

Indigenous Worship through Words:

Regional language: The liturgical format for worship can be poetic or prose in individual context or as a commune. Be them poem or prose, it is important that the language shall be regional; it has to be simple to comprehend; it has to be of a contemporary style.

Prose Format: Supplications and glorifications are included in prose format of liturgy. In Indian context, glorifications, supplications and exhortations are to be formulated carefully with a basic approach that nobody feels provoked. The contents of liturgy has to be systematically devised that when a worship relates a particular occasion like Holy Matrimony, there must be prayers and exhortations to remind the importance of a married vocation and the challenges to be confronted as well as the Divine Grace that is made available through the sacramental liturgy.

Poetic Format: It is generally accepted that glorifications, supplications and exhortations in poetic format are found more appealing. When the liturgy is poetic, the music set to them assumes

importance; the musical notes prominent in ancient Indian traditions which are deep rooted in our culture can be relied upon to tune liturgical hymns. In such music, rather than relying to imitate western or such other systems, emphasis should be to resort to the beauty and tradition we have been enjoying here traditionally. Carnatic music is complex that common men may not find them friendly. There may be people who prefer western system but in an indigenous scenario, what are desirable are Indian musical notes and instruments like veena, sitar and the like.

Indigenous Worship through Rituals:

Arrangements: It is desirable to have an orderly arrangement while conducting worship individually or as a family or as a community. While planning out such an orderly set up, there are many things which can be adopted from the religious life of ancient India. Decorating the place with lights and flowers as well as burning incense are some of them. Light, beauty and fragrance are most pleasing to human senses and therefore making these as a background for worshipping God is appropriate. Sitting with legs crossed one over the other is accepted as a posture that enables one to have total concentration of mind while meditating, as understood from the experiences of ascetics and others. But sitting in such a pose for a long time may not be comfortable to many. The pattern followed by Eastern religions by and large is the celebrant and the participants facing the same direction during worship.

Moments of Silence: One may doubt whether moments of silence can be called a ritual. Here, 'silence' is taken as a ritual because during worships, 'silence' has its own ritualistic significance. An order of worship can be set up with utterances of words and performance of deeds to make them quite an active exercise; but moments of silence during a worship, may be intermittently, albeit short, provides occasion to meditate and simply leave the busy scenario for some time, though for a short while. May be, our concentration is disturbed through the words or deeds in worship when moments of silence help restoring it.

Honouring: To honour Almighty, people prostrate before Divine presence; there are people who express their honour to Almighty by showing respect to other devotees during worship; both these deeds are equally important. Folding hands is one type of honour that has been continuing in our country right from very ancient days. In Indian context, folding of hands is more touching than bodily embracing or shaking hands. Prostrating before Divine presence is not an exclusively Indian tradition; this can be seen in many other religions also.

Specific Rituals: Worship can be arranged in relation to crucial events that take place in our family life, in our personal life or in our Church life. To make such events sensible and meaningful in their full depth, appropriate rituals can be relied upon. For example, in connection with solemnisation of a Holy Matrimony, some of the very simple rituals those were observed in Nazarene families during the good old days can be included as part of our worship. Dressing up the bride and also the groom with prayers, arranging a prayer prior to their leaving for the church, offering gift to venerable persons like his or her guru, lighting a lamp while the bride and groom leave for the church for the Matrimony service are all such rituals which can be connected to our worship. The custom of observing a ritual on Maundy Thursday when all family members join together in remembrance of Last Supper of our Lord can be remodelled as worship which would not reduce or belittle the significance or value of our Holy Qurbana.

Questions:

1. What should be the basic approach to worship?
2. Make an attempt to prepare a liturgy for the evening worship for Christmas under the auspices of a spiritual organisation to which you belong to in such a way that the same is holistic in nature by usage of appropriate words and observance of rituals.

Lesson 3**Art and Literature**

Brief History # Field of Art # Field of Literature

Art and literature are means for Christian religious life to merge with the common stream of life. The ancient Church had their own systems that Christian values and truths are reflected through art and literature for the benefit of people. Therefore, indigenisation of Christianity involves encouraging regional media of art and literature so that Christian values are transcribed through them for the benefit of all.

Brief History:

There used to be many Christian art forms in Malankara Church before the western missionaries found their way in. Margam Kali, Paricha Muttu, Vattakkali are all parts of them. The purpose of a space adjacent to the western side of the church building called Natakashala which certainly was an integral part of the church was for enacting art forms like Chavittu Natakam and other song or dance forms mentioned above. But missionaries ignored art forms; their concentration was in literature. Malankara Christians as well as missionaries had made valuable contributions to literature particularly to travelogues and linguistic studies.

Field of Art:

After the entry of missionaries, there has not been much contribution from Christians in the field of art. May be there would have been some attempts out of personal interests, but they were not propagated as they should have been. Assisi Arts, Kalabhavan, Christian Arts and Christ arts are similar attempts of modern days. However, there should be studious explorations to certain fields can be summed up as (1)Engravings on church; carved works (2) paintings and drawings (3) Vocal music (4) Instrumental music (5) Dance (6) Drama (7) Story narration with musical accompaniment.

These are some media through which social reformation can be implemented effectively through Christian witnessing. Among these, there must be attempts to carry out researches in such areas those are notable in content and laying emphasis on Christian values. The words of Rev Matthew Daniel is pertinent here: "It must be stated that the Christian community in Kerala have been showing a negative approach in the field of art in this modern era; Church leadership chose to prioritise their action plans in setting up institutions and establishing upper hand in other areas" (Kerala Chraisthava Samskaram; page 153, 154).

While efforts are being made to focus attention in the field of art, certain criticisms on contemporary Christian art media are worth noting.

- a. As of now, the architectural fineness of churches is seemingly not much different from those of cinema halls. Architectural planning of a church is having more attention towards space availability and economic considerations.
- b. Paintings and drawings are seen to be totally imitations. Portraits of saints and fathers are individualistic oil paintings and there have been no attempts to enlighten their devotional life.
- c. Foreign influence is visible in singing of hymns be them individual or in group; generally reformation segments attach importance to hymns; Syrian tradition is also not different. But the Christians in India have not bothered to formulate a tradition of devotional music in an Indian style.
- d. Even among instrumental music, western style is seen to be playing support role to Christian art forms in these modern days; Indian instruments like Veena and Sitar are sufficient to present devotional taste to music.
- e. The dance forms in Indian context are highly devotional and submissive to divinity; but these are not taken seriously and western dance forms are given prominence in religious art form which is really a tough nut to crack.
- f. In dramas, apart from Biblical stories, Christian responses to contemporary realities and a Christian cultural presentation aligned with ancient religious traditions in India should be possible. But what we see these days are a sort of devaluation to Christian values in the name of freedom of expression while presenting Christian dramas on stage.
- g. Narration of story with musical accompaniment has been found acceptance among common people. It is high time that an original Indian style has to be designed for this art form within an indigenous Christian tradition.

Field of Literature:

There are commendable achievements from Christians in the field of literature in Malayalam as well as in other languages. In the modern days, Christians have had their presence felt in poetries shorter version as well as longer, devotional songs, novels, poems, journalism and theology.

However, some of these are being pushed to oblivion; folk songs and hymns are getting forgotten. But, hymns certainly deserve place in Christian worship. Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi (Comforting Hymns), Kandathil Varghese Mapillai (Keerthanamala), K V Simon (Christheeya Sangeetha Ratnavali) and C P Chandi (Christian Bhajans) are notable among them. Of these, C P Chandi is acknowledged as the Poet of Church.

Questions:

1. Explain the relevance of art and literature in Christian witnessing under Indian context.
2. Work out how you can make a contribution in any of the areas under art and literature discussed in this lesson in which you have an interest.

Lesson 4

Interpretation of Scripture

Authenticity of Scripture Texts # Explanation of Background # Use of Hymns # Responses to Contemporary Truths in Life

In previous lessons, we have seen that an original diction is necessary for interpreting Scripture texts indigenously. Now let us try to understand what should be the characteristics of such a pattern.

Authenticity of Scripture Texts:

Our ancient religious traditions never seriously bothered as to how much authentic were religious texts historically or otherwise. Who authored such texts or when were they authored have not been a matter of relevance and there were not much of a contemplation in that direction. But the inner meanings of such scriptural texts were seriously looked into and studied; the essence contained therein was considered important. An original authenticity was attached to Scriptures but there was no literal infallibility associated with them. The Indian interpretations were aimed at searching for the internal meanings and relevance based on traditions.

However, consequent to the western influence, the Indian Christian tradition too has been attaching importance to historical authenticity of such texts; excessive emission thereof is very often reflected in the interpretations of scripture. This peculiarity can be seen in culling out scriptural verses to suit any situation and attaching authenticity to such verses those are found suitable in those contexts. This makes it necessary that we look into the lacunae with such a system of interpretations. Any debate on the historical reality of portions of the scripture can naturally lead to the authenticity as well. This may result in confusions not only to common man, but also to educated ones regarding such interpretations.

In Christian and indigenous scriptural interpretation, interpretation style in an Indian scenario has to have wide recognition. It is pertinent to note here that the Indian interpretations and that of Eastern Church traditions have many facets in common. What is needed is to have interpretations without ignoring the historical background, but make them relevant to contemporary life resorting to metaphors or allegories or symbolisations. It can be understood that most of the scriptural interpretations of early centuries were in these lines. The interpretations written by Origen on Christian scriptural texts were foreseeing relevance thereof in three dimensions namely body, mind and soul. His interpretations used to be metaphorical. Origen has worked out an interpretation on the Old Testament book 'Song of Songs' and the spiritual insights revealed through him are fascinating. It was Origen who authored 'Hexapla' which commenced a scientific methodology to carry out studies on Holy Bible. This is a study relying on the earliest six root forms of scriptures through which original facts are explored minutely. This indicates that once we resort to a metaphorical style, there is no need to ignore scientific approaches.

Explanation of Background:

While interpreting New Testament scriptures, having a deep understanding of the background assumes much importance. However it is often seen that such an understanding of background gets confined to Old Testament era and the thoughts attached to that. It is not a matter of dispute that Old Testament books hold an enviable position as a historical background for New Testament events. At the same time it needs to be realised that Jesus Christ cannot be limited to expectations of Jews being fulfilled. Jesus Christ has to be understood as the fulfilment of the expectations of this universe in its wholeness. Therefore, it is appropriate to work out relevant backgrounds of other religions and scriptural texts, perhaps outside the Old Testament background.

In other words, what all explorations are carried out and the resultant inferences reflected in the Indian religious texts are to be given a place in the background for Good News in India. There are many examples that can be seen as symbolic events in the epics of ancient India. The presentation verse of Bhagavath Geetha (4: 7, 8) can be pin pointed in relation to a Christmas scenario.

Use of Hymns in Interpreting Scriptures:

The ancient religious teachers in India used to interpret scripture and convey their messages thereof by reciting them as hymns. Meaningful hymns in simple languages were good enough to transmit the core ideas effectively. As hymns can be learnt by heart by any common man easily, the messages used to remain immortal in their inner self. Using such hymns has good relevance in interpretation of Christian scriptures indigenously. As an example, please look into the below given text of a hymn which narrates the command of divine love and human love being dovetailed.

“Any heart hurting a human, fails in loving our Lord”.

