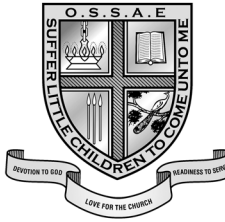


ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF THE EAST



HOLY QURBANA-A STUDY Non-detailed Text for Class 11

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Translated into English

by

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PREFACE

The book 'Holy Qurbana-A Study' is arranged as a non-detailed text in the OSSAE Veda Praveen Course of Class XI. The study about Holy Qurbana begins in OSSAE curriculum from Class IV onwards, and this text gives a total description of the Holy Qurbana from its development stage to the present time. Hence the content includes the origin and development, textual analysis and theme discussion. It is short and handy but descriptive. Rev. Fr. Dr. Reji Mathews, the author of this book and former Director General of OSSAE deserves big appreciation.

Holy Eucharist is a mystery. Eucharist transmits to us divine life. This 'Sacrament of Sacrament' completes all other sacraments. It recapitulates the entire economy of salvation. In Eucharist, we experience the presence of the Triune God with joy and fellowship. We are nourished with the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and incorporated into the Triune God and the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church through Eucharist. The Church fathers understood this and they taught the generations this sacred mystery.

The purpose of introducing this text in the curriculum includes certainly academic but unavoidably spiritual upbringing of the students who study this book. Meaningful participation of the holy Eucharist by knowing its spiritual meaning is the main focus of this text. This study helps the students to grow in knowledge, but meaningful participation of the sacraments leads them to heavenly wisdom and thus aids to them to enter the eternal Kingdom of God.

The meaningful participation and communion of the holy Eucharist make us worthy members of the Church, the Body of Christ. Through the Holy Communion we can enjoy the unity and purity of the divine Kingdom even in this historical world which is really a preparation for the world to come. May the study of this book lead us to participate the Holy Qurbana with more clarity and sanctity.

Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese
DG, OSSAE

CONTENTS

1	The Jewish Background of the Holy Qurbana	5
2	The Institution of the Holy Qurbana.....	12
3	Various parts of the Holy Qurbana	18
a)	The Service of Thooyobo (Preparation)	
	b) Public Celebration of the Holy Qurbana	
	c) <i>Anaphoro</i>	
4	Holy Qurbana in History.....	22
5	The <i>Takso</i> (Book) of the Holy Qurbana and the Service Book of the Holy Qurbana.....	27
6	The place of the Holy Bible in the Holy Qurbana.....	34
7	Holy Qurbana and Ecumenism.....	38
8	Theology of the Holy Qurbana	44
9	Holy Qurbana and Ecumenism.....	48
10	Theology of the Holy Qurbana	54

CHAPTER ONE

THE JEWISH BACKGROUND OF THE HOLY QURBANA

A careful reading of the Old and New Testaments would clearly reveal that the faith and worship pattern of the Christian Church took shape in the background of the Jewish religion. We certainly need a background understanding of how the 'chosen race' upheld its faith in God and how they worshipped God, is a precondition for a clear and definite understanding of the faith and worship scheme of the 'New Israel' which was brought to experience salvation through Jesus Christ. This is similar to saying that, in order to understand the real meaning of the coming of Christ, one shall interpret and understand the prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah. There were three stages in the development of the worship in Israel:

1. The Origins of Worship

From the very early times of creation, there was the custom of offerings and thanksgiving being offered to the Creator God. One of the earliest instances in this regard is the offering made by Abel, which makes it abundantly clear that the moral stature and attitude of the one who makes the offering is of critical importance than the 'quantity and quality' of the thing offered (Genesis 4: 1-7). We have another significant instance of Abraham, the 'the Father of Believers', who was ready to sacrifice his only son, the son of his long prayers, if God, who was leading him in life, so desired it (Genesis 22:9-14). The Israelites were keen to worship in those places where they had the 'vision' of God or divine experiences (Genesis 28:18, Joshua 4:8-10). Later, there were three major feasts for Israel. They were:

1. Feast of Passover (Exodus 12:21-27, Lev. 23:4-8)
2. Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40-43)
3. Feast of Pentecost or Weeks (Lev. 23:15-21)

Also there were smaller or lesser feasts as the following:

1. Purim (Esther 9:25-30)
2. Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (John 10:22, 1 Maccabees 4:53-56)
3. Feast of the Wood (Neh. 10:34)
4. Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:25)

The custom of circumcision for all the male children was ordained as the sign of the covenant between God and human beings (Gen. 17:9-14).

It was during their journey through the desert that worship of Israelites became systematic and orderly. God gave them the Ten Commandments through Moses (Ex. 20:1-17). As part of their worship, Daily Offerings (Num. 28:1-8), observance of the Sabbath (Num. 28:9-10) and the three major feasts were organized during this period. Moses made a Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting) for the worship of the Lord, and placed in it at the Altar, the table for placing the Shewbread, the Brass Lamp and the Court of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25-27, Num. 17:1-11). Priests like Aaron were appointed and Levites were chosen to assist them in worship.

The Israelites moved from place to place and put up their tents accordingly. Israel made the Ark of the Covenant with Acacia wood, as commanded by God (Ex. 25:10-22). They carried the Ark of the Covenant wherever they went. In this way, the Ark could be thought of as a portable altar for the Israelites who led a nomadic way of life, shifting their tent from one place to another. The upper level of the Ark was called the 'Mercy Seat'. On either side of the Ark were placed two Cherubs their wings spread out. It was in the middle of this that the Israelites offered sacrifice to God pouring blood on it. Inside the Ark there were

the gold vessel in which Manna was put; the sprouted staff of Aaron and the Tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed (Heb. 9:1-5). During this time, there were about fifteen sacrifices as part of worship (Lev. 1-5, Num. 15, Deut. 16). Among these, Burnt Offering (Ex. 28), Peace Offering (Lev. 3:1-11), Sin Offering (Lev. 4:1-5), Food Offering (Lev. 6: 7-11) and Drink Offering (Num. 15:1-10) were ceremoniously observed.

2. Worship in the Jerusalem Temple

As the Israelites ended their journey and settled in Canaan, changes occurred in their worship as well. When Israel grew as a nation, and God-fearing kings like David and Solomon were the rulers, they came to have a temple of their own. Actually, it was David who wished to build Temple of God, but instead, his son Solomon was chosen by God to accomplish the same. It was built with the best and most valuable materials. The prayer of Solomon during the dedication of the Temple explains the reasons for establishing it (1 Kings. 8:12-53). A grand feast was arranged for the multitude of people who attended the dedication ceremony. On that day, 22,000 oxen and hundred and 24,000 sheep were sacrificed to God (2 Chronicles 7:4-6).

Daily offering of incense and sacrifices and the atonement offering once in a year, took place as per the Law. Priests and Levites officiated at the daily sacrifices and the offering of incense. However, the yearly sacrifice of Atonement was the exclusive prerogative of the High Priest (Lev. 16:12-13). At the Holy of Holies in the Temple, twelve loaves of bread were placed along in two rows, with incense (Lev. 24:5-9). It was called the Shew Bread. These loaves of bread were replaced on every Sabbath with fresh ones. These twelve loaves enabled Israel to remember the covenant that God made with the twelve tribes of Israel.

3. Synagogue Worship

Important changes in the worship pattern of Israel began to take place after the Babylonian empire took by force the country

of Israel, and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in BC 586. The reasons for these developments in worship were not only the destruction of the Temple, but also that all healthy and wise men were carried away as slaves to Babylon. As they were in a strange country, the Temple, priests and sacrifices all became a memory for them. The new generation did not understand and digest the culture and heritage of their home country. The faithful Jews started gathering in the houses of prophets like Ezekiel for worship (Ezekiel 8:1; 20: 1-3). With the passage of time, houses of worship began to appear here and there, which came to be called Synagogues or 'Fellowship Centres'.

It was for the first time in the history of Israel that the concept of more than one worship place came in vogue. In the New Testament times in Galilee alone there was more than one place of worship. There was an official in charge of each synagogue (Acts 13:15). In the synagogues, the worship activities included reading Psalms and Scriptures; sermon and prayers. In was at this time that the eighteen benedictions (*Shemoneh Esreh*) came into being, which later exerted great influence in worship. There was also offertory in synagogue worship.

Thus it becomes obvious that our Lord instituted the Holy Qurbana in the background of the worship in Israel, which was shaped through three stages mentioned above. Now let us put in a nutshell those factors from the Jewish tradition of worship which got transferred into Christian worship:

i) The Beginning

- (a) Faith in the Almighty God.
- (b) Ten Commandments and the observation of sacrifices.
- (c) The awareness that a particular place is made holy by the presence of God.
- (d) The thinking that people who are called by God were necessary to give leadership in worship.
- (e) The knowledge that certain days were important for worship. eg. Sabbath, and Passover.

ii) **The Period of the Jerusalem Temple**

- (a) The concept of the Temple became deep rooted; the Court, the Holy place and the Holy of Holies were fixed.
- (b) The practice of offering sacrifices for the remission of sins of human beings began.
- (c) Division of priesthood and their responsibilities.
- (d) Daily worship.
- (e) Celebration of feasts.

iii) **The Period of Synagogue Worship**

- (a) Reading of the Scriptures (Luke 4:16-17), singing Psalms (1 Corinthians 14:26).
- (b) Public (general) prayers (1 Timothy 2:12).
- (c) Confession of faith (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
- (d) Sermon
- (e) Offertory

4. The Passover Feast

The meaning of Holy Qurbana will be clear only if we know more about Jewish feasts in general and the Passover Feast, in particular. It was the custom in Jewish families that all the members came together for dinner. This custom had a religious significance too, according to Jerome Kodell, a renowned scholar in the theology of worship. He refers to Covenant of Salt (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13: 5). They used to give thanks to the Lord before and after food, every day.

