

# NASRANI SIMHAM M.A.CHAKKO



M. Kurian



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**M. A. CHAKKO**  
**NASRANI SIMHAM**

## **M.KURIAN**

M.Kurian is a journalist by profession. He started his journalistic career as a subeditor of the Malayala Manorama the leading vernacular daily in India. After serving the Daily for more than 25 years he retired as Assistant Editor in 1983.

Mr. Kurian is an active lay person of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India. Serving the Student Christian Movement in Kerala as its Literature Secretary, he started involving in ecumenical activities and programmes from his youth. He spent one year in the Serampore College, as Machison scholar, reading theology and writing on churches and ecumenical relations. With his passion for the unity of the church, and justice and peace concerns he participated in various kinds of action programmes; particular mention may be made of his fast for peace in the Orthodox Syrian Church in 1955.

Mr. Kurian made a substantial contribution to the ecumenical movement as the Secretary of the Kerala Council of Churches from 1984 to 1992. He edited Church Weekly, a nondenominational Christian journal for a few years. He wrote many books in Malayalam, a few in English including biographies and edited many more. At present he devotes his full-time attention to promote Christian literature as the Editor of the Theological Literature Council in Kerala and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Christava Sahitya Samithy.

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CHRISTAVA SAHITYA SAMITHI  
TIRUVALLA

**M. A. CHAKKO: NASRANI SIMHAM**  
(Biography)

Author: M. Kurian

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First Impression: January 2009

Cover: Global, Tiruvalla

Type Setting: Perfect Computers, Tiruvalla

Printed at: Wigi Printers, Manganam, Kottayam

Published by CHRISTAVA SAHITYA SAMITHY, TIRUVALLA

Distributed by C.S.S. BOOKSHOP, TIRUVALLA-1, S. INDIA

Tel: 0469 - 2630389, 2634936

email: [csspublications@dataone.in](mailto:csspublications@dataone.in)

Price Rs.120/-

US\$ 10 (Outside India)

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CN 80309

ISBN 978-81-7821-100-8



# Contents

	<i>Pages</i>
A word about writing this book	7
Foreword - K.M. Mathew	11
Thanks - M.Kurian	14
Preface - Valsa Varghese Paul	15
A note on the translation - Lily Jacob	17
1. Merit Recognized	21
2. History of the Mazhuvanchery Parambath Family	256
3. College Education	30
4. Marriage and family life	34
5. Early Career	41
6. The Trichur St. Ignatius Church	46
7. Delhi Durbar	51
8. Mancherly	58
9. Catholicos as Metropolitan	71
10. Fire in the Temple	73
11. The Trichur Riot	79
12. A Defalcation charge and Acquittal	83
13. Malankara Church must remain united - Two articles by M.A.Chakko	
i. Reunification – Peace initiatives- 1937	87
ii. Disunity - A Forerunner of Disaster	96
14. Proposed Purchase of ship fell through	107
15. M.A. Chakko, in Cochin legislative Council	109
16. M.A. Chakko's children	126
17. Golden wedding Jubilee of Chakko and wife Letter to son	163

18. Demise	165
19. Condolence Motion in the Cochin Legislative Council	173
20. Evaluation by Church leaders	180
- P.M. Mammen	
- M.P.Varkey	
- Fr. Dr. C.T. Eapen	
- C.O. Oommen	
- P. Jacob Kurian	
- K.M. Mathen Mappilla	
21. Editorial in the Orthodox Church	193
22. Editorial by Gomathi	200
23. Condolence	202
i. Citizens of Trivandrum	
ii. Citizens of Trichur	
Appendix 6	
i. M.A. Chakko Memorial Auditorium	206
ii. Milestones	208
iii. M.A.Chakko's Family	209
iv. Bibliography	217
Other books of the Author	218

## A word about writing this book

In connection with the preparation of this biography of the celebrated M.A. Chakko, I have been in contact with many people for about four years. Of them one of my chief contacts was Prof. K.P. Mathew, retired mathematics professor, U.C College, Alwaye – the son of Mary Poulouse, eldest daughter of M.A Chakko and also my friend of long standing. In one of his letters he writes:-

“Ever since I heard about your project, I have been trying to think of people likely to be of help to you. The foremost among them would have been Advocate E.V. Mathew, my grandmother’s brother, Chakko’s brother-in-law. After retirement from practising law, he had a restful life in his residence in Ernakulam. During these last years, whenever we visited him he used to come out with many anecdotes. They were mainly about Chakko.

No doubt he hero - worshipped Chakko. I regret I failed to record the details of the conversations for posterity. E.V.Mathew had a high sense of humour. The golden wedding jubilee of the Chakko couple was celebrated in May 1941. (Three months before Chakko’s demise). For that occasion he wrote a humorous skit in which he portrayed with impish humour many important events in their wedded life. The play was enacted by his children and grandchildren, with daughter Annie taking the role of Chakko.

Chakko had retired from Govt. service before 1930. So when this is being written (Aug. 2003) there is no one likely to know anything about his professional career or his style of work. Of the neighbours around Mancherly, the older ones have all passed away and the younger ones would be too young to know. I am also not in touch with the roots of our family in Parur and Ayyampilly. As my father was in Cochin Govt. service he had periodic transfers to different parts of the State and so our family had to move around. Sister Reemy who was later married to Ayyampilly also knew nobody there at that time.

I have heard many elders belonging to my wife's family in Kunnamkulam speak in very high term about the invaluable service Chakko rendered to Kunnamkulam and to the Church.

### **‘Nasrani Simham’- (Christian Lion)**

P.C. Korath, the renowned journalist and man of letters, in the book Chittravedi published by him, begins the biographical note written about M.A. Chakko thus:-

“M.A. Chakko who acquitted himself with excellence in his professional capacity as commandant of the Nair Brigade earned the name “Nasrani Simham”. He made his thunderous roar resound in the Cochin Legislative Council for seven years. He rendered life long service to the community at large. He was an unforgettable great soul”.

The first person to refer to M.A. Chakko as ‘Nasrani Simham’ is supposed to be K. V. Raghavan Nair, the editor of the daily newspaper ‘Gomathy’ of those days, published from Trichur. It was from there that P.C. Korath took and used the word in his own articles. Ornate descriptions were too vague in the literary compositions of those days. In 1951 Ramban M.C Kuriakose Pathamuttam has referred to O.M.Cherian, K.C. Mammen Mappilai and M.A.Chakko, collectively as

“Nasrani Simhangal”(Christian lions) in the book “Betheliley Thamara” (The Lotus of Bethel).

In preparing this book I approached Salome (Chinnamma) Kochamma first, as I did in the case of the biography of Sarah Chakko. Though she was 95, the knowledgeable Kochamma still had fairly good memory. Her reminiscential notes on the family history were invaluable.

Years back when the sisters Salome, Sosamma and Annie got together in Valsa’s house in Trichur, I was also invited there. I read out to them the manuscript I had written till then for their suggestions and opinion. After that I went on with my work.

The Orthodox Church in Trichur was built mainly through the initiative, leadership and untiring effort of M.A. Chakko. The account of the construction of the church is abstracted from the article written by Mr. K.M Abraham in its ‘Navathi’ (ninetieth year) souvenir.

I had consulted Dr. K.P. George on several occasions about the writing of this book. I greatly value the help and guidance given by Dr. George and his wife Ammu who loves reading. They were also able to get hold of some old photographs for my use in this work.

Adv. P.C Mathew (Kunnamkulam) was a source of stimulus and encouragement at several stages in the preparation of this book. He kept reminding me that a biography of M.A. Chakko is already long overdue and that the book should be published without further delay. I thank him.

Valsa Varghese Paul gave me the account of the fabricated case filed against M.A. Chakko in which he was exonerated of all charges in the final verdict of the court. She had heard this account years ago from Adv. E.V. Mathew and written it down. It served to reveal the true facts about the defalcation charge.

As the book will not be complete without a short account of M.A Chakko's children, an attempt was made in that direction also. Those who cooperated in this effort are several. Salome Kochamma's help in this instance also is unparalleled. The others who contributed in a small or large measure include Kochamma's daughter Anila (Mrs Jagan Philipose), Sosamma Kochamma's daughter Pro.Bala Mohan, Dr.K.P.George, Lily Jacob, Rema Tharakan, and Varghese Kizhakemuri. It is Varghese John (Malayala Manorama) who made search in the archives at Ernakulam and Trivandrum and managed to locate and copy out for me the speeches M.A. Chakko made in the Cochin Legislative Council, and also an account of the discussion on the condolence resolution in the Council.

Balaprobhdhini the hand written magazine brought out in those days by the grandchildren of M.A. Chakko had a special edition in honour of the golden wedding jubilee of the Chakko couple. Prof. K.P. Mathew sent me an account.

I had several talks with Sri. K.M Mathew, Chief Editor, 'Malayala Manorama'.

He helped me with several tips to hunt for further useful material for the book. His father K.C.Mammen Mappilai and M.A. Chakko were very close friends. The service they rendered in the matter of leadership in Church affairs has already found place in the pages of history. I express my gratitude to Mr. K.M. Mathew for having written a short foreword to this book.

**M. Kurian**

## Foreword

Memories of heroic lives can be energizing, more so if they spring from personal experience. The eventful life of M.A. Chakko, popularly known as Chakko Suprend, has that inspiring quality. Cast in heroic mould, he was a man of principles and integrity who rose to high office in the princely State of Cochin and walked the earth with his head unbowed. Memories of him have the radiance of truth and idealism he cherished, and the dazzle of courage he displayed. This book, by the prolific writer M.Kurian, reflects that brilliance by compiling recollections of people who had intimately known Chakko Suprend and his children. How I wish this book had been attempted a long time ago!

Writing this foreword is highly gratifying for me because Chakko Suprend was a close friend of my father, K.C. Mammen Mappillai. They were birds of a feather, with amazing similarities in their philosophies of life and their attitudes towards the Orthodox Syrian Church, which asserted its Indian identity during their lifetime. They were men of immense courage, who never balked at sticking their necks out; in fact, they revelled in taking risk. If my father made fearless strides in public life and in business, Chakko Suprend was intrepid in every office he held. Naturally, he made enemies and faced severe opposition. He was not the kind who took bribe or amassed riches; he was far more evolved than seekers of material gain. Instead, he earned a greater wealth: a lasting reputation for integrity and truthfulness.

Chakko Suprend and my father had unflinching loyalty and dedication to the Orthodox Christian Church, which they deeply loved and respected. They were ready to die for its independence from Antioch. It is another matter that the church did not show them the regard they deserved.

I was a schoolboy when the church drafted an independent constitution for itself in 1934, after throwing off the stifling yoke of Antioch. I remember the drafting discussions in my house in the Malayala Manorama compound in Kottayam. The main architects of the constitution were A.M. Varki, who was the first principal of Union Christian College at Aluva, Elenjikal John Vakil, Rao Saheb O.M. Cherian, Chakko Suprend and my father. The heat and fumes of the discussions could be felt in the next room where I sat hunched over my books. I also remember the historic meeting of the Malankara Association of the church where the constitution was adopted. I was a young volunteer at that unforgettable meeting addressed by all the stalwarts of the church. Dressed in coat with a shawl and tie, Chakko Suprend made an electrifying speech in his stentorian voice, and I still get charged up remembering his declaration of independence.

“Take Chakko’s word,” he roared with authority and conviction at the meeting. “Our church has become independent. We are no longer anybody’s slaves.” He spoke as if issuing a command and it sprinkled goose-pimples of elation and excitement among the audience.

The fire in the man lit fire in a number of people, and his progeny made him proud. All his children excelled in their chosen fields and won acclaim. One of his sons, Chakko George, was active in the church after he returned from England where he had spent many years as a doctor. He is no more. One of the daughters, Chinnamma, who



lives in Bangalore, did stellar service for the development of the Kangazha hospital in Kottayam. I knew her and her husband, Kuriappan Joseph, from their days in Bombay—a friendship that keeps alive the love and respect her father and mine had for each other. This foreword, too, carries the fragrance of that affection. I am sure people who adore men of principles will value this book, and I appeal to the Orthodox Church never to forget the valiant Chakko Suprend.

**K. M. Mathew**

*(Chief Editor, Malayala Manorama)*

## Thanks

**M**. A. Chakko's biography in Malayalam came out of the press in August 2006. Very soon it was clear that most of Chakko's grandchildren who have no proficiency in Malayalam will not be able to read or understand this biography, just as in the case of Sarah Chakko's biography in Malayalam.

That set us thinking. Something has to be done to make available the biography of Chakko in English. Chakko's grandchildren residing in Trichur put their heads together. Chakko's first grand child Lily Jacob took charge of the project. This team together divided the chapters among themselves and made an efficient job of the translation work. They sat down mostly during evenings, and through discussion among themselves completed the translation work in about ten months.

I express my heart-felt thanks to the members of the team for successfully completing the work.

**M.Kurian**

## Preface

“Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime  
And departing, leave behind us  
Foot prints on the sands of time”.

This little book tells us the story of the life of one such great man, Mr. M.A Chakko who left lasting foot prints on the sands of time.

Mr. M. Kurian spent many months of untiring effort ferreting out information about the life and heroic exploits of ‘Pappy’, as he is affectionately known within the immediate family. The fruit of his labour was brought forth in the form of a biography entitled “Nasrani Simham, M.A.Chakko” written in Malayalam. In this book he has narrated incidents highlighting Pappy’s physical and moral courage in both personal life as well as in the pursuit of his official duties as the first Cochinite superintendant of police in Cochin State, under British rule and also as a District Magistrate and Commissioner of Excise in Cochin State. It gives an insight into his personality and the values and principles for which he fought till the end.

A large number of Pappy’s grand children and great grand children and also some of the members of the Mazhuvancherry Parambath family scattered over the globe are not well versed in Malayalam. This lingual deficiency has deprived them of the privilege of reading first hand this book about Pappy, his life and times. Hence a group of Pappy’s grand children and great grand children

felt the need for an English version of the book. The idea was proposed to Mr. Kurian himself; but he felt he did not want to undertake this responsibility and so entrusted it to the immediate family members. Encouraged by the generous offer of sponsorship of monetary help in printing of the book by U.S.A. based Ravi (Dr. M.A Thomas) son of the late Mr. M.C. Abraham (eldest son of Mr. M.A Chakko), the challenge was accepted and what you are about to read is our combined and humble effort to introduce to you the dignified personality and inspired life of Mr. M.A Chakko. We hope the purpose has been fulfilled.

**Valsa Varghese Paul**

## A Note on the Translation

**D**r. George, my brother, approached Mr. Kurian proposing an English translation of “Nasrani Simham M.A Chakko” by M. Kurian. He said he would rather leave it to the family to undertake the work. Thereupon, Dr. George took up the duty of organizing the project. He suggested that I be in charge of the translation, at the same time promising to see to the printing of the manuscript. Though I was in my late eighties, I was happy to oblige. Dr. M.A. Thomas (Ravi son of Mr. Chakko’s eldest son Mr. Abraham) volunteered to meet the expenses involved in the printing, thereby giving a big impetus to the project.

The willing co operation of the family was my abiding strength. I am the eldest grand child of Pappy (as we affectionately used to call our grandfather); and of my siblings and cousins those well versed in both Malayalam and English are all young enough to be my children. So I knew they would not have the heart to say “no” if I delegated the job of translating specific chapter to each one of them .I was gratified by their spontaneous positive response and their conscientious approach to the allotted task.

Chapter 13 and 19-22 are the toughest to translate. This herculean task, I reserved for that branch of Pappy’s family with a flair for literature- children of late K.C. Zacharia (my aunt Susanna’s husband) renowned for literary activities. Thanks to the unerring judgment of

Shaila Ullas (his daughter-in-law), I was able to approach the right person – K.S Chakko (Jimmy) the eldest son, a chip of the old block. To my great delight and relief, he made an excellent job of it -few could excel it. The opening chapter also was done by him. The bulk of the remaining chapters was taken care of by Valsa Kuriakose and Col Kuriakose (Kency). Reemy Korath, besides helping by translation of certain chapters, took great pains to rearrange chapters 3 and 8 in order to avoid repetition and to put the details in correct order – by no means an easy task. Excerpts from Mrs. Salome Joseph “Remeniscences of Mancherly “are incorporated appropriately in chapter 3 and 8. Mary Varghese (Anu), my daughter and Pappy’s great grand daughter is responsible for the translation of two chapters. Mrs. Valsa Varghese Paul wrote the preface to the translation, did the general editing and also translated one chapter and the sections about Dr. Chakko George and Sarah Chakko in chapter 16. Readily responding to my request, Salome Joseph made valuable contributions in the sections about John Chakko, and M.A. Jacob (Raju) about M.C. Abraham and M.C Jacob. I also made my own contribution completing the translations.

All the manuscripts were scrutinized by Prof K.P. Mathew (Mayikutty) with mathematical precision. Wherever we floundered, he corrected with accurate words and phrases. Valsa Kuriakose prepared the fair copy of most of the corrected manuscripts in her neat legible handwriting. It was then passed on to Valsa Varghese Paul for polishing and editing and she made some alterations. It was then ready for the final scrutiny.

In “Marmion” my residence, Valsa Varghese Paul, Reemy Korath, Prof K.P. Mathew ,Col. K.P Kuriakose, Valsa Kuriakose and I held many sessions to give the final touch to the translation. We spent many happy hours,

reading aloud each chapter, for common approval, still making alterations and spicing the intervals with happy anecdotes and fond memories each one had- not to speak of the daily refreshing snacks each one provided.

One of Pappy's hobbies was the supervision of the construction of houses. "Marmion" was his first attempt- successfully accomplished. As he watched the building come up day by day would he have imagined, that at some time in the future, this would be the place where several of his grand children and great grand children would gather together and have the pleasure of giving shape to the English version of this book about his life and exploits! Wouldn't it have delighted his heart!

**Lily Jacob**





## MERIT RECOGNIZED

“**B**eloved son, never say ‘No’ to anyone who comes to your door seeking help.” That was the advice given to Chakko then a senior official in the Cochin government service, by his mother Mariam, who had hardly any formal education. And that son treasured those words and pursued that advice rigorously. Purity of mind, honest will to serve, flawless and transparent work ethics and an attractively affable nature were inborn to Chakko.

He entered the stage of his official career initially as a clerk in the Secretariat (Huzur Kachery in those days). Endowed with abundant skills and exemplary dedication to duty, he was soon raised to the position of a Magistrate. It didn’t take long before he successfully progressed to the coveted posts of Thahsildar, Diwan Peshkar, District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police, and Excise Commissioner. He demonstrated his prowess in all these departments. Chakko will always be remembered for his services as the superintendent of Police and Commandant of the Nair Brigade. (The Nair Brigade later became the Cochin State force, and in subsequent years, was integrated with the Indian Army as the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Madras Regiment)

Maharaja Sir Ramavarma of Cochin recognized his innate merit and selected him from among his officers, for training at the Police Officers Training School, Vellore.

Excerpts from “Rjarshi of Cochin” autobiography and biography of Maharaja Sir Ramavarma:- “By the time Mr. Subba Rao had to revert to Madras, local men had been trained and Mr. M.A. Chakko took over as Superintendant of Police and carried on the work of further reform loyally and efficiently.

In this work of reform and reorganization His Highness exercised sleepless vigilance which descended even to technical details. He believed that the Police and the Army, more than any branch of Public service, needed the services of humane and cultured men.”

Chakko in his official capacity escorted the Maha Raja during the Delhi Durbar and earned much praise for his devoted service during the event.

Mr. Chakko was Superintendent of Police during the infamous Nair-Christian riots of Trichur. During this time, the citizens of Cochin noticed his extraordinary courage, tact and ability to manage a difficult situation. As the Police force in Cochin State could not contain the lawless conditions, Armed forces, probably the Malabar special police, had to be called in. In the year 1921, he was appointed Commissioner of Excise. He retired from Government Service in October 1925.

On retiring from his multifarious official activities, he was generally known as ‘Chakko Suprend’ in recognition of his invaluable services as Superintendent of Police. The Police department of Cochin went through several progressive reforms during his tenure of eleven years as its Chief.

In the course of these diverse activities, he set aside substantial portion of his time for the service of the Church and the community, eliciting unstinting affection and admiration of the Syrian Christian community, and came to be popularly known as ‘Nasrani simham’ (The Christian Lion). The final years of Chakko’s life were a brilliant period that outshone even the time of his vigorous and impressive official life. The services he rendered to the state, in general, and to the Syrian Christian community, in particular will always be remembered. Enviably expertise in official matters, outstanding literary skills, keen interest in

politics and irrepressible enthusiasm for social service- attributes that rarely come together in a single person –were innate to him in full measure. The memoirs he started writing in the daily , 'Powraprabha', late in his life , featured the condition of Christian communities half a century ago and political environment of that time. Unfortunately before he could complete the series he was called behind the curtain of time. The prints or copies of those articles are not available now.

### **Building churches**

Chakko, who settled down in Trichur, took the initiative to establish the churches of Ernakulam, Trichur and Vadakkanchery. In the year, 1909, after the demise of metropolitan Mar Dionesius of Pulikkottil, when sectarian rivalries and a consequent split threatened the Church, Mr. Chackko spared no efforts to persuade the congregations of Kunnankulam and Pazhanji churches to stay firmly under the Catholicate. When the Patriarch deposed metropolitan Mar Dionesius of Vattasseril, he undertook a lecture tour of Kunnankulam area to prevent sectarian rivalries taking root. It was Mr. Chakko who emboldened Rev. Chakkunni of Cheruvathur (Cheruvathur Yakob Cor Episcopa, in later years) to accept ordination from the deposed metropolitan, in defiance of the Patriarch. Again it was he who convinced the vicar of Pazhanji Church, Rev. Varghese Cheeran, an ardent devotee of the Patriarch, that it was proper and necessary to support the Malankara Metropolitan.

Mr. Chackko meticulously adhered to the traditions of the Church. "I am unimportant and weak; totally dependent on God's grace" was his conviction. Before a church was built at Trichur, in his early career he used to pedal all the way to Chelakkara and Kunnankulam on a bicycle to attend the Sunday services. The debilities of old age could not deter him from his social commitments. The speech he delivered at a public meeting he presided over, called to deliberate on actions to be initiated to ameliorate the misery of people who suffered a severe storm in Trichur, amply highlight the concern he had for people in distress.

It was a cherished desire of Mr. Chakko that the Malankara Church remain united without internal conflicts. In both of his two articles produced in this publication, he stresses the need to protect the unity and freedom of Malankara Church.

In May, 1928, he was elected to the second Legislative Council of Cochin State from the Njarakkal constituency. In the elections conducted for the third Assembly, on the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1931 it was from the Vellarappillil constituency that he was elected. Thus he served the State as a legislator for a total of seven years.

“Gomathy”, the popular daily of Trichur in its editorial on the demise of Mr. M.A.Chakko wrote, “The late Maharajah of Cochin noticed exceptional qualities in him, quite early, and groomed him with appropriate training to make him fit for any responsibility in the state’s official hierarchy. It was a well known secret that the Maharajah, who is remembered for his glorious reign, was assiduously pursuing the elevation of Mr. Chakko, along with Mr. C.V. Antony and Mr. V.K.Sankara Menon, to higher positions. But such ideas waned away after his unexpected abdication. Still he has managed to appoint Mr. Chakko to several high offices considered unattainable to members of Christian community, at that time, enabling the public to appreciate his merits. People admired him all the more as he aged; a concerted effort was on to elect him as Chairman of Trichur Municipal Council, in the forthcoming elections”.\*

The efforts made to get a peep into the diverse attributes and areas of Mr. Chakko’s benign and fulfilling life may be viewed in the ensuing pages.

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\* The full text of Gomathy’s editorial is included elsewhere in this book.

## HISTORY OF THE MAZHUVANCHERIPARAMBATH FAMILY

**C**hakko was born in the illustrious family, Mazhuvancheriparambath of Ayyampilly, in the Kuzhipilly village of Kochi Kanayannur Taluq in the erstwhile Cochin State.

His ancestor Ittiachen and his brother belonging to the Nedunthally Ambookkan family of N. Parur married two girls, who were heiresses of the Mazhuvancheriparambath family, adopting the girl's family name. Such marriages are called 'dathu' marriage.

Ittiyachen married heiress kunjelia and settled in Ayyampilly and his brother the heiress in Cherai. These two branches of the family were popularly known as the Ayyampilly branch and Cherai branch. The brother in Cherai settled down in Valiaveettil. He had five sons known as Ayver (the five). The eldest took up residence in Tharayil;

The other lived in Mathiyezhath Kadavil, Panjikkaran Veettil and Valiya Veettil- Kadavil sub branches in Cherai are Punnakayil and Eattummel.

The Ayyampally branch spread out in Ayyampally – Kizhakke Veedu, Padinjare Vedu, Kiliyanthi, Meykkara, Vadakke Veedu and Vavathuruthu. A few from the Ayyampilly branch shifted to Cherai.

Several members of the Ayyampilly branch distinguished themselves, generally taking leadership for the construction, maintenance and management of the churches like the Cherai Cheria Pally, The Cherai Valiya Pally, The Ayyampilly St. John's Church and the Areepalam Church.

Members of this branch were enterprising coming forward to serve king and country. Judge Korath, Police Superintendent Chakko, controller of Accounts M.I. Varkey, Collector M.M. Varkey- all of them belong to the Ayyampilly branch. M.A. Chakko belonged to Kizhakke Veedu and M.I. Varkey to Vadakke Veedu. The family of Padinjare Veedu shifted to Pariyaram (Areepalam) near Irnijalakuda. The family included Kochucherukkan (Kunjikora), Kunjipylee, Mathukunju and Kochukunju (Kunjichakko). The Areepalam Church was built by Kunjipylee who had two daughters but no sons. The elder daughter was married to George (Dr. Chakko George) son of Chakko.

In the Cemeteries of Cherai ValiyaPally and Cheria Pally, as well as in Ayyampilly St. John's Church, the first rank (row) was allotted to the Ayyampilly branch of Mazhuvancheriparambath. The second row to the Cherai branch. The burial fees for the first row was 35Puthens (one puthen is 10 paise) and for the second row 30 puthens. For members of the Kooranparambil Tharawad, the fee was 64 puthens.

### **Chakko's Forefathers**

Ittychen Chakko, Chakko's forefather belonged to the Nedunthally family of North Parur. He married Kunjelya, the daughter and heiress of Ayyampilly Mazhuvancheriparambath Avaran Chakko and wife Kunjelachy. Ittychen merged into the family of his wife adopting the family name of Mazhuvancheriparambath.

The Ittychen - Kunjelya couple had an only son Chakko (The name Mazhuvancheriparambath Chakku Chakku) appears in the land register of Cochin State, as Pattadar of Ayyampilly Village in the year 996 (A.D. 1821)

Chakku Chakku had three sons, Kunjavara, Avaran Chakko (eldest) and Korath (Youngest). Korath was appointed Judge at Ernakulam by the ruling Maharajah of Cochin.

Kunjavara had three sons – Kochuvarky, Chakko and Korath and a daughter named Annam married to Eraly Vareed. Korath had a daughter Mathiri and son Kunjavara who was M.A. Chakko's father.

Knjavara married Mariam belonging to a branch of the Ayyampilly Mazhuvancheriparambath family who had gone and settled in Cherai. Mariam's brother Philipose and her father before him, were eminent Ayurvedic Physicians coming from an above average intellectual background, Mariam in her times was a remarkable woman. She had imbibed refined manners and a good sense of values in life. She was highly intelligent and quite shrewd.

### **The Kunjavara – Mariam couple had five children**

1. Daughter Ittiannam was married to Puthen Kandathil, a branch of the Kulangara family of North Parur. Her only son Varghese Paul, a lawyer was the father of Anvar Varghese (Rtd. General manager, S. Railway)
2. Korath of Kizhakkevettill looked after common family property. He was well-known for his expertise in drafting land documents.
3. Chakko who was, Superintendent of Police and commandant of the Nair Brigade of the Maharaja of Cochin.
4. Kunjilachy-married to Puthuserry family of Ayyampilly. She was widowed early and settled down at Plakkel House.
5. Kochuvarky (Youngest) married a sister of Kochucherukkan and Kunjipylee of the Padinjare Veedu- Ayyampilly branch of the Mazhuvancheriparambath family. Kochuvarky looked after family property involving the cultivation of paddy and coconut. His daughters were Unichar, Achakutty and Cherian Mariam. His son Kunjavara passed M.B.B.S. and was Health officer in Cochin State. The other son Jacob married Erayil Annamma and died without issue.

## Daring Lady

Chakko's mother Mariam became a widow in her early forties. She took up the reins of the family and managed affairs with competence; her eldest son Korath continued to stay with her. She set her own social norms. She had the distinction of being the only woman who played cards in the community. In those days when "chayakudi, beedivali and cheetukali" (drinking tea, smoking and playing cards) were considered vices or sinful practices even for males, here was a woman playing cards with men! (she played with her sons grandsons and nephews only.)

Her more feminine side revealed a flair for creativity ingenuity and practical sense. She made mats baskets and bags weaving dried leaves of mandamus (kaitha). She sent servants to collect bunches of the leaves, which grew wild in the open areas near by. She had the long leaves cut in strips and dried at home. With them she made different articles. She made exquisite pouches with fine strips; the coarser and bigger strips made mats. This was the outlet for her creative talent. Many of the later generations in their turn have taken to activities like sewing, knitting, painting etc.

Chakko – Kakkappen to the family was born on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1870 as the second son of Avara and Mariam. Avara was an agriculturist and cultivated paddy and coconut as did other landed gentry of the neighbourhood. Ayyampilly, Cherai and Parur are coastal areas where water is brackish and soil unsuitable for other crops.

During Kakkappan's childhood there was no school in Ayyampilly, There were no regular classes. One teacher taught the children for five or six years. After this type of training, Chakko attended the Government school in Ernakulam. When he passed the Matriculation Examination, he was sent to Madras Christian College for higher studies. The Syrian Christian community had become aware of the value of collegiate education in securing government jobs, which were highly coveted.



Kakkappen married Mariam, the eldest daughter of Eraly Kunjuvarky, originally from Ayyampilly but settled in North Parur. Kunjuvarky became trustee of the St. Thomas Jacobite Church and took the initiative in getting from abroad the huge church bell, which he got erected outside the church building. His residence in Market Road, near the Jewish synagogue came to be known as Ayyampilly house. His wife (Thatha) Sara was from Kulangara Puthenveetil family.

Besides Kakkappan's wife Mariam, Kunjuvarky and Thatha had two sons and two daughters. Son, E.V. Abraham called Ittiachen retired as Prosecuting Inspector, Travancore State. Son, E.V. Mathew practiced as advocate in Ernakulam. Daughter Achakutty was married to chathuruthy Iyporah, land lord and nephew of Mar Gregorius of Parumala. Daughter Martha was married to Pallikara Chittieth David Tharakan.

### **Woman who enjoyed reading**

Chakko's mother-in-law, Sara (Thatha) was one who enjoyed reading. The problem was getting books and other reading matter. She read the newspaper 'Malayala Manorama' line by line from beginning to end.

When Madras University results for B.A. were published in 1931, the 'Manorama' listed the names of all the successful candidates. Grandmother Thatha according to custom kept on reading name after name and suddenly was surprised to see the name Salome Chakko! She was not aware that her grand daughter Salome had written the exam. She was reading the list just for the joy of reading printed words.

### 3

## COLLEGE EDUCATION

For Higher Studies Chakko had to leave Cochin as there were no first grade colleges in Cochin or Travancore. Syrian Christian boys from these States generally joined the Madras Christian College. Dr. Miller was the principal then. Fenn hostel where the Christian boys stayed was close to the college. It was managed by Mr. Itty Kurian hailing from Mallappally. Another Syrian Rev. Dr. Itty from Kottayam was in charge of the medical care of the students. He was a priest of the Free Church of India.

Mr. K.M. Mathen Mappilai (Kandathil) and Chakko were classmates in the B.A. class in Madras Christian College, and hostel mates in Fenn Hostel in 1891 and 92. Many of their college mates distinguished themselves in their chosen field of work in later years. Mr. P.T. Varghese (Kottayam) was High Court Judge, Mr. K.T. Thomas (Thiruvalla) and Mr. P.C. Job (Kunnamkulam) were high officials in Cochin State Service, Mr. M.I. Varkey (Ayyampilly) was controller of Accounts and Mr. I. Chandy (Aymanam) was Anchel Superintendent, to mention a few.

In Fenn Hostel there was a large well-knit group of Syrian Christian boys and an equally big number of Tamil Christians. There was very little interaction between the two groups. This was evident in the dining room, play-ground and prayer hall. As in any hostel, there were three

categories of students in Fenn Hostel. One set was systematic and diligent in their studies but not interested in extra-curricular activities. Another group would first finish their studies and join in the fun and frolic of college life. A third happy-go-lucky group, spent more time having a jolly time, study being secondary. Chakko was the leader of this group and Mr. K.M. Mathen Mappilai was of the same breed. Mr. K.M. Mathen Mappilai writes:- “Some of us in Fenn Hostel were given nick names. Chakko was ‘Ramban’ (Arch Deacon) and I was ‘Kathanar’ (priest). Needless to say it was not because of our spiritual life or expertise in the history and canons of the church. M.I. Varkey was named ‘Bava’ (Patriarch) that being the pet name of his wife. P.C. Job as an asthmatic had a soft mattress and sheets and a special cot with a grand canopy, royal luxuries rare in men’s hostel. So he was called ‘Metran’ (Bishop). K.T. Thomas his brother-in-law who attended on the Bishop when he was sick was *semmassen* (deacon). It was to complete this church hierarchy that Chakko and I, as their friends, were given our priestly designations. We accepted the nick names with good grace and they were soon forgotten. It is only when one protests that such names stick permanently. Rev. Dr. Itty, our doctor, was the only one who addressed us by these names till the end of our stay in Madras. I have heard that Chakko was called ‘Appoopan’ (grand-father) when he was a school student because he had a few grey hairs but these disappeared after he came to Madras. I started graying when I was studying for B.A. and Rev. Itty sometimes called me ‘Mooppachen’ (senior priest). It must be gratefully acknowledged that Chakko by his laudable service and sacrifice for the Syrian Church in later life has justified his nick name.”

While staying in Fenn Hostel, we used to visit Rev. Dr. Itty almost every week-end at his Royapuram residence. His wife and P.C. Job were both from Kunnankulam. She had been staying in Madras from her childhood. They spoke English at home and Tamil to the local people. So the children did not have even speaking knowledge of Malayalam. Both Rev. Itty and Mrs. Itty welcomed our visit with pleasure. We also enjoyed their company and the delicious snacks

they served with tea was an added attraction in those hostel days. It was in our days that something called ‘water fight’, a kind of ducking game began in Fenn Hostel. The ducking that takes place in Madras hostels now had not started then. Chakko had the main role in this game also.

The executive efficiency, the ability to win debates, the wisdom and common sense Chakko displayed outside the classroom were much more than one would expect from a consideration merely of the marks he scored in the class examinations. Syrian Christian students in those days were weak in Malayalam; but Chakko’s flair for the language was evident even in the B.A. Class. I was reminded of this years later, when I saw the apt use of words and the pleasing construction of sentences in his “Jeevitha Smaranakal” (memoirs) published in “The Poura Prabha” newspaper.

### **Study of Law**

Even after graduation we continued to stay together in Madras. Leaving Fenn Hostel we stayed in a rented building with a few other boys. It was then that Chakko’s dear Uncle, Philipose Vaidyan came to Madras for treatment. He stayed with us in the lodge and was later admitted in the pay ward of the general Hospital in Madras. He stayed there for about ten days. Chakko and I used to visit him every day.

The doctor could not find anything wrong with him. They declared that his ailment was just imaginary. One after noon when I visited him, he was agitated and tremulous. His complaint that day was that his tongue had gone down and he could not talk. But after examinations, the doctors found everything normal. They insisted that he could talk if he made an effort. They tried all means to make him speak but in vain. As a last resort, they had even threatened him. “If you don’t talk before tomorrow, we will remove your tongue surgically”. This was what agitated him. He made me understand the predicament and pressed me to take him away that very night. We brought him to the hostel without the knowledge of the hospital authorities. The next two months he stayed with us and was treated by a private practitioner. I

helped Chakko to look after him and under this doctor's treatment he got well. Eventually he left Madras as a happy man.