Responses to Contemporary Truths in Life:

One has to be careful of the current scenario along with ancient diction while carrying our scriptural interpretations. Any scriptural message is significant only to the extent it is related to the current practical issues. Any idea that is being attempted to be conveyed becomes appealing only with real life metaphors of contemporary life.

Questions:

1. What are the important facets those are to be included in the Indian Scriptural interpretations?
2. Write in short what you find useful after reading an Indian religious text.
3. If you are of the view that there are a few contemporary issues about which enlightenment is needed, what are such issues or events of our days you have in mind?

Lesson 5

Ethics

In the backdrop of an understanding of Ultimate Truth # In the backdrop of Eternal Goal # In the Backdrop of Concept of a Person # In the Backdrop of Concept of a community

The basic doctrines of Christian ethics would be the very same wherever they be, but there could be indigenous emphasis as applicable. For example, mutual love is a basic doctrine of ethics; here, western countries give more emphasis to emotional expressions whereas eastern culture lays emphasis on contentment and controlled expressions of love. A Christian way of life in an Indian background should necessarily possess ethical characteristics those are indigenous in nature. We can say that there are four foundations for ethics such as an understanding of eternal truth, a concept of eternal goal, an understanding about person and a concept about the community. Now, let us have a discussion on the emphasis of Christian ethical concept that is indigenous based on the background of the above four foundations.

In the backdrop of an understanding of Ultimate Truth, a Christian Concept of Ethics in an Indian Scenario:

Almost all religions accept God as the ultimate truth. Therefore, the ethical concepts of religions would always be God centred. In the religious thought process of India, the Sanskrit originated word 'RITHAM' is one that correlates ultimate truth and concepts of ethics. The ultimate truth or God has to be understood as the ontological energy of life. RITHAM can be said to be that state which supports anything and sustains in a Divine ontological energy. In other words, leading a life in ethics is nothing but living in RITHAM according to Indian tradition. Semitic tradition advocates a life in tune with the commandments of God which is not different from what Indian tradition advising to live in RITHAM; but there may be variance in emphasis. In the ultimate analysis, the teachings of the Bible that the one who disobeys commandments of God would die is the very same as pointed out by Upanishads that whatever is variant with RITHAM would not sustain. Under such circumstances, in a Christian concept of ethics in India, it would be desirable to emphasise that aspect where ultimate truth and ethical doctrines are ontologically related. In other words, God has to be understood as one who is the basis of life as well as its ontological energy rather than as one who keeps on watching his subjects to see whether they are following His commandments or not. Based on such an understanding, death or sin can be explained as a tendency that would not make a righteous judgment of freedom and would not accept ontological energy. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). This verse conveys that God is not one who destroys, but what is not akin for Him to dwell in will get eternally disintegrated. If we can understand this truth, then we would not see our body or mind or our community or even this universe as consumable objects; instead, they would be seen as Divine energy. Then, they would be seen as nobler and really important. Christian thoughts have to lay emphasis that in an ethical view, we may see God as a foundation and ontological energy, but He can never be interpreted as a principle or object; He is to be understood as fullness of personality. In other words, the personal relation and ontological relation are to be integrated and dovetailed in a Christian ethical conceptuality of Indian background.

In the backdrop of Eternal Goal, a Christian Concept of Ethics in an Indian Scenario:

In Christian view, the ultimate goal is holistic salvation of a person as well as of the community which has to be experienced in material, mental and spiritual dimensions. In the back drop of progressive growth towards this comprehensive or holistic salvation, ethical conceptualities too should be exhaustive. The Christian view never holds the thoughts of redemption of a person individually. The ultimate goal in Christian point of view seen as abundance of life (John 10:10) where there is transformation of individuals and community in coherence. This is the experience where man is content with the 'Word' of God which merges with righteousness and peace of man together with the joy of Holy Spirit; redemption is not restricted to material contentment. Therefore what is important here is a pattern of living where individuals and community are seen together in a world that is not to be branded as evil, but life is just not being confined to this world alone. The approach to life in the religious tradition of India reflects this approach.

It may be argued that individual has the prime place in Indian religious tradition and that body is insignificant, but soul is decisive. It has to be admitted that such an outlook has erroneously infiltrated into our culture at some point of time and efforts were there to rectify this. Part of such corrective measures has come in the form of Jainism and Buddhism. In Christian religious tradition too, apprehensions of this sort have cropped up and corrective measures were implemented to put things in its right perspective.

It is necessary that concerted efforts are necessary to establish the above discussed holistic relationships in the ethical outlook of an indigenous religious way of life.

In the Backdrop of Concept of a Person, a Christian Outlook of Ethics:

In Christian view, an individual, man or woman, has been created in the image of God enjoying free will. This call and right are realised in relation with God and community. Here, we have a crucial indication that there is equality between one man and another, between man and woman. Wherever this equality gets distorted, those situations and systems are unethical. But such a view doesn't seem to have found acceptance in India, be it in ancient days or in modern days. However, we have seen voices of dissent rising from within the Indian religious tradition itself against the social system which has been nurturing such iniquities; the fight against 'sati' under the initiatives of Raja Ram Mohan Roy is an example. Therefore, the indigenous Christian ethical concept in India should possess the straightforwardness to stand against such open or closed door exploitations.

In the Backdrop of Concept of a community, a Christian Outlook of Ethics:

A person is always part and parcel of a community. Christian view advocates that a person attains his ultimate goal through the community to which he is integrated. What happens in the Church is a sojourn of the community towards fullness. The culmination of that sojourn is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God or is realised at Divine Governance. This indicates that community has a specific influence on the individual. To a good extent, an individual has his influence on the community too. This influence of the community towards individuals is commonly seen these days in choosing dress materials, in resorting to luxuries of life or in emotional expressions. This has resulted in recognition or respect being accorded to individuals based on their financial richness; this often has paved way for discordances in family life also.

However, in the social life of earlier days, individual influences or social influences were in areas which were matters of greater depth. Some of them were mutual concerns for each other, simplicity in living style, respect for family head and teachers, submissions to ethical values, self discipline and the like. Therefore, the order of those days was honouring quality of life and not status of wealth. It has to be seen how far we can contain this sort of a social system within the Christian ethical conceptualities under an indigenous scenario.

In our discussions so far here, the challenges have been towards formulation of revolutionary models in the area of education, in the attitudes towards labour, in understanding man – woman relationships and so on.

Questions:

1. What are the basics of a Christian ethical concept that is Indian in nature? Explain.
2. Write briefly your response to this statement: 'The system of education we have in India today is exclusively aimed at making money'

Lesson 6

Rituals

Major Events in Personal Life # Feasts in our Church Life # Participation in national festivals

In an indigenous religious tradition, the indigenous characteristics can be expressed most in the performance of rituals. Major events in personal life, feasts of the Church and national festivals are some of the areas where there are celebrations with indigenous pomp and excitement, but the meaningfulness of the rituals is not to be belittled. The Malankara Nazarenes were very careful in this aspect right from very early days as we understand from available records. However, there has been not much progress in this area once our relationship commenced with foreign Churches with the entry of Portuguese missionaries. What is desirable now is to explore how best we can observe our festivals and other events retaining their messages and significance but in an indigenous colour.

Celebrations of Major Events in Personal Life:

In the ancient traditions, all major events in one's personal life used to be observed as rituals and mostly, they used to be in the household scenario. These rituals were helpful in retaining mutual friendliness among families and the community as also to strengthen their bond of cordial relationships. Similar household rituals were very much there with Malankara Nazarenes also. Some of them are continuing even this day. For example, when a baby is born, there is ritual even now to place gold and honey on the baby's tongue. The ritual we have at the houses of bride and groom on their marriage eve also are observances of an indigenous nature. Before leaving to Church at the time of Holy Matrimony, elders and teachers are honoured.

However, these observances are losing their glamour on account of dominance of western culture among us; many of these indigenous observances are branded sectarian by vested interests. Under such circumstances, some of the rituals followed in Christian houses attract attention. It should be

possible for Christians to contain indigenous observances without diluting the related basic values taught by the Church. While sacramental rituals are mostly observed at the church, there are certain other things those can be performed at the house hold; these things, if properly organised, can help enhancing the warmth between family members and close friends. There can be songs, dances, short games and so on for healthy entertainment. Even the sacramental celebrations at church can be arranged with an indigenous touch so that they can be made more meaningful.

Feasts in our Church Life:

When we celebrate indigenous and universal feasts, there should be significance for rituals those are indigenous. Certain rituals are very common among people of Kerala, so familiarised in daily life such as flag hoisting, common worship, indigenous musical instruments, processions, common meals and presentation of various art forms which do not have any sort of bars based on caste, creed or religion. Once we give emphasis to indigenous customs, it needs to be ensured that the essence in the meaning of rituals should not get distorted. Therefore, it would become necessary to cleanse some of such indigenous rituals so that they do not pose a danger to Christian witnessing. Possibly, other religions would appreciate the message contained in such cleansing.

There is an age old custom among non Christian religions in India to conduct recital of scriptures continuously for a certain prescribed period in association with celebration of feasts. Including this in Christian feasts would be a good step and it would be an indigenous innovation. It is also desirable that the joy of Easter and Christmas celebrations are shared with followers of other religions who reside in the neighbourhood.

Participation in National Festivals:

Christians' attitude towards national festivals is an indication whether they move in tandem with the main stream of the nation. Independence Day, Onam and such festivals can be celebrated by Christians in a liturgical atmosphere. Onam is a festival where the subjects look forward to the triumphant coming of a king filled in hope leading to an equitable way of life for all; if so, can't we contain the spirit behind Onam in a Christian way?

When we celebrate the feast of Ascension of St Mary on August 15, shouldn't we remember our nation and the sacrifice of our leaders of the previous generation that we could pray for them and the nation? The purpose behind national festivals includes a renewal of the spirit of national integration and mutual affection within the community. Can't we take initiatives to organise functions jointly with our non Christian brothers? Could it be branded as contradiction to biblical teachings? Any open evaluation will not say so.

Questions:

1. What are the areas in rituals where indigenous character can be introduced? Discuss.
2. Write an article foreseeing what all things, in relation to Independence Day, can be done by those who join together for worship on August 15.

Unit 3

A Probe into Indigenised Christian Witnessing in Social Context

Lesson 1

Responses in Social Arena

Social Background of India # Common nature of Social background # Responses

The energy of an indigenised Christian order is its responsiveness. Sensible responses to the contemporary ways of life would be a notable nature of indigenosity. Such ways of life have three noteworthy areas namely political, economic and social. Under such circumstances, it is necessary for the Christians in India to possess an overall conviction about the social scenario of our country and an understanding as how to respond to it.

Social Background of India:

Pluralities and Differences: The social background of India is a wonderful phenomenon that takes shape from the companionship of pluralities and differences. Notable are the varying and differing races of mankind, geography, climate, languages, religions and social customs.

Geography: India being a vast sub continent that has rich mountains on one side, far stretched sea coast on the other and plateaus, hilly terrains, rivers and lakes in between. In other words, India possesses all sorts of differences throughout its geographical pattern.

Climate: The variations of geography points to differences in climatic conditions of this vast area. There are deep freezing cold, burning warmth, severe drought and devastating floods experienced simultaneously at different parts of this country. These variances have caused formulations of differing life patterns, styles of attire and even human behaviour.