The ceremonial food habits on feast days were elaborate. At the beginning there was washing of hands; then taking wine with prayer; followed by breaking of the bread, sharing it and thanksgiving. The Passover was perhaps the greatest among feasts. This feast started at the time of Israelites coming out of the bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:6-7). If the Passover worship was conducted in homes, there were rituals like washing of hands,

blessing wine and taking it, breaking of bread, sharing the unleavened bread, killing the Passover lamb and sharing it, reading and explaining the Scripture passage which specifies the ordinance of the Passover and singing Psalms.

Four types of vessels were used to signify the four blessings mentioned in Exodus 6:6-7: freedom from hard labour, emancipation from slavery, salvation by the hand of God and liberation through great plagues and punishments meted out to Egyptians. First was the cup full of wine; and when it was taken up, the custom was to say a prayer for the sanctification of the day of the Unleavened Bread. Along with this, the bread was blessed and a portion of it was shared by the family members; the rest of it was left to be taken at the end of the meal. The second cup too was filled with wine. When that was taken, the youngest child in that family assembly would ask: “why is this night different from others”?.

Then the senior most person in the group would read from the Book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 26: 5-8) to recall the history of the liberation from Egypt. An elaborate explanation was given for this incident. The third was the ‘cup of thanksgiving’. This was called the Chalice of Benediction. After partaking from it, a prayer was said for the coming of Prophet Elijah for the salvation of Israel. Following this ‘Hallel’ was sung (Psalm 113:9). Psalm 115 was also recited; and then the fourth cup of wine was taken, saying: “Next Passover in the reconstructed Jerusalem”.

Apart from the Jewish worship, what attracts our attention is the worship tradition of *Essenes* of the Qumran Community. They counted everything as common property; and shared whatever they had with everyone else in the community. Their communal eating style and the thanksgiving service were exemplary. The fellowship of those who shared the meal was a great example.

Thus our Holy Qurbana contains several elements of the elaborate liturgical tradition of the Jews. The most significant

of these were the Synagogue worship and the feast of Passover. Many details in the Holy Qurbana agree with these.

Let Us Think

1. Try to establish that the Israelites were very particular in worshipping God.
2. In what way was the Ark of the Covenant related to the life of Israelites?
3. Trace the origin and development of Synagogue worship.
4. Identify the special features in the observance of the feast of Passover.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY QURBANA

Several elements of the Holy Qurbana developed from the tradition of Jewish worship. But it was Jesus Christ himself who established the divine act of elevating and blessing the bread and wine. The authors for the Synoptic Gospels note that this incident took place before the arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:8-20).

However, the author of the fourth Gospel, St. John, has recorded that the establishment of the Holy Qurbana occurred on the day of Preparation for the Passover; i.e. the feast of the Unleavened Bread (John 19:31). Whichever be the sequence, the earliest documents regarding the founding of the Holy Qurbana is the account given by St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11: 33-26).

The Last Supper

The earliest account of the Last Supper as given by St. Mark, the author of the first Gospel, is simple and brief. The house of Mark was, who later engaged in mission activities with Peter and Paul, was one dear to Jesus and his disciples (1 Peter 5: 13, Acts 12: 25). It is believed that Jesus ate his Last Supper at this place. Jesus had his Passover dinner along with his disciples on the evening of Thursday, *Nissan* 15. It was in the midst of this that Jesus took the bread, blessed it and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take it and eat; this is my body". Then he took the cup of wine, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them and everyone partook of it. At this time Jesus told them, "this is my blood being shed for many. I will not taste of the fruit of the vine, until I take it anew in the Kingdom of God". Gospel according to

St. Matthew describes it as “the blood of the New Covenant” (Matthew 26: 29).

A significant aspect here is that St. Luke has a unique vision style and presentation in his description of the founding of the Holy Qurbana. As per his account, it was Peter and John who arranged for the Lord’s Last Supper. Again, he says that Jesus blesses the cup twice: one before the blessing of the bread, and the other after it (Luke 22: 14-23). In the first instance, Jesus says, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the coming of the Kingdom of God”. Second time, he says, “This cup is my blood of the New Covenant, shed for your sake”. We said earlier that it was Paul, the teacher of Luke who portrayed the details of the founding of the Holy Qurbana first (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). But Paul is in agreement with Matthew and Mark as he refers to a single blessing of the cup.

The Feast of Passover and the Founding of the Holy Qurbana

When we read the descriptions of the Last Supper of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, along with the details of the Jewish Passover feast, the following points become evident:

1. Jesus came to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. According to the Jewish Law, the Passover meal shall be eaten within the Jerusalem Temple, or in a house within the city walls. Jesus told his disciples, “I ardently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer the passion” (Luke 22:15).
2. The Passover meal had to be eaten before nightfall. Jesus and his disciples sat for the meal when the evening came (Mark 14:17).
3. Those who sat at the Passover meal in the ‘leaning’ position. John, the beloved disciple leaned on the breast of Jesus (John 13:23).
4. We read, he “took” the bread, “blessed” and “broke” it, and “gave” it to his disciples (Mark 14:22). These four ‘actions’ are evident in the Passover meal.

5. The discourse made by Jesus at the Passover meal (John 14-15) agrees with the Old Testament readings and their interpretations made by the elders at the Jewish Passover meal. Especially notable themes are the greatness given to his people by the Lord, the fruit bearing vine, observation of God's commandments and the liberation of Israel. The very term 'New Testament' reminds one of the ancient testament made by God with Israel (Mark 14:24).
6. Jesus gave the bread to his disciples, just like the Passover custom of distributing the bread soaked in wine (Matthew 26:23).
7. There was the practice of giving alms on the Passover day. Jesus at the Last Supper told Judas "Do quickly what you are about to do". The other disciples thought that he was being asked "to give something to the poor" (John 13:27-29).
8. It was usual on the Passover day to recall the past history, and hope that the present hard times will be replaced by better days ahead. Even Jesus, pointing to 'the last times' said: "I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).
9. It was also the custom to sing Psalms and give thanks to the Lord at the Passover meal. The gospel tells that Jesus and his disciples "sang the hymn" (Matthew 26:30).
10. The origin of the Passover feast was the Exodus event (Exodus 12:1-28). The Israelites remembered with gratitude every year that ending the slave-life and suffering in Egypt, God led them to land of Canaan. In the New Testament, there are several instances of comparing the Exodus event with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul calls Jesus as "our paschal lamb" (1 Corinthians 5:7). John the Baptist pointing to Jesus said "here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29).

Concomitant Events of the Last Supper

The allied events to the Last Supper of Jesus are all significant in the salvation history. The first among these is the washing the feet of his disciples. St. John alone gives a description of this event (John 13:5-11). It is reasonable to believe that Jesus washed their feet in the midst of their arguing as to who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24-30).

The same night Jesus revealed that one of his disciples shall betray him (Mark 14:18), and that Peter shall deny him (Mark 14:27-31). Then he went to the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed with heart breaking grief, thinking about the passion that awaited him (Matthew 26:36-46). It was after this that Judas betrayed him to his enemies and the soldiers arrested and bound him (Matthew 26:47-56).

St. John's Gospel and the Last Supper

This gospel is completely silent on the founding of the Holy Qurbana. However, St. John gives extensive interpretations of the Holy Qurbana in Chapter 6. He has presented the Last Supper as the part of the feast of the Unleavened Bread that was observed at the beginning of the Passover feast (John 13:1). This was because he felt that the significance of the Crucifixion should not get impaired by comparing the Last Supper with the Passover meal. He is trying to establish that what occurred at the time of the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was not the Last Supper, but the Crucifixion of Jesus. What St. Paul means when he says, "For our Passover Lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7), shall be understood in this sense.

Fr. Dr. Baby Varghese, a renowned scholar in Liturgical Theology says "Jesus must have eaten the Last Supper at the onset of Nissan 14, i.e. after sunset on Nissan 13". He also notes that the *Lamb of God* ascended the Cross on the afternoon of Friday Nissan 14, when the Jewish priests sacrificed the Passover lamb in the Jerusalem Temple (*Abba Pithave*, p.39). The following day

was Sabbath (Saturday), as recorded by the gospel writers (John 19:31, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54). Thus, the Last Supper was after sunset on Thursday (Holy Qurbana); Crucifixion on Friday; Saturday, the Sabbath and Sunday, the Resurrection. Therefore we shall accept the description given by St. John.

The Meaning of the Holy Qurbana

The Holy Qurbana, established by Jesus Christ, has various meanings. They could be summarised as follows:

1. The prophesy by Jeremiah, “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31) was realized with the founding of the Holy Qurbana.
2. Jesus Christ gave the assurance that those who eat His Body and drink His Blood have eternal life; and that He will raise them up on the last day (John 6:54).
3. St. Paul writes, “Whoever eats the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:27). “Unworthy manner” would mean without proper preparation and with a heart full of evil. The best example for this is Judas Iscariot receiving the Holy Qurbana.
4. St. Paul goes on to say that receiving the Holy Qurbana without proper preparation would result in chastisement and punishment both in this world and in the world to come (1 Corinthians 11:29-32).
5. Coming together for the Holy Qurbana signifies the unity and fellowship of the Church (Acts 2:42-47). They are to care for each other and to enjoy the goodwill of the people. As they live a faithful life and worship the Lord as one community, no one should be left hungry (1 Corinthians 11:33-34). Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Corinthians 10:17).

In short, the Holy Qurbana established by Lord Jesus Christ heals the body, mind and spirit of a person, and leads that person to experience the fellowship in the Church. It also reveals the commitment that everyone shall have towards the fellow creation.