Chakko completed the first year of his study of law and passed the F.L. Examination. After he joined the B.L. class came the sad news of the demise of his father. With that he said good-bye to law and returned home.

## 4

# MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

**M**r. Chakko belonged to the illustrious “Mazhuvan-cheriparambath” Family in Ayyampilly. His father Kunjavara was a grand nephew of the famous Justice Korath. He married Mariam, a member of the Eralil family. Her father Kunju Varky, a grandson of the same Justice Korath, had shifted his residence from Ayyampilly to N. Parur. Her mother was Sarah.

Chakko was a twenty year old youngster and Mariam, the bride was hardly ten years old, when they were married. The marriage festivities lasted for many days. Relatives, about 200 in number came well in advance and there was fun frolic and hectic activity in the house. There were expensive dresses and traditional ornaments. A variety of culinary delicacies were prepared every day. The people in the house slept on mats spread on the floor; pillows were hired as needed.

One day, the little bride Mariam was playing with her friends among the mound of pillows. Her uncle, who came there asked her, “Mariam, do you know who this is?” She had a look at the young man with him and said casually, “I don’t know”. Amused he told her, “This is your husband”. She said, “Oh!” And resumed her play with her friends!

As was the custom in those days, Mariam was taught to read and write Malayalam by tutors at home. Her mother was a voracious

reader and Mariam followed suit. When Mariam turned 16, she went to stay in her husband's house in Ayyampilly. There she had good company in the young wives of Chakko's two brothers. Her mother – in – law was an able guide to the three daughters-in-law, in the traditions of the family. Chakko was devoted to his mother, widowed in her forties and to his elder brother who managed the family paddy fields and coconut plantations.

In 1896 Chakko joined the Cochin government service as a clerk in the Huzur secretariat and he and his wife began life on their own in Ernakulam. He got promoted in quick succession on merit and worked in many parts of the State. From the post of clerk he was raised step by step to Tahsildar in Trichur, Peshkar of the northern division District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police and Commandant of the Nair Brigade and finally retired as the Excise Commissioner.

Chakko's eldest child, Mary's attempt to say 'Papa' slurred into 'Pappy'. So Pappy became a loving sobriquet used by all his children and grand-children. They had eleven children born at intervals of 2 to 3 years. Only the last child came after a span of 7 years. In bringing up the children the mother had plenty of help from maid servants of whom there were several at all times.

Chakko's official work involved a lot of travelling. He was frequently on circuit. A cook accompanied him on his travels taking a cane box containing cooking requisites.

Chakko had great religious zeal even from his young days. He attended church services regularly. Whenever he was posted to a town which had no Orthodox Church, he would cycle miles to attend Sunday Qurbana (Holy Mass). Morning and evening prayers, observance of lent and fasting days were strictly followed. The whole family got together for the evening prayer. He insured the importance of punctuality in the children. They realized that time was important, not only to them, but to all. They learnt to be on time at every appointment.

When Chakko was in government service, he would wake up at 4 A.M. After morning ablutions and prayer he would go through the files and finish all correspondence before dawn. He would then take coffee and saunter into the garden. He had a special love for gardening and encouraged the children in helping him in the manual work involved. Together they carried manure and soil, made flower-beds, planted seeds and watered them. Even though there were many servants, the children often drew water from the garden well to the surprise of their cousins and guests. Chakko never touched liquor, but he chewed tobacco. Chopped pieces of tobacco were carried in a small handy circular metal container. The children were often sent to fetch it from wherever it was- the office table, the dining room, the verandah or wherever it lay.

Caste system was at its peak in those days and Christian students were educated in Christian schools. Mary and Sarah were admitted in the Syrian Girl's School. But Chakko along with a few other Christians campaigned for the right of Christian girls to education in all the government schools, where the students were only Hindus. They won, consequently his daughters joined the Victoria Jubilee Memorial Girls High School where they got an opportunity to mix with Hindu girls. It stood them in good stead in later years.

A project close to Chakko's heart was the educational development of Kerala. Along with other interested members of the Orthodox, the Marthoma and the Anglican (C.S.I) churches he extended support to the founding of the Union Christian College and the residential girls school 'Christhava Mahilalayam' in Alwaye His daughter Sarah was a teacher for one year when the 'Christhava Mahilalayam' was founded. The Rama Varma High School at Ayyampilly came into being through the efforts of Chakko. Mr. K.C. Abraham (later governor of Andhra Pradesh) was the Head Master of the school for many years.

In addition to executive ability and vigour in action, Chakko had penetrative insight, sound commonsense, quickness of decision, tact and largeness of heart. People from all classes of society came to him for counsel and help.



Chakko's outlook was modern and liberal. He gave the children plenty of freedom, but in certain matters he was very conservative. Sarah's ambition was to become a doctor. At that time science subjects were taught only in boys' schools. So she requested her father to send her to the government Boys' school. He disliked the idea of sending her with four other interested girls to study in a class of some thirty boys. So Sarah had to give up her dream of becoming a doctor.

At that time Mr. M.I. Varkey, controller of Accounts, a distant cousin and friend of the family took up residence close to Chakko's house. His children were more or less the same age as Chakko's. They used to play together visiting each other frequently. Mrs. Varkey cut and stitched outfits for the entire family. Sarah watched the process with great interest. One day she told her mother, "I wish we too had a sewing machine. It would be wonderful if we could make our own clothes." A few days later, father brought home a shining new hand machine, within days she became proficient in its use.

In the early days cinema theatres were unheard of. There was very little by way of public entertainment. The big event was the bioscope show. Travelling companies came to town, put up their tents, set up their bioscopes and projected still scenes on a screen. Chakko would take them to a show to the immense pleasure of the children.

Trichur Pooram, (temple festival), the most famous in Kerala for its splendour, and a month long Swadeshi Exhibition with exhibits for sale from all over India were the biggest events of the year. Vast crowds of men, women and children flocked from all the near and remote villages. The maidan round the temple would be packed with people. The caparisoned elephants in all their glory came in procession from suburban smaller temples. On their backs were men holding silk umbrellas with gilded tassels, and swinging Alavattam (ornamental peacock feather fans) and Venchamara (fans made from bushy tail hair of the yak) to the rhythm of the Panchavadyam (orchestra of five instruments). They gathered at the main temple at the centre of the town. People of the status of Chakko were reluctant to take their

women folk to the crowded maidan, But Chakko was different. He enjoyed taking the whole family to see the two batches of elephants standing, facing each other, after coming out of the south gate of the temple in the evening. The fire works display that followed the ceremonies was at 3 AM. But the Chakko family returned before dusk, after the elephant display.

The evenings were always a happy time for the family. Sitting with the children clustered round him, Chakko would take out his pen knife, which was his constant companion, peel the fruits of the season, even sugar cane and slice and distribute the pieces to each child in turn. Each one adored him and he became the prime influence in their life. He had a positive outlook, was cheerful and loved all competitive sports. He joined the children in games of cards and caroms. He played each game with zest no matter who played with him.

Chakko's grand children were all aware of the love and concern he had for them. They felt he was one to be respected and not feared. He joined with enthusiasm in all their activities.

Mariam (Mrs. Chakko) was a befitting companion for her husband. The level-headed serene wife complimented her impetuous and daring spouse and provided a congenial atmosphere in the family. The children never saw their mother lose her composure. Her habit of reading the Bible aloud left a deep impression on their minds. Though she did not learn English, the reading habit inherited from her mother lasted through out her life. Along with that she kept abreast of topical events.

Mariam was considered a beauty. Her skin was fair and her face comely. She had a shapely nose and rather beautiful eyes. Temperamentally, a reserved person, she contained her emotions and never showed any outward signs of love or affection even to a baby. She seemed to think that excessive expression of joy, sorrow, love, fondness or dislike showed weakness of character and lack of refinement. She was a wise mother by instinct – A hand placed lightly on the head or shoulder- a smile- these restrained expressions of affection gave the children ample assurance of the deep parental love that surrounded them.

She was seldom away from home. She considered household management a full time activity and made a good housewife. She hardly made any social visit but was happy to receive those who visited her.

She brought up the children in strict discipline and inculcated orderly habits in them. The discipline she imposed on them was often irksome. However, as they were a big enough group, they could laugh away the strictness. Her very presence gave them a sense of security and the feeling that they were in safe hands.

When Sarah was a toddler, she eluded her mother's vigilant eyes and sat playing in the court yard. Her mother saw a snake slithering fast towards the child. She rushed up, gathered her in her arms and ran back. She said later, that it seemed to take an eternity to reach the safety of the house.

Sarah once recalled with a smile the day in her childhood when her mother accused her unjustly of telling a lie. Terribly hurt that she could be thought deceitful, she tightened her lips in resolve never again to speak to such a mother. For two days Sarah would have nothing to do with her. Then her mother, seeing her pass by, thrust a banana into her hand and said, "There, eat your banana and stop sulking". Sarah ran away with the peace offering, her happiness completely restored.

Mrs. Chakko had great faith in the intercession of saints, and in times of crisis, she prayed for the intercession of Saint Gregorius of Parumala and made vows of offerings at his shrine. In 1925 Chakko took the whole family on a pilgrimage to Parumala – memorable event for all of them. They spent many days in a hired wide-bottomed country boat with sails, leisurely making their way through the placid backwaters. The crew would draw up to the shore along the way to cook meals and the children could play on the shore. Finally they reached Parumala. The priests and deacons welcomed the family cordially. They spent a couple of days there in devotion, performed all the vows and returned in the same boat.

Another boat journey was an amusing memory for the children. The whole family had gone to a distant town for a family wedding. The crowd of guests was such that the family could not have the daily bath they were used to. After two days Mrs. Chakko herded them all into a boat and took them to a relative's house where they all enjoyed a refreshing bath before they returned to join the wedding festivities.

Mrs. Chakko enjoyed good health. The children do not remember her even being bed-ridden or having to be nursed in illness. She had only one illness to speak of: she suffered from glaucoma which impaired her vision. It appears to be a hereditary ailment since many of her children and grand children have it. She was however able to see well enough to read till the end of life- at age seventy nine.

## 5

### EARLY CAREER

**T**he royal ‘Matamaheesathala rulers’ of Cochin claims succession from Kerala Emperor Cheraman Perumal. In this long line of kings perhaps the most distinguished and the one most devoted to the welfare of his subjects was Raja Rama Varma, the Rajarishi. He will be remembered with reverence as the architect of the modern Era of Cochin State. He brought about lasting modernization in the Revenue and accounts departments. It was during his reign that the Railway came to Cochin State. His Village Panchayat Act was an attempt to ensure the participation of the people in the administration from the grass-root level. The Tenancy Act was a personal achievement of the Maharaja.

Maharaja Rama Varma took up the reins of the Cochin State in 1895. The administration and the Treasury were in a very bad shape at that time. He had become the crown prince in June 1888. It gave him an opportunity to understand the intricacies of administration and to have discussions with the administrative officer in charge. Therefore when he ascended the throne in 1895 he had a good idea of where and what reforms were needed in the different departments of government.

In most departments corrupt officials operated without fear or hindrance. Funds meant for the welfare of the people were being

looted in different ways. The Maharaja spared no effort to ensure the welfare and happiness of his subjects. He worked tirelessly to eradicate corruption and nepotism from all govt. departments. Although this created a great deal of opposition he was convinced that the administration required rebuilding from scratch. The outmoded structures should be recast. Most officials were working without a sense of responsibility or commitment to the service of the general public. Whenever the Maharaja felt a dearth of able administrators in service, he never hesitated to request the British Government to lend the services of suitable able men from outside the state for a fixed period of time. In fact many department heads and even the Diwan were thus deputed from Madras government service. Such efforts to improve the administration were misunderstood by a section of officials and their camp followers who spread discontent against the Maharaja. A Journal from outside the state published articles and news items adversely criticizing the new policy. However the young ruler continued his reforms without bothering about these pin pricks. Mr. James Thompson, the British Resident in Cochin gave unstinted support to the efforts of the Maharaja.

A great many far sighted and progressive reforms were initiated by Sir Rama Varma. The results of these were not to be measured merely in economic terms. He was able to instil in his subjects certain intangible values which were not visible to the outward eye. Yet they far out weighed considerations of worldly prosperity or even of public interest. The progressive and enlightened educational policy brought about intellectual and moral illumination in the people of the state, which widened their social horizon. A sense of security was created in the different service departments. He was able to generate public trust in the impartiality and integrity of the judicial system. All these are achievements which defy measurement in physical terms.

When the Maharaja came to power, the Diwan was an elderly man, inexperienced in administrative matters. Although he was fully aware of the corruption among the state officials he took no steps against it. It became imperative to find an efficient Diwan. With the

help of Mr. James Thompson, the British Resident, the Maharaja was able to obtain the service of Sri. P. Rajagopalachari, who was in the Madras Civil Service. The integrity and quality of work of the Cochin Government Services was of a very low standard. Many appointments were based on personal considerations, overlooking merit and character. The pay scales were very low, even that of the Diwan. Consequently corruption flourished. Discipline was non-existent. Only the handful of European officials in the state were free of corruption.

In December 1896, Diwan Rajagopalachari having effectively initiated modernization of the general administration extended it to all the other departments of the government. The Maharaja utilized the services of the new Diwan mainly to improve the over-all efficiency.

The Maharaja took care to appoint officers with educational qualifications and ability, without looking to their caste or religion. In those days, it was not easy for Christians to get jobs in the government service and there were not many with high qualifications.

At this time M.A. Chakko had just passed his B.A. and F.L. Examination. He presented humbly before the Maharaja and applied for a government job. The Maharaja was impressed by him and instructed the Diwan to appoint him as clerk in the Huzur office on a salary of Rs. 15 per month. Recognizing Chakko's extraordinary ability and efficiency the Maharaja kept giving him frequent promotions one after another and he held many posts in government. He was appointed Magistrate at Chittur in the northern boundary of the state, adjoining the Malabar District, which was directly under British Rule. Chakko went there with wife and two children Mary and Aby. The second son George was born there. Later for sometime he was magistrate in Nemmara.

From there, he was promoted to the post of Tahsildar at Trichur. He also had the additional responsibility of the forest settlement officer in the border Region where the hill tribes cultivated the forest land. His office at that time was where the Museum and Zoo stand now. M.C. Abraham, Chakko's eldest son stated that when they were digging

for the foundation of buildings at the site, they unearthed ancient burial urns containing human bones. Such urns have been excavated in Tamil Nadu also.

### **Collector of Land Revenue**

For a short period, during his career in the Cochin State, Chakko in his early thirties was appointed Tahsildar of Cochin-Kanayannur Taluq. It was practically the first time that a Christian was appointed as a Tahsildar. Among his other duties he had to see that the Mattancheri Hindu Temple services were regularly conducted. The main function of the Tahsildar was to ensure that the land Revenue due to the state was systematically collected by the Revenue inspectors under him and duly paid into the local treasury of which too he was in charge. In his jurisdiction were the extensive landed property of the chieftain, Cheranelloor Karthav, a vassal of the Maharaja of Cochin. As vassal, Karthav was expected during war to enrol, train and lead a strong force of Nairs to battle along with other forces of the Maharaja against the enemy. Under British Suzerainty, Karthav had little to do that way. But he was known to be very close to the Maharaja. Consequently, the previous Tahsildar slurred over the collection of land revenue from the powerful Karthav.

However young Chakko thought otherwise. He went with his subordinate Revenue officers to the locality and sent the officers to claim the revenue from the Karthav. Karthav chased them away saying he had never paid so far. They reported this to Chakko who was waiting outside.

Chakko noticed that some of Karthav's wooden boats were tied by the side of the adjoining backwaters that extended right up to Cochin. He seized the best five of the boats, as Tahsildar, for non-payment of revenue and towed them away to Cochin.

When Karthav heard the news from his servants, he was furious at the daring of the Christian 'Puppy' Chakko. He went fuming post-haste to the Maharaja who receiving him courteously asked him what the problem was. Without mincing words, Karthav complained about



the cheek of the villain Chakko who had the audacity to take away his boats. The Maharaja listened patiently and then spoke, “Are you not one of my foremost vassals?” “Certainly, I am a true and faithful servant of yours”. The Maharaja said, “In that case, you have to pay me something in token of your vassalship. Have you been doing that?” Karthav had no reply to that. The Maharaja advised him to pay the small amount of arrears of land Revenue and redeem the boats. Karthav eventually did this. Chakko thus earned a name for daring!

## THE TRICHUR ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH

It was in the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Malankara Syrian Christians, from places like Kunnamkulam, Cherai and Tripunithara came to sojourn in Trichur for trade, education and employment. Those who were unable to get home for week ends were dependant on Churches of other creeds for Sunday service. Under the circumstance, they had an intense desire for a church of their own, in Trichur, the cultural capital of Kerala.

In those days there were no high schools in Kunnamkulam. So it was to the C.M.S school Trichur, that the students went for their education. At that time, travelling was mainly by bullockcarts or on rare occasion by horse carts. So it was not possible for the students to go home every weekend. Naturally the parents were concerned about their children missing the Sunday Qurbana (service). It was at this time that the government of Cochin started the construction of a railway line connecting Shornur and Ernakulam. The project enhanced the importance of Trichur, as also, the Syrian Christian Community's desire for a Church of its own there. Chakko a devout Christian, as well as a man of action, took the initiative in uniting the people in pursuit of this dream. They were more than willing to co-operate.

Mr. Panackal Itti Mathew, a Jacobite Syrian Christian belonging to Kunnamkulam was at that time residing in Trichur. He came to

know that time about 2 1/2 acres of land owned by the Thettayil family, was in the market as distress sale. He purchased the property outright for Rs100/- on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1894. It was on this plot that the St. Ignatius Church was later built. Many difficulties had to be overcome before the church was completed. When the application for government sanction was made, caste Hindus made objections. Mr. Ambat Sankara Menon, the District magistrate went to the site, made enquiries and reported to the Diwan that the objections were baseless. Sanction for building the Church was granted by the Trichur Taluk Office on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1903. However construction was not started immediately because of lack of funds.

Meanwhile in the litigation against the Mar Thoma Church regarding the ownership of the Malankara Churches, the Royal court verdict went in favour of the Malankara Metropolitan Pulikkottil Mar Joseph Dionysius. The Metropolitan stayed in Kunnamkulam for one year to get the court order executed for the churches there (Kunnamkulam Arthat Church, Pazhayapalli, Chiralayam palli, Thekay Kurissu palli, Kizhakke puthenpalli). Chakko, who was in Trichur as the District Magistrate visited his Grace and held long discussions about the church construction, a matter close to his heart. The Metropolitan asked him to take the lead in the endeavour. In response to Mr. Chakko's request for a donation of Rs. 1000/- from the Arthat Kunnamkulam Churches. His grace issued a circular to those churches to contribute towards the fund. But the amount collected by November 1907 was only Rs. 924/-

The Malankara Metropolitan, His Grace Mar Joseph Dionysius passed away at the age of 76. His Grace Geevarghese Mar Dionysius whom the late Metropolitan had willed as his successor took up the office with the approval of the Patriarch. At this time information came that His Holiness Ignatius Abdulla II was en route to Malankara. After the visit of His Holiness Pathros III in 1874, the Patriarch of Antioch was arriving in Malankara after a long gap of many years. So this was a great event. Every effort was made to give His Holiness a

memorable welcome. Chakko, the police Superintendent and the Commandant of Nair Brigade was in the forefront of the ceremonial reception.

The Patriarch, accompanied by the Malankara Metropolitan reached Patambi by train on 22<sup>nd</sup> Kanni 1085. His Holiness and entourage were received by the Bishops and Priests of Malankara. Diwan Albian Rajkumar Banerji M.A.I.C.S had placed his carriage at the disposal of the Patriarch and Metropolitan for the journey. Seated in the carriage drawn by two big black horses, they were taken in a grand procession, in the military escort, from Akkikavu to Kunnamkulam Pazhayapalli. The Patriarch and his attendants stayed there for a day. His Holiness heard of the proposed construction of a church in Trichur and offered to lay the foundation stone, halting at Trichur on his way to Kottayam.

Accordingly on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1909, the Patriarch and entourage arrived in Trichur and entered the pandal specially erected for the occasion. After prayer, the foundation stone laying service (Sushroosha) began at 8.30 A.M. Assisted by the Malankara Metropolitan Vattaseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius, His grace Poullose Mar kurilos, Sleeba Mar Osthathios, the two Rambans who had accompanied His Holiness and number of priests, the Patriarch conducted the susrusha and laid the foundation stone for the Altar (Madbaha) in the name of St. Ignatius Noorono. After that The Holy Qurbana (Mass) was celebrated by the Patriarch. The Patriarch and his attendants were accommodated during their stay in Trichur, at the Ratnavilasam, palace, Kokala, which was the Dewan's official residence, while on duty in Trichur.

The subsequent conflict between the Patriarch and the Metropolitan and the consequent rift among the people of the Malankara Church based on their allegiance to either the Patriarch (Bava) or the Metropolitan (methran) adversely affected the progress of the construction of the Church in Trichur.

The architectural plan for the church was prepared by Mr. C.J. Mani, supervisor in the Travancore Engineering Department, some

alterations were made at the insistence of the leaders of the congregation to have it conform to the rules of Thachu Sastra''(vasthu). Masonry work for the church began on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1910. The church committee applied for financial aid, the Maharaja responded favourably and the government sanctioned 10 Kandy's (load) of teak.

The split in the Malankara Sabha put a spoke in the wheel, in the collection of funds for the church. Mr. Chakko was determined to continue the work at any cost. When the fund ran low, he compensated by drawing money from his own pocket or by raising loans.

Mr. Iyyakku was the trustee of the church in its initial stage of construction and for a long time afterwards. The total collection he got till 17<sup>th</sup> May 1911 was only Rs.2197/- and the expense till then totaled Rs. 2221/-. The deficit was made up by Mr. Chakko.

One day the trustee did not have enough money to pay the labourers. Unexpectedly that day, Mr. M.P. Thomas, native of Puthupally and working as an overseer in chittur, happened to visit Mr. Iyyakku. They had a long discussion about the Church construction. There was reference to the financial straits the church was in. The same evening Mr. Thomas contributed Rs.20/- and saved the situation. Mr. Thomas passed away on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1918 and was the first to be buried in the cemetery of the new church. Records show that his daughter, son and mother-in-law were also buried there.

Many further difficult situations had to be overcome before the church was finally completed .At last on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1911; the first service was conducted by Rev. Kuriakose Cheruvathoor from Kunnamkulam. The same day Chakko's daughter Salome was baptized and was offered as a ward of the church till the age of 16. An offering of "Thamuk" (a sweet dish prepared with plantain) was made by Chakko on the occasion.

At the request of the congregation, priests from Kunnamkulam taking turns, continued to conduct service in the new Church from July onwards.

The total expenditure incurred for the construction of the church was Rs. 2351/-. The shortage in the collection was made up by Chakko.

Earlier, a plot lying next to the church property owned by Mr. Irumban, had been purchased for the church for Rs. 150/-. The plot was valued as Rs. 400/- and given to Chakko as part payment of the amount the church owed him. The understanding was that balance of Rs. 527/- still due, would be repaid in small instalments. But there is no record that that money had been paid back.

The priest and acolyte had to come and stay at Trichur on Saturday to conduct the Sunday morning service. So the necessity for a parsonage became urgent. In December 1912 work started on the parsonage on the north side of the church and it was completed on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1915. Mr. Chakko donated the timber and the roofing tiles. The expenditure was Rs. 219 and 2 annas.

There was no Jacobite Syrian church in the vicinity of Trichur at that time. So people from suburbs like Kannara, Pattikadu, Puthoor, Paravattani, Ponganomkodu and Kundukadu came to St. Ignatius church for Sunday service. The religious needs of these people were met by this church.

## DELHI DURBAR - 1911

**M**.A. Chakko as a high official in the government of Cochin State, had to spend many days away from home. When in 1911, he accompanied the Maharaja of Cochin to the Delhi Durbar he was away more than two months.

After the demise of King Edward VII, George V was crowned king at West Minster Abbey in June 1911. He wanted to have another coronation, as the Emperor of India, in Delhi. He had visited India in 1906 as prince of Wales and the Maharaja of Cochin had an audience with him at Madras.

The Maharaja had participated in the Durbar which was held in connection with the coronation of the previous Emperor, nine years before this. On that occasion he had made an extensive tour of North India. So he was not particularly interested in undergoing the long journey to Delhi again. But there was something special about this Durbar; it was the first time that a British ruler was being enthroned in the Indian Dominion. So the Maharaja accepted the invitation.

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1911, Maharaja, along with his entourage and his brother Ravi Varma set forth from Thrrippunithura. They arrived at Madras and called on the acting governor Sir Thomas Gibson. Leaving Madras on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, they sojourned at several places on the way and reached Delhi on November 26<sup>th</sup> in the morning.

The instruction from the Imperial Government was that all the Maharajas should reach Delhi at least by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December. Since the Maharaja of Cochin arrived earlier, he had time for rest, sight-seeing, visiting places like the Juma Mazjid, Qutab Minar, The Red Fort, Chandini Chouk, The Durbar. Amphitheatre and the polo ground. He also paid visits to the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Gaekwad of Baroda, and the Maharajas of Jaipur, Jammu and Kashmir, Travancore, Pudukotta and Charkhari. He also received their return visits.

The proceedings of the Durbar commenced with the arrival of the Emperor, King George V with his Queen in New Delhi on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December. The Maharaja of Cochin, accompanied by his brother Ravi Varma, the Diwan and others arrived at the reception pavilion and took part in the grand procession. Later the Maharaja was granted a private audience with the Emperor. The Emperor received him with the words “glad to meet you again”; clearly the emperor remembered their previous meeting at Madras on his visit to India as Prince of Wales in 1906.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, the Viceroy. Lord Harding informed the Maharaja that the emperor had been pleased to confer the order of G.C.I.E on him, (Grand – Commander of the Indian Empire). The Diwan was awarded the order of C.I.E. This double award to the Cochin State was considered a matter of special pride to the state as a whole. The Imperial Durbar was held on 12<sup>th</sup> December. It was a scintillating function. By sunrise the soldiers were seen in their ceremonial uniforms with arms. The Maharajas, the Governor General the Governors with their retinue, the high and the low, school children, people of different countries, religions, languages all dressed in their best, moved towards the venue of the Durbar.

Two beautiful pavilions had been constructed a big one on the North and a smaller one on the south, their ends coming close to each other. They were designed to seat the participants and visitors according to their rank and position and could accommodate an estimated half a lakh people. The open space between the pavilions had a length of



600 yards in the middle. The seating was in tiers so that the view from any row would not be obstructed by those seated in front. The smaller southern pavilion was reserved for Governors, Maharajas and those of other equivalent ranks. The large northern one accommodated the twelve thousand invited guests, another half a lakh people and six thousand school children.

Special enclosure had been prepared for the orthodox royal lady guests, who by their tradition were not allowed to be seen in public. In the open space between the pavilions, 20,000 troops stood in formation. Innumerable people stood on earthen mounds, located near the venue of the Durbar, to watch the function. All the surrounding high grounds offering a partial view of the main function were full of people as far as the eye could see.

A large magnificent stage had been erected near the smaller pavilion for the most distinguished guests and another smaller one in three tiers over against the large pavilion. Both stages were beautifully decorated and each held two thrones to seat their Imperial Majesties.

Even as the assembled people were enjoying the band music and conversing with each other, the Governor General Lord Harding and his lady arrived, accompanied by mounted troops and escorted by three young and handsome Indian princes. As soon as the Lord and Lady alighted from their carriage, the Maharajas paid their respects and the soldiers their ceremonial salute. Immediately afterwards, the Emperor and Empress arrived in a chariot drawn by four horses—accompanied by a contingent of mounted troops. They were wearing the same ceremonial dress they had worn for their coronation. Canons were fired in salute, the band played joyous music and all the people cheered in acclamation as their imperial Majesties walked forward slowly, in the shade of ceremonial golden umbrellas. When the distinguished guests arrived at the large stage near the small pavilion, the imperial standard was raised and the band played the National Anthem. The Governor General escorted the Emperor and the Empress to the thrones on the stage.

As soon as the distinguished guests were seated, an official appeared and sought their permission for the commencement of the Durbar. The Emperor gave the consent and immediately bugles were sounded announcing the opening of the Durbar. The Emperor rose with a grave but pleasant expression and gave a speech which appealed to the heart and intellect – a speech that reflected his statesmanship as well as his concern for the welfare of his subjects.

Next, the high dignitaries, headed by the Governor General proceeded towards the throne to pay their homage, followed by the senior government officials, the Maharajas and others in their order of precedence according to protocol. After this the Emperor and the Empress proceeded on foot to the other stage escorted by the Governor General, the India secretary and a small retinue. At this time the imperial couple was clearly visible to the entire assembled spectators and they gave vent to their joy with loud resounding cheers.

As soon as the imperial couple were seated on thrones placed there, the band struck up. In tune with their music, The Heralds consisting of 24 mounted soldiers made a spectacular entry from different points outside the arena, sounding their bugles. One half of them were Indians and the other Europeans. They lined up in front of the thrones and two of them their leaders read out the coronation proclamation in a loud resounding voice, one in English and the other in Hindi. This proclamation was read out ceremoniously that day all over India, even in small towns, at 12 noon in English and the local languages.

The main purpose of holding the Durbar at Delhi was to make this proclamation. In order to stress its importance it was immediately followed by the sounding of the bugles and playing of the National Anthem by the band. All those assembled stood up in respect; the soldiers saluted and the canons were fired in ceremonial salute. As soon as the canon firing ceased, twelve thousand soldiers fired their weapons in the air in unison.

The bugles sounded again and Lord Harding stood up to announce the awards and honours granted by the Emperor on this auspicious occasion. The first among these was the awards of 50 lakhs rupees for the education of the common people of India. The next was the award of half a month's pay to all military personnel drawing salaries less than Rs. 50 per month; after that, the release of many prisoners.

The Emperor and Empress then walked back to the first stage and were seated on the thrones there. The Emperor read out some major policy decisions – the decision of shifting the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi. The partition of Bengal was revoked and it was brought under the rule of one Governor. This order appeased the discontent of the Bengalis caused by the partition of Bengal at the time of Lord CURZON. After these announcements the Imperial couple left the arena and returned to their camp.

A banquet was given at the Royal camp that night for all the dignitaries associated with the Durbar. This was followed by a meeting in the assembly hall of the camp attended by thousands of ladies and gentlemen.

The next day the Imperial couple hosted a garden party. Arrangements were made for the people to see them at close quarters after the party. Accordingly the Imperial couple dressed in their coronation robes, seated themselves on a raised platform. The huge crowd of many lakhs lined up in rows one behind the other in front of them. As one row of people moved forward, made obeisance and moved off to left and right, the next row moved forward. This way many lakhs of people assembled there paid homage to the sovereign in due order, without any commotion or confusion.

This was followed by the ceremonial parade by the assembled troops and the distribution of honours and awards to the main recipients in connection with the Durbar. The Imperial couple also laid the foundation stones for some of the proposed buildings required for making Delhi, the capital of India.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, the Emperor bade fare well to the Maharajas and others and proceeded with ceremony to the Railway station on the way to Calcutta and from there back to England. The Maharaja of Cochin was present there along with the other native Maharajas.

On the evening of 16<sup>th</sup> December, the Maharaja of Cochin and his retinue proceeded on their return journey by a special train from Queen's Road railway station. They reached Ajmer early next morning and continued their journey the same evening, as they wished to get back to Cochin as early as possible. By the time they reached Bombay on the 21<sup>st</sup> the Maharaja was very tired. He wished to take complete rest at Bombay. But as a result of the affectionate persuasion of certain prominent businessmen, he consented to receive an address of felicitation from them. He made a suitable reply to it.

When they left Bombay on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, the Maharaja was really exhausted. They reached Madras on the 26<sup>th</sup> and Shornur on 28<sup>th</sup> of December. The journey from Shornur to the capital, though short, was like a victory parade. Every railway station was profusely decorated by the enthusiastic people. They crowded together to present their address of felicitation. At Trichur a glittering reception was held and the Maharaja reached Ernakulam on the 29<sup>th</sup> at 1.30 p.m. The grandeur of the reception there was unprecedented. The whole city was in a festive mood. After exchanging a few gracious words with the people assembled at the station, the Maharaja proceeded to the Krishnavilasam palace. There the citizens of Ernakulam presented a long address of felicitation, couched in words fit to captivate the heart and concluded this with wishes expressing their warm affection: - "You have dedicated your life and your talents for the welfare and service of the State. All our hearts beat in unison with yours. We will keep on praying to the Almighty to grant you good health, prosperity, happiness and long life" It is sad to recall that this ruler who loves his subjects and did so much for their welfare was to bid farewell to them within a short period of barely two years.

## Eagerly Waiting Children

The Maharaja and his retinue were away from 27<sup>th</sup> October to 29<sup>th</sup> December. For Chakko's Children this long wait of two months seemed unending. The loving father brought two presents for his children - live talking parrot the first in Thrissur and a children's bicycle. Aby (M.C. Abraham) and George (Chakko George) took turns to ride the bicycle to church. The girls looked on with envy. They wished somebody would teach them to ride it. But in those days the idea of girls riding bicycles was unheard of. Moreover it was considered most improper for girls in their long skirts to climb on to the bicycle. Bicycles were a novelty in those days (1911-20). Many cousins from Ayyampilly and Parur learned to ride the bicycle on their visits to Trichur.

## MANCHERLY

A grand two-storeyed mansion built in colonial style; it had an imposing appearance which never failed to impress visitors. The palatial house stood on a one acre plot, with access to two parallel roads on the North and the South. The northern gate was the official entrance with a drive-way leading to the front verandah.

It was built for Mr. C. Mathai (elder brother of Dr. John Mathai, Finance Minister in the Nehru cabinet in New Delhi). He was the director of public instruction in the erstwhile Cochin state. He was a bachelor and he found the house too big for his requirement. The contractor Mr. N.O. Inasu, a family friend, offered the house to Chakko who was toying with the idea of acquiring a house and settling in Trichur. His transfer years were over and his children were in school. This house was ideally located close to both Boys' and Girls' schools.

The house was bought in 1913 and named 'Mancherly' – an abbreviated combination of 'Mazhuvancheri' and 'Eraly' – the family names of the master and mistress. Their seventh child Sosamma was born in the new house. More children and several grand children followed in later years.

### Labour in the Garden

There was an oval garden with a circular lily pond in the middle, in front of the house. The garden bordered with colorful crotons – unusual

in private homes at that time added beauty and grace to the house. Saplings of graft guavas, of mangoes like Malgoa, Neelam and Alphonso, etc, and other exotic fruits like Sapota and Mangosteen were bought from the govt farm (fore-runner of the present Agricultural University). They were planted in the compound and were soon bearing abundant fruits in season. Their shade kept the house cool and pleasant even in the hot summer.

The guard room for the police orderlies was on one side of the drive way to the main house, and the shed for the carriages on the other. A phaeton, a dog cart and later on, a jutka for long distance travel, were kept there. The stable for the horse was near by.

Mancherly had many out houses. On one side of the house was one where the granaries (-‘ara – two room-size cellars’) were located. Paddy brought in country craft along the water ways from the family fields at Ayyampilly was stored there. Next to it was the mortar room, where paddy was husked manually with an iron tipped long wooden pestle (olakka). Along side was the smoke chest where bananas were kept to ripen in warm smoke.

The bathing room, in the same block, was adjacent to the well. Water for bathing was drawn in buckets slung over a pulley attached to the bath-room window. Large copper vessels were always kept filled in readiness for the bather. Water stored in copper vessels was believed to have beneficial medicinal effect.

### **Laborious Process**

As the vessels emptied, fresh water was drawn by domestics. Chakko had a bath tub of cement sunk into the floor on one end of the bath room. But it was used only a few times as the filling and emptying proved laborious; still the oval bath tub remained taking up much space!

In summer when friends and relatives living in other parts of Trichur experienced water scarcity, they would come to Mancherly for a proper bath. Their company was welcomed by the family who found it no bother to adjust their bathing times.