Races of Mankind: The populace of India is a combination or mixture of different races of mankind. According to anthropologists, there at least five human races in India namely Dravidian, Aryan, Negro, Mongoloid and Australoid. For the moment, it is not necessary to go into the details of the differences regarding their physique or character or such aspects.

Languages: There are 1652 languages in India. Of them, 33 are spoken by minimum 100,000 people. 15 are considered more important and are conferred official status by the constitution. The pluralities and variations of languages make India wonderful as a nation.

Religions: Apart from umpteen barbaric religions, there are seven important religions in India namely Hindu religion, Islamic religion, Christian religion, Sikh religion, Buddhist religion, Jain religion and Parsi or Zoroastrian religion. Among these, India is the matriarchal household for Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh religions. It can be seen that eastern and western religious patterns of life are getting reflected here.

Social Customs: One can never expect any sort of uniformity in social customs in a land where there are barbarian and tribal life styles to ultra modern westernised styles of living.

The Indian culture that is merged and dovetailed within such pluralities and differences can be called a culture of variations and nothing more. Can there be any common feature to the social background of such a culture? Even if some commonality is identified, there would be umpteen limitations thereto.

Common nature of Social background:

About 80% of Indians live in villages. This makes us to address the rural life in India as the common forum of our social system. There are many common characteristics for the Indian social system of which some are noted below.

- a. Dominance of higher caste majority over others consequent to a deep rooted caste system.
- b. Landholders' dominance
- c. As a sequel to the agrarian economy, unending financial liabilities of agriculture labourers
- d. Male dominance and w female exploitation
- e. Inadequacy of educational infrastructure
- f. Unemployment among the majority
- g. Poverty experienced by majority
- h. Decline of traditional cottage industries
- i. Products from rural areas are sold by villagers at nominal cost, but they have to buy urban products paying exorbitant prices which distorts rural economy leading to feeling of security being eroded, ending up in inequality at the end
- j. Self governance systems of villages have no participation from a common man
- k. Lack of knowledge about health maintenance and family welfare
- l. Narrow minded religious and caste oriented emotional feelings spreading out fast based on misunderstandings

Some suggestions are placed before readers for discussions based on a Christian approach towards such social systems.

Responses:

- The Christian involvement in society should be ideal in as much as that it would be a catalyst to transform the society being free from caste and creed oriented conceptualities. Christian movements are to ensure that they are liberated from such rotten ideologies and should be strong enough to create true awareness against these in the society.
- Christian community should have the courage to provide protection to farmers and labourers from exploitations of greedy landlords sand employers, but respecting their rights and obligations.
- Christian movements are to work out strategies to provide useful guidelines those are practical to banks and cooperative societies for utilising their resources at optimum level that farmers are not tied up in debt traps, for which pain has to be taken to study the situations in their depth.

- Christian movements have to take initiatives to arrest the evils coming out of male dominations in the society, particularly those related to dowry issues as also female exploitations on one count or other; they have to take a lead role in the peoples' movements against such evils and as its first step, the legitimate recognition deserved by women in the Church should be provided without hesitation.
- Christians are responsible to take initiatives to establish educational endeavours based on the priorities of various localities; To make this more transparent, it has to be ensured that profit or fame are not matters of concern, but indigenous priorities alone are to be looked into. There may be areas where there are no facilities to impart basic education; there may other areas where the need would be higher education; there may be yet other areas needing technically oriented courses. In all these situations, indigenous priorities are to be correctly identified and appropriate actions are to be initiated.
- Christian communities should be models to address the problem of unemployment by taking a lead role to identify local resources and self employment opportunities to create more employments locally.
- Christian organisations should prioritise their action points to address the need of ensuring food, clothe and shelter to all.
- Rural Christian communities and their urban counter parts can join together that cottage and traditional industries are revived and markets are identified for such products.
- Rural products and urban products are competing among themselves which is indeed an artificially promoted competition to a good extent and therefore, Christian communities can take efforts to analyse the root cause behind this and apply pressures before the government machineries for an amicable solution to be worked out.
- Mass participation has to be ensured in the administration of parishes and promoting such a model, people can be oriented to take active role in national development.
- It should be possible for Christian organisations to train people in family welfare and health maintenance even if circumstances may have their own limitations.
- Christian communities can take an initiative to organise dialogues among various religions and philosophic ideologies locally that there can be opportunities for raising local issues openly and joint responses thereof can be worked out.

Questions:

1. Discuss various facets of Christian responses in the social arena.
2. From what we have discussed above, find out what are the areas your Christian community can prioritise and initiate suitable actions.

Lesson 2

Responses in Political Arena

Contemporary Political Scenario # Christian Responses

It is an inevitable factor of indigenisation of Christian order that there has to be sensible responses to Indian political scenario also. Political scenario is not to be understood as the background of political parties and their confrontations in elections and other related fields. In its reality, 'Politics' means the process of enactment of laws, implementation of a system based on justice and the system of governance, all the three put together. In countries like India where a democratic system is in place, enactment of laws takes place akin to the ideologies and policies of that party which has earned majority in election. Implementation of justice and governance of the nation are progressing together according to enacted laws. Therefore, what are most important in politics are policies, ideologies and the public acceptance for them. Political ideologies, policies and actions thereof would be bearing considerable importance in the social and economic areas of a country. For such reasons, Christians have no alternative, but to be pro active in political scenario.

Contemporary Political Scenario:

The Indian political scenario has been subject to variations frequently. But there is a truth dominant there. A comprehensive political thought process or in other words, ideologies, policies and action plans with a sense of stability has never taken a clear or distinct shape here. One can say that Mahatma Gandhi had initiated a beginning in its right direction, but succeeding leadership could not continue or fulfil them. Most of our political activists were focussing their efforts towards formulating opportunistic strategies for capturing power. These facts can be seen confirmed once we understand some of the common realities associated with this.

- We are seeing formation of many regional and sectarian political parties exploiting the opportunistic political system by cashing on the prevailing narrow-minded and divisive interests.
- Political parties survive on resources coming from the existing system of economic and communal exploitations; consequently, political field has to be indebted to such exploitations. Likewise, political and sectarianism enter into unholy alliances which are mutually submissive to each other.
- Further, the political scenario is entangled with periodically rising 'waves' leading to a strong opposition not coming up though, there has been a semblance of change these days, but it is yet to be seen how effective they are going to be.
- The existing political system doesn't provide any interim opportunity for voters to react other than the periodic rights to vote.

Christian Responses:

The Christian responses under these circumstances rest with taking strong and stable stands on various issues.

- Christians should not expect any sort of concessions or favours from the political system other than what is constitutionally provided legitimately under minority rights.

- Christian media should take initiatives in the right direction training the upcoming generation to develop a comprehensive political thought process within them to replace the prevailing rotten set up. The political ideologies promoted by Mahatma Gandhi based on non violence, truth and indigenouness should be given concrete shape and there should be efforts to interpret them properly so that Satygraha, Panchayat Raj, Gramodyog and such innovations can be implemented in their true essence.
- It should be made to understand that the capital or resources for political governance is not money, but people who are rightly oriented. We have to rise up from the current dilemma of buying will of people with payment of money to a situation of people being re oriented through public contacts and dialogues.
- Politics should not be understood as contests between parties; it has to be correctly defined as attempts towards developing the nation with emphasise on participation of the people. Even the current set of political parties too needs to be educated in this line. The notion that to serve people, power should be at hand has to be thrown out. The opposition should realise that their task is not exclusively confined to create obstructions to the ruling party or to bring them down. The Christian order in India has a responsibility to ensure that the political leadership should consist of a noble set of people possessing the above discussed political awareness.

Questions:

1. Explain the common nature of Indian political scenario.
2. Can we say that a Christian response in politics mean formulation of a party and contest elections? Explain.

Lesson 3

Responses in Economic Arena

A Brief History of Indian Economic System # Some Concrete Realities in the Economic System # Christian Response to Economic Scenario

Economy is a crucial factor for any nation that indicates her comprehensive strength which is closely associated with socio-political system of that nation. Therefore, variations within any one of these factors would certainly affect the other factors also. Accepting these truths, let us briefly discuss what should be a Christian response to Indian economy in a general perspective.

A Brief History of Indian Economic System:

The prevailing economic system in India has been trying to contain both private sector as well as public sector. Based on the progressive prevalence of this system, we can see reasonable growth in

the Gross Domestic Product of the country, but the per capita income is not moving up as it should be or even we can see that its growth is rather disappointing. The evaluations of World Bank in 1982 placed India globally at 15th position in GDP, but in per capita income, we ranked a poor 117. The inference we have here is that the Indian economic system is one where a lion's share of domestic earnings are held by a very few. This situation pin points to the inadequacy of our economic planning and stiffness of our socio-political factors that is reluctant for changes. The following concrete realities can prove this.

Some Concrete Realities in the Economic System:

- Mainly, the economic structure of India is agrarian. Though, land reform laws are being implemented, utilisation of agricultural land for agriculture is just about 50% only.
- Our traditional products under cottage industries are finding it virtually impossible to find market under the uneven competition provided by large industries and foreign products. This situation leads to unemployment in rural areas as well as economic control gets confined to a few big wigs in the industrial sector ending up with the urban economy dominating rural economy.
- Employment opportunities are not coming up in tune with population increase or the number of educated youth; this causes the most important of all resources, human resources, being underutilized and partly subjected to exploitations by foreign countries.
- Equitability between resource mobilisation and economic expenditure are not matching which results in erosion of money value.
- Lack of control over economic expenditure leads to individual wealth being invested in non productive sectors.
- Loop holes in economic laws and lacunae in law enforcement lead to increase in black money.
- Be it at the national level or at regional level, India is rich in resources; but the problem lies with the absence of comprehensive planning.
- Constant changes in socio-economic areas this way or that way results in a new marginalised segment being evolved; those who were part of the middle class are now backward financially as they are not able to cope up with such rapid changes confronting their economy. They have no benefit or concessions of reservations; now this segment is one that is suffering most in our socio-economic arena.

Christian Response to Economic Scenario:

Let us look into the following aspects that could be discussed in Christian forums.

- The public as well as the rulers should be made to get convinced that there is need to have comprehensive planning for a total realignment of the economic system in India.
- The poorly looked after economic structure has to be put in the right track; there are many initiatives here that can come up regionally; Christian communities and parishes should come forward with new innovations in agrarian sector and industrial area. Entire land suitable for agriculture should be made properly utilised with scientific methodologies; new employment should be created; the products should be pooled together and effective

marketing systems should be put in place. This should be taken as a challenge by Christian communities.

- Christian forums should be capable enough to guide families to prepare family budgets; they should be guided to make useful investments of personal wealth and resources. Lion's share of hard earned money should not be invested in construction of dwelling places. Luxurious furnishings should be discouraged. There must be proper orientations in these lines through parishes.
- Christian institutions should be models in proper economic planning by prioritising resource mobilisation and expenditure in the right direction.
- Christians should cooperate with the idea of economic reservations which should be good enough to take care of the erstwhile middle class which are now turning marginalised.
- Christian institutions should not shy away from providing reservations to all cases which deserve such concessions in areas of employment, education and the like.
- A change in the system of governance that looks into a comprehensive planning to set right our economic, social and political imbalances with proper discipline should be welcomed.