Let Us Think

1. Try to establish that St. Luke had a unique point of view in the description of the founding of the Holy Qurbana.
2. How suitable is the appellation, 'Passover Lamb' for Jesus?
3. Elucidate the promise given by our Lord in relation to the Holy Qurbana.
4. Attempt to explain the related incident that St. John alone mentioned while talking about the Last Supper.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE HOLY QURBANA

A. The Order of Thooyobo

It will be of great help to one who participates in the Holy Qurbana meaningfully, to understand the various parts of the Holy Qurbana. The Holy Qurbana, as we celebrate it today, is mainly divided into two parts: they are the Service of the Word, and the Anaphora containing the blessing and celebration of the bread and wine. Nevertheless, the preparatory *Order of the Thooyobo* and the closing *Post Communion Service* are also significant elements according to the Oriental Orthodox tradition. Therefore, it is imperative to explain these two sections of the Holy Qurbana.

The Holy Qurbana is to be celebrated with proper preparation. Starting with the evening of the previous evening, all the prayers of the canonical hours up to that of the sixth hour (noon) have to be completed as a preparation for participating in the Holy Qurbana in the morning. If under any circumstance, the Holy Qurbana is celebrated in the evening, the evening prayer and the *Soothoro* (compline or bed-time prayer) shall be completed. Normally the Holy Qurbana is celebrated in the morning; hence the midnight prayer shall be said before going to the church to participate in the Holy Qurbana in the morning. In some places, the midnight prayer is said in the church.

The morning shall be said by the congregation in the morning. Because, *Thooyobo* means the Order of Preparation. The meaning of the Syriac word 'thooyobo' means 'preparation', or 'readiness'. There needs to be discipline in terms of food, clothing and the like. The priest, who is to celebrate the Holy

Qurbana, ascends the steps of the 'Madbaha' for the service of the Thooyobo during the Morning Prayer, usually after the 'Promeon-Sedra'. Before he enters the Holy of Holies, he must say an opening prayer and recite meditatively Psalm 51. The Thooyobo service takes place silently within the veil.

1. Offering of Bread and Wine

Firstly the bread and wine for the Holy Qurbana are arranged. In the ancient days, the practice was that people bring bread and wine from their homes and give it to the deacon; and the deacon shall arrange these elements on the altar. Even today there are a few Orthodox Churches where the bread and wine are ceremoniously brought in a procession to the altar by the priests, deacons and altar assistants. In our Church only leavened bread is used in the Holy Qurbana. The reason for this may be summarised as follows: There are two viewpoints regarding the Last Supper of Lord Jesus Christ: one, it was the Passover meal; two, since it was the feast of the Unleavened Bread, the bread used was unleavened. Whatever be, in the Greek New Testament, the bread used then is described as *Artos*, which refers to the ordinary bread used by Jews in their meals. In Syriac language, the same is called *Lahmo*. The same is the word used in *Peshitta*, the Syriac Bible. The *Patheero* which means 'unleavened Bread' in West Syriac is not all used in these descriptions.

The evening prior to the Holy Qurbana, when the sexton prepares the dough for the bread, a small portion of the leaven kept for the purpose is mixed with it. On the morning of the Holy Qurbana when the bread is actually prepared, a small portion of the dough is kept apart as the leaven for the next time. We believe that this is a practise being observed from the apostolic times; so we believe and teach that every time the Holy Qurbana is celebrated, it is a continuation of the Qurbana founded by Lord Jesus Chrstit.

There is the practise of mixing an equal amount of water with wine when it is poured into the cup, when it is being done

a prayer, “Lord our God, unite this water with this wine, just as our human nature was united to your Godhead”. The wine represents the blood of Jesus. We have a tradition that wine is mixed with water, because blood and water flowed from the Lord’s side at crucifixion. The prayer during this reminds of John 19:34-35. The chief celebrant, after washing his hands and putting on the vestments, conducts a long and silent prayer service.

The celebrant says a special prayer on each one of the vestments as he puts it. For example, as he puts on the ceremonial shoe on the left foot he says the prayer: “May my feet, O, Lord God be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, that I may tread upon serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy forever. Amen.” Similarly as he puts on the shoe on the right foot, he says, “Abase under my foot, O, Lord God, all pride that rises against Your knowledge. By the helps from You, may I trample down the passions of the flesh forever. Amen”(Psalm 18: 35). The priest robs himself with the vestments for the holy Eucharist, just as the Levite priests had put them on (Exodus 28:42-47); and also as referred to by St. Paul (Ephesians 6: 11-17).

In the silent (inaudible) prayer that is said in between, all those who pleased God from the time of Adam and Eve to the present times are remembered. At this time, the names of persons to be remembered in the Holy Qurbana, in the name of St. Mary and any of any saints are remembered with a prayer. Following this, prayer is offered for those who are sick; and those who have come and are waiting to receive the Holy Qurbana; and for the faithful departed. There is also space to pray for the parents and relatives of the celebrant; and also for the altar assistants. Those who helped in establishing the church in which the Holy Eucharist is offered, and those who laboured for preparing for the liturgy of the day are also remembered here. A special feature of the Holy Liturgy is the prayer for those departed whose names are not known!

After the long prayers referred to above, the cup and the chalice are covered with the Soosafo and then incense offered before concluding the Thooyobo. The long prayers of the Thooyobo are considered very important; and therefore it may appear that the Holy Qurbana is 'lengthy'. Some people complain about the 'lengthiness' of the Holy Qurbana more because they have failed to understand its total meaning and significance.

Let Us Think

1. What are the details to be taken care of in the 'Liturgy of the Faithful'?
2. Explain the meaning of the terms 'Lahmo' and 'Patheero'.
3. Mention the meaning and significance of mixing wine and water equally in the cup.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE HOLY QURBANA (CONTINUATION)

B. The Public Celebration of The Eucharist

The Holy Qurbana begins after the Thooyobo. As pointed out earlier, there are two parts of the Holy Qurbana: (1) Liturgy of the Word, and (2) Liturgy of the Bread and Wine. The second part, sometimes called as *Anaphora*, the Greek name denotes only the opening prayer. The term *Anaphora*, which means ‘that which is lifted up’ or ‘that which is offered’ points to our minds and thoughts being lifted to the heights. Sometimes, it is also called as Eucharist based on the thanks-giving prayer said at the end of the second part. This Greek word only means ‘to offer thanksgiving’. Both these parts call for detailed study. The Promeon-Sedra read in between them is actually intended to prepare the faithful for the Anaphora.

A) Liturgy of the Word

That part of the Liturgy from the Old Testament readings to the hymn, “It is the time of prayer.....” is called the Liturgy of the Word. In the early Church this was known as the ‘Liturgy of the Catechumens’. The idea was that all those who were getting ready to enter the Church through the Holy Baptism could participate in this part of the Liturgy. Along with the readings from the Holy Scripture, the mystery of Incarnation of Jesus Christ is remembered; and prayers and actions to proclaim our undefiled faith i.e. Orthodox Faith, are also available here. The following are the details of the Liturgy of the Word:

i) Maaneesa of Mar Severius of Antioch: At the opening of the public celebration of the Holy Qurbana, the priest goes round

the altar offering incense and kissing the four corners of the altar, the altar assistant following him; at that time the hymn, “By Thy Mother’s earnest pleas...” is sung. It is believed that this hymn was composed by Severius, who was the Patriarch of Antioch during 512-536 A.D. This hymn reveals the mystery of the Incarnation of Lord Jesus Chrst.

ii) Trisagion: The Eastern Orthodox (Byzantine) churches interpret the Trisagion, viz.

Holy art Thou O, God
 Holy art Thou Almighty
 Holy art Thou Immortal

as the praise of the Holy Trinity. However in Oriental Orthodox Church, it is considered that since we pray, “He who was crucified for us, have mercy on us”, we do address Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity. The Byzantine tradition take the vision of Isaiah as the origin of this prayer (Isaiah 6:3). The West Syriac sources while they do not reject this tradition, interpret this as the praise by the Seraphs when Christ committed His spirit into the hands of His Father at the time of His death on the cross. Joseph of Arimathea, the tradition goes, sang at that time, “He who was crucified for us, have mercy on us”.

Calling Christ as one “who died for our sake” underscores the intimacy that the faithful have with God. In those languages where two words are available for the second person, the members of the family use the singular to address each other. For instance in the German language God is addressed using the singular (*du*) and not using the plural (*sie*). In Hindi, there are two words to specify the second person: *thoo* and *aap*, but even the young members of the family address the older people as *thoo* (you); there is no suggestion of ‘less respect’ in all these.

iii) Scripture Reading: Passages are read from the Old and New Testaments, selected to suit the significance of the day. The most important of these readings is the *Evangelion* (Gospel). Normally, three passages from the Old Testament are read. Usually, the first reading will be from the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, traditionally ascribed to Moses), and the last reading from one of the prophets. When the reading is from Isaiah, since the book contains glorious prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, it is introduced saying: "From the book of Isaiah the glorious prophet-Barekmor". In our lectionary, books from the Inter-Testamental period are included; e.g. Maccabees, Ecclesiastics. Also the Church granted permission for women to read the Old Testament passages in the church.