The wood shed was on the other side of the house. It was an essential part of the establishment when all cooking was done on firewood. Logs of wood were stored in bulk and labour hired to chop them. The logs came from the small cashew estate the family owned near Trichur. The caretaker and the family who lived on the estate paid scant attention to the trees or fruits and nuts. Once in a way when Mrs. Chakko demanded it, they would bring a small offering of cashew nuts to the house. The kernel of the tender nuts made into curry was a delicacy. The children had fun roasting the hard nuts which would blaze out in the process and need to be expertly doused. This work and prising the kernel out of the nuts, a skilled job, were done by the servants. Cashew nuts balls with jaggery and coconut prepared by Mrs. Chakko was very special and mouth watering too!!

### **Impressive regalia**

Chakko was police commissioner when the family came to live in Mancherly. It was a high office and the attendant regalia was impressive and visitors were duly impressed seeing the orderlies in uniform standing at attention and saluting. Growing up with policemen, the children cultivated a sense of affection for the force, which lingered to the end of their lives. Living in a spacious bungalow, set in a large compound with an abundance of fruit trees, the children led a happy, healthy life.

There were occasional fights and arguments among the children. One afternoon Aby, the eldest boy, George the second and the younger Sarah had an argument as to who had the best hand-writing. They agreed that each should write a paragraph and submit it to Pappy (Chakko), for his decision. The work was soon finished and all three raced up the stairs to his office room and put the case before him for judgment. At that time, he was District Magistrate and was writing the judgment in a weighty case. He looked over their work carefully, smiled and gave the verdict in favour of Sarah, the youngest.

Chagrined and disappointed, Aby and George joined argument against Sarah downstairs in their study. Hot, and rude words were



exchanged. George shook an inkwell on Sarah's face and clothes. The yell that followed brought Pappy hurrying down the stairs. He took in the scene- a spell of silence followed, which was broken by Chakko. Beckoning George to his side he said- "I expected better from you, George, than to behave like this to a lady".

George's apology was as tearful as it was heart-felt. Ere long, when Sarah had washed and changed, the study was again humming with mirth and lively chatter.

### **The Family Court**

The children were trained to discipline themselves in a family court of their own-with a clerk, a lawyer each for the plaintiff and the defendant and with a judge, whose verdict had to be respected. Anybody who had been injured in any way or who was impolitely addressed had the right to lodge complaint before the convening officer.

The court sat every evening to hear the complaints and gave verdicts after examining witnesses, of course. The proceedings, carefully recorded, ran somewhat after this fashion:- "Whereas it had been brought to the notice of the court that George, son of Mr. Chakko, insulted his sister. Sarah by sticking his tongue out and otherwise making funny faces at her and whereas after examining witness, the court is satisfied that the accused George has been guilty of this misdemeanor to a lady, the court decides that he be subjected to the punishment of standing facing the corner for ten minutes and be deprived of his share of roasted cashewnuts for the day; and if the punishment is not complied with, the accused is to suffer the loss of two days' cashewnuts".

If the verdict called for corporal punishment it could be administered only by one of the parents. But lesser punishments were carried out by the Juveniles themselves. Thus the brother sister disputes were settled, and at the same time the family ties were forged tighter and the children were being trained in fair play and fair judgement.

## **On the trees, under the trees**

One day, Chakko drove into Mancherly bringing with him a distinguished visitor, Mr. Chandy, the Diwan (Chief Minister) to the Maharaja of Mysore. Seeing a large group of children on and under one of the trees, the guest asked him who they were. Without looking Chako answered, “Some are mine and others my cousin Varkey”.

“Which are yours and which are Varkey’s?” Chakko took a quick look and replied, “Oh, the ones on the tree are mine and the ones on the ground Varkey’s”. The Varkeys had forbidden their children from climbing trees for fear of accidents; but the Chakko, both boys and girls, started climbing trees practically from infancy.

The children organised a Sunday school for the two families. When it completed functioning for a year, they felt an anniversary celebration was appropriate. Sarah Chakko wrote the script for a play about Esau and Jacob for the occasion. The costumes and the sets were made by the children themselves. The play and the performance were much appreciated by the parents and neighbours.’

## **Snakes everywhere**

In Mancherly snakes were often found in all sorts of strange places – in the cow shed, chicken house, the outside toilet and even inside the house. The alarm that a snake was sighted would bring the entire squad of servants and orderlies on duty running to the spot, wielding suitable implements to deal with the offender. Sticks of all sizes, a spear and even a trident were kept in readiness. Operation snake had been perfected.

There was one wily snake which made off with eggs from the chicken house each day and was undetected for days, making the mistress suspect the woman who came at dawn to sweep the compound, whose chore it was to clean the chicken coop. The snake was finally seen by one of the servants and dealt with appropriately.

When Chakko was in town there used to be a stream of callers from all classes of society seeking his counsel and help. One day a

caller found Chakko in the garden pruning trees in working clothes. Taking him for a gardener he asked, "Is Mr. Chakko at home?" "I'll call him", he replied and went into the house. Soon he reappeared in his proper dress and the man greeted him with deference still unaware of the joke played on him. Later Chakko used to regale the family with this story.

One practical joke he played was on his brother-in-law, E.V. Mathew, the younger brother of Mrs. Chakko. Mathew was a great admirer of his Aliyan (brother-in-law). Once at dusk, while Mathew was in the front Verandah of Mancherly, a visitor came up the steps to him. From the flowing white robes, long beard and the cap on his head it was clear that he was a priest. He started talking in a language that sounded like Syriac and the word Yakub occurred a few times in the speech. It was evident that he wanted to see Chakko (Yakub in Syriac). With gestures Mathew invited the priest to take a seat and went in search said "He has not said anything about going out, so must be in the premises". Mathew returned to the priest and asked him to wait a while. But the priest made signs that he would come later and left the house.

A short time after that Chakko came up the steps of the back yard. Mathew told him about the Syrian priest who went away disappointed. "Never mind, probably it was not an important matter", said Chakko and went upstairs to his office room.

Sometime later, the priest came again; Mathew seated him and hurried upstairs to inform his brother-in-law. But to his great surprise, he was not in the office room or anywhere upstairs. Highly embarrassed he came down stairs and requested the priest to wait; and went inside to look for him. He could not find him there either. He went to his sister who was with the children and complained.

"See when the priest comes, Aliyan disappears and when Aliyan comes, the priest is not there, what am I to do" It was then that Chakko entered the room carrying mask with the long beard, the priest's cap and spectacles in his hand to the great mirth of all assembled

there. The front and back stairs at Mancherly helped him to play the trick on his brother-in-law who was himself known for playing practical jokes on others!

Chakko's mother once came to stay in Mancherly during lent. Mother and son sitting on a mat, used to take gruel to break the fast at noon. One day half way through his meal Chakko lay down on the mat and reminisced: "Amma, you remember our dog of the olden days at Ayyampilly. He would be given a pot full of rice-water with a little rice at the bottom. He would drink up the water until full and then go and lie down. After sometime he would lap up some more and lie down again and finally get at the rice! I am full like that dog now".

His mother had a quick repartee, "Because the dog of those old days drank rice water the present one can eat rice!" This is still used as a saying in the family.

The children had a special dining room. They sat on short legged wooden seats with legs crossed. Food was served in plates placed on the floor. Water for washing hands and face was kept in bell-metal vessels with spouts (kindis) on the broad parapet of the Verandah. As the children grew up they joined the seniors at the big table in the dining hall.

### **The Museum and the Zoo**

The famous Trichur zoo was only a stone's throw away from Mancherly. It was one place the children could always go to when they felt like an outing. The exhibits in the archeological section had little interest for them. In the main hall the skeleton of a whale suspended from the ceiling looked enormous. The skeleton of the elephant was interesting as the shape was familiar. The myth that the skeleton of the horse displayed was that of their old horse in Mancherly, made the children look at it with fascination.

The zoo section had a few open enclosures for the spotted deer; the horned buck the wild boar, the tortoise and the zebra. The monkeys had good cages with swings. The saddest creatures were the lions

the tigers the leopards and the panthers which were confined in cells barely 10' by 10'. They were under fed and under-exercised and totally emaciated. There was a deep pond in which an alligator was kept but the creature was seldom visible.

The most famous part of the zoo was the snake house. Visitors from far and wide made a bee-line for the snake house to see the King Cobra, which had the pride of place in that section.

The zoo had a sub-conscious effect on most children who grew up in Mancherly even the grand children. The roars of the lions and tigers, heard at close quarters at dawn and dusk can be quite frightening. Having seen the animals safely confined in their cages did not make the roaring any less menacing. The night mares often were of being chased by lions, which were close at heels, till one woke to unspeakable relief.

## **Hobby**

Chakko - On retirement Chakko kept himself busy taking up one hobby after another. In Gandhian days he made a charka himself and started spinning on it (Gandhiji's Khadi movement). Later he took to carpentry and set up his workshop in one of the main verandahs. Sawing, chiseling and planing of wood necessarily resulted in saw dust and shavings messing up the whole area. Mrs. Chakko was openly resentful. What annoyed her more was his justifying himself saying, "Houses are meant to be lived in and not for exhibition as models of neatness. Everyone should be free to do the thing he or she fancies". Following on carpentry came the stringing of cots.

In all these activities one of his children would be pressed into service whenever he wanted assistance. The fact that they did not have the least interest in the job being done and were utterly unhappy to miss the fun the others were having, did not seem to strike his mind or he ignored it. He then found a more interesting activity. He took to construction of houses. He took charge of the building of 'Marmion' - his eldest daughter's house. Then 'Thalalayam' for the church for renting out.

Each day he would walk to the site and spend hours watching the masons and carpenters at work, generally supervising the construction. While he enjoyed seeing the building take shape, the family felt that the physical effort was telling on his health. They watched with anxious concern as he walked the long drive way to Mancherly followed by a gang of workmen who had to be paid their wages. Hot, sweating and exhausted he would sit on the chair and drink the cool butter-milk kept in readiness.

### **The Sawing of Timber**

The sawing of timber for the houses was done in Mancherly. A working crew of two, set up their outfit under a shady mango tree. Logs were brought and the two men wielded the seven-foot saw – one man stood on the 3 ft platform while the other crouched on the ground. Between them they plied the saw up and down, reducing the logs to planks and ribs to make rafters, doors, windows etc. It was contract work – based on the surface area of the pieces.

One hot afternoon Chakko was resting in his arm chair in the front Verandah as usual. He could see the sawyers at work under the mango tree. Hoisting the log on to the sawing platform using long poles as levers was not easy. Chakko watched them struggling for sometime, got up and went there to give proper instructions. By the time the job was completed he was hot and sweating, but returned happy. Mrs. Chakko said with concern, “It is contract work and their head-ache; why should you tire yourself over it?”. His reply was, “How can I sit still when I see their stupidity?”.

### **House Guests**

In the years when there were no good hotels in Trichur, visitors had perforce to find accommodation in the houses of friends. A number of Chakko’s Friends thus came to stay at Mancherly. The hospitality was returned when he visited Kottayam, Trivandrum and other places.

Mr. O.M. Cherian was a frequent guest since he visited Trichur often in connection with his literary activities. Mr. E.J. John (Jagan’s

grand father), Mr. K.C. Mammen Mappilai and Mr. A.M. Varkey visited him in connection with church politics.

All Bishops of the Orthodox Church who visited Kunnankulam, a strong orthodox centre, would halt at Trichur. They were virtually Chakko's guests though they stayed in the church premises (Bishops do not stay in private homes). All meals were sent from the Mancherly kitchen. As a matter of courtesy, a male member of the family, usually a teenage son accompanied the servant, who carried the food and stood around, while the Bishop was being served. Salome, the third daughter once accompanied her brother Jacob on one such mission and saw from behind the door the bishop – Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, whose intercession people seek now. (He has now been canonized by the Orthodox Church). A frequent visitor was M.A.Achen, so known because he had acquired the distinction of a post graduate degree, so rare in those days. He became Bishop Ivanious of Bethany and later joined the Roman Catholic Church and became head of the Malankara rite of that church.

Another visitor was A.B. Salem an Indian Jew from Cochin who was a friend of Chakko and often stayed at Mancherly. As he ate only 'Kosher meat', Mrs. Chakko would send a live chicken to him. He would put on his cap and say the necessary prayers before slaughtering the bird. Thus the family ate 'Kosher meat' whenever Salem Kocha was a guest. Guests came to Mancherly without notice, V.I.P.s. family members, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins and Nephews and nieces – all were welcome.

### **Gracious Hostess**

Mrs. Chakko was a gracious hostess. She was never in a flurry. Meals were served on time. Special requirements of diet of each guest were attended to. She was a good manager. Provisions were stocked. The kitchen worked smoothly. Seldom did she raise her voice to correct servants. There was no situation she could not handle with poise and authority. She faced emergencies without making any sort of commotion. An unexpected guest was never a calamity at

Mancherly. All the children shared in offering hospitality traditional in Indian homes. Mrs. Chakko assigned tasks suitable to the ability of each child. She kept the house and compound very trim and tidy. To have the big house and inordinately large compound weeded and swept required strict supervision.

Mancherly had always been a large establishment. When Chakko was in office as police commissioner and later as Excise commissioner part of his office functioned in Mancherly and there were orderlies and underlings around. There were ten children and often grand children too. With adequate domestic help the house hold functioned smoothly. It was Mrs. Chakko's efficiency which was at the back of it all.

### **Domestic help**

Quite often in the cool of the evening, Mrs. Chakko would station herself at the southern gate (the tradesmen's entrance to Mancherly) to watch the world go by. The dwellers of the nearby colony of working class families, known as (Anju Muri) would be passing along the road, returning with the day's purchases from the bazaar. Seeing her they would stop deferentially and greet her, whereupon she would ask them what they had bought for dinner that day, what variety of fish was in the market, what was the price etc. She would ask after the children of each woman she was talking to. All of these pleased them no end. The half hour or so she spent there gave her a peep into the lives of these women. Most of them worked in Mancherly in one capacity or another. Annamma hand - sewed Mrs. Chakko's Jacket. Her work was exquisitely neat and Mrs. Chakko could never fault her. There was another Annamma who worked in Mancherly everyday husking paddy and pounding rice. She was a gifted raconteur. When the day's work was over and she waited to collect her wages, she would regale Mrs. Chakko with all the gossip in the 'Five Room' (Anju Muri). Her stories went on and on like those of the Arabian Nights, bringing in new characters at every stage. Her smooth flowing words and eloquent gestures dramatizing the incidents held her listeners spellbound. Her



gossip, however, was without malice and hurt no one. There was bullock – cart driver Anthony who did odd jobs. All of them respected Mrs. Chakko for her dignity and graciousness. She treated all her servants fairly never over generously.

Velu Nair drove the carriages and looked after the horse. He was forever asking for his salary in advance. He dealt directly with the master unlike the others who would approach Mrs. Chakko. There were frequent verbal exchanges between Velu Nair and the master on this matter. The angrier the master got the happier the applicant was. Velu Nair knew that the chance of his request being granted after the master's anger cooled were all the better.

Chakko owned the only phaeton in Trichur other than the catholic Bishop who also had a similar carriage. The Sunday trip to the church was in the phaeton. Riding in it was embarrassing for Chakko's daughters as the people stared as the carriage passed and they were in the more exposed seat facing backwards.

Often one or other of the carriages would be driven out to exercise the horse. The children were ordered to be passengers on such trips. Velu Nair would drive to a point on the road near his house and disappear for a while. After a reasonable interval the carriage would be driven back. All parties including the horse were happy.

### **Laundering of Clothes**

Washing of clothes was done at three levels. Commercial laundries were unknown. Daily washing was done in the house by the house maids. This was stone washing in the literal sense. The maids drew water from the well, they used bar soap and the clothes were sun dried on lines. Then there were the professional washer – women who did the weekly washing of the rough linen such as sheets, towels and daily wear. They steamed the linen with soda to take away the dirt and stains. The washing was done in nearby pools or streams. They did no ironing. The higher level of washing was done by professionals known by the Hindi name 'dhobi' who took a month or

more to return the clothes, cleaned and ironed. Only Sunday bests, pants and shirts were given for dhobi wash.

### **Last Days of Mrs. Chakko**

At one time Chakko's children were scattered on the surface of the earth – Aby was in Ceylon, George and Moncie (John) in England, Saramma in U.S.A. and the rest in India in Assam, Bombay, Raipur, Calcutta and Kerala. Mrs. Chakko was heard to remark that she made a world tour each night. Mrs. Chakko in her later years was a lone woman, living all by herself in the great big house. Often it was a grandson from 'Kadaville' who slept in Mancherly on 'guard duty'. With her there, it was home for all her children and grand children to spend their holidays. They all have happy memories of the time spent there. By sheer chance Achamma, her daughter -in- law, was with her on the night of September 14<sup>th</sup> 1957, when she died.

That day she attended to her daily routine maintaining her usual poise and dignity. She and Achamma had dinner together and she went to bed as usual. By midnight she suddenly woke up restless and breathless. To give her ease Achamma piled pillows at the head of the bed and helped her to sit up and lean on them. Before long she lay down again for comfort. But the breathlessness persisted with intermittent cough. She had to be propped up again. This struggle went on for a few hours. Even in this distress she never showed any signs of agitation; but took occasion to point out to Achamma, the ward robe where her clothes were kept (was she aware that she was sinking!). Though a physician was called in, no medical aid could save her; by dawn she breathed her last.

## CATHOLICOS AS METROPOLITAN

**H**.G. Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius, the Malankara Metropolitan, passed away on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1934. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December of the same year, the Malankara Association met at the M.D. Seminary, Kottayam and elected, the Catholicos himself to the office of Malankara Metropolitan, instead of electing a new Malankara Metropolitan. Besides, the constitution of the Malankara Sabha drawn up by H.G. Vattaseril Metropolitan, with some alterations made later, was accepted at this meeting. So this meeting of the M.D. Association of 1934 became an important milestone in the history of the Church.

According to protocol, The Catholicos as the bishop of a diocese was under the Malankara Metropolitan, whereas as the Catholicos he had authority over the latter. Also there had been difference of opinion on certain minor matters between H.H. the Catholicos and H.G. vattaseril Metopolitan. It was in this back ground, that the leaders thought it best, that both the offices should be held by the same person. Now that The Catholicos becomes The Malankara Metropolitan no such problems arise.

A meeting of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Christian Association was held on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1934, in The M.D. Seminary, Kottayam, under the presidentship of the third Catholicos, H.H. Mar Geevarghese II. Mar Gregorius Metropolitan of Kottayam diocese was seated to

his right and Mar Severius Metropolitan of Niranam and Mar Pelaxinus Metropolitan of Thumpamon, to his left.

After prayer by the Bava, Mr. V.G. George read out the circular sent by The Catholicos. The association secretary, Mr. K.A. Mathan Mappilai B.A. read the minutes which was passed unanimously.

It was followed by the Bava's introductory speech. Chakko then introduced the first resolution. He spoke about the crisis in the church, the failure of the recent peace talks, the necessity for an able leader and electing the right candidate for that purpose and the need for preserving our ancient glory. Then he moved the resolution proposing that Catholicos Moran Mar Geevarghese be elected to the office of the Malankara Metropolitan also.

The resolution was received with cheers and applause. Rev. Fr. Poothakuzhiyil Abraham seconded the resolution.

Mr. Pathrose Mathai M.A.B.L proposed an amendment that the tenure should be for a definite period of five years.

Rev. Fr. Abraham Tengumthotathil spoke giving his opinion that the catholicos should be The Metropolitan for life.

Mr. K.C. Mammen Mapillai criticised the speeches of Mr. Pathrose Mathai and Rev. Fr. Abraham. Then Mr. Pathrose Mathai withdrew his amendment and the resolution was passed unanimously.

## FIRE IN THE TEMPLE

In his forties Chakko became the head of the Police Department of Cochin State and along with it he had the titles – the commandant of the Nair Brigade of the State, as well as the head of the Mounted Body Guard of the Maharaja.

The Maharaja lived in the Kanakakunnu palace on the top of a hill, close to the town of Tripunithura, about 10 miles from Ernakulam. The police Headquarters was at Trichur; but the Superintendent Chakko was often away from the Head quarters on Inspection tours.

One night part of the Tripunithura Temple caught fire, while Chakko happened to be camping in the vicinity. It was part of the duty of the Police to help put out fires, as there was no separate fire brigades in those days. So Chakko mustered some Hindu Police men and sent them into the temple precincts to put out the fire. As he observed that, they were not tackling it in the proper way Chakko himself rushed into the premises and guided them to extinguish the fire, thus saving further damage to the temple.

It was only in the morning that the temple authorities learned that the Christian Chakko had entered the temple precincts, thereby desecrating it. They straight away went with the complaint against Chakko to the Maharaja at Kanakakunnu palace. The Maharaja listened to their vociferous complaint: how the sanctity of the holy

temple, close to the palace, had been violated. His Highness sat silently thinking for a while and replied, “It is not the Christian Chakko who entered the temple complex, but my Superintendent of police in the execution of his duty. Anyway he helped to save the temple from destruction. You better go and do all the rites necessary to restore the sanctity of the temple, bearing the expenses yourselves”.

It was this Maharaja, Sir Rama Varma, who had earlier selected Chakko from among his officers, sent him to Vellore for training in Police office school and appointed him head of the Police Department, the first Cochinite to hold the post, the earlier ones having been deputed from Madras government Police Department.

This Maharaja subsequently relinquished his throne to become a holy recluse (sanyasi) and earned the title “Rajarshi”.

### **Karingachira Church Litigation**

It was when Patriarch Abdulla was camping in the Karingachira church that some allegation was brought against the vicar Karuthedath kathanar. The vicar was arrested by the police Inspector and made to walk hand-cuffed to the Police station.

The deposition made by Chakko, the police commissioner and commandant of the Nair brigade of Cochin State as the fifth witness in the Vattippanam case:-

I had gone to the Kanakakunnu palace with my wife and daughter to present ourselves before the Maharaja – My daughter’s marriage had been fixed. We had been instructed to present her before the Maharaja prior to the wedding and were going there. We were walking to the palace for the purpose, when on the way, a messenger came from the Patriarch to summon me to his presence. I went there.

The Karingachira criminal case was one regarding tampering with the church offertory box. It was the day after the case or the day after that, the Patriarch sent for me- I had known about the case before I went to the church... At the church I had talked about the criminal case with sub Inspector Sebastian...

The Patriarch asked me if I could do anything about the case....

I answered, “the subordinate officers receive complaints and take necessary action. I am afraid I am unable to do anything in the matter. After that I did not linger there”.

When I went to the Patriarch the money in question was there in front of him... The sub Inspector and the Head Coustable who were writing the F.I.R. (First Information Report) told me that it was taken from beneath the cot and placed there.

### **Swadeshabhimani**

When ‘Swadeshabhimani’ Rama Krishna Pilla was banished from Travancore, Deacon Joseph Pulikkottil (he was Ramban later and died in 1942) gave him refuge in his residence at Kunnamkulam with all comforts. The Deacon at that time was publishing a magazine ‘Atmaposhini’. Mr. Pilla was appointed editor of the magazine. But Chakko as police commissioner exerted pressure on the deacon not to harbour him, because the relationship between the two states would be in jeopardy, if someone condemned to exile in Travancore was entertained in Cochin State. Though the Deacon protested, Mr. Ramakrishna Pilla left Kunnamkulam on his own accord.

### **Letter Chakko gave to K.E. Mammen**

(This is the reply I received from Mr. K.E. Mammen, a ‘Sarvodaya leader’ and an active participant in the Indian Independence movement in response to my enquiry:-)

The government of Mr. C.P. Rama Swamy Iyer arrested Sri. C.M. Stephen and me and jailed us for having taken part in the Independence movement. When we were released in (1939-40) we were debarred from educational institutions in Travacore. So we went to Cochin State. As Mr. M.A. Chakko and my father Mr. K.C. Eapen were close friends, we went to him for help. He gave us a letter to Rev. Fr. Palokkaran, The Principal of St. Thomas College. On the strength of that letter both of us got admission to the college; but due to lack of attendance we had to study in the same class we had been in for another year.

## **Dacoit Apprehended**

When Chakko was the police Superintendent he was held in great respect by the general public. There were thrilling stories about his exploits, one being the encounter in which the notorious dacoit Senkannan was apprehended.

Senkannan was a big headache to the Police. The superintendent and the whole police force tried their level best to capture him. But it was no mean task and at first they had no success. Senkannan's wife was from Kottayam. My former head master Rev. Fr. C.T. Kuriakose and cousin used to stay in her parent's house as paying guests, for their education in the C.M.S. College. When she came to stay at home for a few days, she kept on bragging about the heroics of her husband and the way he used to fool Chakko assuming different disguises. But finally the dacoit and his gang were captured. A big crowd gathered in front of Chakko's house when Senkannan and his allies were brought before the Superintendent.

### **The local legend regarding the capture is as follows:-**

Senkannan was a dacoit well known for his ability to escape the police net. Chakko therefore had to device a way to outwit him, in order to capture him. He decided to go in disguise along with a small gang of policemen in mufti to meet Senkannan at his hideout. He instructed his policemen to remain outside and asked for a private talk with Senkannan. The policemen were told to remain outside concealing their weapons, to enter the place for action only when he blew his whistle. Chakko was ushered into Senkannan's presence but was dismayed to find that the dacoit was attended by a bodyguard. He very convincingly requested a glass of water to be brought to refresh him after his journey. The body guard was sent to bring water. As soon as he left, Chakko blew his whistle and the posse of policemen rushed in and captured the unwitting Senkannan.

### **A share for the North also**

As the sixth witness in the 'Vattipanam case' on 29<sup>th</sup> Edavom 1092, Mr. E.J. John in his deposition says thus: - In chief.



From the Managing Committee meeting convened on Chingam 1085-

In that meeting, speaking for the North Mr. M.A. Chakko stated that the Parumala Seminary and its assets were being treated as the particular property of the Niranam Congregation and hence financial help from the seminary was being extended only to schools run by the churches in the south. Mr. Chakko argued that Parumala belonged to all and its assets must be made available to schools run by the church in the North also.

My opinion was that the Parumala assets belonged to the Niranam Methrasanam Congregation. At that time no argument was raised that the Parumala assets were under joint trustees or should be brought under joint trustees. Actually the Parumala assets were never included in joint Trusteeship. My house is only two miles away from Parumala Seminary. Messers K.C. Mammen Mappila, K.M. Mammen and Rev. Fr. Geevarghese attended the meeting solely for requesting monetary help to run the Mar Gregorius school and the M.D. Seminary School. They took no part in the proceedings of the committee.

### **In the Souvenir**

In 1990 the Kerala government published a book about the Kerala Legislative Assembly titled "100 years of Legislative Bodies in Kerala (1888-1988) A centenary Souvenir", with photographs of all the Legislative Assembly members of Cochin and Travancore and short biographical note underneath each photograph. This is the entry below the photograph of M.A. Chakko, Sri M.A. Chakko.

Born in 1870 at Ayyampilly, B.A. studied law for three years, appointed as the first District Magistrate in the State became Superintendent of police and Superintendent of Excise and Revenue did signal service in re-organizing the cochin police; was member cochin legislative council for several years; expired.

### **A legend (source-Rema Tharakan)**

St. George is a very popular saint in Kerala. The church in Edapally dedicated to St. George attracts many devotees from far and near.

One such devote was X of Choolaparampu, a well known family of the locality. X, an old man was an alcoholic who habitually wandered the streets and often found himself in the church precincts.

Late one night, he got home in a highly exhilarated state. He declared that he had a vision of St. George! The Saint had come to the church on his white horse and had spoken to him. The Saint had told him that he should give up drinking; it was not a good practice.

### **X never touched liquor again**

The local people gave no credence to his story. They knew that it was M.A. Chakko who went riding past as he often did and stopped at the church and had spoken to X who was inebriated.

As commandant of Nair Brigade (of the Maharaja of Cochin) M.A Chakko participated on horse back in the annual “Athachamayam” procession of the Maharaja in the hill palace of Tripunithara. It is likely that he did his riding practice in the Edapally area in the quiet of the night.

## THE TRICHUR RIOT

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1921 Sri. C. Rajagopalachari and Sri. Kurur Neelakantan Namboodripad convened a public meeting in Trichur to campaign for the non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. Goondas disrupted the meeting and stirred up violence, marking the beginning of the 'Trichur Riot'—'The Encyclopedia of Kerala History' (Kerala Charithra Nikandu) says, "This was interpreted as a Hindu- Christian confrontation and that when it spread far and wide the government banned public meetings for one year. This ban adversely affected the cause of the national resurgence. The riot has also been interpreted as the protest of the Christian merchant class against the influence of the caste Hindu feudal land lords in government administration".

Joseph Mundasseri in his autobiography "Kozhinja Elakal" writes, Hindu and Christian communities by tradition kept to themselves without any interaction. It was in my high school days that the problem of the Hindu and Christian communities, living in mutual alienation and growing in mutual animosity reached its climax, culminating in the eruption of the Trichur riots. Oh! Now today when I think of the event I can feel the terror of it. We feared that the flames of the raging commercial violence in Trichur would spread even as far as our Kandassamkadavu 8 or 9 miles away. What was the fundamental cause of this riot? At that time different people attributed it to different

causes. But the root cause was the communal friction, induced by the wealthy caste Hindus wielding influence in the government administration and the Christian merchant class having ascendancy in the commercial field. In modern parlance it was the confrontation between the failing feudalism and the waxing capitalism.

Coming back to the days of the riot- the District Magistrate, at that time was Sri. C.V. Antony. He later became the Chief Justice of Cochin State and was popularly known as Kalliath Judge. He was going in a rickshaw on his official duty from his residence in Chembukavu to the 'round' escorted by his body guard, Kanya Moni hefty muscular man from Ollur. The Catholic Syrian Bank had just been founded. "Bishop Menachary Building" was the biggest in the round and the next in size was the Head Office of the Catholic Syrian Bank, which has now given place to the main branch. There the founder Directors of the Bank including Iyyunni Vakil, Ouseph Vakil, Dr. A.R. Menon and other prominent senior citizens had assembled in serious concern to discuss the situation. The District Magistrate's rickshaw had almost reached the precincts of the building. All of a sudden a miscreant appeared behind him aiming a blow with a heavy pestle (Olakka). The bodyguard intervened in time to ward it off and received it on himself. The District Magistrate escaped unhurt, but Kanyamoni had to be hospitalized. This assault incensed the public. Under the leadership of Iyyunni vakil and Dr. A.R. Menon, they met the Diwan who was camping in the government guest house and registered their complaint demanding, "Is there no police? No army? No Magistrate?"

Immediately Christian Officials M.A. Chakko and the second class Magistrate were removed from their posts. The famous words the Diwan uttered, "I am the police; I am the army, I am the Magistrate" (Nan than police, Nan than Army, Nan than Magistrate) became the magical formula for the maintenance of peace. Urged to take Draconian measures by the Diwan, the police took strong action, drove off the militant rowdies and suppressed the rebellion. Peace and rule of law was restored. Had not the revolt been put down at that time the repercussions would have been very serious. The government granted pension to Kaniyamoni for bravery. The benefit was extended

to the next generation also. His successors living in Chmebukavu today still enjoy the pension, a living memorial of the Trichur riot.

Reverting to Sri. Mundasserry's auto biography "There were many factors in favour of the confrontation between the Nairs and the Christians. By accident it so happened that police Supt. and the District Magistrate (honourable men who would not instigate disturbance and peace) belonged to the Christian community. So the Christians became more aggressive. Moreover the whole of India was under the sovereignty of the white man. In the turbulence, Christians even resorted to armed robbery flaunting the picture of the king Emperor.

The Nairs in general were incensed by it. In their country, ruled by their Rajah there was no question of their tolerating the impudence and the affected supremacy of another community. Diwan Vijayaragavachari was sandwiched between these two fighting factions. The agitating Nairs held him forcibly and were adamant that they would be satisfied by nothing short of the summary removal of the police superintendent and the District Magistrate. Left with no option, under their threat, the Diwan managed to save his skin and escape declaring, "I am all in all" (Ellam Nan than). The ravages of the riot were not negligible, yet, in consequence, a better understanding was reached by the Hindus and the Christians. The Trichur riot was actually a turning point in the political social situation of Cochin State. It was after this event that the commercial establishment extended further and further west along the municipal Road to the 'Round' surrounding the temple maidan. Nairs were also gradually inclining towards capitalism. After the riot when some of us went round the town, the ravages were visible here and there mainly in the form of shattered glass in the doors of huge storeyed buildings.

There are many tales in connection with the cruel looting. One story in particular is worth mentioning. Christians plundered the shops of the Hindus and Hindus looted the shops of the Christians. A textile shop "T.R. Krishna Iyer and sons" stood near "Chakola's silk House" on the High Road. Mr. Iyer's knowledge of English enabled him to import textiles straight from Manchester and he had a good collection

of imports in the shop. It was one of the shops looted by the Christians. Sri Pallan Kunjuvareed, a wealthy Christian residing in Ariyangadi hearing about it rushed to the spot to dissuade the plunderers.

But to no avail. An intelligent man, blessed with many children, he ran home and got together everyone in the house, including the women folk to join in the looting. The booty collected he kept safe in his godowns. Sri. Iyer lost all he had, became a pauper and had to live on the pittance earned from a small job. When all was quiet and law prevailed Sri. Kunjuvareed took pains to trace Sri. Iyer and restored the goods he had saved. Sri Iyer's joy knew no bounds. He sold part of it to Chakola and opened a shop in 'round west'. "T.R. Rama Iyer and Bros" where it still functions. Similar friendly gestures may have been extended the other way round also.

In short, the Trichur riot was not like the "Mopila Lahala" of Malabar. Actually in Trichur Hindus and Christians lived in amity. It was evident that they had no desire to hurt each other especially because of their educational and cultural background.

The Trichur Nair-Christian riot took place in 1096 (1921 A.D). The Cochin State police was not able to contain the uprising. Armed forces (probably M.S.P.) had to be called in from outside. Immediately after the riot Chakko was removed from the police department and posted as the Excise commissioner on 17th March 1921 (1096 Meenam).

In 1932, Sri. T.K. Krishna Menon published "Progress Cochin" in English. On page 104 it says The accession to the throne of his Highness Maharaja Sri. Sir. Rama Varma G.C.I.E, the present ruler on the 22 Virchikam 1090. March was epoch in the history of the police administration in Cochin. Mr. M.A. Chakko B.A. was the Department Head when His Highness Maharaja took up the reign of government. He was succeeded on the 4<sup>th</sup> Meenam 1096 by Mr. A.W. Brown".

The official name of government Police Department Head was "Superintendent of police". It was changed to "commissioner of Police" in Mr. Brown's time.

## A DEFALCATION CHARGE AND ACQUITTAL

In response to my enquiries, Valsa Varghese Paul, the granddaughter of M.A. Chakko (the daughter of Dr. Chakko George) replied as follows (She is married to Dr. Varghese Paul, the chief Physician of the Jubilee Mission Hospital in Trichur).

When my parents were alive, we maintained close contact with E.V. Mathew (Advocate, Ernakulam) who is the younger brother of my grand mother Mrs. M.A. Chakko. E.V. Mathew had great respect and affection for his brother-in-law M.A. Chakko, who had given him positive help and guidance in his education as well as in securing suitable employment.

It was during one of his visits to our house that he described how M.A. Chakko was falsely implicated in a defalcation case and how as a consequence he had to undergo great mental stress and agony for years together.

It happened in the year 1924, Chakko had been transferred from the Police Department to the Excise Department, following the Trichur Riots. A token increment of Rs. 50 in salary was given as a justification for the transfer. One Sunderesa Iyer was the manager in the excise office at that time.

The procedure followed in the Excise Department, for the issue of opium and ganja was as follows:- The contractor would deposit the

cost of the item he needed in the Government Treasury and get a receipt for the same. On production of this receipt at the excise office, the office manager would issue the specified quantity of opium or ganja to the contractor. But here the Manager, the contractor and the Accountant in the accounts office colluded with each other fraudulently to make illegal monetary gains. The manager would issue quantities of the items far in excess of the quantities covered by the amount deposited by the contractor. From the gain thus made by the contractor, he would pay the manager a large amount of money as his share. The manager would then cook up the accounts in the stock register. This was the situation when Chakko took charge of the department.