Questions:

1. Briefly explain the concrete realities of Indian economic system and the Christian responses thereto.
2. Look into some resources that is abundant in your area; with your parish made as a central point, work out a plan document to co ordinate its production, procurement, marketing and other infrastructural back up like banking, servicing as well as employment opportunities thereof.

Lesson 4

Practical Outlook of Responses

Self Responses # Joint Participation # Fight against Evil # Objections

Responding to various situations is not very easy as one would confront obstacles on the way. One would have a will power to respond only if there is a will to sacrifice or a will to submit to a transformation in its totality. Let us now discuss some practical aspects on these.

Self responses alone can lead one to respond externally:

A person or a community should be good enough to respond to themselves; only then can their external responses become effective. Individuals or communities who possess capacity to creatively respond in situations alone can provide leadership; only such leadership would gain acceptance.

Joint participation in responses:

Members of different Churches, those following different religions and those who are holding varying political or philosophical ideologies can join together and respond to situations confronted in socio, political and economic areas. These types of cooperation from the Christians would be helpful

for laying a strong foot indigenously and thereby carry on the task of witnessing fruitfully. The local forums for dialogues can do a lot here.

Responding through fight against evil:

It is the responsibility of Christianity to fight against injustice and exploitation those are rampant in our society locally as well as nationally. The source of inspiration for such fight is nothing but God and let there be no confusion on that. Once such fights are progressing, there is no way out for any sort of neutrality. We have to take an open stand against injustice. Once such a stand is adopted, we have to move ahead in self discipline and self sacrifice through various stages of our fight where the Spirit of prayer would strengthen us. This can, perhaps, be called a 'novel martyrdom'. As Gandhiji did, it would become necessary to resort to non cooperation or pressure tactics or Satyagraha while we address systems which are familiar with hardened corruption. May be, like Jesus Christ did at the Jerusalem temple, expression of anger too may become necessary in certain situations.

For generations, thousands of people are being annihilated, openly or otherwise; to open the eyes of a community that has no prick of conscience yet, it would be the need of the day that some among us turn 'novel martyrs', but it is still a disputable issue among Christian circles whether it is justifiable to have emotional outpouring even in circumstances those are too unfriendly. Strategies almost akin to these were employed effectively in Latin America as also in many African nations for freeing many countries from colonialism. This strategy is found effective even today wherever warranted.

Objections from spiritualists, conservatives and established organisations:

In the course of responses, there would be objections continuously from internal sources. But these confrontations would be helpful to catalyse the sharpness of responses. Self proclaimed spiritualists would come up with arguments such as 'man lives not with bread alone' or 'seek his kingdom and justice ahead' or 'redemption of soul is our only goal' and so on. With such exhortations, spiritualists create obstacles to responses. There are conservative 'neutralists' who are willing for changes as the present system suits them well. There would be established religious organisations which are set up within the existing socio, economic, political systems and being comfortable with what they have now are also stumbling blocks. Our responses have to overcome all these obstacles as we go ahead.

Some obstacles are to be simply avoided; some are to be confronted boldly; some help us to be more tactful and careful; some prompt us to correct ourselves. Yet, a Christian has to go on in the path of responses. The compulsion of Christian witnessing in this sojourn is on us; the love Christ prompts us to move forward; who can separate us?

Questions:

1. What are the practical issues confronted in the task of response? How can they be tackled?
2. Who all can be placed in the category of 'novel martyrs'?

Lesson 5

New Dimensions to Services

Prioritising Services to individuals # Prioritising Services to Families # Prioritising Services to Community

Christian service area is one that is rather a relaxed reflection to Christian responses to various issues. Wherever we do service, there ought to be an attitude that is clear and transparent. There shall not be any sort of feelings that something is done for somebody for the sake of doing something though the beneficiary may not deserve; instead, the attitude that rules us should be that we are doing something that we have to do because we are bound to do so. Further, we have to keep on exploring more possibilities and new dimensions to do service. Let us discuss some of the priorities need to be looked into when we venture to do service for an individual, for a family and for a community.

Prioritising Services to individuals:

There are many set programmes to impart spiritual and moral training to individuals, but most of them are concentrating on teaching or exhortation as their media. However, there are many individuals who need personal attention in areas different from what is normally taken care of. We have individuals, who have been suffering from illness to their mind, body and soul as their faculties are hardened with evil habits like smoking, drugs, liquors as also with immoral acts. It is our responsibility to take care of such people on top priority. Many habituated drunkards and such others are desirous to come out of it, but they do not have anybody to guide and counsel them out of this evil. Christians with a service mind should be trained in this field and appropriately deployed within a mechanism to oversee the efficacy thereof.

Prioritising Services to Families:

It is natural that there are issues of discordance within families. There would be misunderstandings between husband and wife, between children and parents, between brothers and sisters or between neighbours. Those who share such issues with a priest during Holy Confession are by and large very few. Even in Churches those follow the sacrament of Holy Confession there are limitations to address these issues. Under such circumstances, it is pertinent to organise service schemes to look into issues of these sorts on priority. Learning, discussions and counselling can be included in such schemes. The contact a priest maintains with his parishioners is very crucial when it comes to addressing family issues. It is very significant that there are forums where priests who are well versed in confronting such family issues and who possess good witnessing are very much there with suitable supports and assistance of laity who are experienced in the line. May be, Christian family weeks can be organised in parishes to give a thrust to warmth and love in family life; Churches in their overall perspective too shall formulate such useful forums.

Prioritising Services to Community:

Most of the services to community are channelized to the fields of education and hospitals. Even here, Christians have to search for innovations; as of now, government and other agencies are in a position to establish and manage schools and hospitals. The institutions in these segments owned by

Christians should work towards improving quality and efficiency as well as transforming them to address contemporary challenges. At the same time priority should be given to identify different means for improvisations in related areas. What should be such areas of prioritisation?

Field of education: Even now, there vocation oriented educational systems, but it would be necessary that the aptitude of young generation should be taken into consideration and a mechanism should be put in place to provide them continued guidelines that they do not lose track on the way. If an education system can enlighten the initiatives of a student, utilise his capabilities and create suitable work atmosphere, such a system would be producing entrepreneurs who have identified their career and not a set of educated job seekers.

Hospitals or Nursing Centres: The present system that has been picking up in our country is establishing large multi speciality hospitals and super speciality hospitals where stiff competitions are the order of the day between hospitals and doctors; such a system cannot survive long. These categories of hospitals can continue as referral hospitals. For pure nursing care and quality treatment, there has to be other systems in place. Community health centres have to have priority in taking care of health care in its wholeness. Prevention of illness and healthy way of life should commence here. Our parishes can take initiatives to set up such health centres in undeveloped areas where prevention of illness can be taken care of as also educating the public of a life pattern that looks after primary health. This has to be the first step in health services. Let us see some the actions those can be considered to be implemented through such centres.

- Visit dwelling places and create an awareness of cleanliness
- Impart training in first aid
- Educate the public to produce and consume food items those are locally available
- Provide treatment to simple illness
- Provide training to infant care and family welfare
- Encourage the public to resort to effective indigenous medicines for simple illness by creating awareness about side effects of English medicines
- Look into a system of rehabilitation for physically handicapped
- Take efforts to contain impact of deafness and dumbness
- Formulate a community medical corps by involving members of student organisations
- Coordinate members of spiritual organisations and arrange special services as and when needed like cleaning open places and visiting patients laid down for long; if possible, arrange palliative care.

Questions:

1. Narrate the new dimensions in Christian services.
2. In your local situation, what are the programmes of service you look forward to.

Lesson 6

Participation in Development

Liberation # Planning # Mobilising Resources # Completion

The term 'development' in a technical sense indicates comprehensive progress of a just, sustainable and participatory society. Therefore, 'development' is a factor that assumes importance in Christian social witnessing. Indigenous Christianity should be good enough to engage in service activities while cooperating with comprehensive indigenous development programmes as a role model and if needed, should be prepared to take up the leadership. There are at least four stages in comprehensive development such as liberation, planning, mobilising resources and completion.

Liberation – the first stage of development:

There are always factors those stand as stumbling blocks in the path of development from which liberation is needed. These objections can be seen as background of responses in socio, economic, political scenario. In localised situations, there would be systems and alignments those would create obstacles against comprehensive development. Only through calculated responses to them liberation can be effected. But to go ahead with development, it is not necessary that one should wait till all blocks are cleared. Development can go forward side by side with the process of liberation.

Planning:

There can be one or more projects those can be planned looking into indigenous needs of development and possibilities. Planning should be set in place by ensuring participation and cooperation of local populace.

Resources mobilisation:

Once projects are finalised, resources including funds are to be mobilised for which banks and government or semi government establishments can be approached for loans or other financial assistance. For a housing project, resources can be mobilised through integrated rural development programmes and housing boards. For agricultural projects, cooperation of Rubber Board and Coconut Board or such other organisations can be relied upon. For industrial projects, Small Industries Development Corporation and Khadi Gramodyog Board and similar institutions can be roped in. Social Welfare department can come forward extending guidance and assistance in welfare programmes. Organisations can be assisted to set up crèches, for self employment programmes for women and so on. Assistance can be provided for working women's hostels. Social welfare department would step in under such situations. Local cooperative societies also can be made to get involved.

Completion:

Completion refers to successful finalisation of the project. For a successful completion of a project, continuous experimentations and learning lessons through failures are all part and parcel of the process. One of the key factors to success is arranging to pass on all the benefits to targeted group. Moreover, public participation in such projects would be an added advantage. This would enable new projects being formulated hassle free and that would also be counted in completion.

Questions:

1. Give a brief explanation to Christian participation in activities related to 'development'.
2. Make some enquires about Malanadu Development Society, Paral Development Programme and Card Development Programme and collect available information about their working.

Unit 4

Indigenised Christian Theological Thoughts: An Evaluation and a Probe

Lesson 1

Contributions of Missionaries and Non Christians in India

Preface # Indian Missionaries and Theological Thoughts # Robert de Nobile # Bartholomew Ziegenbalg # Non Christians of India and Christian Theological Thoughts # Raja Ram Mohan Roy # Keshub Chandra Sen # P C Mazumdar # Swami Vivekananda # Mahatma Gandhi # Dr Radhakrishnan # K Subbarao # An Evaluation

Preface:

We have no evidence of attempts having been made to interpret Christian theology in an Indian background during early centuries. Based on the information we have, it has to be inferred that Malankara Nazarenes had tried to present Christian theological thoughts in simple language and style. There were Nazarene songs of the early centuries where faith in Holy Trinity, the mystery of Word taking flesh and communion with saints were being narrated. However, only recently, development of a Christian theology in the background of Indian philosophy, spiritual traditions and culture was found necessary. Under such a tradition, there are contributions from three segments namely western missionaries, non Christian philosophers from India and Indian Christian philosophers.

Indian Missionaries and Theological Thoughts:

We are all aware that strong and orderly western missionary activities have commenced in India only from the 16th century. The goal of missionaries used to be enhancing the membership of such Christian denomination which they belonged to. For this, some of them resorted to use authority, money and other means of temptations. Some others chose education and social service to attract people to their fold. But very few attempted to present Christian theological thoughts in languages familiar to Indians and through lifestyle and thoughts friendly to them. Efforts in this direction can be said to be the early inputs to indigenous theology in a historical perspective. The peculiarities of the theological thoughts of these missionaries were interesting. They were only concerned about introducing the theological interpretations of that denomination to which they were belonging. Therefore, those who accepted Christ were simply stepping into a western religious system and theology. These missionaries saw indigenous theology as a bite to attract Indians to their fold. However, two western missionaries have to be introduced here.