There are three readings from the New Testament. On the northern side of the entrance to the Holy of Holies, the reading passage is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, or from one of the Catholic Epistles (James, first and second Peter, first, second and third John, and Jude). On the southern side, a passage from the Epistles of St. Paul is read. Following these, the Evangelion is ceremoniously brought to the entrance to the Holy of Holies and read. Full deacons are allowed to read Evangelion with consent on priest on some occasions. It is the sermon that should follow the Evangelion reading. The Liturgy of the Word comes to an end here. But in modern times the sermon is postponed to the last, for the sake of convenience. The preparation for the Anaphora takes place after the Liturgy of the Word.

iv) Promeon-Sedra: The congregation which listened to the Scripture readings shall be lead to repentance and prayer of absolution with the help of Promeon-Sedro. The first paragraph of this prayer is called Promeon which means 'introduction'. The second part is the Hoosoyo or prayer of absolution, which begins thus: "O, Thou who...". This is followed by the Sedra which means 'order, row or series'. This prayer, which entreats

for God's grace, remembering the fathers and mothers who in their lives placed their trust in God, indicates a row or series of prayer. Quite a number of Promeon-Sedras are available; and an appropriate one is chosen according to the importance of the day.

v) Blessing of the Censor: The blessing of the censor, saying: "Holy is the Holy Father, Holy is the Holy Son and Holy is the Living Holy Spirit", is part of the worship of the Holy Trinity. In the West Syriac liturgical tradition there is the practice of the deacon going round the church, censuring it, before the Creed is recited, most probably from the fifth century. After the Creed, it is the 'Liturgy of the Faithful' and the adoration and exaltation of the bread and wine. Therefore it was the time to send out those who are not baptised, as the Liturgy is for the faithful only.

vi) The Creed: Now the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is accepted as the most important profession of faith by the Apostolic Church, is said by the whole congregation. This Creed was formulated by the Ecumenical councils of 325 and 381 AD, and approved at the Chalcedonian council. Scholars are of the view that it was Peter the Fuller, the Patriarch of Antioch (471-488 A.D.) who started using this Creed in the Holy Eucharist. The creed is contained in four paragraphs, which profess the faith in the Holy Trinity: the first tells about God the Father, the second is about Jesus Christ, who became incarnate for the salvation of humankind, and third part is about the Holy Spirit. The fourth section is the declaration about the sacrament of baptism and the second coming of Lord Jesus Christ. In some churches the shorter version called the *Apostolic Creed* is used.

vii) The Intercession: As the hymn "Behold the time of prayer..." is being sung, the celebrant kneels before the altar and silently says the intercessory prayers. Though in the service

of Thooyobo, prayers for those come to the memory of the celebrant, and those who requested to be remembered are upheld, this 'kneeling' intercessory prayer is quite touching. The faithful, who listened to the Bible reading and the Promeon-Sedra, stand in repentance and compunction.

In short, through the service of the Thooyobo and the Liturgy of the Word, the faithful prepare themselves meaningfully for the Holy Qurbana. Now follows the most significant part of the Holy Qurbana.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE
HOLY QURBANA (CONTINUATION)

C. Anaphora

The Celebration of the Bread and Wine

It has been pointed out earlier that the most important stage of the Holy Qurbana is called as *Anaphora* following the title of its opening prayer, and also *Eucharist*, following the title of the concluding prayer of this section. This part of the Holy Qurbana is also known as the 'Liturgy of the Faithful' and this section has been divided into five chapters in the *Holy Qurbana Kramam* (The Order of the Service of the Holy Qurbana) revised and published by His Holiness the late lamented Catholicos, Baselios Marthoma Mathews I. Let us follow that lead in the present study.

i) Prayer for Peace: The Holy Qurbana is a divine worship conducted in a corporate experience of the fellowship of the whole Church. The faithful who have been absolved through the Liturgy of the Word shall participate in the celebration of the Bread and Wine only through an experience of reconciliation. Here the divine word, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5: 23-24) is being fulfilled.

For the Kiss of Peace different methods are used, like embracing each other, hand shake, join both the hands to exchange peace. The Malankara Orthodox Church follows the last type. The deacon/acolyte makes an announcement at the

time of the fluttering of the ‘Sosafa’ that our mind and attitudes may be filled with sanctity, love and devotion as we enter we enter the most important part of the Holy Qurbana. Then the first benediction is proclaimed, “The love of God the Father, the grace of the Only-Begotten Son, and the communion and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, my brethren, forever and ever”.

ii) Celebration of the Bread and Wine: At this time a few prayers are said which are very ancient and important in the Holy Qurbana.

- a. After the Trinitarian Benediction (2 Corinthians 13:13), the prayer for lifting and offering our hearts and thoughts to the presence of God is said. This is called *Sursum Corda* or ‘lifting of hearts.’
- b. The second is the song of praise of the angels (*Sanctus*). Here, the prayer and the response of the congregation are based on Isaiah 6:3, Hebrews 12:22-23, Matthew 21:9, and Revelation 4:6-8. At this time, angels and humans together praise and extoll the Saviour Jesus Christ.
- c. The third is the prayer of the blessing of the Bread and Wine. This is called the ‘Words of Institution’. The words said here are the same words which our Lord used when he established the Holy Qurbana (Mark 14 22-25).
- d. Fourth, is ‘Anamnesis’ i.e. the statement “Do this in remembrance of me.” It tells us that we are to remember the salvific acts of the Lord till His second coming.
- e. The next is the ‘Epiclesis’ or calling the Holy Spirit. Though we experience the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the Holy Qurbana, this is time when we really recognize it through our devotions. It is for this reason that the celebrant with pain and repentance cries out: “Answer me Lord”, like prophet Elijah who offered sacrifice on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:37). Then comes the moment of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, and the priest makes the

declaration that they have been transformed as the body and blood of our Lord.

In short, this part of the Anaphora, consisting of the five parts- *Sursum Corda* or lifting of the hearts; *Sanctus*, the praise of the Holy Trinity; Words of the Institution; *Anamnesis* or the memorial prayer and the *Epiclesis* or calling the Holy Spirit-constitute the holiest and the most important part of the Holy Qurbana. Even in churches which are separated by differences in faith and marked by different modes of the Holy Liturgy, there is a general unity in terms of these five prayers.

iii) Thoobden: We refer now a days to six different intercessory prayers as ‘Thoobden’. For each of them, the celebrant audibly says a prayer first followed by the server or acolyte reading a prayer. When the acolyte is reading a prayer, the priest silently offers a prayer. In that way, Thoobden or Diptychs is a collection of eighteen prayers. In Syriac language, the second to the sixth prayer read by the acolyte begins with the word ‘Thoobden’ which only means, “and again.” The technical word in Syriac is *Deepthiki* (*Diptychs* in Greek). These words mean ‘canon’ or ‘memorial’. Church Fathers like Jacob of Edessa (640-708 A.D.) have used the term with the meaning of ‘memorial’.

Of the six intercessory prayers, the first three is for the living; and the other three for the departed. In the first Thoobden, the bishops who shepherd and administer God’s Church in the four quarters of the world, the priests and the deacons are remembered. In the second, prayers are said for those whose names have been given for intercession, for the sick and the suffering. In the third diptych, all rulers are remembered. Here it is obvious that we shall have peaceful life only if those who rule over us have blessings from God.

In the fourth, all the saints from St. Mary, Mother of God, especially that saint/ saints in whose name the church where the Holy Qurbana is being celebrated, are remembered in prayer. In

the fifth Thoobden, those holy Fathers who formulated the faith of the Church are remembered, especially, those fathers of the first three Ecumenical Councils, viz. those in Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus. Also those Orthodox Fathers who defended the true faith in the Council of Chalcedon and the later councils are remembered along with the saints of Malankara (Maphrian Yeldho Mar Baselios, Geevarghese Mar Gregorios of Parumala and Geevarghese Mar Dionysius of Vattasseril).

The sixth Thoobden is a prayer for all the faithful departed. The prayer says: “give rest and consolation to their bodies, minds and spirits at the place where the light of your countenance shines”.

iv) The Service of Fraction: Fr. Baby Varghese, says that three words used in the Institution, “blessed”, “broke” and “gave” constitute three important elements in the Holy Qurbana. Prior to this, there are three blessings in liturgy. After the second blessing, “May the grace and mercy of our great God and saviour...”, comes the service of the “breaking of the Bread”. In this the priest prays silently and does the fraction, placing the seal and the mixing.

The congregation at this time sings the hymn of repentance, “Harken gracious Lord, we pray...”. While this hymn is being sung, the prayers remembering the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord are offered in the Holy of Holies. In our hearts we need to meditate and pray that Christ who gave His life on the cross for the salvation of humanity to forgive our sins and give us blessings. Litanies entreating intercession for the living and the dead are also said at this time. ‘Litany’ means “request” or “prayer”.

v) Reception of the Holy Qurbana: The fourth chapter in the Book of the Holy Qurbana contains the prayers said before and after the reception of the Holy Qurbana. This part begins with the Lord’s Prayer. This prayer which Lord Jesus Christ taught His

disciples is recorded in Matthew 6:9-15, and Luke 11:1-4. In the early Church this prayer was recited only by the baptized. After the congregation bows its head in prayer, it receives the third blessing beginning: “The grace and mercy of the Holy Trinity...” This is followed by the elevation of the Holy Mysteries and its prayer. At this time we acknowledge the fact that our Lord is the second person in the Holy Trinity and adore the Holy Trinity. The adoration of the Holy Trinity is done three times: at the beginning in the Trisagion when we remember the birth of our Lord; at the beginning of the Anaphora remembering the public ministry of our Lord (blessing of the censor) and remembering the Ascension of our Lord at the time of the elevation of the Mysteries, wherein it is acknowledged that Jesus Christ is a person in the Holy Trinity.

In the ancient Church, the reception of the Holy Qurbana followed immediately after this. But in our Liturgy today, we sing a hymn in remembrance of our Holy Fathers who taught us the true faith, followed by *Kukilions*. The term means “circle” or “cycle”. In each *Kukilion* consists of a passage from the Psalms (e.g. Psalm 45:9-11), an *Ekbo*, two verse stanzas of a hymn and a *Bovootho* at the end. The five *Kukilions* recited at this part of the Holy Qurbana are in remembrance of the Mother of God, saints, the holy Cross, the departed clergy and then, all the faithful departed.