Sometime after taking charge Chakko started suspecting that there was something wrong going on in the department. It was probably the life style of the manager with several musical concerts being staged at his residence and similar extravagances which aroused this suspicion. Anyway as a precautionary measure Chakko locked the store room one day with two locks. He entrusted the key of one lock with the manager. The other key he handed over to another officer in the excise department.

Chakko inspected the register of the past few years to ascertain if any loss had been caused to the government. He also checked the stock position. It came to light that there had been a monetary loss to the extent of Rs. 30,000/- prior to the date he took over charge of the department from his predecessor Mr. Brown and Rs. 90,000/- after that date.

Chakko reported the matter to the government. Although he was the trusted officer of the previous Maharaja, who had since abdicated the throne, Chakko did not have the same relationship with the current Maharaja. Instead of the effort made by Chakko in bringing the fraud to light being appreciated, moves were under way to initiate criminal proceedings against him as one of the accused and to arrest him. But the Diwan knew Chakko well, did not give permission for this precipitate action. However certain influential invertebrate opponents of Chakko managed to get hold of the office copies of some orders signed by Chakko from the excise office. They cut off the original



text from these orders and used the narrow space left between the original text notes forging his hand-writing. This gave the impression that they were notes issued by Chakko to the manager instructing him to issue certain quantities of opium or ganja to the contractor as he had already received payment for the same. Chakko's opponents presented these forged notes before the Diwan as clear proof that Chakko was involved in this fraud! The Diwan scrutinized these notes and remarked, "Would any fool write notes like this, much less an intelligent officer like Chakko?"

The upright and impartial Diwan called his peon and asked him to light a candle. Then he burnt all the notes brought by Chakko's detractors, one by one, in their presence. Then he told them, "you can institute a civil case against Chakko if you want". The influential opponents of Chakko had even kept a police sub-inspector ready, anticipating the Diwan's favourable order to charge a criminal case to arrest him and take him away in hand-cuffs (This story of the forged notes was revealed later by the Diwan himself many years after his retirement to a relative of Chakko. This relative and the Diwan were friends of long standing).

Subsequently two civil cases were filed against Chakko and the contractor one pertaining to opium and the other pertaining to ganja. All the immovable property of Chakko was attached, to prevent him from disposing any of them. On receipt of the summons, Chakko prepared his replies covering all relevant details with the help of E. V. Mathew, his wife's brother newly enrolled as advocate. In the light of mature consideration the defense was entrusted to senior advocates Mr. Neelakanta Iyer from Palakkad, advocate P.K. Varghese from Ernakulam, Chakko's brother-in-law E. V. Mathew and Barrister V.K. John. These advocates and the barrister argued the case. The verdict of the lower court went against Chakko, requiring an amount of one and a half lakh rupees to be recovered from him.

At the intervention of the political agent who was an Englishman, an appeal was filed against this verdict, and a special bench of the court was constituted to prevent undue interference from those in power and from other influential people. Chakko won the case; he

was exonerated and his pension was restored in full. Thus came to an end a long eight years of mental tension and worry.

His daughter Sosamma recalls that during the time when Chakko's assets were frozen, the household expenses could be met without much strain since he had some rubber plantations and coconut groves. The children remember that Mrs. Chakko was particular that their financial difficulties were in no way reflected in the way of dressing or in her hospitality towards the guests.

Chakko never wasted any of the opportunities that came his way, his characteristic outspokenness and determination to go forward despite any opposition brought him into conflict with many powerful opponents. He also had to suffer a lot in consequence. But none of these adversities affected his resolution. As he advanced in age, the respect and regard the public had for him only increased all the more. This is clearly borne out by the strong move, towards the end of his life to get him elected chairman of the Trichur Municipal council.

13 - 1

## **MALANKARA CHURCH MUST REMAIN UNITED**

**Two articles by M.A. Chakko**

The unity and independence of Malankara Church was Mr. Chakko's over-whelming desire and dream. They reverberate constantly in his speeches and writings. At the same time he was concerned about the possibility of a repeat of the situation that led to a split in the church during the time Mar Athanasius of Palakkunnam and wanted to avoid it at any cost. It is because of the eminence of Mr. Chakko in the forums of the church discussing peace, that the church was able to go forward without a split between the 'Southerners' and the 'Northerners'. Several peace talks between the Patriarchial and Catholicate sects had failed. This was attributed by some members of the Catholicate group to the thoughtless and inflexible stance of the other group. Therefore it was thought that all efforts to find a compromise should be relinquished and that the church should go forward relying solely on the rights obtained through the authority of the Catholicos. It was Chakko's desire that the northerners should some - how be persuaded to co-operate and thus avoid a split in the church. Later believing the conciliatory meetings at Aluva was successful, Mr. Chakko spent that night at college hill in great excitement and joy. His delight sprang from his belief that his life's

mission regarding the church was fulfilled. He stayed awake that night and talked to Mathen Mappillai several times about the future programmes of a united Syrian Orthodox Church”.

In this chapter we reproduce two articles Mr. Chakko wrote about unity in the church.

### **Reunification - Peace initiatives -1937**

(This article written by Mr. M.A. Chakko is taken from the book, ‘Malankara Sabha’, published by Rev. Fr. T.C. Yakob from Syrian Seminary. The said book contains two articles in Malayalam. The first is a research paper on the ‘Catholicate trust’, written by Rao Saheb O.M. Cherian. That is mainly history. The second article, by Mr. M.A. Chakko is on the expectations and opportunities for the future.

Fr. Yacob, in his introduction, comments that there is hardly any one in our community who can surpass Mr. Chakko’s foresight on events to expect, emanating from a sound grasp of history. He continues, “There can be no two opinions that these two articles written by individuals of such eminence, famed for their multifarious activities, and who sincerely yearn for the prosperity of Malankara Orthodox Church, would be read extensively by the members of the community”.

Because a full version of the book was not available, Mr. Chakko’s article was retrieved from a photocopy which belonged to my friend, Mr. P.C. Mathew, Kunnankulam).

The article follows:-

“Ignorance is disastrous. When restrained it may be manageable. But when blind ignorance bursts out into tempestuous scrambles it bumps around, knocks down and damages everything that would otherwise remain stable. This is true in social and spiritual movements as it is in nature”.

With the above quotation from a prominent leader of India, let me point out a few facts.

To settle the disputes in Malankara church, the late Patriarch, Mar Elias bava, who is entombed at Manjanikkara journeyed to Kerala and arrived at the Aluva Seminary.

He embraced Geverghese Mar Dionesius metropolitan, who visited him there, and established close friendship with him. The Patriarch and the metropolitan made earnest efforts to work out a scheme of settlement acceptable to both the warring groups of Malankara Church. Unfortunately, like Prophet Moses, they were not destined to enter Promised Land, but only to see it from afar; both of them passed away.

In their respective positions, Mar Aprem was enthroned in Antioch and Geverghese Mar Baselios in Malankara. Aprem bava is a celebrated primate noted for his extensive knowledge, faith and spiritual traditions. Likewise, it is accepted by everyone in Malankara that Geverghese Beselios bava is a guardian of traditions and faith, in the likeness of Mar Gregorios metropolitan of Parumala. Under these circumstances, one wonders, how the truthful laity of our Church can continue the hostilities any longer.

After Aprem bava was enthroned in Antioch, everyone was enthralled by his delectable messages expressed through his directives and through his visitors. His first instruction was that all the bishops of Malankara church shall visit the aging Dionesius metropolitan, make peace with him and declare allegiance to him. His second message was to advise the different factions in Malankara Church to get along in peace, and to assure that no claim of privileges and authority over Malankara by the Antiochians would be entertained. There is no need to elaborate how elated and hopeful the people of Malankara felt about these two announcements. Thus, it was after a peace process was initiated that Mar Dionesius metropolitan passed away in the month of Kumbhom, 1109(1934)

Those anxious days passed off without undue difficulties. The funeral of the metropolitan was undertaken in all serenity. It was thought appropriate to call a meeting to further the peace programme

without delay, before the 30<sup>th</sup> day after the demise of the metropolitan .Advocate Thomas Palambadom, enthusiastic and reputed for comprehending complex problems, was the prime player of this scene. At his residence, a meeting of leaders of both factions and some others sponsored by the clergy was held under the chairmanship of Mar Thimotheos metropolitan, to discuss the possibilities for peace in the Church. After prolonged and arduous deliberations by a formula acceptable to both sides was worked out. It was recorded and signed. That was a joyous day when seeds of unity were sown in Malankara. People on both sides were overwhelmed with love and friendship; tears of joy sprang from their eyes. Alas! that day passed. The detractor did not stay idle; he planted weeds of distrust that same night. It turned out as if we had only dreamt about peace.

It is relevant to consider why the agreement signed on that day was not acceptable to the Antiochians. For an answer we have to look back at events over thousands of years. Our belief is that humans are descendents of Noah. Scientists declare that the racial diversity in colour, physique etc; are brought about by environmental differences of territories they live in. If we agree that this variety in Physical characteristics is due to the aforesaid reason, we must surmise that the same factors will influence the minds and attitudes of people, as well. It is known that Malankara Christians received baptism from St. Thomas. Integration with those who arrived later with Cana Thomas did not change or influence the traditions of Malankara. This is not surprising either, because Malankara Christians treasured the values and customs of Kerala which they had imbibed from mother's milk and from which they derived strength and courage.

As always, the disagreements we have with the Antiochians are rooted in matters related to the administration of the church. In matters of faith there has not been any lapse on our part. On that issue we are a grade above the foreigners. Our clergy also is above reproach on this count. Seeking refuge in the Roman church for subsistence or because of obstinacy is a recent phenomenon considered ignominious

by the children of our Church. Therefore, the dislike towards us displayed by the occupants of the Antiochian throne and their deputies, and the consequent conflicts, depositions, litigations and quarrels between us are all undoubtedly about the equations of administrative power. If we initiate a consensual programme to ameliorate this situation, we could achieve a durable alliance between the Church of Malankara and the throne of Antioch. The lessons those seated on the throne of Antioch and their authorities have learned about church administration are very different from what we and our ancestors have learned. This mystery can be resolved easily if we spare a little time to think about it. The throne of Antioch and that of the Roman Popes were established in places where the writ of the Roman empire prevailed. On the other hand, the Malankara church and the Catholicate of the East were founded and functioned outside the purview of the Roman Empire. The Seleucian Catholicate was in Persia; the relations we had with that church was limited to ordaining our bishop as and when we needed. We did not invite them or depend upon them for advice on matters of administration. Historically, we were ruled all along by our own Archdeacons or bishops.

During the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, and later at the time of the Universal Synod, Antioch and Rome were under the rule of the Roman emperor. From the days of Augustus Caesar their sovereignty was vested in the emperor. From the time of emperor Constantine, the church administration also was, more or less, in the clutches of the sovereign. A Patriarch or Pope who won the emperor's affections became the centre of power in the churches. The patriarchs who came later also remained subjugated to the powers of the state. In the end, the Sultan of Turkey and the Popes who later became rulers were the ones to gift the authority routinely to the Patriarch of Antioch.

This was not the tradition in Malankara. History has it that our homeland, Kerala was initially ruled by Perumals. According to legends, even the Perumals were brought in from the Chera dynasty and the term of each one was restricted to twelve years. After the Perumal

era, Kerala, where the Malankara church is dispersed all over, split into several fiefdoms under the independent control of numerous titular rulers. Later, when the Portuguese came they found that there were many rulers here. There is historical evidence that the crown and scepter that belonged to an erstwhile Christian royal dynasty were presented to the Portuguese. Everyone knows that such proliferation of independent authorities is not conducive to the establishment and growth of centralized power. Local groups, village elders, martial gurus, regional chieftains, territorial bigwigs, all made up different facets of power structure and governance of Kerala. It was a long time before the principalities (with some semblance of sovereignty) like Samoothiri, Perumbadappu, Edappalli, Thekkumkoor and Vadkkumkoor evolved. The state of Travancore was established later. The Malankara Christians, who mastered the tactics to survive in this system, are unlikely to have formed any idea of centralized authority; in fact, they never had. For these Christians of Syrian ancestry their parish functioned somewhat like a village council. The parish council was the administrative body of the local church. The parishes were independently governed entities, and one did not have control over another. Even when a parish was divided for the convenience of members and a new church was built, the new parish became independent of the previous one. The parishes came together to form an archdiocese. They collectively selected their bishops who were ordained by the Catholicos of the East (Persia) and after the Catholicate ceased to exist, by the patriarch (Antioch). The Catholicos and the Patriarch always yielded to these demands with paternal concern and affection. These respected foreign fathers ordained our bishops and gave them appropriate charters of authority.

In Anthioch and Rome, the Patriarch or the Pope appoints and removes bisops according to his own prerogative. In Malankara they never exercised this prerogative. The point stressed here is only that the rules in Malankara are very different from those in those foreign lands. There may be disagreement as to which system is better; but, for the moment, that is irrelevant.



It is because the Patriarch of Antioch or his emissaries tried to impose their administrative style, ignoring the Malankara system that these endless squabbles and disputes surfaced. The meeting at Palambadom, Kottayam, was an effort to bring about concord in the Church by integrating these two dissimilar methods, as much as possible. When we were close to success, the enemy got to act. The rest of the story is very recent and needs no elaboration.

As regards administrative authority, both sides had concurred at the Aluva Synod of 1086 (1911). From then on, after twelve years of hostilities, the same conclusions prevailed at the Palambadom meeting. Still, the loyalists of Antioch tore away their masks to display their true colours. “God is willing (to grant your request), but the pujari won’t let him”, the saying goes.

Divisive forces gathered in the West to depose the saintly and respected Abded Mashiha patriarch. It is relevant to consider if the subsequent incumbents are not apprehensive of a revival of similar forces against them. Some people in Antioch see Malankara as their treasure chest. It is worthwhile considering if the amount of money and gold gathered by the patriarchs Pathros bava and Abdulla bava, from Malankara, has not fuelled the imagination of those in Antioch. Everyone would agree that Mar Elias bava, who passed away at Manjinikkara, and his successor, Mar Aprem bava were great sages, pure in body and mind. Yet they were unable to foresee the machinations of Mar Yulios metropolitan who usurped the position of ‘Antiochian Delegate’ from Mar Ostathios metropolitan. The directive sent out to Malankara by Mar Elias bava through him was artfully stowed away by that trusted servant and never reached the Malankara Christians. The chorus of complaints by the congregation about this became cries in the wilderness. At last, with a resolve to restore peace here, Mar Elias bava decided to undertake a journey to Malankara. After his arrival he stayed at Aluva where he was met by Mar Dionesius metropolitan. As soon as he met him, he managed to ‘grant the boon, before the pujari could get his act in’. Unfortunately, before

he could accomplish anything more of his plans, he passed away and was entombed at Manjinikkara. Why was he unable to fulfil his wishes? The answer is available from Mr. Panackal Pathappan Aipuru, who is a high official in Madras.

Mr. Aipuru is the grandson of Panackal Aipuru who, along with Kurien writer, shone high on the horizons of Malankara church during the visit of Pathros bava in the year 1050 (1875), and the only son of Panackal Pathappan who was a close friend of Abdulla bava. He received Elias bava in Madras. The bava was very pleased to meet Mr. Aipuru who was an ardent supporter of the Antiochian sect. He enquired about Malankara matters and got a fairly good grasp of the situation. Well informed about the hopes and expectations of the Malankara people, he assured Mr. Aipuru that he was happy to proceed on those lines to achieve peace in the Church. He said that he would set the process in motion as soon as he reached Aluva, and instructed Mr. Aipuru to be there to further the task. In compliance Mr. Aipuru came to Aluva and stayed there for some days. But the persistent presence of Yulios metropolitan unnerved the Patriarch so much that he could not discuss church matters effectively with Mr. Aipuru or Mr. George Philip, (Executive Engineer) who was there to assist him. To get away from Yulios metropolitan, Bava decided to move to Malayilkurishu church and asked Mr. Aipuru and Mr. Philip to join him there, to continue discussions without the unwelcome interference. Even there the Bava could not escape the pestering presence of Yulios metropolitan. Mr. Aipuru went back in utter dismay. Elias bava was in great discomfiture to permit Mr. Aipuru to leave. Thus, Mr. Aipuru's eyes opened; a new awareness filled his mind. From then on, the patriarch faction is treating Mr. Aipuru, who was earlier pampered and protected like the pupil of their eyes, (as in the case of Advocate Palambadom after the last Karingachira meeting) with scant respect. It is widely recognized that Yulios metropolitan started murmuring about Mr. Palambadom switching sides, only after the latter met Elias bava at Malayilkurishu church to convey the decisions of the conciliatory meeting at Trivandrum.

Why was the scheme, approved by all and signed at the Palambadom meeting not sent to the Patriarch by his delegate? Why did Aprem bava ignore this fact?

How can the Bava's assurance, that if the Malankara dispute is amicably settled, there will not be any pressure from Antioch regarding their rights, be fruitful? Mar Yulios metropolitan who blocked the communication sent by Elias bava to Malankara needs no further education in the art of manipulation. The question whether the decisions made by the Malankara church should be placed before the Patriarch or not is decided by Yulios metropolitan; not by people of Malankara; nor by the Patriarch. We have to take serious note of this state of affairs.

Now, what are the weeds planted at night by the enemy. They are, threats of excommunication and termination of the Catholicate, concocted to mislead the faithful by distorting history; whitewashed black lies; obliteration of truth; and contradicting themselves against their conscience. These facts are detailed in "Malankara Sabha", written by Rao Saheb O.M. Cherian.

I pray only that the turbulent violence of ignorance described in the beginning does not cause serious damages to our Church.

13 - 2

## **DISUNITY A FORERUNNER OF DISASTER**

**This article was kindly sent to us by Joice Thottakkad**

Expecting many members of the Malankara Church to take part in the meetings scheduled at Ernakulam on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Makaram and at Karingachira on the next 18<sup>th</sup>, a few issues are presented here for the serious consideration of the participants.

The sword of conflict fell on Malankara Church at the synod called by Mar Abdulla bava at the 'Old Seminary', Kottayam in the year, 1085 (AD 1910). Abdulla bava was disappointed at the Royal Court judgment in the Malankara trust case and was concerned that this judgment deprives the Patriarch of Antioch of all temporal authority over the Malankara Church. The Bava indicated his wish that the representatives of the parishes of Malankara Church, which had received and entertained him with great reverence, should agree and pass a resolution to accord temporal rights to the patriarch. When it became clear that the synod was not inclined to oblige, Bava was furious. The meeting ended in discord.

Thereafter, efforts to achieve this objective in other devious ways were on. Patriarch demanded that all bishops of the Church sign and register an undertaking to this effect. Slowly it came to light that Osthathios bava wished to be nominated as a delegate of the Patriarch

and that way access temporal power in the governance of the church. The foreigners who came with the Patriarch also favored this. The bishops vehemently opposed; Mar Gevarghese Dionesius refused to yield. When it was known that those who did not accede to the demand would face ecclesiastical disciplinary actions of suspension, Mar Kurilos metropolitan conceded and signed and registered the document. Poulos Mar Athanasius, who was to be ordained as the bishop of the Northern Dioceses which were devoid of leadership, had to sign up before his ordination. It came about that those who did not cooperate would not be ordained to higher echelons of priesthood.

Meanwhile, many parishes brought their internal problems and squabbles to Bava for settlement. They had to sign and register agreements accepting temporal authority of the Patriarch. The people at large, who wanted to retain the freedom of internal governance of the Church, were alarmed. They started resisting these attempts as and when occasions arose.

Apparently as a consequence of this, Bava released a proclamation suspending the 'Malankara Methran'. At the same time, Mar Evanios metropolitan of Kandanad and Mar Alvares Yulios metropolitan wrote articles to explain that the above acts of the Patriarch were untenable and illegal. Shortly afterwards, the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Association, comprising representatives of all parishes of the Church, met at M.D. Seminary, Kottayam and passed resolutions rejecting the suspension of the 'Malankara Methran' and demanding an investigation into the legitimacy of Patriarch Abdulla's accession to the throne of Antioch. Thereafter, one faction came to be called the 'Bava' (patriarch) sect, and the other, the 'Methran' (bishop) sect.

It was time for Patriarch Abdulla bava to return to Antioch. Meanwhile there were many attempts for a settlement under the aegis of Mar Evanios metropolitan Murimattom without any tangible results.

During this time a telegraphic message from Abded Mashiha patriarch indicating that Abdulla bava was not the legitimate patriarch of Antioch and therefore he had no authority to depose the 'Malankara

Methran', and that he (Abded Mashiha) was the legally enthroned Patriarch of Antioch. In the message he conveyed his felicitations and blessed Mar Dionesius metropolitan. Soon after this, Abded Mashiha bava came to Malankara. The Malankara Church accepted him.

Thus, the time was ripe for the long awaited establishment of a Catholicate in Malankara. The Malankara committee (majlis) accepted Abded Mashiha bava as the legitimate and canonic patriarch of Antioch. With the consent and cooperation of the committee, the throne of the Catholicos (Mapriana) of the East was set up permanently in Malankara, and the investiture of the immensely popular Mar Evanios of Kandanad, who was to be the first Catholicose in Malankara, was performed. The third Catholicos in succession rules the church now. After the death of Malankara Methran, the present Catholicos was elected to hold the position of Malankara Methran also, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Dhanu, this year.

At the beginning of the hostilities, those who supported the Malankara Methran for freedom of administration of the Malankara church and resisted Abdulla bava, came to be called the 'Methran sect'; the other sect called themselves, the 'Bava sect'. The former called a meeting of the Malankara Association at M.D. Seminary, soon after and rejected Abdulla bava's claim to the Antiochian throne and accepted Abded Mashiha bava as the legitimate Patriarch of Antioch. From then on, it would seem more appropriate to call them the 'orthodox bava's sect' rather than the 'methran sect'.

The term 'methran sect' brings unpleasant memories to people in some northern parishes, especially to those in Angamali, Kochi and Kandanadu dioceses. The term implies a desire to cut off the Antioch connections. Those who supported Mar Athanasius, who encouraged Abraham Malpan and others to alter the liturgy and create a truncated version under the influence of the C.M.S. priests, were the 'methran sect' of the year 1050, when Patriarch Pathrose bava visited Malankara. At that time it was transgression of faith that caused the

disputes. Even his enemies would agree, not only that Mar Geverghese Dionesius who was Malnkara Methran in 1085 was second to none in adherence to traditional rites and authentic faith, but also that he was more principled and purer in mind than the Patriarch, Abdulla bava, who visited Malankara around that time. Even though Abded Mashihah Patriarch was there in Antioch with a substantial following after he was dispossessed of the throne, it was only to avoid a confrontation with the Antiochian church that Mar Dionesius consented for his investiture to be solemnized by Abdulla bava. It is very clear that Mar Dionesius nor his followers ever intended to sever the Antioch connection.

The present quarrels in the church do not pertain to matters of faith; it is all about governance. The Patriarch of Antioch, Abdulla bava, the delegates, Mar Osthathios metropolitan and Mar Yulios metropolitan, and later, Aprem bava stated and reiterated at every opportunity that if the relations with Antioch are to be continued, these so called Antiochians must be given the control of internal governance of Malankara church. Only the quantum of control had to be determined. The patriarch should have unrestricted right to intercede, at his pleasure, in matters relating to the administration of individual parishes, issue directives and execute such directives through the delegates. Further, as an agent of Patriarch, the delegate also should have all these powers. Only if these conditions are accepted by the people of Malankara, the patriarch and the foreign bishops are willing to retain the existing relations with Malankara. Most people are alarmed at the ransom Malankara church has to pay for the Antioch connection.

It is not desirable to issue orders over the head of the local authority, thereby causing chaos and confusion, for favouring the opportunistic adherents. Any relationship with Antioch obtained by handing over the reins of the Church to these incompetent foreigners is bound to be short lived. It has become imperative to restrain the stream of Antiochian power that has breached its banks. Even a beneficial spring should not be allowed to destroy the land it nurtures. The golden era

of mutually beneficial and blessed interaction between Malankara and those in Antioch was when it was channeled through the Catholicos of the East. The relations with the Catholicate, which stumbled along with several interruptions, deteriorated into direct rule by Antiochians after the arrival of Patriarch Pathrose bava in the year, 1050 (AD 1875). In defence, our ancestors set up a blockade with the decisions of the Mulanthuruthy synod. Again, when Abdulla bava whose machinations resulted in the deposition of Abded Mashiha bava, arrived here in the year, 1085 (AD 1910), he had no hesitation to overstep his authority to wipe out the decisions of the synod, like cobwebs, ignoring all protests.

It must be remembered that it was under these circumstances, with no alternatives in sight, that the meeting of the Association was called at M.D.seminary to find a solution to the problem. The discussions at that meeting did not contemplate termination of the Antioch connection; but only to moderate and regularize it. Malankara church turned their attention towards Abded Mashiha patriarch, supported and protected by a minor group, though deposed. It was decided that interactions of Malankara church with the throne of Antioch should be accomplished through the Catholicos, as in the earlier times. When the time was ripe, Abded Mashiha patriarch came to Malankara, established the throne of Catholicate here with consent and co operation of the Association and ordained an eminent and respected primate of Malankara as the Catholicos. That secured the contentions of the Mulanthuruthy synod, that the claims to the throne of Antioch should be open and equal for the Malankara church also. It is not surprising if the foreign church is dismayed and envious.

We the Malankara Syrians should be proud of following the footsteps of our forefathers. Deviating from that path is demeaning. Some may pose a question, if it is not wiser to accept changes to improve a situation. But if the change is for downfall, it is foolish to pursue that. Now, let us examine how our forefathers guided our destiny all these years. Until the time of the senior Mar Dionysius



Metropolitan, the founder of Kottayam Seminary, it was the Mar Thoma metropolitans of Pakalomattom family, who ruled as 'Malankara methrans'. All of them protected the authentic faith of the Antiochian church, and their perseverance to get themselves ordained and appointed by the Patriarch was successful in most cases. This period continued until the visit of Patriarch Pathrose bava, in the year, 1050 (AD1875). The relation with Antioch, up to that time, was limited to obtaining higher ecclesiastical titles and advice and assistance pertaining to liturgy from the patriarchs of Antioch, whenever such necessities arose. History reveals neither more nor less than this. But when the Patriarch himself appeared in Malankara, it facilitated more intimate and better appreciation of each other, and opened the way for the Mulanthuruthy synod, during the month of Edavom, 1051 (AD1876), which established and formalized a protocol for friendly interaction between Malankara and Antioch. Never before had any such arrangement been contemplated to regularize the relations between the Patriarch of Antioch and the Malankara church. Yet, from ancient times, there existed some mutually beneficial contacts and interaction, greatly appreciated and fondly remembered by both churches. It would not be wrong to surmise that it was long tradition of mutual love and consequent chain of events that culminated in the Mulanthuruthy synod which reformed and regularized the relations. How did Patriarch Pathrose bava and the people of Malankara (which included Rev. Fr. Verghese Shrayil Kuttikkat, ancestor of Poulose Mar Athanasius metropolitan) fashion the Antioch connection?

### **Let us read it in their own words**

“Taking into account that for a long time, followers of some other doctrines have been making diverse efforts to destroy the longstanding friendship and co operation between our Malankara Syrian church and other Syrian churches under the Apostolic throne of Antioch, and taking note of the erstwhile British Resident Mr. Ballard’s remark that there will not be peace in the church in Malankara as long as its relations with Antioch continues, the meeting has agreed and confirmed

that to ensure that such relations are maintained, Malankara church and churches outside Malankara shall remain united, with both churches having equal and impartial rights and access to the throne of Antioch, and that the Majlis (committee) here and the foreign majlis shall remain separate and complimentary, and that whatever is done with the consent of the committee to benefit our church and community shall be considered valid in every sense”.

It is inappropriate to reject or breach this agreement signed by mutual consent, between the ablest and most adored Patriarch of Antioch and Malankara church. To pretend as supporters of the throne of Antioch and Malankara church while undermining that agreement is plain hypocrisy. It has become obvious that Patriarch Mar Abdulla and bishops Mar Osthathios and Mar Yulios think that the Patriarchate is an exclusive inheritance of churches in Antioch; that the Malankara church has no claims for equality with Antiochian church; that the Malankara church shall remain subservient to the Antiochian church and that the Patriarch has the right to appoint a delegate, invariably one from the foreign church, to supervise the majlis and bishops of Malankara. Under what authority did the patriarch unilaterally decide to institute the position of a delegate? What is the necessity to create such a position? Did Abdulla bava or his successors seek the consent of the Malankara majlis before imposing a delegate on us? The people of Malankara should contemplate, where Mar Osthathios metropolitan and Mar Yulios metropolitan hid the decisions of the Mulanthurathy synod, so that they could don the garb of delegates and enslave and harass the bishops here and encourage fissiparous tendencies in the Malankara church. Is it wise of the present generation to sell off the rights, so assiduously preserved and treasured by their forefathers, for small favours? The delegate status opened the way for Yulios metropolitan to subjugate the Malankara church. We are told that the Malankara synod is not a synod; it is ‘cunistho’! Yulios metropolitan has fabricated the concept that the authority to determine whether the Catholicate instituted by the earlier Patriarch can be accepted by the present incumbent is vested with the synod of Antioch!. It is made

to appear as if the foreign is the appropriate forum to ratify this matter settled by Mar Abded Mashiha Patriarch and the majlis of Malankara. Are these the equal and impartial rights and relations and the complementary, but separate status of the two majlises envisaged in the agreement signed by Pathrose bava? The sword of ecclesiastical suspension hanging over their heads petrified the bishops who signed the pact of allegiance to Antioch. They dare not utter anything other than 'yes'. Where did the majlis of Antioch get the mandate to decide whether the throne of the Catholicos jointly established by the Malankara majlis and the Patriarch is authentic, and whether the esteemed primate who occupies the throne is Catholicos? Law does not permit the rescission of an agreement, binding on the throne of Antioch concluded by Patriarch Pathrose bava and the representatives of the church of Malankara at the Mulanthuruthy synod, by the subsequent incumbent of the throne without the concurrence of the Malankara Church convoking a meeting of the synod, which is the majlis of Antioch and cannot revert this legal position; so nothing can be achieved by that. Add zero to zero; the result couldn't be larger than zero.

Let us turn our attention to the part of the saying, "...whatever is done with the consent of the committee to benefit our Church and community shall be considered valid in every sense". Anything done without the consent of the committee cannot be sustained. Even justice Veeraraghava Iyengar of Travancore High court, who analysed the contentions and gave his favourable judgment, confirmed that what Patriarch Abdulla bava did without consent was not legal. In other words, Mar Athanasius is not 'Malankara Methran'. The present effort is not to test whether what Patriarch Abded Mashiha did with the consent of the committee, for the church and the community, is sustainable in law. Realizing that this issue can be utilized to start another series of litigations, Mar Yulios metropolitan, Mr. Chakko Tharakan and Mikhael Mar Dionesius metropolitan are instigating people in the northern parishes. That is the problem we face right now.

We should evolve a balanced view of this. Both favourable and adverse factors have to be analyzed with equanimity. We should not exaggerate or understate obvious facts based on whether it is put forth by a friend who agrees, or a foe who disagrees with us. ‘Business should be handled businesslike’, the old adage remind us. During the term of the fourth Mar Thoma in 1708, a Nestorian bishop called Gabriel came to Malankara. The Syrian community had some reservations about accepting him. However, a Syrian Christian who had some disagreements with Mar Thoma took the trouble of going to Kochi to meet him. On his return, he said, “He is neither my father, nor uncle; but, for now, he is useful (to take on Mar Thoma)”. We should not entertain that attitude, either.

### **Let us examine the present position**

1. Patriarch Abdulla arrogated the throne to himself by force. Force may or may not be justifiable.
2. Patriarch Abded Mashiha was deprived of the throne after his legitimate investiture. He had a minority group in Antioch supporting him. It would be difficult to establish that Abdulla bava had a hundred per cent backing of the congregation of Antioch.
3. For the sake of argument, it may be conceded that Abded Mashiha bava was deposed by the majlis of Antioch and that the same majlis elevated Abdulla bava to the throne. But have they consulted the Malankara majlis and obtained their consent?
4. Accepting Patriarch Abdulla as the de facto incumbent of the throne, Mar Geeverghese Dionysius and Mar Kurilos who were elected by Malankara church accepted their ordination by him. The Malankara church approved the installation and appointment of these metropolitans. Subsequently, when Abdulla bava arrived in Malankara, the malankara church accepted him as Patriarch and arranged for his meeting with the ruling prince.
5. At the meeting of the Malankara Syrian Christian Association, an assembly of representatives of all parishes, held at M.D. Seminary,

Malankara majlis rejected Abdulla bava's accession to the throne of Antioch and took the initiative to accept Abded Mashiha bava as the Patriarch.

6. Afterwards the Malankara Association accepted Abded Mashiha as the Patriarch. That Patriarch established the Catholicate of the East in Malankara and ordained a Catholicos, with the consent and co-operation of Malankara Majlis.
7. Patriarch Elias bava accepted Mar Dionesius as the 'Malankara methran', at Aluva. When discussions were in progress about the acceptance of the Catholicos, Mar Elias Patriarch passed away.
8. At the election of Mar Aprem patriarch, Mar Dionysius was invited to be present and vote; however it was without the co operation or consent of the majlis of Malankara that Mar Aprem was installed as patriarch.
9. For mutual acceptance Mar Beselios Catholicos journeyed to Homs.
10. Mar Aprem bava received the Catholicos in the presence of a public gathering and escorted him to the altar (madbaha), in all reverence befitting his eminence.
11. The ecclesiastical scholars of the Catholic Church in Rome have examined the validity of occasion of the Catholicos and arrived at the conclusion that the institution of the Catholicos was without fault and that the ordination of bishops performed by him were acceptable. It was on this that Mar Evanios metropolitan was accepted by the Catholic Church.
12. The royal court judgment stipulates that the 'Malankara methran' should be ordained by the patriarch. That was before the Catholicate was reinstated in Malankara. Once a Catholicate is canonically and legitimately established by the Malankara majlis and Patriarch, as also the foreign church, is it not necessary to follow that stipulation to the letter? Therefore the main contention to be settled in the litigation is whether the Catholicate is authentic and legitimate.

The yearning for a Catholicate in Malankara is longstanding. It was to contain the chaos and confusion perpetrated by Abdulla bava and others connected with him, that a Catholicate was instituted through Abded Mashiha patriarch, in some haste. In a recent effort for reconciliation both factions jointly approached Patriarch Aprem bava hoping for a settlement. Everyone knows the result.

It is obvious that Aprem bava and Yulios metropolitan want to establish that their Church and bishops are superior to the Church and leaders of Malankara and so the church and bishops in Malankara should remain subservient to them.

In this context, is it not better for Malankara to protect and retain the Catholicate already existing? It may be assumed that the concern some people had about the legitimacy of the Catholicate had been eased by the series of articles written by Augen Mar Themotheos metropolitan. Nevertheless, to guard against further strain to the relations, after the demise of Mar Dionesius metropolitan, a conciliation meeting was held with the co operation of popular leaders from both sides.

A compromise was reached, both sides relaxing their demands a great deal. This plan was sent to Patriarch Aprem bava. It must be pointed out the peace initiative bringing both sides together was prompted by the conciliatory statements made in good faith by Aprem bava on several earlier occasions such as, “we wait in anticipation of peace. Antiochians have no desire to rule over “Malankara bava” like earlier when he confronted Elias bava, lead us to conclude that Mar Yulios is the conscience keeper of the patriarchs of Antioch.

With sincere love for the community foremost in my mind, I appeal to everyone to realize the fact that disunity among us would certainly lead to downfall of the Church should be branded on to our minds and that we should not deviate from the path of peace.