Robert de Nobile:

Robert de Nobile was an Italian Jesuit missionary who came to India in 1605. This was a time when most of the Roman Catholic missionaries were forcibly converting indigenous Christians and non Christians to Latin tradition using the authority and influence of Portuguese king; but Robert de Nobile chose to try a different experiment. He appeared a pure Indian in his attire and life style. He

wore saffron robes, rudraksha and wooden sandals as any India Sanyasin. He ate vegetarian food cooked in Indian style and led a humble monastic life. He became proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil. He learnt Indian philosophy and religious texts. He started writing in Tamil and Sanskrit and also taught these languages. He formulated Christian theology summed up into one hundred Sanskrit stanzas. On a similar line, 'Jnanopadesa' was written in Tamil.

Mainly, the theological contributions from Nobile were language based in nature. In other words, he attempted to present catholic theology in Sanskrit and Tamil which was an effort for the first time towards formulation of an indigenous theological language. But the contents of his theology had no place for indigenous religious concepts or theoretical terminologies. For example, he dismissed with contempt terms like 'karma', 'incarnation' and 'chanting of God's name' without seeking their meanings or relevance. Yet, Nobile deserves attention that he gave emphasis to indigenous languages and leadership as well as indigenous life style. Thus, he has been a notable character among missionaries of 17th century.

Bartholomew Ziegenbalg:

It was Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pluetschau who reached Tranquebar of Tamil Nadu in 1706 to commence Protestant missionary works in India. They were Lutherans. There are a few notable characteristics in the mission work of Ziegenbalg such as (1) he learnt Tamil and started preaching in Tamil (2) he translated New Testament to Tamil and propagated (3) he learnt Indian religious texts and proclaimed that there are many noble truths contained in them.

It was not very easy for the 18th century western reformation movement to admit the truths in Indian religious texts. It was under such a background, Ziegenbalg preached in Tamil accepting the truths contained in the Tamil devotional movement. Therefore, though the presentation of theology by Ziegenbalg was simple to comprehend, it accepted and respected indigenous religious concepts pretty well.

Non Christians of India and Christian Theological Thoughts:

Many Indian philosophers who were not Christians and never joined or not even thought of joining Christianity had undertaken studies on Christ and Christian theology. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen did so because of their personal affinity to Christ and Christian teachings but Mahatma Gandhi or Vivekananda or Dr Radhakrishnan did so through their independent evaluation of Christian traditions and arrived at their own inferences about Christian theology. These efforts on the part of non Christians were aimed at understanding Christ and Christian theology in an Indian perspective; may be some of them did so based on their appreciation to Christian traditions and others based on their enthusiasm for an independent critical evaluation. Whatever be the circumstances, the contributions of such thinkers cannot be belittled or ignored when one thinks of an indigenous Christian theology.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772 – 1833):

Often, Raja Ram Mohan Roy is respected as a prophet of Indian nationality, the rising star of Indian renaissance and so on; right from his days as a youth, he had a likeness to the teachings of Jesus Christ. He had occasional opportunities to write about Christ and to deliver speeches about Christian traditions even before he came up with Brahma Samaj. He had published a set of selected

exhortations based on the four gospels which was titled 'Teachings of Jesus: Means to Peace and Joy'. Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered that the teachings of Jesus Christ on Ethics were far superior to the pieces of advices from all incarnations we have heard about and that Jesus Christ could be accepted as a messenger of God and that he was a Guru possessing the highest degree of nobility. However, he could not reconcile neither with the faith in Holy Trinity nor with the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He interpreted Holy Spirit to be a divine energy acting as a presence of holiness or as an internal enlightenment. In other words, Raja Ram Mohan Roy accepted Jesus Christ as a Guru and Yogi in the highest echelon within the structure of one God faith. Roy interpreted virgin birth and resurrection from the grave to justify his stand.

Keshub Chandra Sen (1838 – 1884):

After Raja Ram Mohan Roy, K C Sen turned out to be the highest leader of Brahma Samaj, but he was different in many ways. Roy was attracted to the teachings of Jesus Christ; Sen was attracted to the redemption deeds of Christ as well as to Christ as a person of eternal divinity. Roy saw Holy Trinity as illogical; Sen accepted Holy Trinity aligning it with Sat, Chit and Ananda. Christ was a highly noble Guru for Roy, but 'one God faith' centred global religion was not a concept for him. But Sen was very much keen towards formulation of a global religion centred on Christ. Sen had made attempts to reveal a Christ who was present in other religions albeit hidden. Sen taught that this universe was in a process of transformation through Jesus Christ. Thus, we can say that Sen had almost all the facets of Christian theology contained in him. In particular, Sen correlated the three principles of Sat, Chit and Ananda and the singular truth Satchitananda behind them with Holy Trinity, which attracted many.

P C Mazumdar (1840 – 1905):

Like K C Sen, P C Mazumdar too was a Christian in all sense without becoming a Christian. If he could find a Christ who is 'eastern' in nature, it was through the influence of K C Sen and the philosophy of 'wholesome presence of God everywhere' seen in Indian religious texts. He believed that those in the east can understand Christ far better than those from the west as Christ is purely eastern in person. In his book 'Eastern Christ', he had expressed Christ as the wholesomeness of redemption and personification of Divine love. The one who comes to Christ experiences the fullness of love that is flow of divine energy in which he becomes part and parcel; God is enlightened through him also.

Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902):

Swami Vivekananda was the most prominent of all disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He saw Jesus Christ as one who had attained Moksha while living in flesh and therefore was Jeevan Mukta. He had been advocating that meaning of the term 'Christ' in biblical traditions indicated the Jeevan Mukta state of Jesus. Jesus was one like us; he became Christ; it would be possible for us too. We must make it possible. Christ and Buddha, by these terms mean that state of life we should achieve; Jesus and Gautama were two persons who revealed this truth.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948):

Our 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi had written many articles about Jesus Christ in publications 'Young India', 'Harijan' and the like. He found 'Sermon on the Mount' very appealing. Mahatma Gandhi saw Jesus Christ as an unrivalled exponent of Satyagraha. For him, the attraction

was not the divinity or the truth behind incarnation of Christ, but the way shown by Christ how could a man fight for truth and succeed in that. Gandhiji interpreted the meanings of cross and resurrection of Christ as the power of freedom reacting in mankind through a life that was dispassionate and epitome of endurance.

Dr Radhakrishnan (1888 – 1975):

Dr Radhakrishnan was a well known philosopher who had interpreted the nobility of Hindu religion to westerners through his books; he also attempted to explain how the easterners saw Jesus Christ. His view of Christ had similarities with that of Swami Vivekananda. Mainly it could be seen as one from an Advaita Vedanta exponent. Jesus Christ was a Yogi who identified the divinity in human beings. "I and the Father are one..... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, 10:30). This statement of Christ was seen by Dr Radhakrishnan as another expression of 'Aham Brahmasmi' and 'Tatvamasi', the Upanishad principles.

K Subbarao (1912 – 1981):

Subbarao was one who gave leadership to a Hindu – Christian movement in Andhra Pradesh. He had a revelation of Christ; without becoming a Christian, he experienced Christ. He was blessed with the gift of healing and therefore, his movement grew up. He introduced a Vedanta based philosophy that was Christ centred. 'Illusion' or 'sin' is a state in slavery to 'self' or 'own'; liberation from this is salvation. The cross points to a truth that if you nullify duality, you are one with God.

An Evaluation:

We can see certain common features in the Christian theological thoughts formulated by non Christians; Other than K C Sen, no one among these had seen any relevance in the ontological divinity of Jesus Christ or a Christ centred redemptive process. They had been ascertaining that whatever were possible with Christ could be possible with all human beings. They had never expressed the need of an established Church to know and experience Christ. However, they were comfortable to see Christ as God lightening the illusion of Parabrahma or as an incarnation or as a great yogi or as a noble guru or as Jeevan Mukta.

Questions:

1. What were the contributions of missionaries towards indigenisation of Christianity?
2. Evaluate the Christian theological thoughts of Indians who were non Christians.

Lesson 2

Contributions of Indian Christian Scholars – 1

K M Banerjee # Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya # V Chakkarai # P Chenchiah # Sadhu Sunder Singh#

K M Banerjee (1813 – 1885):

Krishna Mohan Banerjee was a Bengali who became a Christian consequent to his association with Alexander Duff, a missionary. His deep interest in studying scriptures paved way for formulation of an independent Christian theological thought. The central scriptural principle can be said to be a doctrinal structure that has been taken care through offering sacrifices. The cause behind this universe called 'Prajapathy' or 'Purusha' or 'Viswakarma' has created and is sustaining this universe through sacrifices. The sacrifice by Christ for redeeming mankind is the completion of this mystery. Therefore, Banerjee perceived these: in the most ancient scriptures, an exploration had commenced seeking redemption through sacrifice; an enlightenment of the same had been continuing through the Jewish scriptures; completion of these explorations were seen in a historical perspective in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross who is said to be the modern 'Prajapathy'. Based on these inferences, Banerjee was attempting to interpret Jesus Christ in such a background of sacrificial doctrines of scriptures in Indian context; this can have similarities with the Jewish concept of Messiah.

Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya (1861 – 1907):

Bhavani Charan Banerjee was born in a Bengali Brahmin family and later became a Christian with a new name Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya. Initially, he was in an Anglican Church, but subsequently switched over to Catholic Church. Though the acceptance he had in the then Catholic Church was not very warm, his thoughts and ideologies were followed by Catholic clergy in later days. Brahma Bandhav had been taking efforts to give new dimensions to Christian theology using the Adwaita thoughts of Shankaracharya through his series of articles released through a magazine 'Sofia'. He argued that the scriptures of India should have a position par with the Old Testament. He tried to explain Holy Trinity based on the concept of Sat Chit Ananda. Christ who is God and man was qualified by him as 'nara – hari'.

V Chakkarai (1880 – 1958):

V Chakkarai Chetty, an Advocate and a native of Chennai became a Christian in 1903. Though he had not carried out any comprehensive study on Christian theology, he gave valuable contributions to Indian Christian thoughts based exclusively on the insights he had. 'Jesus, the Incarnation' and 'Cross and Indian Thoughts' are two of his known books; through these books and many of his articles, he ascertained beyond doubt that certain terms and many concepts dominant with Indian religious traditions can be used in indigenous Christian theology as well. He pointed out that Christ, an incarnation in its wholeness lived in each man in his inner self. The energy that is flowing out of the sacrifice on the cross is continuously transforming the universe. Sin is a state of being in 'illusion'. When Christ lives in the inner self of one, one is emancipated from the state of illusion.