The actual time for receiving the Holy Qurbana is after the three prayers said during the procession of the Holy Mysteries to the door of the Holy of Holies (*Madbaha*). However for the sake of convenience, now a days, there is the practice of dispensing the Holy Qurbana either before the procession of the Holy Mysteries or before the congregation is dismissed after the final blessing (and *kaimuth*). But actually, the hymn “Glory to the God on high...” is to be sung after the dispensation of the Holy Qurbana, and then a prayer is said, before the Holy Mysteries are brought back to the Altar.

vi) Thanksgiving: The last part of the anaphora is Thanksgiving. The prayer of thanksgiving says: “Lord! we praise you for your great mercy which made us eligible to partake in your Heavenly Feast. Lord, let not our partaking in your Holy Mysteries be for our condemnation, but enable us to be partakers with your Holy Spirit.” Then the prayer for peace is said and the congregation prays with bowed head. This is followed by *Hoothomo* which means literally, “to seal” or “to sign”.

Here seal is placed on our testament with God; the prayer at this time says: “May we have the rights and share of the saints from the beginning of times,” which confirms our commitment to Christ. Then the priest gives the benedictory prayer (*Seloon B’shlomo*) dedicates the congregation to the grace and mercy of the Holy Trinity, and sends the congregation away with ‘food for journey’ which is the Holy Qurbana. The Anaphora ends with the priest exhorting the congregation to pray for him. This is like people standing around the mountain and praying for Moses who went up the mountain to intercede for the people.

vi) Post Communion: Just like the Thooyobo or preparatory service before the public celebration of the Holy Qurbana, the Post Communion service too is important. The congregation is to depart only after this end service and receiving the final blessing. After *Seloon B’shlomo* veil is drawn across the door of the *Madbaha*; and the priest prays on his knees. After this the priest ascends and sings Psalm 23. Then the priest takes in the remnants in the paten and the chalice, and wipes them clean. At this time Psalm 29 and other prayers are said by the priest inaudibly, the congregation sings the hymn, “*Ente kadangalasesham nin...*” and the prayer “*Moran Eshu Mashiha...*” The priest finishes the prayers, bids farewell to the altar, cleans his hands and concludes the service. He descends the altar step saying a touching farewell: “I am not sure if I will come to your presence again”.

The Post Communion service ends with the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary. Then the people depart after kissing the hands of the priest which celebrated the Holy Body and Blood of Christ. At this time it is much becoming to recite Psalms. It is our custom that the faithful, with joy at heart, gives thanks to God as they leave the church.

Let Us Think

1. What is the Biblical basis for the Kiss of Peace before the most important part of the Holy Qurbana?
2. Which are the five parts of the Anaphora?
3. Identify the general theme of each of the Diptychs (Thoobden).
4. What are the important ideas contained in the blessing, *Seloon B'shlomo*?

CHAPTER SIX

THE HOLY QURBANA IN HISTORY

The office of the Holy Qurbana in its present form developed through various stages in history. Only by examining them one by one, we will come to know which of the factors continue to exist till today; and which are the other elements added in the course of history. We may divide this study of this evolution into three historical segments.

1. The Meaning of Holy Qurbana in the New Testament

The earliest document describing the institution of the Holy Qurbana is 1 Corinthians 11: 23-30. We also did examine the descriptions given in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 26: 26-29, Mark 14: 22-25, Luke 22:15-20). We also noted that in the Gospel according to St. John, though the description of the institution of the Holy Qurbana is not given, the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fishes, and the exhortation following it does give its true meaning (John 6:1-71).

Apart from this, there are passages in the New Testament which point to the Holy Qurbana. One instance is Jesus having supper with disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:1-30). “He took bread, blessed, broke and gave it to them” (Luke 24: 30), are exactly the same ‘words’ said in the institution of the Holy Qurbana. The four important verbs, “took”, “blessed”, “broke” and “gave” are seen in the description of the feeding of the five thousand also (Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41, Luke 9:16; Jn 6:11).

In the early Church, the Holy Qurbana was called the ‘Lord’s Supper’ (1 Corinthians 11: 20). This used to take place on the

‘Lord’s Day’ (Revelations 1:10). We also read that early Christians used to assemble regularly for ‘Breaking of the Bread’ (Acts 2:42-46). This assembly was not merely for taking food. There were ‘thanksgiving’, ‘prayer with one mind’ and the ‘fellowship of the Grace of God’. St. Paul says that those who ‘break the Bread’ which is the Body of Christ, become parts of the one body; and those who ‘Bless the Cup of Blessing’ are in the fellowship of the Blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10: 16-17). Paul also declares that such people are “Baptized in the same spirit and have drunk the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

2. The Service of the Holy Qurbana till the Fourth Century

The Orthodox Christians take pride in the fact that they truly follow the details of faith and worship patterns evolved in the first four centuries. There are a few great Fathers who talk about the Holy Qurbana. St. Clement of Rome (CE 92-101) has quoted the prayer we say in the Holy Qurbana, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the God Almighty, by whose praise heaven and earth are filled...” In the Epistles of St. Ignatius, who was the bishop of Antioch (CE 100-110), calls the Holy Qurbana, ‘the Breaking of the Bread’ and ‘the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving’. He says in his Letter to Smyrna that the bishop shall preside over the Holy Qurbana, and Holy Qurbana shall not be celebrated without the bishop. He has described the Holy Qurbana as the ‘Medicine of Immortality’ and the ‘Antidote against death’.

Pliny, who was the Roman Governor in Bithynia, in his letter to the Roman ruler Trajan, wrote that Christians did assemble (CE 112) early morning on Sundays, and came together for ‘a common meal’. In *Didache*, (or ‘The Counsels given by Christ to his disciples’) which belongs to the second century, the Holy Qurbana is described as ‘the Offering of Thanksgiving’. In the same document it is said: “Like the many grains lying on different hills are brought together to become one bread, gather your Church spread to the end of the earth, into your Kingdom”. Justin

Martyr (AD 150) noted that there were Scripture reading, sermon, prayers, hymns, Breaking of the Bread and offertory in the service of the Holy Qurbana. Justin observes that the bread used was the bread brought from homes, and not the one prepared in the church as it is today. Fathers like St. Irenaeus of Lyons (CE 180), St. Clement of Alexandria (AD 200) and St. Cyprian of Carthage (CE 250) taught about the Holy Qurbana.

By the beginning of the third century, two parts of the Holy Qurbana had evolved: 'Liturgy of the Catechumens' and 'Liturgy of the Faithful'. This is made clear by Tertullian (CE 200). After the Scripture readings, sermon and the recitation of the Creed, *Catechumens* (those who were still learning the faith-not baptized) were asked to leave; then only the celebration of the bread and wine was done with the participation of the baptized faithful.

3. Service of the Holy Qurbana after the Fourth Century

St. Cyril of Jerusalem was a great teacher who taught the living presence of Christ in the Holy Qurbana (*Mystagogical Catechism* 4-5). He talks about the details of the practice of bringing bread ceremoniously, the practice of mixing wine and water and washing of hands and their real meaning. His disciple, John of Jerusalem (CE 386-417) also spoke about the 'mystery' in the Holy Qurbana. St. Gregory of Nyssa (CE 407) exhorted that the bread sanctified by the Word of God instantly becomes the Body of God the Word; and that eating this Body of Christ provides divinity to us because of our unity with Him.

St. Theodore of Mopsuestia (CE 428) taught that the Body and Blood of Christ, and the grace of God we receive from them, shall empower us to do righteous deeds. The words of St. John Chrysostom are famous: "Though none of His bones were broken while on the Cross, today He suffers in His sacrifice for your sake; He allows Himself to be broken and shredded so that all

may be made full". St. Athanasius of Alexandria said: "You may think that the bread and wine prepared by the deacon (acolyte) and placed on the Holy Altar (*Thronos*) are ordinary things; but when they are blessed by the priest, they become the Body and Blood of Christ." There are numerous quotes of the Church Fathers on the Holy Qurbana like this.

What we believe today regarding the Holy Qurbana is based on the teachings of the above quoted Fathers of the Church. Instead, if someone comes all on a sudden and says, "The Holy Spirit made me think like this about the Eucharist", it amounts to abusing our Lord himself! This because, the principles and interpretations of this sacrament have been revealed and developed through the Fathers of the Church, through a long period of time. The celebration of the Holy Qurbana was very simple in the earliest times; and it was done secretly during the persecutions. However, it is reasonable to surmise that after Emperor Constantine declared Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire after Edict of Milan in AD 313, the transformation that took place in the Church should have certainly affected the celebration of the Holy Qurbana as well. Many of the elements seen in the Holy Qurbana today were added to it when Christians could worship in a free environment.

Let Us Think

1. Identify the New Testament passages which point to the Holy Qurbana.
2. What are the 'five verbs' used in our Holy Qurbana, which were used by our Lord when He instituted the Holy Qurbana?
3. Find any two quotes from Church Fathers to show how vital the Holy Qurbana was in their lives.
4. What was the one major event that resulted in many changes in the service of the Holy Qurbana in history?

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE QURBANA TAKSA AND THE KURBANAKRAMAM

The Book used by the priest in the Holy Qurbana is called *Taksa*, which literally means “text”. The congregation uses the *Kurbanakramam* (Service Book of the Holy Qurbana) to read the responses and to sing hymns. Both these books have a long history. Usually, we use the Taksa of St. James or the *Anaphora* of St. James. Apart from it, there are about seventy Taksa in West Syriac liturgical tradition. However, normally, we make use of only few of them in our churches. It will be useful to have fundamental knowledge about these Taksa.

1. Taksa of St. James

The oldest Qurbana Taksa is that of St. James. Tradition says that the author of this was St. James, ‘the brother of our Lord’, and the first bishop of Jerusalem. Although mention of this Taksa is seen in documents dating from the fourth century, the most ancient hand-written copy of this belongs to the ninth century, according to scholars. The original Taksa of St. James, written in Greek, was translated into Syriac in the fifth century. Many of the prayers in this are pretty lengthy. Fr. Baby Varghese is of the view that several of the prayers in it were condensed by Gregorios Bar Hebraeus, the famous Syriac Scholar and the Catholicos of the East (*Abba Pithave*, p. 62). Even after this condensation, this Taksa is still the lengthiest of almost all available ones.