I wish all of you a happy new year

*Thrissur*

*1<sup>st</sup> Makaram*

## PROPOSED PURCHASE OF SHIP FELL THROUGH

**I**t was a period of great financial constraint in the country. Shri K.C. Mammen Mappillai came to know that the British government had sold off a flat-bottomed ship worth lakhs of rupees for a paltry sum of three thousand rupees to certain Muslim operators of Bombay, after the Second World War. He also got the information that they were prepared to sell it for fourteen thousand rupees. He wanted to buy it because it could operate in shallow water of a depth of two or three feet and had the facility to transport two or three thousand people, in three tiers. His aim was to run a large boat service between Cochin and the commercial city of Alappuzha. It could carry freight as well as passengers. But it was not possible to mobilize such a large sum of money in the prevailing financial situation.

Mammen Mappillai reminisces, I happened to talk about this ship to Mr. M.A. Chakko, the superintendant of Police in Cochin State, who was my very close friend. Unfortunately, Mr. Chakko was at that time reeling under severe financial stress. He had lost his job and was facing possible liability of the order of three to four lakhs of rupees, which loomed large in the horizon. Naturally, my narration of this scheme, and the prospect of making profit drew his attention. The thought that it could mitigate the money crisis to a large extent attracted

him to this proposal. With great difficulty he mobilized four thousand rupees which was needed to be paid advance for the purchase of the ship and handed it over to me. I went to Bombay with that”.

Alighting from the train at Bombay, I proceeded to the Crawford market. There I sat on the verandah of a shop and read the newspaper. “Times of India”. By the time I finished reading the paper and moved away from there. I had forgotten all about the bag and the money which I had left behind. When the matter of paying the advance came up, I suddenly remembered the bag and the realization sent shock waves through my entire being. “Oh! God, what a trying situation! Will I get back my bag and money?” The prospects were truly grim.

I walked back to the market and located the shop where I had read the newspaper and enquired about the bag. The shop keeper had kept the bag in safe custody. What a great relief it was!

I met the Muslim operators and finalized the agreement and paid the advance as stipulated.”

Mammen Mappillai continues in his memories

“The obstacles in the path of acquisition were analyzed in detail with various conditions and clauses of the agreement and then the whole project was abandoned. However, realizing the financial struggle Chakko was laboring in, I quietly returned the amount four thousand rupees that he had entrusted, without his inquiring about it or asking for it.”



## **M.A. CHAKKO, MEMBER OF COCHIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**M**r. M.A. Chakko was twice member of the Cochin Legislative Council, the second (1928-1931) and the third (1931-1935) councils; 7 years in all.

The first time, he was elected from the Njarackal constituency, comprising Revenue Villages of Cochi-Kanayannur Taluk, Elangunnapuzha, Njarackal, Nayarambalam, Edavanakad, Kuzhipilly and Pallippuram. The second time, it was from Vellarapilly- constituted by Revenue Villages, Malayatoor, Chowara, Thekkumbhagam, Vaddkumbagam, Kizhakkumbagam, Kadamakudi, Mulavukad (except Ernakulam District) and Cheranellur.

The following quotations are from some of the speeches he made in the legislative Council

1. General Discussion on the Budget for 1931
2. Resolution 3 regarding Public Service Commission
3. Civil Marriage Bill

### **1. General Discussion on the Budget for 1931**

4-8-1931

Mr. M.A. Chakko- Sir, the budget before us has no pretensions of being a prosperity budget. It is the forecast of a lean year. Of the

three years 1105, 1106 and 1107 that are held out to view, the figures for the last mentioned, viz; 1107 are the lowest. So I say the forecast is that of a lean year.

There is a fall of 7 lakhs. It is of course due to the prevailing trade and economic depression. It is also an indication of the extent to which our State is affected by the calamity. It works out a percentage of 7.7 of the total revenue of 1105, the fat year. But if we propose to draw a further inference from the figures to the effect that because the State, the Body Politic, has not suffered much, that it has withstood the impact famously, (therefore) the subjects of the State had also that rare good fortune and that their incomes were reduced only by about 7 or 8 per cent, it will be very wide off the mark.

Price of the staple produce of the country coconut and paddy has gone down by more than 50 per cent, while the act of procuring the necessaries of life and meeting other needs like children's education, conveyancing of land, recovery of debt etc; has not gone down to any appreciable degree. Thus if the budget of the State be lean by 7.7 per cent, the budget of the average citizen is leaner by far, more than 60 per cent. It is a matter that should arrest the attention of the Government as well as of this House.

The last Council bade good-bye to the late Administration. The parting words of most of the members were not at all complimentary to the departing head. In the maseva each of them felt about the situation, they have given utterance to their thoughts at the last budget discussion. Since I am one who was present as a member of the House then I do not ignore the fact that several of the Hon'ble Members of that Council are also members of this Council and some of the members were members of the first Council also-I may be permitted to make some reference to it. I know that comparisons are odious, not always happy. But what is the budget before us if it is not a comparison? Is it not a row of figures, comparing one year's figures with the figures of its predecessor? Reference to previous failures and success is at times necessary in order to fix our programme to feel our way forward.

It is important to see how the failure becomes inevitable in one case while success and satisfaction followed another. I shall therefore refer to one passage in the memorable speech of the late Hon'ble Member for Jennies, MARY Kunjunni Raja Avergal, which was the first budget speech of the last year. The passage, it may be stated, had the full and unstinted approbation of the House as was seen from the applause it evoked from the floor of the House. This is the passage; I refer to page 1188 of the printed report. "The Public Service of the State which for long enjoyed an enviable reputation for efficiency and integrity presents today the saddest spectacle of laxity and demoralization as the inevitable concomitant of nepotism, favoritism and communalism pursued with undisguised and unblushing downrightness."

The subjects of the State were groaning under this and the condition became almost unbearable before the Swaraj minded Indians thought of a European, a Britisher, to administrate the State in order that Justice and fairplay that left the land, might return and reign over them. The new Council welcomes you, sir, as the exponent of justice and fairplay.

With your advent, nepotism has taken wings and fled. In the short time that you held the reins of Government you have set right wrongs, made reparation where you could and healed up unkindest cuts. That you have made a good beginning is the feeling abroad. The people are aware that yours is no bed of roses. Your task is arduous in the face of obstacles seen and unseen. You lend a ready ear to the humblest of the State to hear his grievance. It is the rarest privilege the people have enjoyed for a long time.

In the field of appointment to the public service the conviction had gained ground that you have always kept in view fitness and efficiency though communalism was shouting the loudest. Now it behoves this House to lay stress on one truth. The most important of all boons to the citizen, and what he values most is the correct, speedy and impartial dispensing of Justice. It is the birthright of every citizen which cannot be interfered with on any ground. The importance of an efficient upright

and independent judiciary cannot be exaggerated. It has to be secured and maintained at all cost. Therefore the Chief Judge of the state is chiefest and highly paid officer of the state, next only to the Diwan. Best men of high character, wide culture and legal erudition should be appointed as Judges. Such a one for judgeship is a pearl of surpassing value which has to be sought for from far and near. When such a one is found, it must be procured, the right man for the right place. Everything that militates against this supreme necessity for the happiness of the people should be brushed aside. Seniority in service and at the Bar has to be respected. But it shall not prevail against the first and most important factor, viz; the dispensing correct, speedy and even-handed justice.

It has been the tradition of this State whose Chief court is of even higher potency than the High courts of British India being the final court of appeal. From British Indian High Courts appeals lie to the Privy Council in England. To the citizen of Cochin State the Chief Court is the final dispenser of justice. Life and liberty and property are as much valuable to the subjects of His Majesty, the King Emperor. It is indeed therefore that a precious pearl of surpassing value one with the lustre of wide culture, independence, integrity, impartiality and uprightness-is wanted to adorn the Chief Court. This truth was borne in mind in the past and it was this fact that brought the “enviable reputation of efficiency and integrity” to the Judiciary of the State. Judges have to decide the cases that come before them without fear or favour. The same sacred duty devolves upon the Government in their selection of Judges. Judgeship shall be no sop to appease any community or interest.

If I have dwelt on the subject which is an accepted truth throughout the civilized world, my only excuse is that the truth is worth repetition. At this juncture. I shall not linger on it further. Next only to Law and Justice in importance is Education. We in Cochin State have reason to be justly proud that we are ahead of other parts of India including Native States in point of literacy. The Government are maintaining a

First Grade College and aiding two others, one for boys and the other for girls. High Schools and Lower Secondary Schools we have by scores. A good percentage of public fund is spent on education. There is still insistant demand for more schools and the Director of Education has very often to refuse the demand for want of funds. The question then arises if the late comers are to be left to shift for themselves while those who have come first are served. Is it in keeping with the policy of the Government who stimulate the so-called depressed classes and backward classes to come forward and participate in the benefits of education, to deny the legitimate needs of those who do not require such a stimulus? Primary education is the birth right of all citizens and the Government cannot deny proper and sufficient grant-in-aid. The College serves the few at a high cost while the village school serves the many at comparatively small outlay. They do not stand in need of up-to-date hostels with lavatories having flushing arrangements in the second and third floors. They can have their swimming baths in the river or the adjoining pool. Education of the many should be the concern of the Government; The College should not kill the schools.

The Council is now 6 years old. It has entered in its 7<sup>th</sup> year. The Government that was not paying much heed to the cries of the infant Council has now begun to see that its Council deserved greater respect. We are beholden to you, Sir; for this as well as for the privilege granted to us to select our Deputy President. It is a trite saying that trust begets trust. This Council has therefore to set to work with greater responsibility when it grapples with important problems set forth in the programme of works indicated in the Hon'ble Finance Member's speech. The most important concerns that we have to finance immediately are the Harbour, the Railway and the First Grade College. All the three require large outlay. The first two concern the commercial advancement to the State, while the last is intimately connected with Education. It has, however, to be borne in mind that collegiate education is not so much in demand as it was a decade ago. The graduates of the Arts College are as a rule not wealth producers of the country. That is the thought uppermost in people's mind at present.

The University demands large outlay on College buildings and as the salaries of Professors and Lecturers. We cannot say that it is unreasonable. They know best. The question then is did the Cochin Durbar bargain for this when they launched the scheme of having a First Grade College in the State and got two more instead of one? Is it not time to pause and consider if the game is worth the candle? One will not be surprised if some of the Colleges in the Madras Presidency be scrapped as a result of the retrenchment policy now set on foot. If it comes to applying the axe somewhere the College scheme stands prominent.

Love for the big scheme has to be borrowed, says the Hon'ble Finance Member. To go borrowing is to go sorrowing afterwards, says the old adage. It requires a robust mental constitution to face the situation. Nothing ventured nothing gained, is the true incentive for big efforts. The proposition has been brought forward and discussed in this house that it would be the policy of the Government to finance big reproductive undertaking by loans. It is scant justice to the present generation to be asked to bear the burden and go through the strain and sweating to obtain a loan for the coming generation. It is on the other hand more fair and equitable to require those who reap the benefit to share the burden and toil also. Sound finance of a State or business does not eliminate borrowing when the money is needed for reproductive investment. It is only when the spending of the money borrowed produces articles for which there is no particular use or which would overstock the market that a State debt should be condemned.

We have been complaining that more money should be spent for useful Public Works. The retrenchment of two lakhs in the P.W.D budget this year cannot be commended at all. It has been shown that the well-to-do people have their income affected by about 60 percent, while the state receipts are short by only 7.7%. The poor day labourer has to get work and earn wages in order to live. In the towns building works are suspended. It has come to a stand still. That means no

quarrying, no transport of stones or other building materials, no chiseling or hammering, no masonry nor carpentry. Tile factories are all but closed. In the rural parts ordinary labour in the rice fields employ only a few. Other works of agriculture which require outlay are suspended. The workers on the soil and large number of estate coolies are thrown out of employment. It would have been an act of kindness and considerate regard for the wretched plight of the poor honest folk if the Government had made use of them to get through their public works at this time. Like the quality of mercy it will be twice blessed benefiting him that gives work and those that get work to do; because the work would be got done most speedily and at much less cost.

The citizens are affected and crippled. They stopped spending money on works that could wait. The Government should not follow that example to put off works of the most crying need. The money locked up in Government coffers must come out to help the poor people. America is helping Germany and Europe. I wish that Cochin State would come forward and do likewise. The Road Committee, the Village Reconstruction Committee, the Panchayat Department and the P.W.D. all these must do brisk work. That will bring relief.

The house rose for the day at 4.15 p.m.

**C. J. MATHEW**

*Secretary to the Council*

## **2. Resolution 3 regarding Public Service Commission**

15-02-1933

Mr. M.A. Chakko-sir, I rise to oppose this resolution. The resolution is this: "This Council recommends to the Government to drop the idea of having a Public Service Commission in our State." Public Service Commission is intended to sit upon the question of getting or having the best servants for the State to fill up vacancies. As already pointed out by the Hon'ble Member for Cheruviruthi, if any vacancy occurs in service of the Government at present there are numerous applicants. It is also true that our Colleges are producing a large number of

graduates and undergraduates and the demand is far far short of the supply. There is a rush of educated young men for places in the service of the Government. Every one of these applicants or candidates believes that he has a claim to be preferred and taken into the service of the Government for several reasons. All of them could not be taken. Some or one at least must be taken. Who is to be taken is the question. That question has to be decided. The decision of that important question rested with, or was in the central authority of the Diwan. By decentralization that power was delegated to a certain extent to a few heads of departments. They exercised that power; and we may say that they have been doing it fairly well all this long time. But the times have changed. Vacancies have become fewer, compared with the number of applicants. Hence rush for preference, disappointment and dissatisfaction! The problem before the Government is how to give satisfaction. As has been mentioned by several previous speakers, great dissatisfaction is felt by the subjects of the State of all denominations, that public service is not evenly or fairly distributed amongst the claimants who are applying for the posts. The Government had thus entertained the idea of having a Public Service Commission. Now this Council is asked to request the Government to drop that idea. We must, before doing that, point out to the Government how they can satisfactorily solve the problem without having recourse to this. The idea, I should think, must be respected.

One point of objection is that Public Service Commission has not been a success in British India where it was tried for some time. One cannot say that Cochin State cannot excel British India in certain matters. British India deals with vast number of population, various interest and different influences which do not have the same effect in this small State of Cochin. I think I would be giving utterance to the feelings of the people in the State as well as the Hon'ble Members of this House when I say that in the matter of official corruption and things like that Cochin State can be proud of being better off than British India. So if in that matter the sons of Cochin soil have shown



better sense of responsibility, one should think that select sons of Cochin can do this piece of work, if entrusted to them, successfully.

There is no reason for the note of warning now struck in this House. The Hon'ble Member for Government has said that we are going to have a sort of Judicial Committee to sit upon the question, i.e., to find out who has got the best claim to be preferred for any appointment, who among the candidates that appear before the Government, seeking service, has the best claim. A judicially minded Committee is to sit upon that question. I should think that tried men of integrity, whose life has been transparently honest and sincere, can be trusted to do the right thing to the sons of the soil who claim to be preferred as officers who are to serve the coming generation. Therefore there is no ground to apprehend that the Public Service Commission will cause any harm to the service or to the State or to the public. I should think that the idea is not so bad as to be dropped at once.

Again, there is wisdom or I should say, fairness in multitude of heads. If I have a case to be heard and decided, I would prefer that it is heard and decided by three persons instead of one. It is on this principle that the Cochin State has got three Judges in the Chief Court rather than one. Here the Government is going to entrust the work that was done by one individual head of the department to three or four persons to do jointly together. We can expect greater fairness from three persons sitting and deciding a matter together than from one person doing it in his office room without publicity at the recommendation of persons under him. Therefore on that ground also the idea of Public service Commission is happy. It would be useful and advantageous to the public, more especially for the sections of the public who are crying for greater representation in the services.

Another objection which I would touch upon is this: The idea of Public Service Commission need not now mature, because we have at present a Diwan, as Head of the Administration, who is quite impartial, and who has no identification or kinship with anybody in the

State who would go to him to seek an appointment. That is a sound argument indeed! Therefore it is said that the Public Service Commission can wait. But the question has to be approached from another side. The Public Service Commission itself has to be watched; the man who is to watch will be eminently fitted for the watching purpose if he has nothing to be gained by one party getting preference over another. It is good to lay down healthy traditions for the Public Service Commission which, we should think, must function for a very long, long time. The start must be given under the auspices of a Diwan or executive Head of Administration who would be in such a position as to guide and direct it in the proper channel. Therefore this is the most auspicious time for inaugurating and bringing it into effect. Still another point that was hinted was that the drawback, if any, can be cured by having proper rules. I should think that it is not a sound proposition to affirm that if we have very good laws we need not have sound Judges. I am of opinion that even though we have good laws we must have good Judges also to administer that law. So making of laws will not cure the defect, unless those who carry out the law or give effect to the law are also selected with equal sense of purpose and usefulness for the State. I should not take up much of the time of the House on elaborating on other points. Therefore on these grounds, I oppose the motion that the idea should be dropped.

Mr. K.T. Mathew- Sir. To establish that there is no need for a P.S.C, one reason the honorable member who moved the motion gave is that there are no jobs to be given to the applicants. If that were so will the Government even think of having a P.S.C? The government is sure that there are vacancies to be filled up. No doubt that is why Government decided to have a P.S.C. In accordance with the demand of the member of the Council, the Head of each Government Department used to publish in the government gazette; reports of quarterly appointments made in the department. One look at it will show that there are plenty of jobs going. But the moment, the permanent British Diwan left, these publications in the gazette ceased altogether. It is not clear whether it is because no more appointment

were made or because the publications were withheld. Some questions and answers given here favour the conclusion that the lists of appointments made here were deliberately withheld from publication. Anyway the quarterly list of appointments made here is a clear indication that there is no dearth of vacancies. It is precisely because there are jobs to be given, that often questions are raised here as to whether they are given in the proper manner. In fact an accusation brought forward, in the Council against a government officer was that he had not been impartial, in taking different castes into consideration in allotting jobs in his department. The government is aware of similar complaints, from different quarters. It seems the government's idea in entrusting the responsibility of appointment to the P.S.C. is to prevent such prejudicial appointments. In this way the government officers will be able to discharge their main duty without criticism, in the Council. No doubt a government officer will have more time to devote to his duties in the department, if he is relieved of the authority to make staff appointments (Hear! Hear!). Not only the government officers, but the other members of the council also will have more ease and time at their disposal if such commission is set up.

### **3. Civil Marriage Bill**

29.03.1933

Mr. M.A. Chakko- I rise to oppose the motion for recommitment and wish to bring before this House that the point that was raised by the Hon'ble Member in his dissenting minute is not exactly correct. It is to this effect "I also understand that not a single marriage has been solemnized after the Christian marriage Act of Cochin. That is not a fact. I can say that a marriage has been solemnized by me as Marriage Registrar. About the history of the passing of the Civil Marriage Regulation, that measure was necessitated to be passed by this Government, because the Roman Catholic Church put a big portion of the Catholic population under interdict and prevented the proper marriage of His Highness' subjects being solemnized within the portals of the church. It was then brought home to the Government that every

individual subject of the State had a right to marry according to law. If the church will not allow it, the State will have to interfere and supply the need. So, I submit it is only when the church did not allow certain privileges of the subjects that the State had to interfere. There is already a Christian Civil Marriage Regulation in force. That will affect the Catholic Church or the followers of the Catholic religion. There is no particular advantage in exempting them the present bill that is brought by the Hon'ble Member for South Ezhuvass. Then on the point raised by one Hon'ble speaker about what has happened in Indore and other places, I may say it has been admitted by him that the Catholic Church allows wide latitude in the selection of a partner in life. The question is, if a true catholic wants to marry a non-Catholic or non-Christian woman, who is to solemnize the marriage? That question has to be answered. Perhaps the partner who is not a Catholic may have serious objection to go to a Catholic Church to have his or her marriage solemnized there. There will be difficulties, and these difficulties have to be overcome before we go on exempting one particular community. A number of individuals, I cannot say how many, may desire to have Catholic husbands or wives. If the Catholic Church has any rule by which marriage can be solemnized, except in their churches for uniting a catholic and non-Catholic, then it would be time for the State to look on and not to interfere. But so long as the Catholic Church has made no such provision, I think the State must interfere. There is ample reason to take them also into the purview of the Civil marriage Bill. For this reason, I oppose the motion.

### **Mr. K. Ayyappan**

The Honorable Member who moved the amendment for recommittal has cited no reason for it. He has only opposed the Bill. I believe his idea is to postpone the Bill indefinitely, somehow or other, so that it may not be passed. The term of this Council is coming to a close. There may not be sufficient time to pass the bill. If by any chance, I am unable to attend the next meeting, the bill will not see the light of the day. That is what they are aiming at. However, whether I

win or lose, my opinion is that the bill must be discussed now. The Honourable Member who moved this amendment stated that his idea is to improve the terms of the bill. But, in reality his object is to defeat me.

There is no reason for the Catholics to oppose this bill. They have a Christian Civil Marriage Regulation in force. So this bill does not affect them in any way. They have no reason to object to the loop hole in the bill favouring mixed marriages. Catholic Members themselves have stated here that they have no objection to mixed marriages. Yet they oppose the bill on conscientious ground. Strange conscience indeed!

The Honorable Muslim member wants the Muslims to be exempted from the bill. I brought this bill with the hope that if the Civil Marriage Bill is passed, it will encourage mixed marriages. But if each community wants to be exempted, the bill will not have the intended benefit.

*Motion for recommitment put and carried.*

#### **Resolution No. 4 Recruitment of Nayers and Christians to the Police Force**

Deputy President:- The resolution tabled here is that Nairs and Christians should not be recruited to the Police Force for five years. As it does not refer to any police violence there is no need to speak of any such. If you have anything to say about the resolution, you may do so.

Mr. K.P. Vallon: - That is what I am going to speak about. When there is violence against the scheduled caste and they file a case, the police who are deputed to enquire belong to the Nair and Christian communities. Their attitude usually is that, "the complainants got the beating because of their insolence". When the offender is a Nair, the enquiring officer takes his side and persecute the poor victims. For example, the year before last, the people belonging to the scheduled caste held a festival in their "Bhajana Madham" in Mulavukad when there was a threat the procession would not be allowed to pass in

front of a certain school, they informed the government of it and asked for protection. Some police constables were deputed for keeping law and order. They were mostly Christians. I know for certain the police favoured the offending party and tried to stop the procession. One of the very same constable was on a similar duty on the next such procession. At the instance of a member of his community he gave a violent push to a poor man of the scheduled caste. When I questioned him myself about the incident the reply I got was on the lines that the poor man was only moved to one side and not beaten. Similar incidents of harassment are frequent. Such harassments are not likely to occur if some people from the scheduled caste are included in the police force. In similar situations these policemen will come to their aid that is not to say they will act prejudicially against the other communities. They won't allow the other groups to make unfair and false reports against the poor people. That will alleviate many of their disabilities. So if the government with due consideration decide to pass the bill, the scheduled caste will not only be saved from oppression, but it will also be a means to the general betterment of their standard of living. With this belief I support the bill.

Mr. M.A. Chakko- On a point of information. I would like to know the percentage of Nayers and Christians now in service.

Mr. Nilakanta Menon - A large percentage. I cannot say exactly.

Mr. M.A. Chakko-I want know exactly the percentage under each-Nayar, Christian, etc

Mr. P. Nilakanta Menon-I have not got the figures

Mr. M.A. Chakko- Sir, I rise to oppose this motion. I cannot do it except on general grounds. The mover of the resolution has not brought before the House the present strength of the constabulary force. I mean, we do not know the total existing number of the policemen – how many are Nayers, how many are Christian and how many are Ezhuvas and so forth. Everybody believes or some persons believe that there is a large number of Nayers and pretty large number of Christian and fewer numbers of Ezhuvas. On this indefinite data it

would be very dangerous to say that certain communities must be kept out of the field of enlistment for the next five years. It is dangerous because it is built on surmises only. It would have been better if the Hon'ble Member had elicited by interpellations how many Nayers, how many Christian and other castes of policemen exist in the present Police Force. I am one for communal representation, I do not oppose that plan of recruiting to public service because it is not after all very dangerous. But before we proceed to build anything upon the principle of communal representation we must be very clear and definite about the percentage each community has obtained in the loaves and fishes of the office. In the present case, when we speak of communal representation we must know first of all what is the percentage of each community on the whole population of the State. If in the population of the State when we compare by percentages, the Christian constitute by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the whole population, I think every Christian young man will have the claim to be enlisted in the Police force up to the number of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the whole police force. When that  $\frac{1}{4}$  has been completely filled, of course, he has no claim; but he has to wait until any other community which has not reached that minimum or maximum of percentage gets its share. Now looking at the present existing Police force I do not think that the number of Christian in the Police force has come to anything about  $\frac{1}{4}$ . If they have come to that  $\frac{1}{4}$ , it will be according to the readiest of the present mover of the resolution ground for excluding Christians from enlistment for the next five years. If they have not come to that level, of course the mover should make himself prepared to give the Christians the number which they still have to make in the list. I do not think that the Ezhuvas have come to anything like 10 per cent or 20 per cent or anything like the percentage they are entitled to, there is no justification in asking a brother community member to stand behind till he gets to the level of the community which has got the lion's share of it. In accessing the motion for the acceptance of this House, it would have been better for the mover of the resolution or at least the Government Member to convince this House that Christians must be excluded from enlistment for the

next five years on such and such definite clear grounds. It is dangerous to put a proposition for the acceptance of this House on surmise alone. Now since the Hon'ble mover of the resolution has made some reference to what has been done years ago, I have to advert to that in passing. I am not here to defend or support what I have done or to explain what I have not done in my time. May I draw the attention of the Hon'ble House as well as the mover of this resolution that times are changing. Within the last 12 years, since I left the Department, I think the Ezhuva community has made rapid strides.

Mr.K.M. Ibrahim-There are other communities. There are Pulayas.

Mr. M.A. Chakko- I referred to only one community. I come to the other communities later on. Other communities are striving to come forward but they are not making much progress. I may say that the Ezhuva community has made very rapid strides in the last eighth of a century. If we apply the present day facts to the conditions that were 12 years ago it will not conduce to a correct estimation of appreciation of the actions and inactions or omissions of things done in those days. In that connection, I have to observe that those were times of plenty – the years 1095 and 1096. Those were days of plenty. The pay of the constabulary then was not very attractive either. An average sturdy honest working man was able to earn much more by manual labour than a Constable could eke out by serving in the Police force at the bid of his masters in the Police stations both in the towns and rural parts. So it was not a very attractive thing for an adult man to go and seek service in the Police Department, except when he had the false pride that manual labour is not a dignified work for a human being. Therefore the average Christian and the average Ezhuva, and I may say a Pulaya or the Valan did not care in those times to go and earn this pittance of eight, nine, ten or twelve rupees in far distant places, leaving behind his wife and children when he could earn much more by his honest manual labour, remaining in his own house, in his own environments and surroundings. In those times it was very difficult to get men from the classes other than the Nayars or even Christians to



come and from the classes other than the Nayers or even Christians to come and enlist themselves for service for Police Department. We should not apply that to the present day when the coolies find it difficult to get work and the pittance the Police were then getting has been since augmented by at 10 or 20 per cent on account of the enhancement of pay and about 30 per cent by the reduction of prices of food grains. It will be seen that Police service is somewhat attractive now. To blame the department or the departmental head for not having enlisted depressed classes men or, men other than from Christians and Nayers in those days, is simply criticizing the Government without understanding the situation then and now. I have to make this observation. If we refrain from enlisting Christians and Nayers for the next five years that will bring about a state of circumstances that after about 15 or 20 years, most of the young men that are enlisted now will have been retired or weeded out from service. So it will end in a state of circumstance that those who are senior in service after 12 or 15 years will be of the castes and communities other than Christians and Nayers. I don't think that the mover of the resolution requires that the seniority also should go to those communities over and above the equal share in the public service. I should think there are several sides to the question. It will create unanticipated circumstances that will influence the force by resorting to such a drastic rule. I may admit that the Hon'ble Member has a compelling necessity to induce him to bring this drastic resolution for the acceptance of this House. But this House should calmly consider all the circumstances before they give their support to the resolution. It is with the greatest reluctance that I have to oppose this resolution. I accept communal representation or selection on communal lines to the public service. But I must oppose this principle of shutting the door of public service against certain communities for 5 years. On these grounds I oppose the motion.

## M.A. CHAKKO'S CHILDREN

### 1. Mrs. Mary Poulouse (1897 - 1984)

(Written by Mrs. Lily Jacob the eldest daughter of Mary Paulose)

My mother Mamy (Mary) was Pappy's first child. She was born on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1897 in N. Parur. She loved and respected him. To her Pappy was a tower of strength.

At the age of 13, while still at school, she was married to Paulose, a B.A. student of Madras Christian College. His father was Kadavil Abraham master. At that time Pappy was the Police Commissioner, at the peak of his career. The marriage was celebrated on a very grand scale. The bride was attired fashionably in a saree (not in vogue in Kerala a century ago) and in western style accessories like gloves and pointed high heeled shoes; although to the disapproval of Pappy's mother. From the church the bridal couple was taken home in procession in a palanquin to the accompaniment of the State Band. The wedding celebrations lasted four days. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day the bride wore the formal Syrian Christian wedding dress. Then Pappy's mother warmly said "Now let me have a look at my child" and embraced and blessed her.

When mother completed her schooling, father was a final year law student at Madras. College education for women was unthought of at the time. But father had progressive ideas and took her to Madras

to continue her education. She was in the first batch of the newly founded Womens' Christian College, in Madras. Madras Christian College and Womens' Christian College both had dedicated selfless and foreign missionaries on the staff. My parents were greatly influenced by them. The motto of W.C.C. 'Lighted to lighten' was deeply engraved in mother's mind.

Their family life began when father set up practice in Ernakulam as an advocate. I was born when mother was 21 (the eldest among 3 girls and 6 boys) Soon, father entered government service as Magistrate and was promoted step by step retiring as High Court Judge. He was posted to several parts of the State and mother was a worthy partner all along.

### **Between the Parents**

Engrossed in his official work, father had very little time to attend to the day to day domestic affairs, except to guide us with a soft approach when we erred and to set a good example himself 'practising what he preached'. Mother was a strict disciplinarian. She did not 'spare the rod and spoil the child', though caning was sparingly resorted to. Once she made a decision, she saw that it was implemented. One of my brothers aged 5 stubbornly refused to go to school. At the point of the cane she somehow managed to send him out of the gate. He walked a few yards beyond her reach and coolly squatted on the public road, throwing down his slate and book. For a moment she was taken aback, next minute she asked our servant to carry him to his school which was quite close by. Amidst his kicking and struggling and shrieking in protest, the servant managed to take him to the school and seat him in his place. After a little while he calmed down. The tantrum was not repeated. All the same mother was a caring person. She would win our love, patiently attending to our needs, telling us stories and actually joining us in all our games. Above all, she gave us the confidence that we could depend on her in any emergency.

Service to the community was important to her. Father had a similar disposition and she had a free hand to pursue her inclination. She took

a very active part in organisations like the Y.W.C.A, the Women's club, and the Martha Mariam Samajam.

### **Selfless Service**

She is gratefully remembered by her children and close relations for her selfless service in conveying them safe through crises, be it in the home, beyond Kerala or even abroad. Her equally selfless husband was very supportive of her actions.

She led a simple life and abhorred pretensions or ostentation in any form. Like her father, she too believed that houses were meant to be lived in, not exhibited as museums. During holidays when we all got together, she never resented the children turning the house upside down. All our cousins were cordially welcomed and could count on a relaxed time at our home.

Aiming at the all round development of the children she started a 'Balasamajam' modelled on the 'Literary Union' meetings held in Schools. The children held meetings regularly. Elders including Pappy presided and encouraged us. She was also instrumental in bringing out a hand written magazine "BalaPrabodhini" by the children, to develop their literary talents.

The children were book- worms and in concern for their physical development, she had them admitted to the dance class organised by the women's club. She also started a 'Mittai Club' for the idle and deprived boys of the neighborhood. She bought a foot ball for them to engage them in harmless sport. She distributed 'Mittai' (candied sweets) before they dispersed. Years later some of them introduced themselves to us:- "Don't you remember us? We belonged to the 'Mittai Club'.

### **Not fair in complexion**

Mother was not fair in complexion – Once she told us "I have heard that when I was a new-born baby lying beside my fair and beautiful mother, a friend who visited her is reported to have said to a common friend 'Nobody would take her for Mariam's Child': Little

did she know then that the baby was destined to be her son's wife". Another story in this connection, when Miss McDougall, the Principal of W.C.C. from mother's days, knew that I was in school final class, she wrote to mother "you must send your daughter to W.C.C., she will be the first grand child of the college". When I met Miss McDougall in W.C.C., the first thing she asked me was "How is your mother? Oh! She was pretty, she was very pretty, she was very, very pretty. Is she still pretty? I used to point her out to visitors." This was a big joke among us her children.

Occasional movies and games of cards and caroms played in competitive spirit were highlights of the holidays. Mother was game for all these pastimes.

Mother tried her hand at everything she came across-: dress making, crochet lace, pillow- lace, modeling with clay and weaving grass mats. Her attempt to make hand-loom cloth had to be given up after the loom was ready, as father was transferred before she could put it to use.

Mother had a special interest in supervising house construction, inherited from Pappy. Our house Kadaville in Chembukavu was constructed under her supervision with Pappy's guidance and another house after his death.

She sustained a fracture a few years prior to her demise and was confined to her room during the last few months. But her sense of humour and optimistic outlook never left her. Her grandchildren would cluster round her bed during holidays. She would argue with the children like the proverbial 'Village School Master'. Her room would resound with songs, arguments, quarrels and laughter.

Her advice was "Make peace with God and mankind when you are well, when you are sick and in pain you will be thinking only of your ailments".

She was fortunate enough to see all her nine children well placed in life. Her married life lasted 72 years. She passed away on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1984, two years after father's demise.

## **Rema Tharakan daughter of Reemy Korath, on her grand mother Mrs Mary Poulouse**

She was the first born of her parents, epitomised the strength, wisdom and indomitable spirit that characterised each one of her siblings to follow. Her sense of fair play and her sense of commitment to the community was as strong as her sense of humor. She was for me the grandmother who was a great friend too. She understood and empathised with all the agonies of irrationalities and defiance of growing up- could draw out and empower the shy and the insecure. She always led by example- always commanded respect never demanded it. She was the perfect foil for the gentle and poetic man she married. While he was busy presiding over the court of law, she presided with equal flair and elan over her world of home, family and community. (I have heard hot debates about, which of the three was uppermost in her interest). Difficult to write formally about her. She was such a special person for me. I will always lapse into the intensely personal.

### **2. M.C. Abraham (1900 - 1999)**

M.A. Chakko's second child and eldest son, Abraham was born on June 7, 1900. He was educated in his adolescent years at Trichur. As a student he was both diligent and intelligent. He went on to acquire a Civil Engineering Degree (First Class), from the Manchester University, Great Britain.

M.C. Abraham returned to India and was employed as a Civil Engineer on various projects in the Madras Presidency, notably on the Kakinada Harbour Development Project and the Cochin Harbour Project.

In the Cochin Harbour Project, he worked as an assistant to the renowned engineer Bristow, who was in charge of the Project. The first part of the Project was the formation of the present Wellington Island with earth obtained while dredging the harbour. Even before the formal opening of the harbour there was a fierce storm and an Italian ship sought asylum in the newly created harbour. In later years Abraham would say that it was an anxious time for all those who

worked on the project; but it was also one of excitement and a sense of achievement. Bristow presented to Abraham, the only Christian amongst his Assistants a carved wooden Celtic cross, which Mrs. Bristow had kept with her from the days when she was a nun!. 'His family continues to keep it as a precious memento'.

In 1928 Abraham applied for a job in the Public Works Department of the Government of Ceylon, but was unsuccessful. However in 1929 he was appointed by the Irrigation Department of the Government of Ceylon as an Assistant Engineer. In 1932 Ceylon faced serious economic recession and the services of many Engineers in the Public Works Department in which he had earlier been denied employment were terminated. This turn of events left a deep impression on Abraham. It confirmed his faith in Divine providence. He stood firm in his belief in the Goodness and Wisdom of God and faced both good times and bad, bravely to the end of his life.

In the Irrigation Department he was transferred to various locations in Ceylon. During the war his services were requisitioned to build an aerodrome in Dambulla. He rose to the Departmental position of Divisional Irrigation Engineer. He was engaged in Ceylon's first and largest multipurpose Project for flood control, irrigation and electricity generation called the Galoya Development Project.