P Chenchiah (1886 – 1959):

Like Chakkarai, Chenchiah too was an Advocate from Chennai who became a Christian. He went on to become the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. He too had his visualisation about Christian theology in an independent view point. One missionary Henrique Cramer had exhorted at the Tambaram Conference in 1938 that Christian evangelists need not bother about indigenous aspects of religions. Chenchiah had formulated his thoughts as his reply to these exhortations. He argued that Christianity ought to be brought up in Indian context just like the concept of Christ got developed in Jewish context. For such a development of Christianity in India, Indian religious texts should be treated par with Old Testament. The responsibility of an Indian Christian rests with providing an impression to the 'pure reality of Christ' within the cultural heritage of India. This pure reality is the beginning of a new creed that is born in the universe. In other words, divine life has merged with the existing customary universe thereby causing a transformation and that is Christ. He is the beginning of a new creation. Energy of that transformation is Holy Spirit. Chenchiah was of a view that the terminology of sin or judgment or cross or heaven or Sheol was insufficient for India to understand Christ. According to his thought processes, Christ is redeeming the world not through his sufferings on the cross or his sacrificial death, but because of the commencement of a new creed and system in his essence. Resurrection is an event that expresses the vigour of this new life. Individuals can realise this through Holy Spirit. There is no need for an established set up like Church. Mission is not conversion, but presence of Christ. The other side of this is that there may be many critics who doubt the veracity of the Christian view Chenchiah had been holding on to.

Sadhu Sunder Singh (1889 – 1929):

Sadhu Sunder Singh was born in a Sikh family; he became a Christian in 1905 as a result of his travails to seek truth on his own. His theological insights were centred on the deep love of God St John used to emphasise frequently and the concept of Karma that had been prominently placed in Hindu background. Sin is a state of nothingness; if one continues in a state of nothingness, he would be bound by the pressures of deeds. Only the eternal essence or the love of God can emancipate one from this state. The fellowship with this love of God saves you from nothingness or sin and you reach the state of truthfulness. Through Christ, what happens is a transformation like this. There is no way to understand this, but only through one's personal experience. The speeches and short articles of Sunder Singh were simple and touching. The metaphors he had used from Indian culture must be a model for anyone who ventures to interpret Scriptures.

Questions:

1. Compare the contributions of the Christian philosophers from India whom we have come across in this lesson.
2. Work out a critical note on the importance Indian philosophers attribute to Old Testament and an established Church.

Lesson 3

Contributions of Indian Christian Scholars – 2

A. J. Appaswamy # Fakirbhai # P D Devanandan #M. M .Thomas # Raymond Panicker # S. J. Samarth

A. J. Appaswamy (1891 – 1975):

Bishop Appaswamy has a background of being born in a Christian family, having undergone systematic education in Christian theology and later, getting ordained as Bishop of Coimbatore. His theological thoughts could be seen as having been influenced by the Alvars, who were yogis of Vaishnava cult; the Vaishnava devotional traits are quite evident in his thoughts. He had a deep attachment to the Gospel according to St John. He understood the mystery 'Word' seen in this gospel and the concept of God as 'present inside a person' in Hindu thoughts as similar. God, who doesn't reveal openly, took flesh as a man out of his boundless love of mankind. The love he has shown on the cross is the climax of this. The reason for this fascinating love was that God desired to liberate man from the yoke of his deeds. Once we turn to him and remain in total submission and devotion, he takes over the yoke of our deeds and liberates us. This is the core idea contained in his book, 'Christianity, the pious way'. He preferred the term 'emancipation' rather than 'salvation' as more apt in Indian context. In his theological thoughts, Old Testament and Church hold a crucial position; however, there are people who attribute such a stand to his being one representing the official Church. Yet, it has to be noted that the historical perspective of Christ cannot be properly revealed without the background of Old Testament. Appaswamy has attempted repeatedly to explain the inevitability of Church in the continuation of redemptive experience of Christ and true witnessing.

Fakirbhai (1895 – 1967):

Danjibhai Fakirbhai was a Professor of Physics, born in a Hindu family in Gujarat and turned Christian. He has authored a few books namely Hridayageetha, Christophanishath, Snehadarshanam and the like with a view to express his Christian experience indigenously. He dovetailed Karma, Jnana and Bhakti ways and presented Christ as an epitome of love in relation to Adwaita philosophy. On this basis, he explained our relationship with Christ, who is God. In his Christology, he has been using many Upanishad verses as comparative parallels. His theological language too had certain peculiarities and had been using terms such as Prajnanam, Shabdaprapancham, Christadwaitam and the like.

P D Devanandan (1901 – 1962):

Paul David Devanandan was born to a Christian priest. He was a shining example as Christian activist. He emphasised two aspects in his theological thoughts: (1) basics those are needed for a social reformation have to be evolved through dialogues between religions in India and different ideologies prevailing here (2) the Church has to carry out its mission not as an established set up, but as a community that transforms. Among these, for a transparency to the first point, he carried out a research on 'illusion'. Devanandan presents 'illusion' or 'Maya' as a universal outlook that can be

accepted both by Christians and Hindus because it exposes the necessity of our relentless actions or deeds. He has interpreted Romans 8:20 in this sense.

M. M. Thomas (1916 – 1996):

M. M. Thomas, hailing from Kerala attempted to evolve formulation of a theology of his own and was known all over the Christian world on account of such an effort. Once we go through his writings and speeches, it can be understood that he was dovetailing Christian ideologies with the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Carl Marx in the backdrop of an Indian renaissance. Rather than formulating an 'orderly' theology, he looked forward to a theology that was coming up through the impacts in social life and historical realities. He believed in a theology that was relevant in contemporary life and also casually developing, but laying emphasis on objectivity of practical life. [Rev Dr P G Kuruvilla, Bharata Christhava Darshanangal, page 152]. Thomas desired to interpret the redemption deeds of Jesus Christ as an enlightening of humanisation in its totality. But we see before us a humanity that is distorted in sin and in all forms of injustice. Christ, the redeemer and the transformer carried out a mission to restore the distorted humanity through his deeds aimed at a humanisation of wholesomeness. These humanisation thoughts lead us to identify the relationship between religion based fellowship within the Church and the human fellowship within a secular community. Thomas says affirmatively that all those doctrines and renaissance moves of other religions are related to Christ in as much as they influence mankind creatively. Such a correlation need not evolve consciously or as directed by Christianity. Any political or social attempts targeting comprehensive liberation and transformation of mankind are part and parcel of contemporary history and the mission of a Christian is to take active part in such movements and also to assume leadership thereof wherever needed.

Raymond Panicker (1918 – 2010):

Panicker was born to a Hindu father and a Spanish Roman Catholic mother. He is known as one who led a dedicated life and was globally known as a catholic priest who was a proponent of Indian philosophical thoughts. His main works in writing include 'Christ unknown in Hinduism', 'Trinity and World Religions' and 'Manthramanjari or Vedic Experience'. There are a good many articles published by him having caught attention of many. God has a place in Adwaitha Vedanta; this concept of God stands comparable with what St John advocates as 'Word' or 'Logos'. Logos is Christ. Because of this, wherever God acts, such acts can be understood as in Christ and through Christ. Panicker has taken efforts to establish these thoughts. When he says that there is the concept of Trinity and the concept of Christ in all religions and that Jesus of the Bible is just a reflection of Christ, what we see in him is an exploration towards presenting Christian theology universally relevant.

S. J. Samartha (1920 - 2001):

Among many of his studies, Samartha had come out with his thoughts as to how Christian theology can be developed in the backdrop of Adwaitha philosophy. He has been criticising the western concepts of theology where theology has been made confined exclusively to historical perspectives, thereby ignoring divine revelations in human conscience as well as in natural backdrops and that such tendencies are necessarily be corrected in Indian thoughts. Indian Christians should witness that Christ is calling everyone to take part in the justice oriented struggles for liberation standing

firm on classical philosophical roots. Samarth ascertains that the effectiveness of Christian gospel would be measured based on the impact of such witnessing.

Questions:

1. Make brief note on the theological views of those who have been introduced through this lesson.
2. Make an attempt to read a book or at least an article by any of those who have been mentioned in this lesson.

Lesson 4

Contributions of Indian Christian Scholars – 3

Pathrose Mar Osthathiose Metropolitan # Paulose Mar Gregorioso Metropolitan # Geevarghese Mar Osthathiose Metropolitan # Fr Dr V C Samuel # Concluding evaluation of the contributions by Indian Christian thinkers

Pathrose Mar Osthathiose Metropolitan (1886 – 1968):

In North India, we had Sadhu Sunder Singh about whom we have already learnt. Pathrose Mar Osthathiose Metropolitan was one whose life of witnessing was as note worthy as that of Sadhu Sunder Singh. He was born in an ancient Nazarene family called Mookancheril in the present Ernakulam District. His thought processes concentrated on a practical theology of Christians in India. There was a period in the history of Kerala when untouchability was practiced in its worst form, even among Malankara Nazarenes, and the Metropolitan worked against it actively through his writings and exhortations. Ancient Malankara Nazarene tradition had comfortably aligned with the higher castes of the society; but there was another segment within the cultural heritage of India called the lower castes or Harijans, as they came to be known later. Pathrose Mar Osthathiose was working towards laying a foundation of a practical theology that would align with the lower castes of the community. Those were days when the government and the law were hesitant to address the indiscrimination confronted by low castes; but Pathrose Mar Osthathiose stepped into their huts, shared food and was a solace to them. He worked hard to raise resources to provide food, shelter and clothing for them. His was a revolutionary movement in all respects that about 22,000 low castes accepted Christianity and became part of the Church. While he was a priest, he showed his class by taking part in the famous Vaikom Satyagraha. He wrote in the English daily 'Swarajya': "Had the ancient Syrian Christian community in Kerala been sincerely committed to the liberation oriented Good News of Christ, they could have done wonders here". In 1919, he initiated a movement among Syrian Christians called 'Worship in Indigenous Language'. He entered into the pathetic lives of low castes with a strong will. May be the culmination of such revolutionary thoughts and continued efforts in that direction ended up with the formation of 'Servants of the Cross Society'. Pathrose Mar Osthathiose was a living example of how could one emulate the living style of Jesus Christ in 20th century and how can we follow his activities of being congruent with the marginalised segment of the society even now in practical life. His speeches were quite simple filled

with indigenous metaphors. His prayer meetings used to have hymns tuned in classical styles backed up by indigenous musical instruments.

Paulose Mar Gregorioso Metropolitan (1922 – 1996):

Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso Metropolitan had a leading role in global ecumenical movements and philosophical / cultural fields; his theological thoughts contain specific concepts about Christianity in an Indian background. He was well convinced that indigenous theological thoughts should be meaningfully correlated with the universal Christian traditions. He believed in a brilliant future for Christian theology in an Indian background if we stabilise a relationship as above. He has a reason for such optimism; Christian fathers till the fourth century had crucial roles in formulating a perceivable system for Christian theological thoughts. Their logical traditions and thought processes have similarities and unison in many facets with the logical traditions of India. Therefore, going through the studies of these fathers, a foundation can be formulated for an indigenous Christian theology.

Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso suggested that with firm roots in such a foundation, Christian theological thoughts could develop with added inputs from contemporary socio philosophical responses. These views are discussed at depth in his books 'Cosmic Man' and 'Freedom and Authority' of which the former is a study on the theological outlook of Mar Gregorioso of Nyssa. The Delhi Orthodox Centre was set up by Mar Gregorioso that the above ideas could be explored elaborately in a practical scenario.