Even today, this Taksa is used on occasions like the first Holy Qurbana celebrated by a priest, consecration of a church, ordination service, and Moranaya feasts (feasts relating to our Lord). If can keep some of its prayers in memory, then it will

not be difficult to recognize the Taksa of St. James. For instance, in the prayer of the consecration of the bread, “When He who was without sin prepared to suffer willingly for us sinners...” is from this text. Unlike in other Taksa where the description given to the Holy Spirit is not too long, St. James’ text gives a pretty long description at the end of several prayers: “We offer glory and praise to You, Your Only Begotten Son, and Your Holy Spirit, holy above everything, righteous, adorable, life-giving and consubstantial with You, now and always for ever”.

St. James’ Anaphora which was born in Jerusalem was accepted in Syria, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Greece, and Egypt.

2. Other Taksa

The many Taksa in West Syriac liturgical tradition are modelled on the Taksa of St. James. They do not vary in their general structure. In our Holy Qurbana, from the service of Thooyobo to the Creed, common prayers are said. Then the priest ascends the Altar step (*darga*) and starts the Liturgy of the Bread and wine, i.e. the Liturgy of the Faithful. Here any one of the Taksa is chosen for the day. The priest returns to St. James’ Taksa at the time of the hymn, “*Anpudayone...*” (Prayer of Fraction). Again, the same text is used at the time of the service of receiving the Holy Qurbana. The final prayer of thanksgiving will be from the Taksa chosen for the day.

Usually the Taksa in our Church are those of Mar Dionysius Bar Salibi, St. John Chrysostom, St. John the Evangelist, Mar Mathai Royo and Mar Callistos (Xystus) of Rome (C.E. 251) and the *Kanestha* or the Common Taksa of the Fathers. Among these, the text of Xystus is the shortest. Our Fathers consider the Taksa of Mar Dionysius Bar Salibi (C.E.1171) as the most important, after the text by St. James. In Byzantine Orthodox Churches, especially in Greece and Constantinople, it was the Taksa of St. James that was used for centuries. However, later the use of the

text of St. John Chrysostom (died C.E. 407), came to be used in these churches. Even today their preference is for the Taksa of St. John Chrysostom, and they rarely use the St. James. It must be said that the Taksa of St. John the Evangelist and Mar Mathai Royo contain some of the beautiful prayers in the Holy Liturgy.

3. Translation of Taksa into Malayalam

Apart from the few Taksa mentioned above, there are about seventy five Taksa in West Syriac. Among these, only a few texts have been translated into Malayalam. The practice in our Church was to celebrate the Holy Qurbana in West Syriac, till 1950s. The congregation used to respond with Amen and Kurieleison, though they did not often know why they said so. The need for having the Holy Bible and the Taksa in Malayalam was strongly felt and expressed, after the CMS missionaries made Kottayam an important centre of their activities. Syriac language was 'foreign' to them. Therefore the missionaries encouraged our scholarly malpans to translate the Holy Bible and Taksa to the native language.

The translation of the Holy Bible did not create much problem; but the translation of the Taksa actually created a division in the Malankara Church. Those malpans who were attracted by the Protestant missionaries challenged the apostolic faith of the Church; and translated it as per their whims and fancies. This led to a schism in the Church. One major instance was Palakkunnath Abraham Malpan of Maramon who removed from the Taksa prayers for the departed and the communion of saints. He gave Bread and Wine separately, as it was in the Protestant Churches and discontinued the practice of Holy Confession. All these were the result of the influence of the Anglican Church. This group described themselves as the 'Reformed', and constituted a separate entity called the Mar Thoma Church.

However, it must be said that the congregation without understanding what the priest was doing and singing Syriac hymns, without understanding their meaning and such other practices were really a serious handicap of the Malankara Church. It is true that Syriac and Aramaic languages were the language of our Lord; and so they deserve respect. But the congregation has to understand the meaning of what they are saying if they are to participate meaningfully in the Holy Liturgy. This fact continued to disturb many of the Church Fathers. In those momentous days, those who engaged in the translations were branded as ‘heretics’ and ‘Protestants’; this was more due to the unjustified attempt by the Protestant missionaries to instil their corrupted faith through translations.

As a result some of the Church Fathers prepared translations of liturgical texts into Malayalam and celebrated the Holy Qurbana in Malayalam, secretly. Many priests took to instant translation of liturgical texts for the benefit of the people, as they were leading the liturgical services!

In the use of liturgical texts in the local language, there came in a big change in the twentieth century. This movement was inaugurated by Deacon Pathrose Mookkancheril (later Metropolitan Pathrose Mar Osthathios of Malabar, the great social reformer and missionary), travelled throughout the Church with a Malayalam translation of the Taksa. It was the size of an ordinary book. Many of the Church leaders of the time discouraged him; some of them commented: “What business do the deacons have with Taksa; their job it to ignite and use the censor”. Some people thought that Deacon M. P. Peter and his friends would destroy this ancient Church!

Nevertheless, history bears witness to the fact that this Malayalam translation was, by and large, well received in the Church. Even today many raise the question, was the translation made by the deacon? Some people say that it must have been done by some priests in the Mookkancheril family. Whatever

that be, it is only too obvious that it was Deacon M. P. Peter who worked hard to spread the Malayalam Taksa in the Malankara Church.

Prior to this and after, several priests had translated the Holy Qurbana Taksa into Malayalam. Prominent among these was Mattackal Alexanthryose Karthanar. It was his translation that was used in southern districts of Kerala for a long time. The monks of Bethany Ashram, Ranny, Perunad, also translated the Qurbana Taksa and other prayers; and also Promeon-Sedra books. In later times, the Taksa translated by Konat Abraham Malpan, printed at Mar Julius Press, Pampakkuda, is being widely used. This text subsequently published by Fr. Dr. Johns Abraham Konat (son of Abraham Malpan), is now being uniformly published by the Malankara Orthodox Church Publications, Kottayam (MOC).

4. The Taksa of the Holy Qurbana in Other Languages

As the Malankara Orthodox Church started spreading throughout the world, and the number of the Church members who are born and brought up in different countries increased, it became necessary to translate the Taksa and other liturgical texts into other languages. They are mainly translations from Malayalam. Metropolitan Mathews Mar Athanasius of the Diocese outside Kerala (later H. H. Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews I) translated St. James' Taksa into English language. Later Metropolitan Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios of Delhi Diocese translated the Taksa of St. John Chrysostom into English. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Dionysius of Madras diocese got the Taksa translated into Tamil language with the help of Tamil scholars.

Also, Kannada and Konkani translations were done under the responsibility of Dr. N. J. Thomas Ramban (Mount Tabor Dayara, Pathanapuram), who was in charge of the Brahmavar

community for long. As directed by Metropolitan Stephanos Mar Theodosius of Calcutta diocese, Prof. K.M. Kuriakose translated the Taksa into Hindi language. Fr. Dr. K. M. George (formerly Principal, Orthodox Theological Seminary) has celebrated Holy Qurbana in French; and Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew in German. If the Malankara Orthodox Church has to be the true National Church, i.e. Indian Orthodox Church, the Taksa and other liturgical texts should be available in all Indian languages. Such a move shall definitely prove beneficial for the mission of the Church.

5. The Service Book of the Holy Qurbana (*Kurbana Kramam*)

The translation of the *Kurbana Kramam* (Service Book of the Holy Qurbana) is as important as that of the Taksa. The history of the development of the *Kurbana Kramam* shall also be traced. Many of the prayers we use today were translated into Malayalam by the great Syriac scholar, H.H. Baselios Augen I Catholicos. The *Kurbana Kramam* which we use today was translated and compiled by H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews I Catholicos. In this book, the prayers for wednesday in the *M'shaheemo Namaskaram* (Common Prayer) have been compiled as *Sleeba Namaskaram* (Season of the Holy Cross); and also a translation of the *Kyamta Namaskaram* (Season of Easter). Another translation of the *Kyamtha Namaskaram* is available in the *M'Shaheemo Namaskaram*.

In the said *Kurbana Kramam*, the hymns in the Holy Qurbana are arranged systematically; so they are very useful and come handy for the congregation. Besides, hymns which could be used for feast days (used after *Evangelion*, at the time of Fraction and after *Hoothomo*) are also included in this annotated *Kurbana Kramam*. There is another publication, *Jeevanulla Bali* (an annotated *Kurbana Kramam*) prepared by C.K. Varghese, Pandalam. This book has provided a prose rendering of all hymns in the *Kurbana*

Kramam, explaining their meaning in the context of the Bible. This book is now available in English (*The Living Sacrifice*); and has proved extremely useful to Sunday school children.

Let Us Think

1. Write some sentences to identify the Taksa of St.James.
2. Which are the important Taksa used in Malankara Orthodox Church?
3. Explain the role played by Metropolitan Pathros Mar Osthathios in the translation of the Qurbana Taksa.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PLACE OF THE HOLY BIBLE IN THE HOLY QURBANA

We give an important place to Holy Bible reading and the ideas in the Holy Bible in all our liturgical services. The Holy Bible is made use of in different ways in the Holy Qurbana. Let us see how it is done.

i) Reading of Bible Passages: We already observed that there are at least six occasions when Biblical passages are read during the Holy Qurbana. Three among them are from the Old Testament. The Lectionary (*Vedavayanakuripp*) gives a list of Bible passages to be read on a given Sunday. This is very ancient custom. In addition to this there are readings from the writings of saints, in the *Synaxaria* of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Just as in the case of the Qurbana Taksa, the West Syriac liturgical family keeps variety in the lectionary as well. The oldest is the fourth century Jerusalem Syriac Lectionary.