In 1948, Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, became an independent nation and there was a feeling of insecurity amongst Indian officers in Sri Lanka Government Service. In conformity with requirements of the new constitution, Abraham retired and he came to India, choosing to remain an Indian citizen rather than opt for Sri Lankan citizenship in order to retain his job.

He joined the Bengal Engineering College at Shibpur in Calcutta as Associate Professor in the Civil Engineering Department. Teaching in a Professional College after a quarter century as an officer in field work was not easy. But Abraham, with his characteristic diligence was able not only to cope, but function outstandingly and win the respect of his students and colleagues; all this in the turbulent, post-riot environment of Calcutta, from 1950-1952.

The Government of Sri Lanka approached the Government of India under the provisions of the Colombo plan, for the services of M.C. Abraham as Chief Engineer in the Galoya Development Board. This was on account of Abraham's knowledge and experience of Sri Lanka and their confidence in him. The work on the Ingini Yagala dam was being executed by M/S Morrison Knudron, an American firm.

Abraham was genuinely concerned about the personal and professional welfare of his subordinates and junior Engineers. His simple and disciplined life style and his concern for each of those working with him, created a healthy working environment and good team work. It was no surprise that his service was extended thrice.

After retirement he settled in Bangalore. He had retired from service; but he was just as busy as he was in his working years. The fiery hothead of earlier years had mellowed into a man of dedicated service. Planning and assisting in the construction of the Ecumenical Centre at Bangalore, organizing and running "Action for water development" (a non-profit organization engaged in digging bore wells and water management), teaching in and organizing Sunday school in the Bangalore Orthodox Church, running a charitable dispensary for the congregation of his church, construction of a new Church building on Hosur Road, (now the Orthodox Cathedral in Bangalore) helping to construct the C.S.I. All Saints 'Home for the Aged', also on Hosur Road; these and similar activities filled his life. His wife and mother of his five children died in 1979. Abraham lived another twenty years and died in 1999 at the age of 99.

### **Dr. Chakko George (M.C. George) (1902-1981)**

George the second son and third child of M.A. Chakko was born on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1902 at Cochin Chittur. At that time Chakko was the Magistrate in service there. As he was born in Chittur he was known among the domestic staff as chitturkaran (meaning in Malayalam, a native of Chittur).

He did his early schooling in the govt. Boys' High School (Sarkar High School, today Model Boys' High School) in Trichur. As a boy he



was active and mischievous, ready for fun of any kind and also for championing causes in which he believed. While in School he was in the forefront of an anti-govt. agitation albeit for a worthy cause. This proved to be a headache for his father, who in his capacity as Supdt. of Police, was bound to maintain law and order and subdue any questioning of British authority, however trivial. On one occasion without the prior knowledge of his father, he led a jatha of School boys who were vociferously protesting against the compulsory wearing of caps & coats as part of their school uniform. The news flashed to his father by the police and he was forcibly taken home by them, much to his embarrassment. However, the outcome, though it materialized much later was favourable.

George derived great pleasure out of practical joking and teasing. He was once responsible for tying a dead chameleon to the dhoti of an unsuspecting sleeping watchman.

George's College education was in Madras. He initially took up English literature and later abandoned it and adopted medicine in deference to his father's wish. He took his Medical degree from Madras Medical College in 1930. He served for one year with the govt. of Cochin, in Ernakulam.

During the course of his Medical studies, he married Achamma the daughter of Mr. M.C Kunjipaily. He went to England in 1932 for higher studies. He completed his LRCP & S. But as the war broke out, he was unable to return to India with his family. He started general practice in Enfield, Middlesex. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939 he served in a voluntary capacity in the Red Cross. Feeling it was his duty to serve the land in which he was living, during its time of crisis. In 1941 he volunteered for Army service and served, with the rank of Captain, in the Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.) on the Burma front from 1943 – 1946.

After his return to England he continued general practice and trained in Dermatology from the Tropical School of Medicine, London from 1951 – 1953. He continued his dermatological training in the University Hospitals, Cleveland, Ohio USA.

He returned to India in 1953 and settled down in Trichur, Kerala. He was a practising Dermatologist till his demise in 1981.

After his return to India he engaged in social cultural, civic and religious activities.

He was the founder Director of the Malankara Medical Mission Hospital in Kolenchery. He was a member of the Governing Board and Executive Committee of the Christian Medical College Vellore and Acting Chairman of its Council. He started a Rural Dispensary in Kundukadu.

He served as president of the Bible Society, Trichur branch. He was a member of the Managing Committee of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, member of the Diocesan council and lay President of Malankara Orthodox Student Christian Movement.

His civic activities included the starting of the Children's Park & children's Library in the Thekinkad Maidan. He was a Board Member of the Kerala Kalamandalam and also the Sahithya Academy and local chairman of the sadachar samithi.

Drawing from the fund of knowledge and expertise gleaned from his experience in various facets of life Dr. Chakko George, in the 28 years that he spent in Trichur, was able to contribute in a very pertinent way to its rapidly progressing social, economic and cultural life.

He passed away in April 1981 while on a visit to his son and family in Doha.

As a father, his children, remember him as an understanding friend, philosopher and guide.

### **Sarah Chakko (1905 – 1954)**

Sarah Chakko was the fourth child of M.A. Chakko. Through her nobility of character, dedication, captivating behaviour and sound wisdom she was able to render valuable service to the church and community.

The first half of her short life spanning less than half a century, Sarah spent as a student. The second half from 1930 (when she joined

Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow) till her premature death in 1954, was a fertile period of unremittant and dedicated hard work. These years saw a young Malayalee maiden born and brought up in an Orthodox Christian home, emerging on the North Indian scene and establishing herself as an ecumenical leader. She later entered the international arena and caught the attention and unstinted respect of the world leaders of the church. The World Student Christian Federation, the World Y.W.C.A. and the World Council of Churches were some of the ecumenical bodies in which she made her presence felt.

Sarah was born on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1905. Along with her sisters she attended the Victoria Girls High School in Trichur. Realising the importance of collegiate education Sarah's father sent her to Queen Mary's College, Madras for B.A and later to Presidency College for her M.A. in History. She began her teaching career in the Bentinck Girls' High School which was run by the London Missionary Society. In 1930 she was appointed to the faculty of Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, a women's college run by the American Methodist Church. In 1937 she went to the U.S. for her Masters degree in education in Chicago University and the study of International law and Political Science in Michigan University.

In 1939 she was appointed as Vice Principal and in 1945 she took charge as the Principal of Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow a post she graced till her demise in 1954.

As an active member of the Student Christian Movement, Sarah participated in the Student Christian conference held in Java in 1933 and in San Francisco in 1936. She was one of the chosen delegates of the Student Christian Movement who visited the university students of China in 1946. She served on the National Committee of the Y.W.C.A of India, Burma and Ceylon and held the post of Vice President of the World Y.W.C.A in 1947.

In 1948 at the invitation of Bishop Bromley Oxnam of the American Methodist Church, Sarah attended as a delegate, the Organising

Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam. There she presented a report of the Womens' Commission deputed to study the place of women in the church and society. On the recommendation of the Assembly, she was selected as the full time president of the newly chosen Womens' Commission. Taking leave from the college for one and a half years, she worked diligently for this cause. During this assignment she frequently visited Europe, U.S.A. and during the public meetings, group discussions and public speeches she tried hard to create among women, an awareness of their capabilities and to encourage them to take their rightful place in church and society.

Sarah returned to Lucknow towards the end of 1951. During the one and a half years of her leadership various discussion groups in the member churches of the Ecumenical Movement began propagating the new message. It reached a stage where the irksome issues could no longer be ignored.

In 1948 a noted theologian T.C. Chao of Yenching University in China was elected as one of the six presidents of the World Council of Churches. However he resigned in 1951 in protest against the World Council of Churches' approval of U.N. intervention in the Korean War. In recognition of the outstanding services she had rendered to the Ecumenical Movement Sarah was elected to that post. It was in response to the invitation of that great lady that the central committee of the World Council of Churches met in Lucknow in January 1953.

Sarah had been nominated by the Orthodox Syrian Church to be a delegate at the second Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held at Evanston, U.S.A. in 1954. Unfortunately though she was actively preparing for this event, it was not to be as she passed away while participating in a staff- student basketball match. She died of a heart attack. The news of her untimely demise plunged not only India but the whole world in gloom.

Often in the normal course of life we fail to adequately appreciate the greatness of our colleagues. It is only after they have gone that we realise the magnitude of our loss. Sarah Chakko's death was during

the bright period of her youth. The short spell of life of this jewel taught us that the values of life does not depend on the number of hours and days spent in this world, but rather on the merit of our deeds and nobility of our thoughts.

She derived pleasure from the warmth of love and companionship, whether rich, or poor, teacher or students, superior or subordinate, each one found their place in her large heart. She gave respect and won respect in return. She outpoured love and received the same in response. That noble lady was a friend to all.

How significant is the fact that her soul left its earthly abode on the game field. She had competed in the race of life with discipline abiding by the rules. She bade farewell encompassed by youthfulness, love and laughter. At sunset when she entered the gates of the palace of the King, she must have been welcomed by the sweet music of the angels. Sarah loved music. The Two nights prior to her death she had enjoyed the singing of her colleagues.

There's a light upon the mountain

There's a song in the air .....

.....

I hear the angel's voices call me.

### **M.C. Jacob (1907 - 1994)**

Mazhuvanchery Parambath Chakko Jacob was born at Trichur on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1907. He took his degree from the Madras Christian College with Botany as the main subject. Then he joined the Madras Medical College. After completing one year of study there, he appeared for the competitive examination for selection to the covenanted posts of Government Service. He got selected to the Imperial Police Service (old I.P.S) as well as Imperial Forest Service (old I.F.S).

Jacob opted for the Imperial Forest Service on the advice of his father who was at that time Superintendent of Police in Cochin State. He completed the course at the Forest Training Institute and was inducted into the Assam Cadre.

His first posting was as the District Forest officer of KAMROOP District at Gauhati in the year 1930. During the subsequent 16 years, he was posted at various places in Assam State, some of which are listed below; at Shillong as working plan officer, at Tezpur as the Darang District forest officer, and later at Dhubri as the Yolpara District officer.

In 1947 the Government sent Jacob to Oxford and to the United States to gain specialization and experience in forestry and soil conservation. On his return to India in 1948, he was posted as the Junior Forest Conservator of the old Assam State, comprising the present states of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh and was stationed at Shillong.

In 1954, Jacob was promoted as the Chief Conservator of forests. He held that post for 11 years till his retirement from service in 1965. Thus he served the State of Assam for a period of 35 years.

During his tenure as the Chief Conservator of forests, he was closely associated with establishing of the Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary (which is the natural habitat of the Indian Rhinoceros), Gauhati zoo, and the forest Training College at Bermihal. He also established a new Soil Conservation Department for the Government. He held the post of the Director of Soil Conservation also, in addition to the post of the Chief Conservator of forest till his retirement. He was very much concerned about the plight of poor people living in the hills and plains of Assam. With the view to improve their financial States, he put in a great deal of effort to impart training and guidance to the villagers in cultivating crops like cashewnut, rubber, coffee and other agricultural products profitably.

The work schedule adopted by Jacob was such that for three weeks in a month, he would be out in the deep forests, his tour extending right up to the international borders with China, Burma, Bhutan and the present Bangla Desh. His work in the field of soil conservation, brought him into close contact with the people of various tribes inhabiting the vast area. He advised and guided them in modernising their prevailing agricultural practice in such a way as to minimize soil erosion which is a major problem in hilly areas.

The Malayala Manorama in a report dated 1<sup>st</sup> December 1968 under the heading “The Malayali influence on the soil of Assam” states-

“The seeds of Agriculture reformation in Assam were sown by a Malayalee. Mazhuvancheri Parambath Chakko Jacob of Trichur introduced the cultivation of rubber, Pepper, cashewnut and cardamom in to the State of Assam when he was the Chief Conservator of forest. (He was the first Indian to hold this high post).

The rubber plantation that he had set up in the Kaziranga National park (which itself was established largely due to his efforts) can still be seen there.

(The Manorama reporter on his return journey from Assam visited Chakko Jacob, who was there leading a retired life in Gandhinagar Colony at Adayar in Madras. Old memories brought tears of joy to his eyes. Assam can never forget Jacob.)

In those days, the State of Assam extended from Tibet to the Bay of Bengal. “Assam did not forget him his long service to her, spanning nearly half a century. They invited him to inaugurate the Forest Research Station at Burnihat” recalls Jacob’s wife Omana of Kandathil family, Thiruvalla (Omana was the daughter of K.V.Eapen, the son of Kandathil Varghese Mappilai)

Jacob was a member of the All Saint’s Church of Shillong till his retirement. He had also served as a member of the Pastoral Committee of the church. He was a member of the Governing Body of the prestigious Pine Mount Girls School, Shillong.

After his retirement, Jacob was selected as the forestry expert to the Aid Nepal Mission, to go to Kathmandu, but due to his failing eyesight, he had to decline the offer. Jacob passed away in 1994.

### **Salome Kuriappan Joseph (Chinnamma)**

Salome was born in 1911. Her mother once remarked, assessing three of her daughters – “Saramma for big matters, Sosamma for small ones (household matters) and Chinnamma for both. Another of her observation was, “whatever work Chinnamma undertook, she did

with precision and speed". She was a good student. The Examiner who valued Salome's S.S.L.C. English paper was so impressed that he is reported to have enquired who the student was! After her schooling in Trichur, she joined W.C.C, Madras, for her Intermediate in 1927. Then she took her B.A. degree from Queen Mary's College, Madras.

She worked as Tutor in Queen Mary's College and as a lecturer in W.C.C. for a short time. She had great interest in sports. She was in the Tennis, Badminton and Basketball teams. While teaching in Queen Mary's College, she was instrumental in founding the Inter Collegiate Athletic Association and was the first secretary.

She was married to Mr. Chungath Kuriappan Joseph, Kunnamkulam in 1935. He was an Advocate practising in the Bombay High Court, and a part time Professor in a Bombay College and the Law College at Poona. After marriage Salome started life in Bombay with her husband. She became a prominent figure in the Social Service Circle. She was a member of the Board of the Y.W.C.A and also President of the hostel committee. She was a founder member of the Kerala Mahila Samajam and was President for a term.

In the nineteen forties she used to take great interest in church activities. She served on the Building Committee of the Orthodox Church under the leadership of Mrs. Achamma John Mathai. Later she was Secretary of the free Medical Aid Dispensary run by the same Church. She wrote several short plays for the Sunday school in the Church and helped in their production also.

During her long stay in Bombay their house was a transit home for relations and friends, going abroad. Both husband and wife were of one mind in welcoming everyone. Kuriappan Joseph passed away in 1968. Salome stayed on in Bombay for another 6 years.

### **In M.G.D.M. Hospital Kangazha**

Mr. Varghese Kizhakemuri writes:

Salome Kuriappan Joseph joined M.G.D.M. Hospital in Kangazha in 1974, when Mr.P. Geeverghese, the founder of the hospital invited



her to take up the administration of the hospital. She stayed on there for 23 long years and was addressed affectionately as 'Kochamma' by everyone. Even to the Bishops and V.I.P.s who paid intermittent visits to the hospital she was "Kochamma". Mar Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews II<sup>nd</sup> who died recently was an exception. He used to call her "ammamma".

She took an active part in the hospital development programmes undertaken by the Managing Trustee P. Geevarghese, the Medical Superintendent Dr. S. Joseph and the Organising Secretary Fr. George Pattalatt. Later, when Dr. Thomas Thachil was Medical supdt. and when Mr. Varghese Paul took charge as Managing Trustee on the demise of his father Mr. P. Geeverghese, the service rendered by Kochamma in the field of hospital administration and of social activities within the hospital was appreciated by all. She was a trusted and popular figure in the hospital.

Many Church leaders and other individuals within the country and abroad had been extending a helping hand to the hospital in implementing its expansion programmes. Kochamma through her proficiency in English, was able to render unique assistance to the Managing Trustee and the medical Superintendent in approaching such friends and in interacting with them. Whenever there were distinguished visitors to the hospital, it was Kochamma who made all the backstage arrangements for receiving and honouring them appropriately.

From the very inception of the English Medium School attached to the hospital, Kochamma served unobtrusively as local manager. Her help and guidance were fully available to other schools too, whenever needed. The Boarding Home adjoining the English Medium School was close to her heart. She was also companion to Miss. M. Chakko, the principal of the Nursing School. They were the officially appointed, personnel in charge of the administration of the nursing staff and students. Kochamma kept in touch with their needs, problems or complain to after proper discussion, whenever possible, or passed them on through proper channel, to those empowered for their solution.

Dealing with complaints, problems and misunderstanding in the daily routine of the hospital is an art. Minor complaints would be there - “After taking a token card we have to wait a longtime for the Doctor to call us”. “The Doctor is late coming to the consulting room” etc. Then there were the bigger problems like friction between the patients and service staff. Kochamma had a natural gift for softening and resolving all of them. Then there were those who had no money to buy medicines, those who did not have enough money to do so, and those who though discharged from the hospital had insufficient fund to pay the bill-, the destitute and the helpless- for all of them Kochamma had some magic solution, solution which did not unduly burden the hospital. She had nurtured funds, gathered from various sources to meet such contingencies.

Kochamma took the lead in organising a variety of social and cultural activities within the hospital campus. Realising their role in promoting relaxation and relieving tension in the hospital atmosphere, she used to organise competitions in flower- carpet designs during Onam and in singing of carols at Christmas, in activities like Christmas decorations and play-acting. Physical competitions like tug-of-war, various indoor games etc. were also organized. The winners were given attractive prizes then and there as far as possible.

There is no doubt that such programmes brought to the hospital community a sense of togetherness, relieved their mental tensions, brought about a sense of collective responsibility through co-operation promoting unity bridging all divisions among them. Kochamma strove to organise useful exhibitions and outdoor excursions under the leadership of the different units. She also took the lead in visiting bereaved homes to offer consolation and houses where weddings were taking place, to rejoice with them.

Kochamma was fully conscious that a good relationship between the hospital and the public was essential for the development of the hospital and to preserve the concept as a big family group.

She retired in 1977 and is living in Bangalore now.

(This account of the services in the Kangazha Hospital was prepared by Sri Varghese Kizhakkemuri).

### **Sosamma (by daughter, Bala)**

My mother Sosamma is the seventh child of M.A. Chakko. Like her father, Amma too is a person of grit, strong will and high moral values. But what I admire most in her is the amazing ease with which she adapts herself to the changing situations of life. Being the daughter of a police officer of high rank, she grew up enjoying all sorts of comforts and luxuries of city life. She had her higher education at the prestigious Queen Mary's College of Madras. But soon after, she was transplanted by marriage into a well to do agricultural family in a remote village, where the light of modernism had not yet reached. Though her husband K.C. Zachariah was a well educated young man with modern outlook, the lifestyle in her new home was rustic and primitive. As saree was considered too fashionable a dress in the village, Amma had to change to 'Mundu and Chatta' the traditional wear of Syrian Christian women, on the very day of her wedding.

In those days, rural people did not consider bathrooms and toilets a must in the house. They bathed and washed in nearby streams or ponds and the vast stretches of barren land around the house served as good enough toilets. Amma said that it was because of her insistence that a bathroom and toilet were built in the house! In her father's house she was not used to doing much domestic work. But in her new home it was customary to give midday meals to the workers toiling in the field. Daily, there would be about 20 men to be fed. According to the custom there, the women in the house would have their first meal, only after the workers had eaten and gone, by about 11 o' clock. Amma who was used to having her breakfast by 8 A.M, found this new pattern very hard to cope with, especially when she had a suckling. Electricity and running water were unheard of in the village in those days. Scope for entertainment almost nil; outings rare; books hardly available; life in her new home was indeed dull and colourless. But Amma never uttered a word of complaint; she only tried to change her ways to suit the new set up.

Later, when my father accepted the Chief Editorship of 'Kerala Bhushanam' Daily and came to live in Kottayam, the family also moved with him. Here the atmosphere was totally different. Appan had a wide circle of friends consisting mainly of budding poets and writers of the time, like Changampuzha, Thakazhy, Karoor Neelakanda Pillai, Ponkunnam Varkey, M.P.Paul and C. J Thomas. Plenty of books arrived for reviewing. At home, there prevailed an atmosphere of reading and literary discussions. While writing book reviews and editorials Appan used to respect Amma's views and opinions. In preparing Appan's radio talks, she was of much help, copying the manuscripts and listening to the talk again till it reached the correct length. Appan was an expert at making limericks. Though Amma herself would be the butt of ridicule, she enjoyed them much.

When his father died Appan resigned his job and returned to his ancestral home, with Amma. By now, the old village had attained the stature of a small town and possessed all amenities of modern life. When Appan entered in to active politics and became an M.L.A. it was Amma who stood by him and gave him all support and encouragement.

Though Amma was just an ordinary house wife, she was a woman of some social commitment. When she was living in Kottayam, she took initiative and formed a 'Mahila Samajam' (Ladies Club) which undertook many activities useful to the women of the locality. The club had a small library, conducted tailoring, music, and dance classes, and provided facilities for indoor and outdoor games. Amma was also a nominated member of the Kottayam District Development Council for some years.

### **Daughter Sosamma Zachariah writes**

Strangely enough, the Excise Commissioner who brought to light and reported on the fraudulent practices going on in his Department for some time, was himself required by the lower Court to make good the heavy loss to the Govt. He was relieved of his job and his movable and immovable properties were frozen. The family was in sore straits.

However the elder children had all completed their education by then. The eldest daughter was married. The eldest son Abraham had finished his engineering course in U.K. and was working as Assistant to Engineer Bristow who was in charge of the Cochin Project. The next son George, after completing his Medical course from the Madras Medical College, was in U.K. for higher studies. Daughter Sarah after taking her M.A. degree had joined as lecturer in Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. Son Jacob I.F.S. had entered Govt. Service in Assam as Conservator of Forests. So the financial liabilities were somewhat lessened. The defalcation case dragged on for 3 or 4 years in different Courts. At last the verdict from the High Court was in favour of Pappy, he was exonerated from all charges and his pension and the use of his assets were restored. Until that time, the income from the coconut trees and the small rubber plantation kept us going.

After retirement, Pappy took to carpentry as a hobby. He made a tool box for keeping his implements and kept it well stocked. Lids for mother's jars, a stand for the pot holding drinking water, a ladder, a charka are some of the things he made that comes to my mind. When he was doing any turning work shaping the wood he would call one of us children to lend a hand. Woe to the victim, who will have to be on her knees for at least one hour pulling at the ends of the rope twisted round the shaft, back and forth to keep rotating the wood for shaping.

Sosamma Zachariah died on 9-7-2007

### **Annie Mathew 1917**

I was the eighth child of my parents born in Mancherly, Trichur on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1917. My schooling was in the Victoria Jubilee Govt. Girls High School, Trichur, except for a year in the newly started 'Christava Mahilayalam', Alwaye. My College education was in Madras, Intermediate in Queen Mary's College (1933-1935) and Botany B.A. in Women's Christian College. I passed with second rank in Botany in the B.A. Examination held in the Madras Presidency in March 1938.

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1939 I was married to Mr. P.C. Mathew (Unni) son of Dr. P.C Cherian, Illampallil, Chengannur. He was on the teaching

staff of the Rajkumar College, Raipur, meant exclusively for the sons of the princely families of Madhya Pradesh. It still exists as an Institution of repute. The College building stands in the middle of a plot of 250 acres, with staff quarters dotted around in the campus. There was plenty of opportunity for games. I continued playing tennis which I had picked up during my College days. All my three daughters were born during our stay there. We had a happy home life in Raipur.

In 1945 the Political Department posted my husband and me as joint guardians of the Raj (Princely) Children of Bastar State. The Political Department took over the children after the premature death of their mother who was the ruler of the State. The first guardians one Col. Gibson and his wife, both English, brought the children up in the western style. The Political Department realised the Rajakumarees were to be married to strictly Orthodox Hindu Raj families and had to be Indianised, so my husband and I were posted as joint guardians of the Minor Maharaja of Bastar, his brother and two sisters. Our main job was to familiarize them with Indian ways, speaking in their mother tongue, eating with their fingers etc. We had efficient staff to run the palace. As guardians we carried out our mission successfully and both the Raj kumarees were married during our tenure in office. The British were leaving India by then and in a hurry, they crowned the 18 year old Rajkumar. That brought to a close this chapter of my life.

In 1948 my husband went to the U.K. for training in shipping. At the insistence of my widowed mother, who was staying alone in Mancherly; my four children and I kept her company till my husband returned from the U.K. The two older girls were sent to school in Trichur.

I joined my husband in Liverpool where he was undergoing the last 6 months of his training prior to his return from the U.K. While staying there I spent a fortnight with my brother Dr. Chakko George who was practising in London. My brother John who had just finished his examination in Electrical Engineering was handy as a guide and took me out sightseeing. My sister Sarah Chakko was in Switzerland

at the time and at her invitation we spent a week with her in Geneva. So I had the good fortune to visit Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland.

Soon after our return to India, my husband joined M/s Pierce Leslie Co. Cochin as the officer in charge of shipping (We rented a house and the family moved into Ernakulam). In two years we purchased a plot and built a house in Kacherippady. Our children grew up in that house, had their education and were married during our stay there.

(After that we spent a spell of 10 years in Chengannur, our family house. We sold the house and returned to our house in Kacherippady for one year). With the children married and gone we found the five bedroom house too big for us. We shifted to our present abode of 3 bedroom flat on top of our son-in-law's house in Ernakulam. While we were living happily in that flat my husband died suddenly due to heart failure on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1993.

I feel safe and secure with my son-in-law and daughter staying on the ground floor; they look after all my needs (I spend a lot of time watching on T.V. various games. cricket, tennis, football and hockey. My eyesight is reasonably good and I spend the morning hours reading Malayala Manorama and Indian Express).

I am 91 years old and keep reasonably good health. (The super market and the Bank are within walking distance and I fend for myself. I have a steady income to keep me in reasonable comfort.) "God has been very kind and caring and I am thankful to Him for His manifold blessings".

Lily Jacob. Her niece, classmate and friend:

Of pappy's children Annie is the wittiest and the prettiest, resembling him the most in appearance. A smart mischievous child she was. Pappy found her little ways amusing and had a soft corner for her. She adored her father.

Annie's performance on the stage was superb. in school, college, women's club etc.

In any gathering whether of classmates or friends or in any social function, if you hear peals of laughter from anywhere, you can be sure Annie is in the centre of it.

In a Crisis, no matter where, in college, at home, or among relatives, she is quick to extend a helping hand, regardless of the consequences, or of her own personal comforts and sometimes even of her family. She was confident she could justify her action and was always able to do so and win their all out support. She is a wonderful person, in a class of her own.

### **IX Martha Mathews (Minnie)**

Minnie was born in April 1920, the ninth of the Chakko Children. She was followed by John (Moncie) seven years later.

Minnie had her schooling in Trichur. College education was in Women's Christian College, Madras, whence she graduated in 1941. She thus chanced to be in Trichur with her mother, when her father passed away in August that year (No other son or daughter was with mother at the time).

Minnie was married in 1942 to Mr. I.K. Mathews of Kakkassery family of Kunnamkulam. Mr. Mathews was an officer in the Audit service and was posted in Calcutta; thus Minnie began her married life in Calcutta where she lived for a few years. Their son Lebias was born in 1944. Later Mr. Mathews was transferred to Delhi and the family moved to the capital where they remained for several years. The next move was to Bangalore in the late nineteen fifties where they finally settled down. In between Mr. Mathews was sent to Iraq on a special Assignment. However Minnie stayed behind to oversee her son's education.

In Bangalore the Mathews built a house for themselves. Life was comfortable. Minnie was a model wife and mother. By nature placid and methodical, she was a good homemaker. Very often there were house guests, relatives and friends from Kerala and other places, visiting Bangalore. Minnie was a gracious hostess.



Son Lebias graduated from the Engineering College and proceeded to England for higher studies. After completion he found employment there. He married Irene, a Swiss national. Parents Mr. Mathews and Minnie went to London, where the marriage ceremony was conducted (Lebias and his wife Irene moved to Zurich where they still live).

Minnie and Mathews spent their retirement years peacefully. Occasional visits by son and family brightened their days. They in turn visited Zurich to be with Lebias and family.

Life continued on an even keel in Bangalore, till Mathews was diagnosed as having cancer. Minnie nursed him through the painful illness for long months till he passed away in 1989. After his demise Minnie lived alone in Bangalore. She had a host of relatives there, including her eldest brother, several cousins, and nephews and nieces and many friends. She led a quiet life.

The end came suddenly and in a tragic manner. She was attacked by a gang of robbers who forced their entry into her flat on the night of 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1997.

Remembering Minnie, one thinks of her quiet dignity, her unobtrusive manner, her composure and poise. She always showed great maturity, beyond her years. Her friends, even older ones consulted her and sought her advice on crucial matters.

Minnie, we remember you and miss you!

(Written by her sister Salome Kuriappan)

## **X. John Chakko (Moncie) 1927 - 2008**

Moncie is the youngest of M.A. Chakko's children. He was an unexpected arrival, when his mother was rather advanced in years. In times of distress, he was known to invoke the name of 'pappy' instead of the usual 'mother'. He says he was not as close to pappy as his brothers and sisters, probably due to the wide age difference between them.

Moncie was born in 1927 at Trichur. After completing his intermediate course at St. Thomas College he went to the U.K. and

took his degree in Electrical Engineering from Faraday House. He took up work with the world renowned Associated Electrical Industries (A.E.I), Great Britain. In the nineteen fifties and nineteen sixties the company deputed him to India on different occasions on different projects. These included the construction and commissioning of a new power station at Ahmadabad on the banks of river Sabarmati, commissioning of the electric trains supplied by his firm for the newly electrified suburban railway for Calcutta, and later for commissioning new electric trains for Bombay's Suburban railway .

In 1957 Moncie married Grace Rae who was from Scotland. They lived in Manchester till Moncie retired. Grace was with Moncie in India during some of his assignments there.

After his retirement they moved to the town of Cockermouth, in the Lake District, England. Both of them contributed a great deal to social causes, spending much time and effort, particularly for the care of the elderly.

Having worked closely with helpless, aged people Moncie and Grace were familiar with Alzheimer's disease. So Grace recognized the lapse in memory as the beginning of Alzheimer's disease in herself.

Grace told Moncie, "Leave me and get yourself another wife" Moncie took it as a joke and pacified her.

In the second stage of the disease, she begged him, "Don't leave me. I don't have anybody else". Moncie still gets emotional when he speaks of this. Grace passed away in 1999.

John lives alone in Cockermouth and continues his welfare activities. He has set up charitable trusts to ensure continuity to what Grace and he have been doing. He has set up three separate trusts for charitable work, one in Scotland, one in England and one in India. The third trust supports the Indian Alzheimer's Society and special projects for the rehabilitation of disabled children. His entire inheritance, he has deposited in this Indian trust. Whatever he earned, he deposited in the other two trusts. He is also closely associated with many social and welfare activities in Cockermouth. Besides the Alzheimer's group

they include the rehabilitation of “victims of torture” and the “speech after stroke” scheme, that helps the victims of stroke to regain speech.

Moncie is trying to forget the sorrow at the loss of his wife, in the service of his fellow men. He is a much loved citizen of Cocker mouth.

### **Alzheimer's disease**

Dementia is a state due to the excessive destruction of brain cells and hence the functioning of the mind and body is curtailed. Even today, all over the world more than half the dementia cases are catalogued as Alzheimer's disease due to non availability of proper diagnosis and treatment. The only way of looking after them is nursing.

“The Alzheimer's and related disorders society of India” (ARDSI) is the only organization engaged in serving the victims of the disease and in giving advice to their volunteers in caring for their patients in a proper way. They do research in this field. The Alzheimer's society which has many branches in many parts of India started its Kottayam Chapter in 1996.

The Alzheimer's disease which Grace contracted was the motive with which John (moncie) plunged into this field. The Alzheimer's society West Cambria branch of England and the Alzheimer's society Kottayam Chapter joined to form a “link project” with a view to impart knowledge regarding the victims of dementia and the people who serve them.

The ‘Link project’ has the financial support from Grace trust and Grace Chakko trust. These trusts are headed by John Chakko who is permanently residing in England. The Kottayam chapter established a “Memory Clinic” in the Aymanam Grace Hospital as part of the link project 2002.

John Chakko died on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

### **Down Memory Lane**

Dr. K.P. George (grandson of M.A. Chakko), Moncie and Bobby (Rtd. Professor, Institute of statistics, Calcutta son of E.V. Mathew)

were of the same age and they used to meet every year at Thrissur during the summer holidays.

Dr. K.P. George reminisces about those childhood days thus: - Pappy's house in Thrissur was a large rambling three storey building set in an extensive plot of land. The third floor was an attic with coloured glass windows and rough floor. Assorted antiques were lying all over the place to the great delight of the children.

Although entrance to the attic was forbidden we used to sneak up there frequently. As soon as you enter the front verandah of the house, you see a wide wooden staircase on your right, climb up five steps you get on a landing with a well crafted wooden door on your left, barring your way. You need to open a number-lock to proceed upstairs. If you clear this and go up, you reach pappy's office room on your right. If you go past his table, chair, an easy chair and a swing-bed hung from the ceiling (where he usually rests in the hot after-noons) you see the narrow, steep, wooden, open, stairs leading to the large attic on the third floor. We used to go there stealthily and silently, past Pappy dozing peacefully on his swing bed in the after noons. We were all a bit afraid of Pappy. The attic had many delights to offer like old wooden clubs that you swing for exercise and body building, many old steel trunks with and without locks and many old chairs that used to serve as royal thrones for us.

Once we were climbing the attic stairs to return an illustrated book Moncie had discovered there earlier, one of the wooden steps creaked. Pappy was half awake and asked "who is it?" – Moncie had the presence of mind to reply in his normal tone "It is me, pappy" and that seemed to satisfy him!

Mancherly still had a horse - drawn carriage in the shed, stables and guard room for the police constables for duty and rest. But the horse and police had vanished as Pappy had retired from service by then. The carriage was a magnificent four wheeler, similar to the one used by the President of India for his ceremonial arrival to open the Parliament Session. In this carriage we could be the coach man, the

Army Commander or even the Maharaja. We could shout out to the imaginary constables in the empty guard room to bring the non-existent horses to the carriage. Then we would gently push the carriage. If it moved too much we did not know how to stop it!

Once a month Ammachi (grandmother) used to give us money to see a picture in the cinema theatre. But in return we had to clean up all the electric bulbs and shades in Mancherly.

During Christmas time we would go singing wearing masks to the house of our family friends. When we came to Mancherly singing Christmas carols Ammachi would reward us with a handful of sweets. We used to have a Christmas tree- selecting a guava or sapota tree in the courtyard for the purpose. We hung up presents for each other, duly wrapped with the names of the recipients scrawled on them (Moncie used to call it 'the distribution of odds and ends'). The head of the house would read out the name on each and distribute it ceremoniously. The children in the neighborhood were also given sweets.

When the children and grand children come together at Mancherly, we children would be fed first. We would sit on low stools and rice would be served on dinner plates kept on the clean floor. Then some of us would play indoor games and some would help in serving the elders at the dinner table. Once Mrs. M.C. Abraham Moncie's eldest sister-in-law, said to Moncie, "Son give me a second helping with two grains of rice" (Malayalam phrase for a small helping of rice). Moncie promptly counted two grains of rice, put them in her plate and ran away laughing mischievously.

When Yakob achachen (M.C. Jacob) comes on vacation for one or two months he would buy a car and sell it off when they go back. Once three weeks after his return to Assam a telegram came from him "Money in car pocket, collect". Pappy immediately ordered us to run to the person entrusted with the task of selling the car. We ran, although I could not understand the necessity for running three weeks after the incident. Luckily the car was there and the money also was there.