Geevarghese Mar Osthathiose Metropolitan (1918 – 2012):

Geevarghese Mar Osthathiose was one who was continuously raising his voice as the representative of the persecuted, marginalised and the poor all over this universe and many of the books authored by him contain reflections of the basic theological stand to be adopted by Christians in India. Christians in India should have their thoughts, words and deeds directed towards setting up a social system modelled on the fellowship of Holy Trinity. He ascertains that such a model could not be confined to India alone. In Holy Trinity, there are reflections of a community in fellowship of wholesome unison seen with plurality and oneness in person protected. This type of realising a social structure is Kingdom of God. He emphasises that in Kingdom of God, social life doesn't relate to a material sense. It is sin to be rich in a poor world. Redemption from that sin takes place through a comprehensive change of structure and a transformation of heart. Christ has been active through this path and when we preach that Christ, the question of 'salvation only through Christ?' comes up in an Indian context. Under such a background, Mar Osthathiose reaffirms and proclaims that Christ acts outside the Church also.

Fr Dr V C Samuel (1913 – 1998):

Fr Dr Samuel had written a book in 1975 titled 'Is this an Indian Church?' Though his question is addressed to Christians in India generally, he had Malankara Orthodox Church specifically in his mind. He had certain clear notions about our attitude to Church, about theology and about the liturgical traditions. Indian Christians have been holding an independent Christian fraternity right from the 1st century and therefore he desired to have a historical perspective of the Church that is not forced upon or falsely created. Malankara Church had no participation at the Chalcedon synod,

yet we have been called Monophysites senselessly; the letters of Mar Severiose of Antioch did not contain any mention of this. These facts are well clarified in his book on Chalcedon Synod. While rewinding the earlier theological controversies and thinking about the mission of the Church in the present scenario, Fr Dr Samuel got convinced of certain facts. (1) Most of the rituals, traditions and precedents are performed or observed based on certain likes and dislikes of men rather than on any firm theological foundations (2) it should be possible for Christians in India to attempt for a Church structure that is Christ centred and accommodating the whole universe in a spirit of love (3) it should be possible to contain indigenous realities in the life of Church as well as in liturgy (4) Christian tradition in India has no obligation to be submissive to Greek or Latin Christian traditions. India can formulate an independent Christian witnessing that has been responding meaningfully to ancient and modern cultural life of this nation and which shall be Christ centred and aligned to practical realities of human life. However, that has to be related to the Christian traditions in its essence universally.

An evaluation of the contributions by Indian Christian thinkers:

We have seen that all these Christian thinkers from India possess varying backgrounds and differing theological views. The main topic of their discussions was mostly confined to the relationship between indigenousness and universal Christian tradition. Attaching too much of an importance to indigenous issues can cause formation of many traditions those are mutually not related to one another and keeping a distance among themselves. This was the main failure of Gnostics during the early Church history. Foreseeing such problematic issues, it should be possible for indigenous theological endeavours to maintain adequate relations with universal Christian traditions.

Most of the Christian thinkers in India have taken Hindu tradition as an Indian background. There are many more religious traditions in India. Even the Hindu tradition has within it dialectical variations. When we use the term 'Hinduism', it should not be understood as either Adwaita alone or Vedanta alone. In its reality, Hindu religion is just one religion that has contained Indian culture to a large extent. Indian Christian theology too has such a challenge before it to contain Indian culture with all its variations and diversities.

There is another attempt among Christian thinkers in India that has been catching attention; what is being done here is to live in the Indian rural style and get trained in ancient meditational systems. With this, they enhance their experience and feeling of Christ and preach Christ through sermons and writings; they enjoy conducting worships with non Christians and staying with them, learning, discussing and being in fellowship. Mostly, these types of methodologies are adopted by missionaries from abroad. Swami Param Aroopyananda (previously a French person Jules Menkanin) who has set up the Sat Chit Ananda Ashram on the banks of Cauvery, Swami Abhishikthananda, Bede Griffith who became a Guru there and Francis Acharya who commenced the Ashram at the Mount of Cross at Wagamon are examples.

Questions:

1. Summarise the theological views of the thinkers of this lesson in an Indian scenario.
2. Compare the thoughts of Christian thinkers from India in relation to approach to Old Testament, about presenting Christ and attitude to structure of the Church.
3. Prepare your personal evaluation about the contributions of India Christian thinkers.

Lesson 5

Some Theoretical Issues within Theological Thoughts– 1

Concept of God # Concept of History # Concept of Creation

In the background of Indian philosophical and religious thoughts, Christian theology in India has to address certain theoretical issues. Let us have a brief discussion on these.

Concept of God:

- a. Is not the God of Indian Christian God for all? There is only one God and therefore He is God for all. But different people are presenting that one God in different viewpoints.
- b. To what extent Christians in India can reconcile with the thought of presenting God as Adwaita Brahma? Those who present God as Adwaita Brahma mainly brings up two aspects namely, one, in his being, God is incomprehensible and two, God is the cause behind everything. These are two thoughts which go well with Christianity in India. Be it in Old Testament or in New Testament, it is well established that no philosopher or no logician can comprehend God through his intellect. 1 John 4:12 exemplifies this. Yet, just because of this, no one keeps silence about God. Whatever little is understood through one's experience gets expressed through words. The experience of one who follows Adwaita Vedanta gets to the feeling that that God is he himself. Those who experience God through Jesus Christ are convinced that God is Father and all men and women are His children. An Indian Christian would always proclaim that the cause behind everything is God. Similarly, he can also proclaim that anything that exists has come from God.
- c. How far relevant is the thought that God is Father? In Semitic religious thoughts, father was held in very high esteem. No one was seen nobler than a father who was abundance of mercy. It was in this backdrop that Jesus Christ introduced God as Father. This view of presenting God as Father has been seen in the Vedas and Upanishads. For example, in Rig Veda, the one who performs a sacrifice prays to God like this: "Thou noble father; me son. Kinsman pleases kinsman, companion pleases companion" [1, 6, 26 (3)]. But the faith and experience of a Christian is that this God revealed Himself in Christ. The reason behind such a revelation is that God is love.
- d. How can we explain in the Indian context that God reveals Himself out of His love in its acme? In Indian religious tradition, what we see more commonly is to understand God in person rather than in the principle of Adwaita Brahma. In person, God is fulfilment of all that is good. This state of goodness in its wholeness is called 'God is love' in true sense. Love is wholesome only by being humble to move low and offer sacrifice in congruence with

everything. This is the mystery behind revelation of God. In His totality of love, God is sacrifice in its extremity. That sacrifice is revelation, tribulation and death of God.

- e. How can we explain the fact that God is Triune in an Indian context? God is not to be seen in plurality; God is one. Though Rig Veda uses many names of God, it says, "Only one; He is expressed by scholars in different ways". But the 'one God' is not an arithmetical one. The arithmetical 'one' is one among trillions and trillions of 'ones'. When we say 'hundred', there are hundred 'ones' in it. But the 'oneness' of God contains all pluralities and therefore it is the oneness of 'fullness'. He is the root cause of the universe of plurality. Thus, the oneness of God is inclusive of the principle of plurality.

The characteristic of 'oneness' of God is that it contains the principle of 'plurality' and 'singularity'. The term 'Trinity' explains this reality. Trinity is a principle of fullness where singularity and plurality are merged in. When we say God is love, it means God is a fellowship. Love gets fulfilled in fellowship. If there is fulfilment of fellowship in God, plurality and singularity would be present there. The concept of Holy Trinity points out that God is one and His fellowship of love is reflected in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God is just not a singularity or a plurality. Instead, God is unison of singularity and plurality; the principle of Advaita also expresses this. Instead of saying singular or dual, God is qualified as Advaita and thus the very same sense of unity is reflected. When we say God is Sat Chit Ananda, the explanation is broader. [Sat is existence, Chit is sense and Ananda is energy of joy]. In short, oneness and duality are merged in God and there is a base for this thought in Hinduism also.

Thus it is firmly established that logically, singularity and plurality are contained in God; at the same time, Christian experience ascertains that God is fellowship in love of Holy Trinity that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Concept of History:

In theology, concept of history assumes lot of importance. What we mean by history here is not a narration of events that had already taken place, but as an understanding of the concurrent movements associated with this universe. In relation to this understanding, there are certain issues that would have to be discussed in the indigenous theological thoughts in our country.

- a. Are there differences between understanding of history by Semitic religions and Indian religions? If there are differences, to what extent they can affect theology?

In their initial understandings, there are differences in the approaches to history between Semitic religions (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) and Indian religions (Hindu, Jain, Buddhist). Historical views of Semitic religions have a beginning, have systematic progress and have an end at one point as can be generally said. But Indian religions follow a pattern where there is no specified beginning, there is no systematic progress or there is no end. The former one is called linear view and the latter cyclic view. Based on this variation in approaches, there are differences in theological expressions also. Linear view narrates seriously a historical

beginning, a fall and a final judgment. In the cyclic view, we have a concept of eternal universe where the soul of life has to attain a state of calmness; this is the central point of theological thought. The discordance with Christian historical view has ended up in Indian scholars of theology like Chenchiah standing against western theology.

b. Are linear historical view and cyclic historical view is contradictory to each other?

Though it looks contradictory on the face of it, the emphasis of linear view of history and cyclic view of history are mutually complementary to each other. In other words, principle of linear history is reflected in cyclic view to a considerable extent and vice versa. According to linear view, history has its beginning with God. A progressive movement and completion to history is initiated by God; in other words, the beginning, the progress and the destination to be reached in history is based on God. That being the case, the principle is that history is commenced with God, is guided by God and is fulfilled in God; this is nothing but starting at one point and returning to the same point which is as good as cyclic principle. In cyclic principle of history, there is a path through which individuals and community reach their destination; this path is a progressive one that gets freed from the bindings of deeds. This progressive movement has to be sustained. Therefore, in the cyclic progressive movement within this universe, the progress of individuals from one point to another is aligned to the linear principle.

c. How should a Christian historical view be in India?

The growth of western Christian theology was based on an extreme emphasis to linear view of history. But a linear approach to history was not found amicable to Indian scenario and therefore, western Christian theological thoughts were not appreciated here. Realising this truth, Christianity in India should develop an approach to history by suitably dovetailing both liner principle and cyclic principle. What we have seen above is a situation favouring such a development. That is, the fact that linear principle contains cyclic principle and cyclic principle contains linear principle to reasonable levels. On the basis of this insight, once we dovetail both these principles to develop a refined approach to history, we would not be having a literal interpretation aligned to a sort of blind faith in understanding the depth and relevance of the redemption deeds of Jesus Christ or in explaining the concept of salvation or in understanding the meanings of eschatological events; the interpretations shall never be causing a fear complex or containing narrow minded ethnic emotionality. Our interpretations of the above events would certainly be accommodating everyone, involving the expression of Divine love and touching the Spirit rather than letters. (See notes at the end of this text)

Concept of Creation:

In Christianity, there were very deep theological studies about 'creation'. However, religious thoughts prevailing in an Indian background do not seem to be logically agreeable to the concept of creation. Under such a scenario, it becomes a crucial issue as how to interpret 'creation' in an indigenous Christian theology.

a. What should be the reason for Indian religious philosophies not agreeing with the concept of creation?

b. Religious insights under an Indian background generally align logically with an eternal universe theory rather than with the thoughts of 'creation'. In an eternal God, the universe sustains eternally with all variations therein. These variations within an eternal universe are expressed poetically as creation.

c. What are the logical issues coming within the concept of creation and the eternal universe approach?