The lectionary used in Malankara Orthodox Church is the revised one approved by the Holy Episcopal Synod. This contains readings from the Deutero canonical books too (e.g. Bara Sirah Maccabees). There are special readings for the Lenten season. The Old Testament passages are read with the introduction: “The voice of glory and salvation in the tents of the righteous’ thus sang the Holy Spirit through David” (Psalm 118:15). The New Testament and Old Testament passages are chosen to suit the importance of the day. Thus it has got a theological background. For instance, look at the readings for Christmas:

- (a) The Evangelion for the evening prayer is about the Word becoming flesh (Jn 1: 1-18).
- (b) For the morning prayer, the Evangelion is from Luke 2, which narrates the birth of Christ.

- (c) Old Testament readings are from Genesis 21:1-8, describing the birth of the promised son, Isaac. Micah 5:1-4 tells about the elevation of Bethlehem and Isaiah 9:1-7, which contains a prophecy about the birth of Christ.
- (d) The Epistle read at the northern side of the door of the Madbaha (1 John 1: 1-10) is relating to the Word of Life which the apostles saw, heard and touched.
- (e) The reading at the south side (Galatians 3: 23-4:7), explains the deterioration for the Jewish Law by the birth of Jesus.
- (f) Evangelion passage is Matthew 2:1-12, gives a description of the birth of Jesus Christ. This reading seems a fulfilment and climax of all preceding passages.

ii) The Psalms: Verses from the book of Psalms are plenty in our worship. In our common prayers too we make use of several Psalms. On Sundays Psalm 51 is recited in the very beginning, but the celebrant priest has to recite it once again before the *Thooyobo*. In the silent prayers said by the priest, like in the *Thooyobo* and the Post Communion Service, recital of the Psalms is an essential part (Psalms 23,29). Psalms are recited for the preparation of the altar and also for putting on the holy vestments.

iii) Prayers: Besides the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), the Christological Hymn in the Epistle to Philippians (2:6-11), the holy song of Angels' Praise in Isaiah (6:3), the Christ Hymn in 1 Timothy (3:16) are sung in the Holy Qurbana. The Trinitarian Blessing, "May the Love of God the Father..." is found in 2 Corinthians 13:13. The Blessing of Peace repeated several times in the Holy Qurbana, is from the New Testament (John 20:19; 21:26). Words like *Amen* and *Hallelujah* used countless times in the liturgy is found several times in the Bible. The words at the end of many prayers, "Glory be to Him for ever, Amen" is something again and again in the Bible (Romans 11:36, Galatians 1:5, 2 Timothy 4: 18). Then, listen to the Promeon-Sedras in our services; they are rich with events and characters from the Bible.

iv) Hymns: The Bible is the source of the majority of hymns used in the Holy Qurbana. The hymn beginning, “Paul the Apostle...” (*Paulosesleeha dhanyan...*) is from Galatians 1:5-9. All the *Kukilions* are passages from Psalms. The Holy Bible is the background for the hymns “King’s daughter stands in glory...” (*Ninnaal sthuthiodu raja makal...*, Psalm 49:9-11); “The Righteous shall prosper like palm trees...” (*Nayavaanpana pole...*, Psalm 92:12-15); “Thy priests...” (*Charthumneethiye...*, Psalm 132:9-10, 1 Chronicles 6:41-42); and “Like father shows mercy...” (*Makkalilappankrupa...*, Psalm 103:13-15).

v) The Draping and Embellishments in the Madbaha

The construction of the church building itself follows the instructions in the Bible. Let us also understand that the draping and the priest’s vestments are all according Biblical principles (Exodus 25; 1 Kings 6). The feasts in the Church and the priestly vestments (Exodus 28) are Bible based. In the Orthodox Churches, the inside and outside of the walls are full of Icons depicting events and personalities in the Holy Bible; and it is something beautiful to see. The sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22), Jacob’s vision of the ladder (Genesis 28) and the Last Judgment (Matthew 24-25) are themes in such Icons.

In short, we may say that the architecture of the church building and the principles of worship are all anchored in Biblical principles. Things are arranged in such a way in the church that even the common people are able to understand the Holy Bible, making use of the time spent in the church.

Let Us Think

1. Quote the Bible reference for the four important *Kukilions*.
2. Identify the themes included in the Old Testament readings for the Christmas liturgy
3. What is meant by Lectionary?
4. “The draping in the church follows the Bible regulations” - substantiate.

CHAPTER NINE

HOLY QURBANA AND ECUMENISM

Reception of the Holy Qurbana (Communion) is an issue that is being discussed in most of the ecumenical dialogues. The Malankara Orthodox Church has been actively involved in the century-old ecumenical movement. From the time of the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1948), the leaders of the Malankara Orthodox Church fully partakes in ecumenical activities and cooperates with other churches. Still Protestant and Evangelical Churches accuse the Malankara Orthodox Church that it has an 'orthodox' outlook on intercommunion. Though other churches have no difficulty in giving communion to, receiving communion from others, we, the Orthodox, do not accept the communion of other churches, nor do we give our Qurbana to people belonging to other churches. Why are the Orthodox so exclusive? Let us understand the reason for this.

Actually, the above said attitude is not exclusive to the Malankara Orthodox Church. In the whole of Christendom, the Orthodox Churches are a bit serious and 'adamant' in their stance regarding the Holy Qurbana. That does not mean that the Orthodox do not accept the other churches, or that they do not respect the priests and members of other churches. From our discussion in the previous chapters we know that the Holy Qurbana is the very 'life' of the Church. The details of the faith of the Church are all centred on the Holy Qurbana. The Orthodox Church follows a 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology'.

The Orthodox understanding of the Holy Qurbana is basically different from that of the other churches. This Church has respect for those who preserve the 'Last Supper' of our Lord for the last twenty centuries, without losing its real essence, and

without changing the long standing faith traditions. But a study of history would reveal that the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant-Evangelical Churches have adopted certain wrong ideas and interpretations regarding the Holy Qurbana. That exactly is the reason the Orthodox Churches do not agree for communion with these churches. Let us have a look at those differences.

1. The Holy Qurbana in the Roman Catholic Church

In the early centuries, the tradition of the Holy Qurbana in the church of Rome followed the *Apostolic Traditions* composed by Hippolytus of Rome. This Liturgy underwent certain changes in the Middle Ages (9 to 15 centuries); some of which were the following:

- a. There were very few occasions for the congregation to sing or to say their 'responses'. So choirs were organized.
- b. They began to use 'Unleavened Bread' for the Qurbana.
- c. It was taught that the most important moment in the Qurbana was the 'Words of Institution' at the time of the celebration. However, the Orthodox Churches never taught that it was at some particular moment when the bread and wine got transformed into Body and Blood of our Lord.
- d. From the eleventh century onwards, in the Roman Liturgy, the priest turned towards the congregation. The Eastern Churches always turned towards the east in the Qurbana.
- e. Since the celebration and exaltation of the bread and wine was considered to be the most important moment in the Qurbana, the number of people attending the Mass at that time only as 'observers' increased.
- f. The practise of the priest celebrating Qurbana all alone (Private Mass) was implemented.

In the Roman Catholic Church, there was the 'Low Mass', in which the priest read all the prayers by himself; and the 'High Mass', in which the priest was accompanied by deacons and the

choir. Thomas Aquinas, the Roman Catholic theologian of the Middle Ages (1225-1274 AD), and others like him, taught that bread and wine underwent change of substance or 'transubstantiation' in the Qurbana. The idea behind it was Aristotelian. Accordingly, they began to interpret the relation between the 'substance' and 'accidents'. It says that the outside 'accidents' of the bread and wine (colour and taste) remain unchanged; but their 'substance' changes after the words on Institution, and they really become the Body and Blood of our Lord. Orthodox Churches reject this interpretation. We are not ready to analyse the transformation of the Bread and Wine scientifically. It is God who transforms them, and He decides the moment when they get transformed. The faithful who partakes in the Holy Qurbana eats and drinks it believing them to be the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The mode of transformation and the moment constitute a big mystery.

2. Holy Qurbana in the Protestant Tradition

The Protestant Churches began in 1517, when Martin Luther, a German monk, pasted on the door of the Wittenberg church, 95 charges against the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church (95 Theses). In the Middle Ages it was rather necessary to protest against the evil customs in the Roman Catholic Church, that the Reformed churches basically drifted away from the faith of the Universal Church became a failure. In the liturgical text prepared by Martin Luther, many of the basic facets of faith were preserved, but he removed the silent prayers, confidential confession and the practice of celebrating Qurbana when there were no faithful to receive it. He chose the Apostolic Creed instead of the Nicene Creed. The Words of Institution which were in the form of prayers were changed to the reading of the Gospel passage.

Besides, he taught that the most significant part of the Eucharist was the sermon, and introduced the practice of the priest standing behind the altar, facing the congregation in worship. Protestant Churches do not refer to the Holy Qurbana

as a ‘sacrifice’; and they would not prefer to call the celebrant as ‘Priest’. The Orthodox Church do not accept the priesthood in the Protestant Churches.

3. Holy Qurbana in Indian Churches

Certain churches in India still broadly follow the worship tradition of the Malankara Orthodox Church. The following churches accept the Taksa of St. James:

- a. Malabar Independent Syrian Church (Thozhiyoor)
- b. Mar Thoma Syrian Church
- c. Syro Malankara Catholic Church (Rite)
- d. St. Thomas Evangelical Church

These four churches are those who separated from the Malankara Orthodox Church. We respect them, for they continue to follow the worship tradition. However, on inspection, the Protestant influence in the faith followed by the Mar Thoma Church becomes evident. The Syro Malankara Catholic Church, on the other hand, is the keeper of the Roman Catholic faith. Therefore, even though, these churches take pride in keeping the uniqueness of priestly vestments and mode of worship, they are really estranged from the faith of the Malankara Orthodox Church.