There were many exotic varieties of mangoes in Mancherly. We had names for all of them. There was an old mango tree “bitter skin” which was older than Pappy. If four or five of us stretch our hands we could just enclose its trunk. There were no branches below and it spread high and wide covering a large area. Nobody could climb it. The fruits were big but the stalk was weak. A squirrel or a crow had only to touch the ripe fruit for it to fall down. A good breeze would bring down showers of ripe mangoes. Even if all of us ate to our heart’s content, there would still be baskets and baskets left. Ammachi would spread the mango pulp on a bamboo mat to dry it in the sun, in layers, to make ‘thera’. When the ‘thera’ was properly dried and ready to eat, she would send it to all her children who were far away. She would give us also in plenty. Once we saw swarms of flies sitting on the drying mango pulp. I told Ammachi who was a stickler for hygiene, “Look at the flies!”. Ammachi calmly told me “Go close and look”. They were all honey bees!

During one summer vacation Papa took us all to Coonoor, where he had rented a house for one and a half months. There was a dairy farm run by British troops within walking distance. Milk and butter of good quality were available there for sale. Moncie, Reemy and I were given the task of buying one pound of butter from there. Of the three of us, I was the youngest. You have only to say “a pound of salted butter” we were instructed. When we neared the dairy we were nervous especially because we were not used to speaking in English. Reemy asked Moncie and Moncie asked me to go to the counter. I went nervously up to the Britisher and blurted out “A sound of polted butter, please”.



M.A. Chakko in ceremonial dress of the  
Police Commissioner

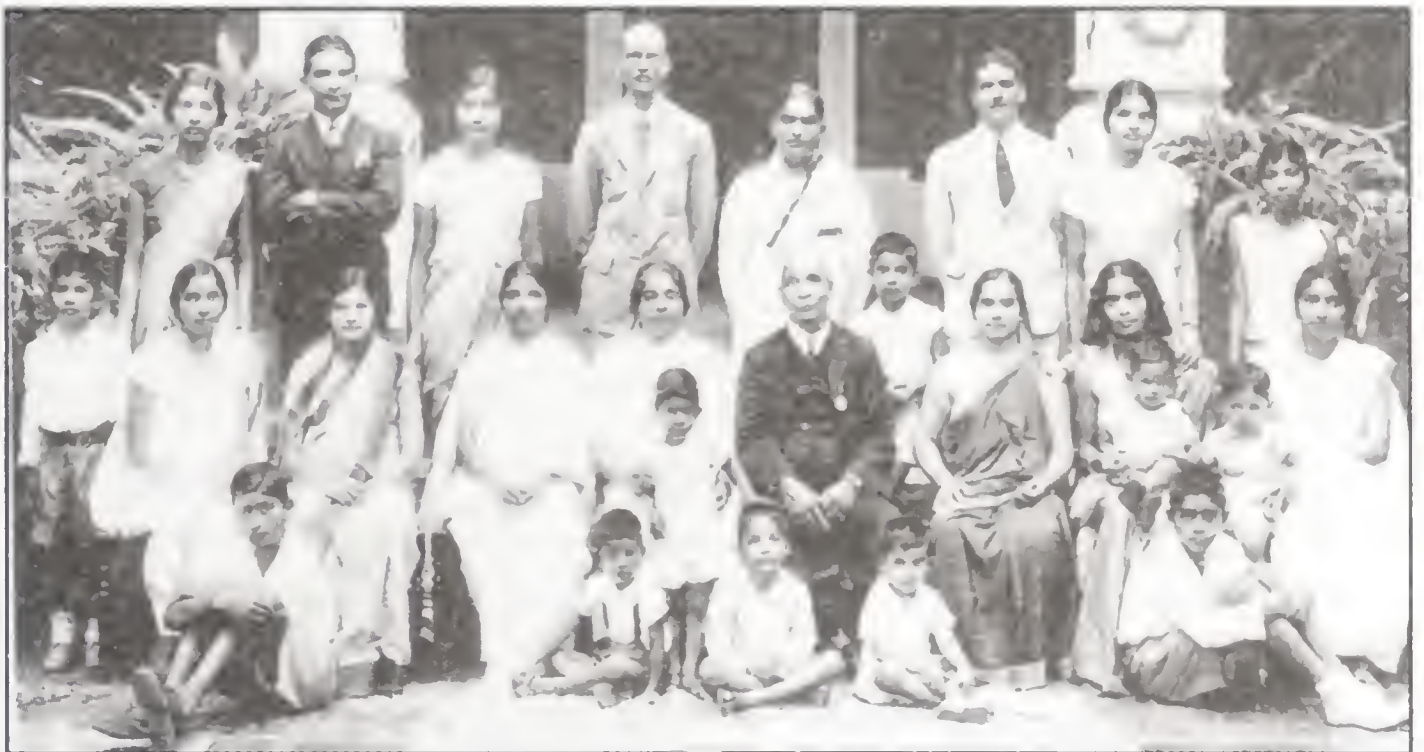


M.A. Chakko with wife Mary





Standing: Sons. M.C.Abraham. M.C. Jacob. M.C. George. Sarah Chakko (daughter) Sitting: Mary Chakko, M.A. Chakko, daughter Salomi (in front), M.A. Chakko's mother Mariam, M.A. Ckakko's sister Itty Annam Mary Poulouse (daughter) sister Sosamma (in the lap)



M.A. Chakko's Children's: in a group photo: Standing: 1<sup>st</sup> Annie, Second M.C. Jacob, Sixth M.C. Abraham, Seventh Minnie (Mrs. I.K. Mathews ) Sitting: 1<sup>st</sup> Sosamma Zachariah, 3<sup>rd</sup> Mary Paulose, 4<sup>th</sup> M.A. Chakko's wife, 5<sup>th</sup> M.A. Chakko, 7<sup>th</sup> Salomi Kuriappan, 8<sup>th</sup> Sarah Chakko, Sitting on the floor: 1<sup>st</sup> Moncie John Chakko



Cochin Maharaja with the heads of government:  
M.A. Chakko's standing: on the extreme right



Mrs. K.A. Poullose (Mamy)  
eldest daughter



M.C. Abraham and Elizabeth  
Abraham, Bangalore



Dr. Chakko George



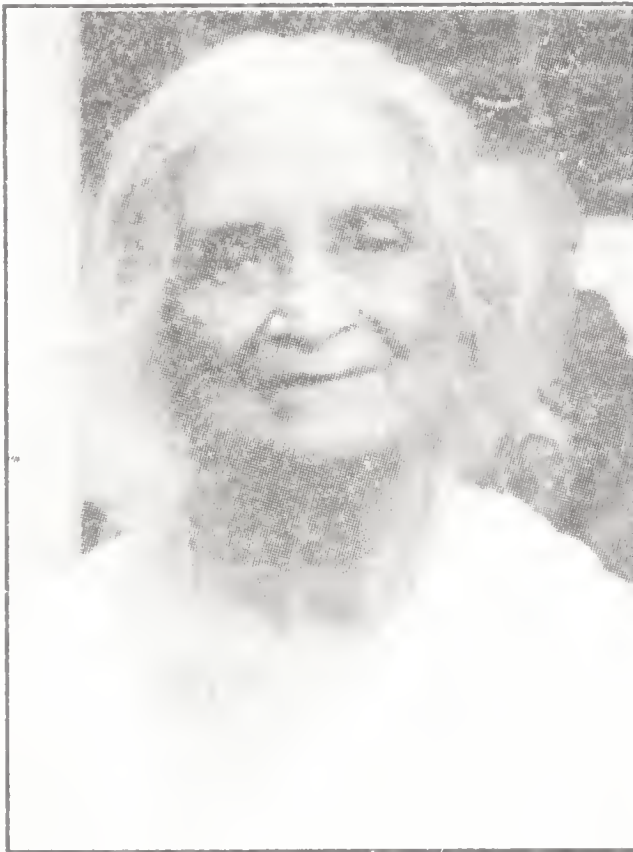
Sarah Chakko



M.C. Jacob



Salomi Joseph (Chinnamma)



Sosamma



Annie Mathew



Martha Mathews



John M. Chakko

Now alive among the children's



Annie, Salomi (Sitting)  
Sosamma - Died on 9-7-2007  
Monicie - Died on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008



M.A. Chakko's dead body in the Trichur Orthodox Church: I.H. Mar Basilius Catholica Bava, Puthencavu  
H.G. Mar Philaxinos, M.C. Kurikose Ramban, M.A. Chakko's eldest Son M.C. Abraham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Son M.C. Jacob,  
K.A. Paulose, Judge (eldest daughter's husband) Priests and laity can be recognised

## THE GOLDEN WEDDING JUBILEE - 1941

The wedding bells rang for the Mariam Chakko couple in May of the year 1891. The advent of the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary was an occasion to rejoice for the children and grandchildren. They decided to organize a three days, 'celebrations at Mancherly'. The sons and daughters with their families came to the fold from various parts of India in the first week of May to participate in the joyous festivities. Everyone was in high spirits.

The celebrations commenced on the morning of the first day, with a special service of thanksgiving and adoration offered to the Almighty father for the fifty years of health and grace.

When the family got together after breakfast, Aby (Mr. M.C. Abraham) representing the children presented the couple with a Chiming clock as a token of their love. It was accepted amidst loud applause. Afterwards they turned to various amusements-Most of them took delight in talking, as occasion for the whole family to get together were rare. After lunch some of them retired to rest, while others engaged themselves in playing cards and other games.

In the evening, after tea everyone turned out to see the 'Swadeshi Exhibition', held every year in the 'Pooram' (Temple festival) season. A family outing together like this is always a joy for ever. After dinner,

some went to 'Kadaville' to sleep, while the others spent the night at 'Mancherly'.

The next day was the historical 'Trichur Pooram'. The whole clan set out, in the evening, in groups to see the famous Pooram.

The highlight of the second day's celebration was a play written and directed by Mr. E.V. Mathew. The theme of the play was Mr. and Mrs. Chakko's childhood, youth and certain hilarious anecdotes from their married life. The actors showed rare talent as they became one with the characters. Mrs. Annie Mathew sparkled in the hero's role while Mary Abraham showed her mettle in the heroine's part. The prize for acting was awarded to Mrs. Mary Abraham and Master K.P. Mathew. Another item which fascinated one and all, was the dance performance by Mr. E.V. Mathew. He came on stage in a female dancer's costume and rendered a fantastic performance, exhibiting all the graceful movements of a born dancer. His expertise as a dancer earned him the nickname 'Natiya Kala Praveenan' (proficient in the art of dance) Mr. E.V. Mathew and the actors who worked tirelessly to make the entertainment a success merited felicitation.

On the third day, a family group photograph was taken, as also one of Mr. and Mrs. Chakko, and the family turned to various amusements after that. There was a garden party in the evening. Apart from the family members some 60 friends and neighbours attended. Mr. M.P. Varkey and Mr. Sankara poduval spoke on the occasion commending Mr. Chakko's official and social activities.

Mr. Chakko gave a fitting reply to the speeches. Mr. E.V. Mathew gave the vote of thanks acting as his sister Mariam's spokesman. He made full use of the opportunity to make a few digs at the jubilee couple and kept the audience roaring with laughter. There was 'Ottanthullal' while tea was being served. With the tea party, the curtain came down on the golden jubilee celebrations. Special mention should be made of Mrs. K.A. Poulouse who took the responsibility of the function on her shoulders and Mr. M.C. Abraham who worked endlessly to make it a success.



**DEMISE**

**M**r. M.A. Chakko died at the old seminary at Kottayam. It happened thus:-

The Catholicos had sent Rev. Fr. Yakob Manalil, to Trichur, to request him to go to Kottayam, to testify before the court in the Law suit relating to the Church.

Mr. Chakko was more than happy to oblige. He had acquired an important role in Church matters from the time of Metropolitan Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, to whom he gave staunch support in the conflict with the Patriarch Mar Abdulla. He continued to be called for consultations by the Church leaders, and trips to Kottayam were frequent.

But Mrs. Chakko was unhappy about his trip this time. She expressed her anxiety to Rev. Fr. Yakob Manalil. She felt that the long journey and the stay at Kottayam were too arduous for a man of his age and state of health. The weather had been especially foul all through the month of August that year; it kept raining cats and dogs. The priest assured her that he would be well looked after and that he would personally escort him safe and sound. Nevertheless she continued to fret (Did she have a premonition of what was to follow?!).

The two travelled to Ernakulam by train and stayed the night with Mr. E.V. Mathew (Mrs.Chakko's brother). Chakko's daughter

Sosamma Mrs. K.C. Zackaria met him there, the next morning, before he left for Kottayam by boat (mode of travel then).

At Kottayam Mr. Chakko was accommodated in the old seminary in one of the rooms upstairs. As Rev. Fr. Manalil had promised, he received good attention and was waited upon hand and foot. In a letter he wrote to his daughter Annie, at Raipur, which she received only after his demise, he had mentioned that he was very comfortably put up and that he was taken good care of. What gave him special happiness was that he could attend Holy Qurbana every day in the seminary chapel. Mrs. Chakko also received a similar letter.

On the fateful day 25<sup>th</sup> August 1941 he attended Holy Qurbana and partook of it as usual. Then he had breakfast and rested in his room for a while and got ready to go to the court. He was dressed as usual. He put on his coat, took up his walking stick, and walked to the head of the staircase, which was not far from his room. There were people waiting for him at the foot of the staircase. As he stood at the top, suddenly, he looked uncomfortable, his stick fell from his hand and he swayed to one side. Before he fell, Rev. Fr. Manager caught hold of him and set him down gently on the floor. By then, Rev. Fr. Manalil also reached the scene. Together, the two priests carried him to a cot in the room of Mar Theodosius.

The Catholicos came immediately and performed the “Thailabhishekam” (sacrament of anointment for healing the sick, commonly called the last unction by error) assisted by numerous priests and Deacons. Meanwhile Dr. Thaliath had been sent for. But by the time he came, the great man had breathed his last.

The utter confusion that followed can be imagined. The sad news was relayed to his son-in-law Mr. K.A. Poulouse, Sessions Judge in Trichur, to his third son Mr. Jacob, Chief Conservator of forests, Assam, who was on holiday in Trivandrum, and to his brother-in-law Mr. E.V. Mathew at Ernakulam.

It was the shocking news of Chakko’s death that reached the court, when the Judge and Advocates were waiting for him. Advocates

T.J. Mathew, K. Cherian and other prominent citizens immediately headed for the old seminary. Innumerable people from different parts of the town also converged to the spot.

The body attired in fresh garments, anointed with fragrant oil or perfumes was laid on a cot inside the chapel, to the right of the tomb of H.G. Joseph Mar Dianasius, the founder of the old seminary. The natural dignity of his face was undiminished even in death and he looked more alive than ever.

By afternoon H.G. Kuriakose Gregorius, Metropolitan of Pampady and his attendants arrived. The Bishop and others were stationed near the coffin all the time. The news of the calamity spread like wild fire in Kottayam and its suburbs. There was a continuous flow of people from far and wide, coming and going, to see the body for the last time and pay their respects.

Published in the "Orthodox Sabha Magazine" of Chingam 1117 was the following imaginative account of their own reporter.

In the glow of the brightly lit candles on all four sides of the coffin and the illumination from the electric lights, Chakko's handsome face looked radiant. Steeped in sorrow, people stood on either side watching without moving so much as an eyelid. Amidst them some people like me, were lucky enough to have known him in person and by repute and to understand his vision regarding the Church and to delve slightly into the inner depths of his mind. We felt as if his lips would move yet again, he would suddenly rise up from the coffin with undiminished vigour and speak to us in this manner:-

I fought the good fight with all my might and kept my faith. God has given me the crown of eternal life. Why are you sad and unduly apprehensive about me? Do not mourn for me. I did my level best for our mother church. I shall still utilize every opportunity I may get in my new circumstances to continue to do so. Similarly you too continue to acquit yourselves of your responsibilities with determination and without any personal animosity. Do not despair and look to escape

from this ship. Give staunch support to the Catholicos. Help him guide the vessel in the right path, and we are sure to reach our goal. I see around me all our departed fore fathers and everyone who worked along side of me for launching and manning this ship. They give me comfort and inspiration. Let me cut short. Today and tomorrow, you will be chanting on my behalf these lines from the Vazhikala (hymn for the funeral procession).

“With this death, I am like an alien to you, far away. Remember me always in your prayer without fail”.

Is it not pardonable that I dedicate these lines from the song as a request. If any of this strikes you as an advice forgive me.

Mr. Chakko's son Jacob had telegraphed that he was on his way to Kottayam. All arrangements were made to take the body to Trichur immediately on his arrival. The Catholicos and Metropolitan Mar Gregorious conducted the evening prayer with the assistance of numerous Priests and Deacons. It was only after evening prayer that Mr. Jacob arrived with his wife, accompanied by Mr. E.J. Philipose and others.

The chapel and its premises were crowded to overflowing. People in thousands had come from various places, even disregarding the division in the church and stood spell bound with shock. The body of Mr. Chakko who died in the morning, dressed in clothes he usually wore to the Managing committee meeting lies motionless in the specially decorated coffin. To see him, nobody would believe him dead. He looked so fresh and alive, in his gold rimmed glasses with a smile on his lively face, glowing with natural vigour. Only his eyes remained closed.

After prayer and other services the coffin was placed in the special bus. His son Jacob, relatives and friends and numerous Priests and Deacons got inside. Car loads of people were in readiness to accompany the hearse (in front and behind). The funeral procession started for Trichur by 8.30 P.M. The Priests and Deacons chanted

prayers all along the way. The cortege had to be halted briefly at various places to allow the people gathered along the way, to pay homage to the deceased.

The procession stopped in front of the seminary at Moovattupuzha, as arranged in advance, at the request of the Metropolitan Mar Thimotheos. Priests and Deacons holding lighted candles and a huge crowd of people were waiting there. The Metropolitan entered the bus; the scene that ensued was very touching. Inside the bus, he offered special prayers for the departed soul. He recalled that only the previous week he had long discussions with Mr. Chakko about church matters. He also touched on the fact, that the great man, an undisputed leader of the community was lucky to have come by his end at the old seminary, the repository of the relics of so many great, blessed and saintly forefathers.

At 10.30 P.M. the funeral procession started again and reached Mr. Chakko's residence "Mancherly" in Trichur at 2.30 A.M.

The family members from Ayyampilly, Parur and Ernakulam had assembled there in deep sorrow, well before the arrival of the cortege. The sad news had arrived before noon and spread far and wide. A large crowd from Trichur town and from ten miles distant Kunnankulam and Arthat and suburbs had gathered in thousands with deep concern, everyone counting the hours, without a wink of sleep awaited the hearse.

The bus stopped in front of the house. Priests and Deacons in black robes singing "Karunaniranjavane" (prayer for the dead) carried the coffin into the house. The heartrending scene that followed is beyond words. His beloved wife broke down completely. Only a few days back her husband had bade her farewell in pretty good health and the sight of the motionless body shattered her.

The whole place resounded with the sobs of the weeping dear and near ones. When they calmed down after a while, the Priests recounted the circumstances of his death.

Mr. Elanjickal John Kuruvilla took charge of all the Priests, Deacons and laymen from Kottayam and afforded them hospitality of his house for the night.

At dawn Rev. Fr. Yakob Ooppootil (Kottayam) conducted Holy Qurbana for the departed soul in the Orthodox Church constructed mainly through the initiative and efforts of Mr. Chakko.

Relatives, Govt. officers and ordinary citizens continued to arrive in thousands in 'Mancherly' from the morning. By 10 A.M. the place was like an ocean of men and teemed with the cars and rickshaws of the arrivals.

The Orthodox Church in Trichur comprised only 30 or 40 families. It lacked the gold and silver crosses and the silken ceremonial umbrellas for display in a procession. The local Chaldean Church made up the lack, by providing their big magnificent crosses of gold and silver, and festival umbrellas of brightly coloured silk edged with silver tinsels, in their keeping.

Despite the short notice everything was in readiness for a grand procession.

Mr. Chakko's eldest son Mr. M.C. Abraham, Engineer, employed in Ceylon and on holiday in Bangalore could arrive only in time to attend the final funeral service held in the home. It was conducted by Rev. Fr. K. David BA.BD. After the service, he also made a short speech. Plans for the orderly movement of the funeral procession were organized next.

The tragic news was flashed by newspapers and other means of publicity, the previous night. Consequently Orthodox Priests and laymen from Kunnamkulam, and other places arrived with silver crosses and 'muthukkudas' to enhance the grandeur of the procession. The coffin was placed in a specially decorated car, with the top folded back. The procession started from home to the Church at 11 A.M. and went slowly, in an orderly manner. Gold and silver crosses and the numerous ornamental silken umbrellas were in the forefront. The

band marched next, playing the funeral dirge. Deacons in black robes and the Priests in colourful 'Kapas' (Priest's officiating dress) followed. Immediately behind was the hearse and finally the vast crowd of mourners. The procession made a slow detour of all the important roads the deceased had traversed on horseback, or had been otherwise associated with as though in farewell. It took 2 ½ hours to cover a matter of 2 ½ miles – an indication of the number of men taking part.

The Catholicos with Metropolitan Mar Phelaxinos of Puthenkavu, Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Remban and attendants had come from Kottayam in the morning and they were already waiting in the Church. The Catholicos officiated in the funeral prayer of the funeral service with the assistance of the Metropolitan, the Rev. Remban and all the Priests. The Catholicos and Metropolitan made speeches extolling the exemplary services of the deceased for the Mother Church and his virtues in general.

The body was laid to rest in a specially prepared tomb in the cemetery of his beloved St. Ignatius Church within their hearing distance of it. It was 3 P.M. by the time the funeral service was over and the crowd dispersed.

Mr. E.J. Kuruvilla invited the Catholicos and others from Kottayam, to his house and offered refreshments. There the Catholicos said a short prayer.

Around 4.30- P.M the Catholicos with his retinue visited Mrs. Chakko and family and consoled them. After prayer there, he returned to Kottayam.

### **Letter to son**

From a letter Mr. M.A. Chakko wrote on July 21<sup>st</sup> 1941, to his son Dr. Chakko George residing in London, about a month before his demise.

The other day I went to Dr. Puthooran for a medical checkup. He examined me. My blood pressure is not high. There is nothing wrong with me. He prescribed some tablets and a mixture. I am taking it; but can't say it is doing any good.

My symptoms are these – I begin to pant, when I walk a short distance, the slightest exertion, even vigorously towelling my body, causes breathlessness.

Years back, in the company of Dr. K.C. Paul I was climbing a hill in our Pudukad Estate, when suddenly I felt cold and breathless. Even at that time he warned me against doing any more climbing. He advised me to confine myself to the rooms downstairs and not to climb the stairs. Dr. K.C. Paul seems to have foreseen some danger. If the irregular heart beat, chest pain, panting and breathlessness were not taken seriously, he said, the condition would gradually worsen and after a certain stage might be beyond control.

I was not prepared to take heed of Dr. Paul's warning. I was also not willing to listen to his advice about climbing the stairs. What cannot be prevented must be endured.

(Mr. Chakko believed that there is no point in having a long life, if you cannot live it with verve and vigour. He had made that plain to the Doctor. These were the circumstances when he went on his mission to Kottayam.)

(Dr. K.C. Paul and Mr. K.C. Abraham who later became the Governor of Andhra Pradesh were brothers. They married the daughters of Mr. Chakko's elder brother).



## CONDOLENCE MEETING

01.12.1941

Condolence Motion in the Cochin Legislative Council

Regarding the demise of Mr. M.A. Chakko

Copy of pages (37-42) of Cochin legislative council proceedings dated 1-12-1941 which contains discussion on the condolence motion.

Mr. President: I now call upon Mr. V.J. Mathai to move the Condolence Motion on the demise of Mr. M.A. Chakko.

**Mr. V.J. Mathai** (*Planters*)

Mr. President, Sir, I rise to move that "This Council places on record its deep sorrow in the demise of the late Mr. M.A. Chackko B.A; retired Superintendent of Excise and some time member of this Council and further requests the Hon'ble President to convey to the members of the family of the deceased the sympathy of this House in their bereavement."

The life and achievement of Mr. Chakko are so well known also so fresh in our memory that it seems to me almost superfluous to recount them before this House. All the same, I shall not fail to follow the rules of convention and recount them in short sketch.

Mr. Chakko was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 1870 in the Mazhuvancheri Tarawad, an ancient Jacobite Syrian X'ian family of

Ayyampilly, Cherai, which boasts of the famous Mazhuvancheri Judge. He was educated in the Ernakulam High School and graduated from the Madras Christian College.

He joined the Cochin Government service as a clerk in the Huzur Secretariat on 6<sup>th</sup> Edavam 1071. He became a Magistrate in 1072, was appointed Tahsildar of Trichur in 1073, was Northern Division Peishkar, District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police and Commandant of the Nayar Brigade till 1096. It must be remembered that his position as Tahsildar and Diwan Peishkar was of singular trust since the Devaswam Department was then included in the Revenue Department. He was also the first Indian Chief of Police and Commandant of the Nayar Brigade. In 1096 he was appointed Commissioner of Excise and retired in 1099. In recounting the life story of Mr. Chakko, one cannot help remarking that he was lifted up in the official cadre by the recognition of his merits by that great ruler "Rama Varma the Great", who abdicated the Musnad after his Shasti Poorthi. In fact, it is well known that Mr. Chakko was his trusted lieutenant and right hand.

After his retirement from Government service, Mr. Chakko was twice returned unopposed from the Narakkal and Vellarappilly constituencies and was a member of this Council for seven long years. He was also continuing his stubborn fight for the nationalization of his church and for its improvement and in the midst of that fight when he was at Kottayam, where he had gone as a witness in the third Vattipanam case, he passed away on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1941, dying as he lived, a happy warrior, while still in the forefront of the fight.

Mr. Chakko leaves behind him his widow, a benign, noble lady and ten issues. Of them, the eldest is the wife of Mr. K.A. Poulouse, Additional District Judge; Mr. M.C. Abraham, B.Sc; Manchester, A.M.I.C.E; is an Engineer in Colombo, His second son, Mr. M.C. George, is a Medical Practitioner in London. His second daughter Miss Sara Chakko is a Master of Arts of the Chicago University.

His third son, M.C. Jacob, B.A; I.F.S; is a Deputy Conservator of Forests in Shillong - a happy family made sad by the loss of Mr. Chakko.

Mr. Chakko was a man among men. He was in private life a splendid type of man, handsome, strong and dignified, a good husband, a loving father and a sincere friend and, above all, a true Christian. My first memory of Mr. Chakko dates back to 26 or 27 years. I then saw Mr. Chakko, astride a magnificent white prancing charger in front of his beloved Maharaja in the Attachamayam procession, dressed in his Delhi Durbar Dress, drawing the crowd after him- I dare say he kept that figure and personality to the last.

His main achievement, if I may say so, was the reorganisation and the reform of the Police Department in the State which he left as second to none in India. And I would not be far wrong if I were to say that Mr. Chakko was the father of the Police force in Cochin which occupies to-day an unsullied position even now as one of the best police forces in the Empire.

After his retirement, he was carrying on a sturdy fight for the independence of his church and besides that he found time for helping in the educational development of Kerala and was for a very long time a member of the Council of the Alwaye Union Christian College. He was also taking a keen interest in planting and owned a pretty large rubber estate in Pudukad, which also is a standing monument of his varied services.

He was a deeply religious man and to him "life was real, life was earnest, and the grave not his goal" and he lived and died as happy warrior, and I dare say, he has "left behind him more than foot-prints on the sands of time."

May his soul rest in peace!

**Dr. A.R.Menon** (*Minister for Rural Development*)

Sir, it is my privilege to associate myself on behalf of the Government with all the sentiments expressed by Mr. Mathai. It was my privilege to have known Mr.Chakko for a very long time, and I do not think

there will be any difference of opinion when I say that he has left his impress upon the governmental machinery and also upon the public life of this country. Mr. Chakko began his life as a humble government servant and through various stages occupied some of the most important posts in His Highness's, Service. After retirement Mr. Chakko did not spare himself, but took an active part in public life and also in various other activities. Mr. Chakko as a non-official won the good opinion of all the people of the State and after retirement he was in this Council as an active member for a period of 7 years. As a non-official he was indefatigable in his service and gradually he came to occupy a place of importance as one of the leaders of the State. He was the recognized and undisputed leader of the Jacobite Christian Community of the State. I am sure his loss will be very keenly felt by this small but progressive and intelligent community in the State. By his demise the State has lost a great citizen, the people, a friend, and His Highness the Maharaja, a devoted and loyal subject and servant. I am sure the House will agree with me in expressing unanimously our condolences at his unexpected demise and wishing to convey our feelings of sorrow to his family.

**Rao Sahib I. N. Menon** (*Director of Public Instruction*)

Allow me, Sir, to say just a word to associate myself with this condolence motion. It has been my rare privilege to have known the late Mr. Chakko for nearly 40 years, ever since my boyhood. My earliest memories of the late Mr. Chakko were about the time when he was Tahsildar, and the Tahsildar was at that time an officer in charge of the management of the revenues and temples here. I have a distinct memory of how the public appreciated the services of a Christian official devoted to the cause of Hindu religious worship. He was considered, Sir, to have been one of the ablest of our Civil servants and the fact that he was transferred from one place to another did not matter much, because neither he nor the departments concerned suffered by his transfer. Such a versatile man he was. In fact he was a typical servant who could handle any department which required knowledge, probity and intelligence.

Another extraordinary thing about the late Mr. Chakko was that the day he laid down the reins of official life and took up work as a non-official and entered this Council he showed that an intelligent civil servant is not by heredity or by training disqualified from being a parliamentarian and we all know how very much both the official benches as well as the non-official benches in this House benefited by his presence and sound advice on many occasions. My only excuse for taking up the time of this House with regard to this condolence motion is that it has been my privilege to have known the late Mr. Chakko probably with a degree of intimacy to which the other officials in this House probably may not have had occasion.

**Mr. K.M Ibrahim** (*Cranganur*)

Mr. President, Sir, our party also associates with the grief expressed on the floor of this House this morning. It has been rather my privilege to work in this House as a colleague of Mr. Chakko and one should think that my grief is greater than that of the hon'ble mover himself. There is not much to be added to the enumeration of the great services he has rendered to the Cochin Sirkar. The only point which strikes me at this moment is, Sir, that he was perhaps the first Tahsildar in our State, from a minority community. And may be from Mr. Chakko's time the interests of minorities have been recognized more in our State. I express my earnest sympathy to the bereaved family on his demise.

**Mr. K.R. Viswambaran**

Sir, This motion is introduced to condole the demise of Mr. M.A. Chakko, a great citizen of Cochin State, who has had the privilege of serving his State as the Head of various govt. departments, and as a member of the Legislative Council. I do not think that there is any citizen of Cochin State who does not know the late Mr. M.A. Chakko. As some of the honorable members have stated here, everyone knows how honorably he acquitted himself in his official and non-official career, for half a century and how well he earned the love and respect of the general public. He was one of the few government officers who must be given the credit for the fact that compared to other

States; the administration in our State is more efficient. When The Ex. Highness brought about the reformation in the state administration of Cochin State, Mr. Chakko was a trusted officer and perfectly attuned to the Maharaja's mind and vision bringing new vigour to the administrative field. It is the Mr. Chakko of those days who lives in our minds to-day. Whenever and wherever the opportunity for service arose, he rendered it with courage and uprightness. I support the motion of condolence expressed by the council on the demise of a great cochinite methodical, courageous and fearless.

**Mr. A.B Salem** (*Mattancheri*)

Sir, I wish to associate myself with all the expressions of sorrow and grief that has been already expressed on the floor of this House, on the demise of Mr. Chakko. Mr. Chakko was a personal friend of mine for the last 40 years and perhaps I am the oldest.....

Mr. A. Eachara Menon (Chittur- Rural): No, No

Mr. A.B Salem (Mattancheri): Yes, I admit Mr. Eachara Menon also. Perhaps I am the oldest member who knows Mr. Chakko so intimately. But I claim to have been an inmate of his house off and on during all the time he was an official as well as non-official here. As such, I think it my duty to contribute a word of tribute to his memory in this House and having done that I hope that this expression of sorrow will be conveyed to his family in due course. I associate myself with all that has been said in his memory. May his soul rest in peace!

**Mr. President:** I also associate myself with all that has been said about the late Mr. Chakko. Though I had not the privilege of personal acquaintance with him, yet his record clearly shows the great service he has done to the State and to His Highness the Maharaja. I would specially mention his work in the posts as Commissioner of Police and Commandant of the Nayar Brigade which he held for no less a period than 12 years, and we can well be proud of the state of our Police force in Cochin. After his retirement he continued to serve the State in this Council Chamber and outside. Unlike some other

officials he seemed to feel quite at home there. What I was particularly pleased to notice was that in his last few months, despite failing health and old age, he took a lively interest in the collection of money for the war fund, and showed that he realized the importance of this work. Right up to the end he placed public service first and foremost. I am sure that all the Hon'ble Members will wish to express sympathy to the family of the deceased. I now request Hon'ble Members to pass this motion, standing.

Motion passed nem. con. all members standing as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.

(nem. con = no one contradicting)

## EVALUATION BY CHURCH LEADERS

**P. M. Mammen** (*Editor, Mahilamony*)

(Speech delivered at the condolence meeting at M.G.M High School, Thiruvalla.

Thomas Mar Dionysius presided over the meeting)

The pillar of pride and corner stone of the Syrian community in Kerala. Mr. M.A. Chakko is no more! How will the Syrian community take it; how can they bear it? Surely this picture of immense sacrifice will be inscribed in the glittering pages of history in golden letters.

Can the people of Cochin forget the image of the brave soldier clad in impeccable ceremonial dress, seated on a magnificent horse, with drawn sword, escorting the Maharaja whom he prized more than his life? How will the picture of their Police Chief, who managed the law and order for the Maharaja, with judicious discretion fade from their minds?

Can the Malankara Syrian community forget that martyr who stayed close to the mother church during good times and was prepared to sacrifice his life during her difficult times?

What he concluded was his role in the fierce battle to rescue the beloved mother from the jaws of adversaries. How can the mother,



who sought solace in the strong arms of her valiant sons, Mr. M.A. Chakko in the north and Mr. E.J. John in the south, bear this? He spent a large part of his precious life in the service of the community. He generously used his wealth and influence to the benefit of the community setting aside his personal comforts and needs. At a time when a Syrian church was going through a period of seemingly endless night, he gifted over three decades of the best part of his life (from the age of forty years) in selfless service to the community.

Armed with truth and righteousness, leaving his beloved wife and children and the comforts of his home, he came here. The Malankara church and churches of other denominations in Kerala looked towards him and listened to his wise counsel. Thus a long chapter in the history of Malankara Syrian community has been written. What does the Syrian community hear now? That the colourful bird flew out of its blessed cage? Oh! Syrian church, wail for your beloved son, wail! Who was not astounded by the mammoth crowd that surged into the Old Seminary on that day and shed an ocean of tears?

How will the Syrian community console the devastated family of the deceased? The Syrian church should tell that family; that even our coming generations would praise him, that the women of Syrian community would sing ballads of his stories as lullabies to their babies, that thousands would throng his tomb to lay flowers on it and that countless pillars bearing the flags of independence of church would decorate Malankara in remembrance of him. With such assurances we may console them.

Again, why should that family grieve? Man is mortal therefore who would be sad if a devout son has to die laying his head in his mother's lap?

This Joshua, nay, Moses was taken to his heavenly abode at the Old Seminary (where the most respected primates of the church are entombed and is thus graced by the souls of several 'Dionysiuses' who fought similar battles like him). Surrounded by numerous priests singing hymns right beside the altar where Holy Communion is

celebrated every day, at the feet of the most revered father of the Malankara Syrian church the Catholicos of the East. Who can deny that this was a great blessing which ordinary mortals are not worthy of?

Oh! Brave soldier, take rest take rest. You have fought the good fight, you have finished the course, you have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for you the crown of righteousness. The Syrian church will remember you forever, will pray FOR YOU. To further the cause for which you sacrificed your life and attained martyrdom, we will follow you, bearing the flag of freedom you handed down to us, be it till we hear the clarion call of the second coming of the Lord.

