

The editor of *Carmela Sandesham* (a Malayalam quarterly for private circulations among members of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, worldwide) decided to publish this letter from Fr. Amos Mechery, CMI (1904-1988) to Fr. Alexander Kattakkayam, CMI (1912-2000), with an editorial note stating the reason for his decision to publish. Here is a copy of the letter in Malayalam and a translation by Joseph J. Palackal, CMI.

The letter is about the visit of Prof. Heinrich Husman (1908-1983), a German musicologist from the University of Göttingen, to the CMI Prior General's House at Karikkamuri, Ernakulam, Kerala. Prof. Husmann stayed at the Monastery for thirty-five days in the 1960s to document the melodies of the East Syriac liturgy of the Hours. Husmann recorded the melodies in the voice of Fr. Amos Mechery, CMI, who was a member of the community at the Prior General's House at that time. From the editor's note, we understand that the letter is a reply to the letter that Fr. Amos received from Fr. Alexander Kattakkayam, CMI. We do not have a copy of Fr. Kattakkayam's letter. The letter of Fr. Amos includes interesting information on Prof. Husmann and on the status of Syriac chants in the communities of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate in India.

Nammute āṛāḍhanakṛama gāna pārampariyam

(Malayalam, Our Liturgical Music Tradition)

Letter to the editor of *Carmela Sandesham* (December 1991)

Note from the editor [Fr. Sebastian Poonolly, CMI, editor from 1990 to 1996]

Members of our Congregation should become aware that the tunes that we have been traditionally singing in our Congregation are the Syriac tunes' unadulterated form. Recently, changes have been happening in such traditional tunes as Sahde Brike, Brik Hannana, Eramarmak Marmalka, Esthappanos, Maran Ase, Sahde waiton, and Al Madbahqudsa. It is the adulterated versions that are being promoted through cassettes and what people nowadays sing during Qurbana.

It would be appropriate if the responsible persons took the initiative to teach the unadulterated versions in the formation- houses and promote the same among the people. I am publishing a letter that our late Fr. Amos sent to Rev. Alexander Kattakkayam on 24 April 1987 because I think it is relevant.

Editor

Letter from Fr. Amos

J. M. J.

Bharatha Matha Ashram
Palakkadu
22 April 1987



Dear Rev. Kochuchandiyacha,

Your letter of 4 April 1987 reached me on 8 April 1987. Thank you very much. Dr. Husmann, a musicology professor at the University Gottingen, one of the four old universities in Germany, is on a mission to get the sound [melody] of the Syriac songs of our Lord. He went to Beirut and met the Archbishop there. It is said that Syriac continues to be the colloquial language in two or three villages in Beirut. The Archbishop told Husmann: due to the coexistence of Arabic, Muslim, and Jewish people, many Muslim manners have comingled with our Syriac language. Therefore, you will not get the pristine purity of the Syriac chants from us. The old melodies are sung only in Kerala. Dr. Husmann, you should go to Kerala and meet Very Rev. Maurus [Fr. Maurus Valiyaparambil 1901-1983; Prior General 1953-1966], the Prior General of the Carmelites [Congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate]. He will make all the arrangements for your mission. Do not approach the diocesan priests. The diocesan priests always improvise the old melodies. Also, do not go to young priests. You will not get the pristine purity from them.

Dr. Husmann came to Ernakulam [Prior General's House] with the business card of Very Rev. Fr. Maurus. Rev. Fr. Maurus had gone to Bangalore [Dharmaram College]. The first Councillor and us [the resident priests at the Prior General's House] told Dr. Husmann to go to the Seminary at Aluva [St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary at Mangalappuzha, Aluva]. He did not like it. We told him to go to our Novitiate House at Ampazhakkad. Then we told him to go to Dharmaram [the Major Seminary of the CMIs in Bengaluru], where ten to three hundred people sing together. He did not like it either. Because youngsters, even if they are religious, improvise melodies.

"Are there any elderly people?" Dr. Husmann asked. Here we have a priest, Amos. He is not one in favor of innovations. He listened to my singing; he liked it very much.

He recorded all the songs of our Hudra, including services for the Nativity of our Lord and feasts of the Blessed Virgin in my voice on a tape recorder. He stayed with us for 35 days. By that time, Fr. Maurus arrived.

This is what happened. I have listened to the community prayer [the Hours] of the diocesan priests at St. Berchman's; I have also listened at the minor Seminary in Ernakulam; also during the annual retreat [of the priests of the Diocese of Thrissur] at Thoppil. I did not find it devotional.

Please forgive me for the delay.

Fr. Amos, CMI
Humble brother

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