In the Syro Malabar Church, there is a move to retain the ancient traditions of Malankara. From the time of the Synod of Udayamperoor (1599), these people had accepted the Latin form of worship; now they are coming back to the East Syriac tradition of worship. The restoration of the custom of the priest facing the east in the liturgy may be seen as a sign of their seeking to return to the ancient oriental tradition.

4. Eucharistic Hospitality

In the beginning of this chapter, we briefly referred to the allegation regarding an ‘orthodox’ attitude of the Malankara Orthodox Church and other Orthodox Churches in relation to

the issue of intercommunion. The allegation is strong that even in this ecumenical age, the Orthodox Churches do not evince a Eucharistic Hospitality. For example, it is true that those who get married into the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, when they come back to their mother parish, they are not given the Holy Qurbana. We do not allow those who get married into our Church from the said churches, to take the communion from their mother church. But why is it so?

The reason is the foundation stone of our understanding regarding Holy Qurbana and priesthood. Holy Qurbana is a sacrament celebrated by adherents of the same faith. Unlike the understanding in some other churches, the Orthodox Church teaches that the Holy Qurbana is the basis of Christian unity, and not baptism. Holy Qurbana is the sign and symbol of unity. Therefore, the Holy Qurbana is not the means, but the aim of unity of the Church. For example, let assume that a Protestant believer attends the Holy Qurbana and receives it. After that how can he/she say that he/she is a Protestant believer? He/She received the Holy Qurbana at the end of the worship service. Several things that are said in that Orthodox sacrament are not believed by him/her of the Church he/she represents. Then, how can he/she receive the Holy Qurbana? It is exactly for the same reason that, with due respects to him/her and his/her Church, it is said, “you should not receive this Qurbana.”

Orthodox Churches insist that the Holy Qurbana shall be dispensed only on the basis and strength of faith. Thus, the Orthodox way is either ‘communion’ or ‘no communion.’ The Church ‘excommunicates’ those who are in grievous and deadly sins, and those who violate the canons of the Church. The members of other churches are allowed to participate in our worship services and sacraments only to maintain ecumenical relationships. Anything beyond that calls for intense studies and deliberations.

We need to know that Holy Qurbana and the priesthood of the bishop are inseparably related. Some new Protestant churches

in India simply address somebody as ‘bishop’. In the Malankara Orthodox Church, there are in place certain established canons and traditions and procedure of installing someone as ‘bishop.’ They are all based on the faith and canons followed for the last twenty centuries.

The Malankara Orthodox Church need not accept the ‘episcopacy’ of a church, simply because a member of that church adorns the traditional episcopal vestments and uniform. For the Malankara Orthodox Church, the faith and liturgy which have been handed down through generations are vitally important. The ‘Cathedra’ or ‘seat’ of the bishop is not the symbol of worldly authority, but it is symbol of the one who presides over the Holy Qurbana. It is the bishop who decides everything relating to the Holy Qurbana. The statement of St. Ignatius of Antioch, ‘Where there is a bishop, there the Church is’ is still live in the Orthodox Church.

Let Us Think

1. What are the visible differences between the Holy Qurbana of the Roman Catholic Church and that of the Orthodox Church?
2. What is meant by ‘Transubstantiation’?
3. What is Eucharist in the Protestant tradition?
4. “The Orthodox Church opposes ‘inter-communion’ more due to its respect for the other Churches”. Elucidate.

CHAPTER TEN

THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY QURBANA

Bishop Pakenham Walsh, who belonged to the Anglian Church, loved and respected the Holy Qurbana of the Malankara Orthodox Church, and he lived almost like an Orthodox. He lived as a poor villager in the Thadagam Ashram he founded at Coimbatore, died and was buried there. The best introduction to our Holy Qurbana is the book he wrote, 'Holy Qurbana: A Meditative Study', which gives a good understanding of the Holy Qurbana. The content of this book is the speech he gave at the Orthodox clergy conference in 1941. The bishop pointed to a few characteristics to highlight the greatness of the Holy Qurbana, which may be summarised as follows:

1. The prayers in our Holy Qurbana have the background of deep theological insights.
2. Some of the prayers are in use from very ancient times, and they contain the unadulterated faith of the Church.
3. There are separate prayers to be said by the priest, the altar assistants, and the congregation, which ensures the participation of the entire Church in the sacrament.
4. There are certain actions and symbols accompanying our prayers. Those who understand their symbolic meaning can easily imbibe the faith of the Church.
5. The sound of the small bells, and the music help the faithful to come nearer to God. They really receive a heavenly experience.

All of the above said principles apply to the worship in all the Orthodox Churches. In the tenth century, King Vladimir of Kiev in Russia sent his messengers to find out which religion was the greatest and the best in the world. The messengers reached

Greece and attended the Orthodox worship. They declared, “We did not know if we were standing in heaven or earth. Certainly there could never be worship more beautiful and grand than this anywhere in the world.” Our worship, with the architecture of the church building, the special vestments of the clergy, the draping on the Altar, singing, the sound of bells and the *Marvahasas* (small fans), and several symbols are enough to lift the faithful participant to a high level of spirituality.

The Theology of the Holy Qurbana

By participating in the Holy Qurbana, we become participants in the salvific history, and proclaim the fundamental elements of the Church. The following factors are important facets of this proclamation:

a. The Holy Qurbana is the participation in the worship of the Holy Trinity

The firm faith in the Holy Trinity is a significant element in our fundamental faith. In the Trisagion, blessing of the censor, recitation of Creed, and elevation of the Mysteries, we adore the Holy Trinity. We also declare that we live in the continued communion of the Holy Trinity. For example, look at the prayer on the occasion of the Mysteries: “With us is the Holy Father who in His grace created the world; With us is the Holy Son, who by the precious suffering of His body redeemed the world; With us is the One Holy and Living Holy Spirit who completes and perfects all that is, all that is to be! Blessed be the name of the Lord, from ages unto ages of ages”.

b. The Holy Qurbana gives forgiveness of sins

We believe that our sins are forgiven through the Holy Qurbana. That is why the Church insists that those who repent and confess their sins in the Sacrament of Confession should receive the Holy Qurbana. The promise of forgiveness we receive in confession is really received through the Holy Qurbana. Confession without receiving the Holy Qurbana becomes

incomplete. That is why at the time of the procession of the Holy Mysteries, the priest says the prayer, “From your propitiatory altar, may there descend pardon for Your servants, O, Son of God, who came for our redemption, and who will come again for our resurrection, and for the renewal of our race, for ever and ever.”

c. Holy Qurbana is sacrifice without blood

People use to offer sacrifice to please God. In the Old Testament we come across Abraham who was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen 22); and Jephthah, the Judge, who fulfilled his pledge by sacrificing his daughter (Jud 11). But through Jesus Christ, such sacrifices have come to an end. In the Holy Qurbana, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ “who came for once to forgive sins by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:23-28). From now on, there is no need for Christ to repeat his sacrifice like the high priest who went every year to the Jerusalem Temple with the alien blood (Heb 9:25). The sacrifice on the Cross that took place for once has enabled our redemption for ever. The object of sacrifice and the one who offers sacrifice become one in Christ. When we celebrate the Holy Qurbana, we remember this sacrifice. Note that we pray in the Holy Qurbana, “God the Father who by Your great love for humankind did send Your Son to the world to bring back the sheep that had gone astray. Do not reject O Lord, the service of this bloodless sacrifice.”

d. Through the Holy Qurbana we participate in the salvific activities of our Lord

Why do we repeat the whole Mystery of Incarnation in the Holy Qurbana? We not only remember the prophecies about the birth of Christ, the events at the time of His birth, the teaching during His public ministry, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and the Second Coming, but also becomes witnesses for them all. As St. John says in his epistle, the gospel that we proclaim from now on is about the Word of life, “what we heard, what we

saw with our own eyes, what we looked upon, what we touched with our own hands” (1 Jn 1:1-2). We actually see, listen to, look up on, touch and taste the Word of Life that became Incarnate, through the events in the Holy Qurbana. It is not merely ‘a memorial’ as Protestants say. On the other hand, it is the living participation in the salvific events of Jesus Christ. The faithful believer becomes the owner of a reality that survives time and space, and continues for ever and ever.

e. In the Holy Qurbana, all creation, the heavenly beings and the earthly ones all come together

Through the Holy Qurbana, we come together in a heavenly worship. All creation, heavenly and earthly beings, come together in this. We praise and glorify God in the company of “the sun, moon, and all the stars, the earth, the seas, and the first born inscribed in the heavenly Jerusalem...”. The book of Revelation tells us that angels and the departed in Christ are part of this worship (Rev 4-7). The Psalmist sings that the whole universe and all beings in it, animals and vegetation all praise the Lord (Ps 104).

When the entire universe is praising and glorifying God, we also become part of it. The world scared by climate change and natural disasters seeks to know that human are have been given to be the ‘Stewards’ of creation. We are never the rulers or owners of the universe. Our duty is to show the wisdom to minister unto and sustain the creation, as per the will of God who created it. Many churches in their worship are more concerned about the redemption of human beings alone. In our precious Holy Qurbana, on the other hand, the living, the departed, the saints and the guardian angels all gather together. Not only that we, human beings participate in their great praise and glorification of God.

Those who participate in the Holy Qurbana and partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, need to effect a certain amount of disciplining in their life. We are no mere spectators

or passers-by, but we are actually participants in the redemptive events of our Lord. Therefore, after participation the Holy Qurbana, we need to discipline and systematize our words thoughts and actions. In the Orthodox tradition our day to day life is described as ‘liturgy after the liturgy.’

Let Us Think

1. ‘Holy Qurbana is the participation in Trinitarian worship’, Explain.
2. Why is it said that through Holy Qurbana we partake in the redemptive activities of Christ?
3. Elucidate the idea that Holy Qurbana is heavenly worship.
4. Explain the idea contained in the usage ‘liturgy after the liturgy.’



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