Once we use the terminology 'created', it is obvious that there was nothing as created till the process of creation was done. But the eternal God is the eternal creator. How do we explain this or how does this happen? Should it not be that creations should also be in God in some form eternally? Since this question is logical, there can be a counter question also logically. If the creation is sustainable eternally, how can that creator be a creator? Can God be a God if he is not creator? If we say that the universe is sustaining in God eternally, should it mean that God is powerless on the state of eternity of universe? When we say that this universe with all its inconsistencies, its corruptibility and its incompleteness is in unison with God, doesn't it mean that all these are present in God also? Can we call such a God in reality a God? In other words, thoughts of creation out of nothing and the thoughts of eternal universe theory would be subjected to questions alike.

d. Are the creation thoughts and eternal universe theory in relation to God are contradictory?

On a close evaluation, it can be understood that both these thoughts are not contradicting mutually. The thoughts on creation emphasises that God initiated a start to universe. Thoughts of eternal universe theory emphasises that God is the eternal cause and the foundation of universe. In short, we can say that a thought where we see an eternal beginning in God has two sides of it which are creation from nothingness and eternal universe theory. But the Christian thoughts emphasise that there is a new reality for any creation in its relation with the creator and this may be a novelty when it comes to ancient traditions in India.

e. In the thoughts of creation, there is an ultimate possibility; likewise, there is a concept of eternity in the theory of eternal universe. Are these two contradictory?

In Christian view, the ultimate possibility for any creation is a possibility of 'not being' and the state of transformation to eternity. Thus, the 'change of form' that is not revealed with the transformation to eternity is being expressed as 'ultimate'. In the theory of eternal universe also, what we see is a universe that is eternal with all its variations of state. That being the case, possibilities of variations is common to both. In a status variation, the ultimate level of a state is included. Therefore, these views are not contradictory.

Questions:

1. How realistic are the concept of three gods and the concept of Sat Chit Ananda in comparison with interpretations of Holy Trinity in the indigenous Christian thoughts?
2. Try to interpret 'final judgment' based on a historical perspective within an Indian backdrop.
3. What is the emphasise for a proper approach to Christian universe in an indigenous background?

Lesson 6**Some Theoretical Issues within Theological Thoughts– 2**

Concept of Man # Concept of Sin # Concept of Salvation

Concept of Man:

There are some differences between Christian approach and indigenous religious approaches to the concept of man as far as the fundamentals are concerned. Let us go into some details here and have a discussion on the concept of man as seen through indigenous Christian religious principles in relation to these differences.

Fundamental differences between Indian religious thoughts and Christian thoughts regarding the concept of man:

In Indian religious thoughts, no special status is given to man in principle, though man is one who meditates or thinks rationally. These thoughts suggest that the spirit of life present in man is the same as the spirit of life in other beings as well. Likewise, many thinkers in this line point out that neither man nor the spirit of life has any key role in guiding the progress of history of this universe.

But, Christian thoughts see man as the summit of creation. Man has a central role in guiding the progress of history. The relation between man and universe is one of mutual alignment.

Yet, it can be seen in a practical sense that the thoughts within Indian religious scenario are quite in line with Christian approaches on this matter. All efforts towards the welfare and betterment of nature inclusive of other living beings are centred on man such as sacrifices for preservation of

RITHAM and the like. It shall also be seen that deeds and the consequent change of state of the universe are in relation to the desires and thirsts of the spirit of life.

What we can understand here is that highlighting the role of man and emphasising the relationship between man and nature in the indigenous Christian thoughts would not appear as imported off shore ideologies.

The Biblical and the indigenous religious and philosophical approaches to free will of man:

According to Bible, the progressive sojourn of the history of creation has its base in the freedom of man. The decisions taken man in his free will makes him, the community and the universe participatory to the resultant status of sin or salvation. Further, a comprehensive relationship comes up between the individual, the mankind and the universe.

In indigenous religious philosophies, an emphasis on this freedom is not too obvious, but the need to attain ultimate goal as a responsibility of individuals has been well stressed. Despite directives to perform one's task and do sacrifice for the welfare of others, the prioritised emphasis in Indian religious philosophies is the achievement of the above said goal by individuals. This suggests that even while we harp on the comprehensive relationship between man, community and universe, the human approach of laying emphasis on the responsibilities of individuals hold prime importance in indigenous Christian thoughts.

Concept of Sin:

Analysis of the concept of sin assumes lot of importance in Christian theology. In western thoughts, sin is usually interpreted as disobedience to commandments of God. This type of an approach is not seen seriously in the Indian religious philosophy which has been pictured by some Christian thinkers as an indication that sin is not seriously viewed here. Though the terminologies sin or disobedience is not used, the Indian religious philosophies are more concerned about the realities behind sin. Therefore, it would be better to develop the Christian thoughts about sin in India in the backdrop of these deliberations.

The characteristics in western Christian thinking about sin:

Sin is disobeying commandments of God. As God is righteous, there would be punishment and that punishment is death. But God is love also and therefore, redemption is needed. For this, he carried out redemption deeds and took flesh to live as man. Yet, on the ultimate day, he would judge all; he would give punishment as also salvation. Behind an explanation like this, we can see a relationship akin to a loving and righteous king has with his subjects.

Indian religious view about the reality behind sin:

As Indian religious philosophies understand it generally, God is the energy of this universe. Once we have a relation with God, the energy keeps us bright. When our soul likes to stand alone, we lose this relation and in such a situation, our soul would be wandering through 'nothingness' or 'illusion' or 'desire' or 'thirst' or 'binding of deeds' or 'foolery' or 'myth'. All such wanderings are bindings and a deviation from what would have been essentially the truth. Therefore, what the Indian religious philosophies explore is that particular situation where we experience reality in its absoluteness.

Explanation of the concept of sin in Indian Christian thoughts:

Christians too subscribe to the view that sin is a deviation from the situation where one has to be truly in. It is a scenario that is purely situation based. There are Christian thinkers who have interpreted such a deviation as a shift to 'nothingness'. A Christian often sees the situation of sin as bondage. Christians need not be adamant that such a situation has to be necessarily called sin in the Indian context. That being the case, is there any wrong to infer that the principle of truth behind sin is understood by Christians and Indian religious thinkers in the very same manner?

Christians point to the incident of the first sin to narrate a historical commencement of sin. Christians would also add that the redemption from sin is seen in Christ. They would also emphasise that liberation from the state of sin should be reflected in the spiritual, ethical and social levels.

Concept of Salvation:

Any religion or any ideology has something to say about an eternal virtue. Jewish religion called it 'salvation' or 'shalom'. Islamic religion called it 'heaven' or 'Islam'. Literal meaning of the term 'Islam' is total submission. The very same terminologies are 'Moksha', 'Kaivalya' and 'Nirvana' in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist religions respectively. Marxist ideology would call the very same as a system of equality for all. Gandhian thoughts refer to this as 'Ramarajya' or 'Sarvodaya' or 'Antyodaya'. Christians call it 'salvation' or 'redemption'; it is also interpreted as 'divine reign' and there are many more explanations to these. Under such circumstances, illustrating Christian concept of salvation in an Indian scenario would need correlation with varying view points of 'eternal virtue' as seen above.

The central factor in Christian approach to salvation is the mission of redemption carried out by Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the deliberations about salvation in an indigenous Christian thinking would have to be centred mostly on interpreting the Christ factor.

In the backdrop of thoughts about the state of sin, how could Indian theology contain the aspect of God having taken flesh to be a man?

The status of sin through the Christian deliberations in India inferred that sin can be interpreted as deviation from situation of absolute reality where one has to be in. That being the case, the inevitability of historical objectivity gifted by God to man has to be discussed to understand the transformation to the real status or for a realisation of that status. It is here, the experience and participation of an Indian Christian become crucial. The above question may not find a satisfactory answer through a logical analysis. But an answer is rather easy to arrive at when an Indian Christian experiences his transformation to the state of absolute reality through the historical truth of Christ. A logical analysis may require the historical truth of Jesus Christ to be merged with the concept of God as Raymond Panicker partially did. Or else, this should be studied aligned to the concept of incarnation seen in Bhagavath Geetha (Geetha 4:6, 7). Otherwise, Jesus Christ has to be seen as a great Yogi and be presented as the noblest model; many Indian thinkers chose this option. Even if we say that man should participate wholly in the Divine eternal splendour emanating from God and what happened to Jesus Christ was his being a reality in such splendour and therefore whoever unites with him participates in that experience, it may not end up as an expression of wholesome nature of the objectivity of Christ.

Ultimate status of salvation: unity, merger or participation?

In Christian view, what is the ultimate experience of righteousness? Is it being united or merging with or participating? Even when Christian theology stresses this as a situation of preservation of individuality, there is something more to be born in mind. After forsaking selfishness totally and not being in a position to think about self sustenance, unity, merger and participation are all varying expressions of the same experience.

Salvation of non Christians:

Many questions on salvation come up on the assumption that salvation is a heavenly blessing for one's soul. An Indian Christian believes that salvation happens individually, socially and universally as a comprehensive transformation guided by God. He will not venture to pass judgment on salvation of others. As far as Christians are concerned, the cause behind this salvation is the redemption deeds of Jesus Christ which has no limitations of time or space or religious philosophy and man has no right to think of such limitations. Christians are expected to grow in the experience of salvation accepting that all are children of God. Such progressive growth is the path of witnessing. That is the sensible response to indigenous circumstances.

Questions:

1. What are the main aspects coming out of Indian theological thoughts about the concept of man?
2. Explain sin in relation to the concept of 'illusion'.
3. What should be the basic understandings of an Indian Christian about salvation?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Explanatory Notes

Unit 1 Lesson 5

Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya, a Christian thinker in India made attempts to formulate indigenous Christian thoughts in the model of Adwaita Vedanta. He interpreted that God is Sat Chit Ananda which points to Trinity and that the experience of salvation is realisation of God or realisation of Sat Chit Ananda. Another indigenous Christian scholar Bishop Appaswamy tried to formulate a Christian mystical theology in line with love of God based on Vaishnava devotional movement. Bead Griffith was a French catholic priest who came to India and lived like an Indian. He relied on certain ideas from Upanishads and tried to establish that the ultimate goal for man was to return to the first source. Swami Abhishikthananda opened a Christian retreat centre called Sat Chit Ananda Ashram. He too was a French catholic priest who formulated a Christian mystical approach based on 'cave of the heart' indicated in one of the Upanishads.

Cave of the Herat is a technical terminology in the thoughts of Yoga. This is indicative of a state attained by our inner soul through meditation. At this stage, there is no scope for any sort of deviation or variation. Swami Abhishikthananda hints at a scenario where all the religions can attain unity in the Cave of the Heart.

Raymond Panicker authored a text Manthramanjari through which he presented a treatise of spiritual feelings and the likeable lessons we have through various religious scriptures in India and abroad; through these, he highlighted universal unison of spirituality.

Unit 4 Lesson 5

Linear History and Cyclic History:

These are two approaches to history. Christian and Jewish religions are approaching history in a linear view where history commences at a point and proceeds straight. Like a straight line, this commences at creation and finishes at an end.

The views of Indian religions are approaching history in a cyclic pattern. This is endless like a circle and the same process continues with no end to it. Eternal soul adopts different bodies and continues through rebirth.