## **2. Unparalleled Service to the Community**

### **M.P. Varkey**

(A prominent leader of the laity, Mr. M.P. Varkey was an earnest spokes man of the freedom of the Church. Brother of Mar Osthathios of Mookkencheril, the founder of the 'Servants of the Cross' society. Was Superintendent of Postal Services in Cochin State. He was the first to stand up in the meeting called by Patriarch Abdulla bava at the Old Seminary during 25-27 Nov., 1909 and oppose the move to accord temporal powers to the Patriarch. Author of 'Parumala Thirumeni' and 'Pulikkottil Mar Dionesius II')

Even when burdened with responsible government assignments, service to the community found an important place in Mr. Chakko's mind. For the sake of that, he was prepared to face any hazard. Most Syrian Christians in Cochin State lived in sparsely populated outlying villages. There were situations when some of them had to take up residence in towns like Ernakulam and Trichur, yet there were no churches in these towns. It was through Mr. Chakko's untiring effort that churches were built in these two towns. His initiatives in the efforts to build the Vadakkanchery church and in obtaining permission to conduct a raffle under the aegis of the 'Christian Company', a charitable institute, are well known. In another instance, the project to build a church at Irinjalakkuda remained stalled by incompetent

government officials influenced by some envious antagonists (This is the situation in Chingom, 1117). The Syrian Christians constitute only ten percent of the Christian population in Cochin State. But, wherever they go, they achieve enviable positions in public life. It is an unpleasant fact that this agitates the minds of many envious people. But fortunately, this does not slow down the Syrian Christians. It is well known that Mr. Chakko was in the forefront of those who opposed certain schemes of Abdulla bava. When the bava came to Malankara, he demanded that the meeting of the representatives of the churches, held at Kottayam in the year 1085, approve a resolution assigning temporal powers to the patriarch in the administration of the Church, as the earlier Royal court judgment which clarified that the patriarch had only spiritual authority over the congregation, was coming in the way of efficient administration of the Church. The meeting's disagreement to this proposal and subsequent deposition of Mar Dionesius who refused to sign an agreement declaring allegiance to the patriarch are well known facts. The one who stood out among those who worked for the well-being of the Church was Mr. Chakko.

Mr. Chakko took the initiative to bring Abded Mashiha patriarch here, and to have the Catholicate established. He tried his best for a compromise and settlement of the court case filed by some mischievous persons to depose the Catholicos. As this case still persists, he was examined by the court as the third witness for defence.

Viewed from any angle, there are very few in Malankara who have struggled so much for the prosperity of the Church. The children of Mr. Chakko adorn high positions in London, Assam, Ceylon, Lucknow etc. He had no worries about his family. As the death was so sudden, that also may be perceived as lucky. His wife would always remain a shining example for Syrian Christians to follow.

### **3. The Chariot and Charioteer of the Syrian Church**

**By Rev. Fr. C.T. Eapen**

(Promoter and publisher of *the Star of the East*, noted theologian. Born: Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> 1895 in Adoor, Nellimoottil Chavadiyil. A reputed

deacon, he was chosen for a bishop's position, but he declined. Started a residential school at Shasthamkotta. It is on a plot of land donated by him, that the Shasthamkotta Mar Theodosius Memorial Medical Mission Hospital functions. Passed away on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1977.)

‘And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” And he saw him no more’.

When I think of the demise of a courageous person like Mr. M.A. Chakko what comes to my mind is this most touching scene from the Old Testament. Who among the virtuous children of our Church, will not wail at the loss of that champion archer! The past quarter century has not been progressive for the Church. Our church is fragmented by internal conflicts and spiritual degradation. The lamp of the Church is dimming. The children of the church are forsaking their mother to seek refuge in other denominations. Several self seeking individuals are making Herculean efforts to inflict damage on the independence of the Church.

Mr. Chakko was one of those prominent leaders who had a broad perception that local autonomy is essential for durable stability and unhindered progress of the Church. He was convinced that the Malankara Church would not survive without the office of the Catholicate. As a devout well wisher of the community, it was a matter of life and death for Mr. Chakko to ensure the survival of the Church by protecting the institution of the Catholicate. He was always ready to argue for this ultimate truth without fear or hesitation. Be it in the Managing Committee, or a meeting of the representatives of the parishes, his primary concern and message was about the Catholicate. Who among the children of our Church cannot see Mr. Chakko, who loved and nursed the Syrian Church all along, till his end, as the ‘chariot and charioteer’ of the Syrian Church?

Mr. Chakko was the 'chariot and charioteer' of the Syrian Church for more than one reason. It is not solely because he fought for the administrative freedom of the Church that he deserves this honour. There are hundreds of followers of the Church who love the Church and fight for her, but without experiencing her ability to impart spiritual revival. None of them could be termed 'Chariot and charioteer' of the Church. But Mr. Chakko's activities in support of the temporal matters of the church emanated from the spiritual experience he had acquired. He was a very strict follower of the traditions and customs of the Church. He rigorously observed the lent, prayed and participated in the Holy Communion etc. Is it not for this unwavering adherence to faith that he was blessed with an end befitting a true faithful? To pass off during a season of lent, while observing the regimen; after the routine Confession and receiving the Holy Communion, anointed by the most eminent primate of the Church- what more would a true believer want?

Mr. Chakko's commitment to the faith was longstanding. Soon after he got a government appointment, he visited Mar Gregorios Metropolitan of Parumala at Ayyampilly Church. He advised Mr. Chakko, "A government job is a high worldly position. But don't fail to achieve laurels in the other world too". Mr. Chakko tried to follow this advice all through his life.

Endowed with unmatched intelligence, profundity, efficiency, love of God and good looks, Mr. Chakko was destined to enjoy the beneficial results of these attributes; at the same time, he had the blessings of God to watch his children progress to enviable levels of prosperity. When it comes to children, many great people are not quite as lucky. Mr. Chakko was an exception.

Let me conclude this article with a prayer. Lord! Kindly bless our mother, the Syrian Church with many such children.

#### 4. Brave Activist and Defender of Righteousness

**C.O. Oommen, B.A., L.T., Puthenkavu**

There are few people who have attained such fame, eminence and popularity in official positions and otherwise in Cochin and in church activities in Travancore. Mr. Chakko's personality was a splendid confluence of the beauty and elegance of his intrinsic and acquired attributes. When people met him, they bowed to him in respect; when they heard him, they were overwhelmed by pride; when they understood him, they developed an intimate bond with him such as his personal traits and lifestyle.

Though his physical presence has disappeared from this world, his shining spirit which still beams the light of his philosophy of life is amidst us.

From the autobiography which he started writing during the later years of his life, we understand that his childhood was utilized for acquiring the skills and strength for the uninterrupted agenda of activities to come later. It was surprising at the time that Mr. Chakko who belonged to a minuscule sect of a minority community, progressed to the highest echelons of the State administration. Mr. Chakko was initially appointed to the post of 'Peishkar', a responsibility combining the administration of revenue and Hindu religious establishments (Devaswom) and, from then on, his elevation to the positions of Commandant of the Armed Forces and Commissioner of Excise was only because of his intense sense of justice and devotion to duty, which are borne out by his remarkable accomplishments in his official domain. Uninhibited by his personal preferences, relying only on truth and yielding to the guiding torrent of propriety, he skillfully steered the vessel of his office. The dangerous rocks that stuck out, the turbulence and the whirlpools he encountered now and again did not deter him.

It need not be emphasized that it was due to his deep commitment to serve the society and his country that he became a legislator after his retirement. Undoubtedly, it was his sterling character and unmatched efficiency that prompted the public to elect him unopposed to the

legislature for seven consecutive years. The common concept that the public generally have scant respect for retired government officials has turned out to be baseless in Mr. Chakko's case. In the legislature also he fought for justice and righteousness without fear or favour.

His forthright and unbiased attitude reflected in his official and nonofficial functions, as much as in his social activities. Disregarding all obstacles that came across, he maintained his bond with the Church. The Syrian Church will always remember their hero who made great sacrifices and fought for the independence of the Church, supporting the Catholicate in the Northern parts of Kerala where the 'Patriarch' group were substantially larger in number.

Mr. Chakko was, without doubt, the leader of those who worked tirelessly to retain the Catholicate in Kerala. At a time when several senior members of the clergy forsook the Orthodox Church to convert to other faiths, and the Church generally appeared destabilised, it was the indomitable stand that Mr. Chakko and the likes of him took, that imparted confidence to the members of the Church.

Mr. Chakko was unruffled by sociopolitical or religious tempests, cloud bursts or hailstorms. Even during his last days, it was only because of his courage and commitment to the needs of the community that he decided, ignoring ill health and medical advice, to leave home to depose before the court in the Church case as a witness. Mr. Chakko is not dead; nor will he die! To raise similar soldiers from our community he counsels us from a position not visible to the world; let the community awaken and arise.

## **5. Fearless Fighter**

### **P. Jacob Kurien (1884-1950)**

[Gifted orator, brilliant journalist, noted author, prominent leader of the laity, great legislator (of Sree Moolam Praja Sabha). Son of late Kochu Chacko Tharakan, Padinjarethalakkal, Mavelikkara. Born; 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1884. Dr. P.C. Alexander is his nephew. After matriculation from M.D. Seminary high school, Kottayam, entered journalism. Editor

of 'Sarasagaram', 'Keralabhimani' and 'Keralasevakan'. Was life member of the Church Managing Committee. President of Syrian Christian Congress. Assumed the leadership of the Movement for Civil Equality in 1917. Authored a Christian musical play 'Kunjannamma']

In recent times, nothing more unexpected and sorrowful than the demise of Mr. M.A. Chakko has been heard by the Syrian community of Kerala. The news of passing away of Geeverghese Mar Dionesius metropolitan shocked the members of the community for more than one reason. Yet, his death was not unexpected. Thousands of his people were fortunate enough to visit the ailing metropolitan and seek blessings. But Mr. Chakko disappeared behind the curtain when he was active in his last fight for the community he loved and served, embarrassing his adversaries with his incisive comments, and producing waves of elation among the members of the Church. These circumstances make his death all the more painful to the people. No one expected that this healthy and visibly youthful, though elderly, leader, who was the pillar of pride of the Malankara Church and the object of unreserved respect, would pass into the other world so soon.

During those days of indescribable disaster, when the French forces were overrun and France was in turmoil, and the English channel became a pool of death and Britain was burning, if an inspired leader like Sir Winston Churchill, who, with incredible strength, was able to overcome that dangerous situation and show the path towards a bright future, was not available to lead England, we can imagine what would have been the future of the British empire.

Mr. M.A. Chakko was an unrivalled leader for the Syrian Church. As far as I can remember, the deposition of Mar Dionesius and the judgment of the High court against the metropolitan in the trust case were two catastrophic situations in the history of the Syrian Church. When the leaders of the Church were disheartened and unable to react, and started retreating and absconding from the battlefield, Mr. Chakko was the 'Northern General' who responded to the call of the



Metropolitan who raised the flag of Malankara in his hand, stood firm and exhorted his people to fight on. Without the fearless leadership and guidance of Mr. Chakko, Mr. E.J. John and few others, the fate of the Orthodox Church and the Catholicate could have been different. It is God who protects the Church; again, it is He who raises capable leaders for that. We can take solace in the knowledge that God's hands are strong. However the loss of such leaders make us very sad.

I knew Mr. Chakko from his childhood. He was one of those few leaders who yearned for the progress of young people in the community and encouraged them at every opportunity. He patiently listened to any one who talked to him; he presented his own opinions maturely and without fear; finally he accepted the verdict of the majority with dignity, and acted accordingly- this was the style of his social behavior. He was uncompromising in following the customs and traditions of the Church in an exemplary manner.

Mr. Chakko spent a large part of his precious life for the benefit and progress of the Syrian community which listened to him. He fought passionately for the community, fell on the battlefield and died like a brave soldier. With demonstrations of grief and condolences reverberating all over, the community expressed their respect for his soldierly death. May God grant his soul eternal peace. May the Almighty gift our community with good leaders like him.

## **6. The Church Must Unite – Mr. M.A. Chakko's intense desire**

**K.M. Mathen Mappillai, B.A.**

(Secretary, Malankara Association- 1934. Born in 1874. Classmate of Mr. M.A. Chakko. Belongs to Karathalil Kandathil family of Kuttur. After obtaining B.A. degree joined Travancore government service as a clerk. Devotion to duty and honesty are his noted attributes. Mr. Mathen Mappillai who detested opportunism progressed rather slowly through the rungs of bureaucracy. Retired as Senior Accounts Officer. Was a powerful leader and guide of the Malankara Syrian community.

The office of the Association was reorganized and modern accounting systems were introduced when he was the Secretary. Was member of the Church Managing Committee for a long time. Passed away at the age of 74, on the 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1948. Buried at Umayattukara Church.)

After completing education, our lives took different directions and our activities were in different environments. Mr. Chakko joined the Cochin government service. The Cochin government recast and refined the government administrative system. It was during the reign of Maharaja Rajarshi and his Diwan Rajagopalachari, who believed that it was the duty of the State to provide equal and impartial opportunities to all subjects, that Mr. Chakko entered government service. I joined the Travancore government service. In those days, the Department of Revenue and that of administration of Hindu religious institutions were not separated. Therefore, the doors of the revenue department which controlled even the judicial jobs like that of magistrates were shut against the Christian Community. There are numerous junior colleagues of mine, who, though in no way more skilled and qualified than I was, progressed through the revenue department and ended up as my senior officers and bosses.

It is not surprising that Mr. Chakko's courage for action, enthusiasm and commonsense led him to the higher offices of the Government.

After leaving college, there were no contacts between us. The friendship of our youthful days revived only after I was elected Secretary of the Malankara Association.

I have no direct knowledge about Mr. Chakko's remarkable activities in Cochin government service or his social services after his retirement. I have known about the great service he has rendered for the progress of Malankara Syrian Church, only through newssheets. Therefore, I am not attempting to elaborate on these things as I don't think I am especially qualified for that.

After I was appointed Secretary of the Malankara Association in August 1934, we have met on several occasions and discussed in

great detail matters relating to the activities of the Church. From these discourses, I have been able to get some idea about Mr. Chakko's perception on and hopes for the future of the Church.

Independence of the Church- that is, to shed the heavy and burdensome yoke pulled on to the shoulders of the ancient and Apostolic Church of Malankara by Athanasius of Palakkunnam and Mar Dionesius of Pulikkottil and to restore full independence- had engrossed his mind. At the same time, he was concerned about the possibility of a repeat of the situation that led to a split in the Church during the time of Mar Athanasius of Palakkunnam and wanted to avoid it at any cost. It is because of the eminence of Mr. Chakko in the forums of the Church discussing peace, that the church was able to go forward without a split between the 'Southerners' and the 'Northerners' in the congregation. As several peace talks between the Patriarchal and the Catholicate section had failed, and because the former were becoming increasingly thoughtless and inflexible after each of these meetings, several members of the Catholicate group felt that these efforts to find a compromise should be given up and the Church should go forward relying solely on the rights obtained through the authority of the Catholicos. A resolution to this effect was passed by the managing committee. Discarding these views, it was Mr. Chakko's desire that the 'Northerners' should somehow be persuaded to cooperate and thus avoid a split in the Church. Feeling that the recently concluded meeting at Aluva was successful, Mr. Chakko who spent that night at College hill, was in great excitement and joy. His delight sprang from his belief that his life's mission regarding the Church was fulfilled. He stayed awake that night and talked to me several times about the future programmes of a united Syrian Orthodox Church.

Some people have complained that Mr. Chakko was concerned only about the political and temporal aspects of the Church and that he was indifferent to matters of its spiritual progress. The management of spiritual aspects is in the exclusive domain of the clergy; the laity

interfering in that field is not taken kindly by them (the clergy). However, whenever there was an active discussion on the spiritual revival of the Church Mr. Chakko encouraged it with his advice and with money.

Mr. Chakko felt that he was one with the Church and therefore the Church is in no way obliged to him for the services he rendered. On the other hand he felt that he was indebted to those who served the Church. There is reason to believe that the affection and concern he showed for me, after I became Secretary of the association, was because he thought that as the Secretary, I was doing some valuable service to the Church.

## **"ORTHODOX SABHA"**

*Orthodox Church (Editorial)*

### **Inscrutable Acts of God**

“What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shall know hereafter”  
John 13:7

At this unfortunate juncture, the entire church is steeped in sorrow at the unexpected demise of Mr. M.A. Chakko. Some people, for their own particular reasons or being influenced by our adversaries, seem to be unduly apprehensive and disheartened about the future of our church. These adversaries look only for evil amidst abundance of virtues, like a mosquito that seeks only blood even on an udder full of milk.

With its last issue, this magazine completed four years of its publication. With this issue it is entering its fifth year; the age at which traditionally our children were initiated into their schooling. If the father of a five year old passes away, that child would not be able to comprehend in any great detail, the immense changes such a misfortune can bring into his/her future. Yet a child of normal intelligence would surely feel utter helplessness and sorrow. Having learned from many people who were active in matters of our church during the last forty years, about Mr. Chakko's involvement in such activities and on

realizing that one of the mainstays of our dreams about the future of the church has been taken away, we are in a similar state of mind. The unexpected demise of Mr. Chakko stunned us as much as other members of the church. He was a subscriber of our magazine right from its start and like a father, encouraged us with timely advice and guidance all along. In a moment of weakness, we forgot all the benefits God, in His mercy, had given to us, to the deceased and to our Church as a whole. We felt that He was unkind to us and to his relatives that He did not defer Mr. Chakko's demise for a few days. However as days passed on, what appeared unkind and unjust earlier evolved into an altogether different and pacifying perspective. The biblical words quoted initially explain our thinking. The verse supported us; strengthened our hands. We hope, it would help our esteemed readers as well, if we shared what was revealed to us.

Like all other sayings of our Lord, that verse has deeper and wider meaning than what is initially apparent. It would help us solve problems and obstacles that puzzle us, not only in our personal life but also in our social and political activities.

We, Christians believe that nothing happens without God being aware of it, and that He does everything for the welfare of the human race- individual, community and nation. But because we have no patience or ability to discern the depth and meaning of God's acts, on several occasions during our life time, we may be disappointed at impediments that block wishes and hopes. We have to surmount many such dark situations with forbearance and reliance upon God.

In such predicaments, we should not grumble and blame God for all the mishaps like the unwise who are reluctant to trust God and seek His help. We should wait until the obstacles wither away and darkness clears, in persistent prayers to the Almighty, who, to make His will known for the sake of humanity, enabled even a donkey to speak. Weak and unworthy as we humans are, we cannot gauge the will and purpose of the designs of God who created and controls all things living and non living "what I do thou knowest not now", our

Lord said. He did not conclude it there, but went on to say, “but thou shalt know hereafter”. We are unable to grasp the evolution, effects and ultimate results of His acts. So at every stage we feel frustrated, we doubt, we grumble. Actually, when we initiate our schemes God knows the whole sequence of events to follow. He knows how it will conclude. For Him there are no surprises, no embarrassments. The words “but thou shalt know hereafter” assure us that the dark clouds will clear in time and delightful sunshine of divine intervention will brighten the surroundings. Thereupon, the blessings we were unable to recognize will become clear to us and we shall rejoice at the results. Here is how a poet explains this truth.

“Sometime when all life’s lessons have been learned  
 And sun and stars for ever more have set  
 The things which our weak judgements here have spurned  
 The things o’er which we grieved with lashes wet  
 Will flash before us, out of life’s dark night  
 As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue  
 And we shall see how all God’s plans were right,  
 And how what seemed reproof was love most true”.

It is with this indisputable and inviolable truth in mind that we have to look at Mr. Chakko’s death which, at first, has been extremely sad and incomprehensible for the entire Malankara Church and his family. Therefore we believe that there is cause only for peace and consolation for the soul of the departed and those of us who remain. Some people may disagree with us for the reason that it would have been helpful if he had lived on to complete his deposition before the court in the church litigation. Our reply to them, in short, is the story of Moses who was chosen to secure the release of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and lead them to the promised land of Canaan.

Atop the mount of Horeb, in a burning bush, God appeared to Moses and called upon him to take up that mission. Though Moses, aware of his shortcomings, hesitated, God persuaded him saying, “.... *I will certainly be with you....*” He made Moses do many wonders.

Moses overcame several obstacles, endured years of migration through harsh forests and deserts, leading his people and when he reached the vicinity of the promised land – though he was 120 years old “his eyes were not dim nor his natural vigour diminished” – he was called up to the mount of Pisga and told “*This is the land which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying ‘I will give it to your descendants’ I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there*”. We must realize that the thoughts of the Israelites on hearing about this must have been similar to our own thoughts right now. Further, it must be noted that it was Joshua, not particularly reputed for his skills and leadership, who was chosen in place of Moses, to take on the powerful tribes and kings and conquer the promised land. Those who despair saying “Mr. Chakko also is gone, who is next?” should know that many would have felt the same way at Joshua’s assignment also. The hope and strength for them should evolve from faith in God. We should know that God is the head of our church and that He knows more than any of us every need of the church from time to time and that he will fulfill his commitments through ways and schemes humans cannot perceive. When He felt the need, he created everything. Once a Joseph, who was sold as a slave, another time, a Balam; yet again, a strongman called Samson a Gideon, David, a shepherd and later, Saul (Paul) who initially was an adversary, were all used to protect His chosen people. No matter who, every one of them, as in the case of Moses and Joshua, was given an assurance “*I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.....*” It is not personal skills and wisdom that help one to handle his assignment. On the other hand the motivation comes forth from the faith in the guidance assured by God who chose him for the mission. In common parlance it might be called ‘courage of conviction’. That was the secret of Mr. Chakko’s success in life.

From what we know from some of his classmates, Mr. M.A. Chakko was an average performer in school, not especially impressive. Yet, in later life he demonstrated incredible ability and pragmatism in his official and other activities, and achieved laurels, surprising many



of his more studious classmates. But our love and admiration for him stems mainly from the fact that unlike some others among the children of our church who also have attained similar eminence, Mr. Chakko realized that the fame and position are not meant for the exclusive benefit of his family and children, and shared them with the church, a beloved mother in his perception, and toiled for her day and night, ignoring physical strain, consequences and cost. These facts are well-known; so there is no need to repeat what went on in our church during the last thirty years. However, let us point out a few instances to refresh the memory of our readers.

(i) In an embezzlement case detected when Mr. Chakko was 'Superintendent of Excise', he was also listed as an accused and the government confiscated his entire assets, including bank accounts. It is well-known that the initial judgement of the District Court was adverse (The High Court subsequently reversed this verdict and exonerated him, enabling him to recover his properties and withheld emoluments). Just a few days after the District Court judgement Mr. Chakko was invited to a very important meeting at the 'Old Seminary', Kottayam. He dutifully presented himself there and participated in the discussions, unflustered and in a thoroughly cheerful disposition. Though he had the frustrations of defending charges in the District court and the High court, he found time to attend many sessions of consultations and meetings at Kottayam. This was a time when he had to provide for the education of his children, pay for the expenses related to the court cases and meet the cost of his travels on church matters. All he was left with was paltry sum of around three thousand rupees in his wife's bank account. This demonstrates his commitment to the service of the church.

(ii) The Church dispute was at its peak at Kottayam when Mr. Chakko was 'Superintendent of Police' in Cochin State. Apart from many people who were envious of his high official status, there were others who were disciplined by him for corruption and dereliction of duty. These people and their friends and relatives were ganging up to

frustrate him at that time. Undaunted by these adversities he worked tirelessly representing the 'Catholicate' faction though they were very small in number compared to the 'Patriarchate' group in Cochin State.

(iii) Mr. Chakko was unwell and under medical care when he was called upon to go to Kottayam to give his submissions to the District court, in the church case. Though his friends and his son suggested rest for some more days, he ignored their advice and submitted to the call of duty to his beloved mother, the church.

The passing away of a person who served our community under such difficult circumstances saddens us today. Condolence meetings, everywhere including remote villages and proposals to immortalize his memory as an example to future generations, at such a scale, are unheard of at the death of a lay member of the church.

Malayalees, especially members of our church, are notorious for starting up ventures with great pomp and gusto only to abandon them soon with utmost indifference. We hope that the same fate would not befall our suggestion here; to institute an award/endowment (a gold medal) for a Sunday school student who excels in performance, to perpetuate the memory of the deceased in the mind of boys and girls who would be future leaders of our community.

Man is mortal, so Mr. Chakko also had to go. But he lived a successful and eventful life of nearly 71 years. Like Moses, he saw the results of his hard work and, as serving the church was his greatest pleasure he died with his head on the lap of mother church, nursed and cared for by the head of the church himself. As our church believes, he has become entitled to the '*crown of life*' promised by God to his chosen servants. The bereaved family and friends of Mr. Chakko may take solace in these thoughts.

At this irreparable loss and consequent grief of our church, as we search for peace and tranquillity the options are manifold. To explain this, as shown in a report of our representative, included elsewhere in this publication, the Church may be perceived as a ship cruising towards a most favourable destination decided by its Founder.

Once, a steamship loaded with several goods set out for a distant port. Unfortunately all the coal on board was exhausted midway through the journey and the ship was stranded. The captain who was a wise man used all the combustible loads on the ship, first the cheaper items and later, everything that burns and managed to bring the ship to its destination.

Like this, on a journey started two thousand years ago, the ship that is our Church has neared the port. To steer this ship from hereon there are several 'Sauls' transformed to become 'Pauls' waiting. Understanding these circumstances, we pray for peace to the soul of Mr. M.A. Chakko whose name be written in golden letters in the history of our church.

**GOMATHI**

*(Editorial – 12<sup>th</sup> Chingom, 1117)*

Cochin State has lost a leader aged in years and in wisdom, at the demise of Mr. M.A. Chakko. By his extraordinary courage, firm convictions, boundless knowledge and commitment to his duties Mr. Chakko provided exemplary leadership to senior State officials and eminent citizens of Cochin. The late Maharajah of Cochin noticed exceptional qualities in him, quite early, and groomed him with appropriate training to make him fit for any responsibility in the State's official hierarchy. It was a well known secret that the Maharaja, who is remembered for his glorious reign, was assiduously pursuing the elevation of Mr. Chakko, along with Mr. C.V. Antony and Mr. Sankara Menon, to higher positions. But such ideas waned away after his unexpected abdication. Still he had managed to appoint Mr. Chakko to several high offices considered unattainable to members of the Christian community, at that time, enabling the public to appreciate his merits. A careful search into the reasons for the glowing performance of the police department even to this day would reveal the reforms he introduced into its functioning when he was the Superintendent of Police. Though some aspersions were cast on Mr. Chakko's role in the Hindu – Christian clash at Trichur, his innocence was ascertained and accepted by all. He held the office of 'the Superintendent of

Excise' and ran that department with commendable expertise to produce substantial increase in its revenue. However, an instance of embezzlement detected during his tenure made the end of his career quite unsavoury. It must be admitted that the Trichur riots and the embezzlement in the Excise department were two setbacks in his advancement. But later it was established that he was innocent in both instances. As if to wipe out these stains and assert their faith and respect towards him, the public elected him as their representative to the Legislative Council. The service he rendered to his constituency and to Cochin State as a whole, through the legislature was extremely valuable. After retiring from government service he lost no opportunity to work in the forefront of any matter of public interests, often contributing financially as much as possible, and to advise leaders of the public wherever necessary. His frank and forthright views and principled rigidity in dissent brought him into conflict with many powerful adversaries. He had to go through many ordeals because of this. But, that such difficulties never diminished his firmness and courage was one of his notable attributes. People admired him all the more as he aged; a concerted effort was on to elect him as Chairman of the Trichur Municipal Council, in the forthcoming elections. The departure of this respectable individual who was an example for officials and leaders of public to follow, and the undisputed leader of his community is indeed an irreparable loss to the State of Cochin. Wishing his soul eternal peace, we share the grief with his friends and family.

## CONDOLENCE MEETINGS

**S**hri O.M.Cherian at the condolence meeting held at Thiruvananthapuram.

The St. George's Association of Thiruvananthapuram convened a condolence meeting on the occasion of the sad demise of M.A. Chakko which was presided over by Retd. Judge K.K. Lukose, Rao Sahib O.M. Cherian spoke as follows at this large gathering.

“His personal and family affairs are at the peak of prosperity. His landed property is worth three or four lakhs of rupees. Many of his sons and daughters hold high government posts in different States in India. The name and fame he earned in government Service and in dedicated service to the people are truly enviable. Once a wrist-watch belonging to Advocate Elanjikal John (popularly known as John Vakil) was stolen when he was at Trichur. The matter came to the notice of Mr. M.A. Chakko. I understand that within forty eight hours the watch along with its chain and clasp was recovered and sent back to John Vakil who was then at Thiruvananthapuram. The fame he earned in government service had spread far beyond the borders of Cochin State. Mr. Chakko was the trusted right hand man of the Maharaja who subsequently abdicated and is popularly acknowledged as the architect of modern Cochin State- along with the eminently capable Diwan Rajagopalachari. Despite the busy schedule of his official work

he paid great attention to the Syrian Christian Community. He became a committee member of the Malankara Syrian Christian Association when he was about 25 years old and has continued to attend most of the meetings and actively participated in all its activities till now.

It can be unequivocally stated that E.J. John, M.A. Chakko and the Metropolitan Gee verghese Mar Dionysius have been instrumental in providing a clean administrative set up formulating policies and projects and giving a direction to the Syrian Community. John Vakil is a person who finds the path without danger or risk to achieve the goal. M.A. Chakko finds path and proceeds to the goal regardless of danger and risk of failure, for ultimate success. Mar Dionysius is a person about whom it can be said that once he sets upon a path to the goal, he never returns unless he achieves success. The late Mr. Kuruvilla (Kuruvilla Engineer) rendered valuable help and support on many occasions to this triumvirate. Mr. Chakko had certain specific ideas to benefit the Syrian Christian Community. He had spoken to me earnestly about the need to construct our churches in all the Taluk head quarters like Thovala in the northern end of Travancore state and in all the eight Taluk head quarters in Cochin State. It is with this overall aim in view that he had put in unstinting support and help in establishing churches at Ernakulam, Trichur, and Wadakkanchery; had he been alive, the next church would have come up at Irinjalakkuda. He had a great gift of oratory. But it is the manner in which he conducts serious and meaningful discussions with those in authority and with other influential people, that his extra ordinary ability comes to light. People of all castes and religions, from Trichur town and from many other parts of Cochin State, seek his residence "Mancherly" for succour, when they face problems. It is well known that while the members of our church are very keen and active in the conducting of the affairs of the church, they are not so keen on following the rules and traditions set by the church. But in the house of the deceased, the rites set by the church such as daily prayers, observing prescribed fasts and lent attending the Holy Qurbana etc were strictly followed.

The Syrian Church is now sorrowing because it has lost its strong man at a juncture when such a man is needed. I shall not lose courage; who can fathom the will of God? It may be that other lion cubs who can hold their head up, will be raised.

Mr. Chakko was a firm optimist. He never despaired over anything. When he was the Commissioner of Excise, he was made the first accused in a defalcation case. There was even a verdict that he should forfeit an amount of nearly one lakh rupees. Subsequently at the time when Mr. C.G. Herbert was the Diwan, the High Court found him innocent and exonerated him. His accumulated salary for this period amounting to nearly a lakh of rupees, which had been frozen, was then released to him. He was not overly distressed when the verdict of the lower court went against him; nor was he unduly elated when the verdict of the High Court came out in his favour.

The pastime he enjoyed most was playing cards with his sons and daughters and family members.

We have lost Mr. M.A. Chakko, but in our eyes his death is like the death of a martyr.

May his soul rest in peace.

### **The condolence Message of the citizens of Trichur**

Trichur

16 chingam 1117

A condolence meeting called by Messers. V.B. VAIDYANATHA IYER, E. IKKANDA WARRIER, Right Rev MON PALOKKARAN, N.O. INASU, C.P. LONAPPAN, A. ASMATHULLAKHAN, S.F. NEUNUS, K.R. VISWAMBARAN and other prominent people, assembled yesterday at 5.30 P.M at the Medleycott Hall, St. Thomas College, to record the resolution of condolence of the citizens of Trichur, at the demise of the Retired Commissioner of Excise Mr. M.A.Chakko, who was a prominent citizen of Trichur. Chevalier C.V. ANTONY presided over the meeting. In his presidential address, he recalled the rare qualities of courage, practical wisdom and patriotism inherent in Mr. Chakko. He



further stated that Mr. Chakko took keen interest in all the public activities and after retirement from Service, was a member of the Legislative Council, the War Committee, and the Distress Relief committee in all of which he took active part. He concluded his speech with the statement that the demise of the deceased is an irreparable loss to the people and the State.

Mr. C.R Iyyunni was the next to address the meeting. He said that he had heard from the colleagues of Mr. Chakko that he had a rare quality to settle disputes amicably. The Police department as well as the Excise department that he had headed, had improved their performance significantly under his leadership. He went on to say that although he had made few enemies as a result of his bold and courageous acts, that itself is the great proof of his commitment and uprightness of character. He also mentioned that in the recent past, Mr. Chakko had turned his attention towards resolving the serious disputes in churches in his own community.

Following this address, Pro. S.F.NEUNUS and Mr. Viswanatha Iyer also spoke. They recalled that although the deceased had to take strict disciplinary action against some of the officials working under him, not one of them had complained that it was unjust; and what is more even those who had received such punishment had praised his impartiality and fairness. The speakers also brought out that the will to fight against any form of injustice was strong in him. Finally the president read out the resolution of condolence at the demise of Shri. Chakko and the assembled gathering stood up and passed the resolution. After deciding to send the resolution to the family of the deceased, the meeting dispersed.

## APPENDIX I

# THE M.A. CHAKKO MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

**O**n 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 2000, Mr. K.M. Mathew the Chief Editor of the 'Malayala Manorama' inaugurated the concluding Session of the nineteenth anniversary celebrations of the St. Ignatius Church, Trichur and also the Chakko Memorial Auditorium constructed in the Church compound. The Catholicos Designate Thomas Mar Thimotheus presided over the function.

Mr. K.M. Mathew pointed out that M.A. Chakko, popularly known as 'Chakko Suprend' was the epitome of integrity and courage. He also remarked that the auditorium built as his memorial is a reflection of our traditional gratefulness to our forefathers. He recalled the friendship that existed between his father K.C. Mammen Mappillai and Chakko.

H.G. Poulouse Mar Militius unveiled the portrait of Chakko and H.G. Zacharias Mar Anthonius delivered the Jubilee speech and released the souvenir. Bishop Mar Aprem of the Chaldean Church gave the jubilee message. Arch Bishop Mar Jacob Thumkuzhy of the Catholic Church gave the benedictory address.

Messers V.P. Raghavan M.P, Therambil Ramakrishnan M.L.A., Very Rev. C.K. Joseph Remban, Rev.Fr. George Kannothe, the Vicar Rev. Fr. C.S. Thomas, former Vicar Rev. Thomas Myalil and Dr. Varghese Paul spoke on the occasion.

The speakers recalled the unparalleled selfless service Chakko rendered to the Orthodox Syrian Church, and the St. Ignatius Church, Trichur. His very name is an inspiration to the members of the community. It is to perpetuate his memory; the Chakko Memorial Auditorium with all modern amenities is constructed in the Church compound. The hall has an area of 1300 sq meters and can seat 2000 people.

## APPENDIX II

# MILESTONES

1870 -October 19- Birth of M.A. Chakko

1890 - Marriage

1893- Passed B.A. – Joined Law College

1896 – Clerk in the Huzur Secretariat, promoted as  
Magistrate

Tahsildar

Dewan Peishkar

Dt. Magistrate

1910 Police Superintendent (11 years)

1921 Excise Commissioner (4 years)

1925 Retired from Service

1928 M.L.C. (Njarackal Constituency)

1931 M.L.C. (Vellarappilly Constituency)

1941 August 25<sup>th</sup> – Demise

## APPENDIX III

**M.A. CHAKKO'S FAMILY**

M.A. Chakko, B.A. Mazhuvanchery Parambath. Ayyampilly.

Birth October - 19<sup>th</sup> 1870

Death August 25<sup>th</sup> 1941 - Dewan Peishkar - Cochin State - Police Commissioner and Commandant of the Maharaja's Nair Brigade - Excise Commissioner.

Wife – Mariam Chakko, Eralil; N. Parur.

Born – 17-2-1880 (1055 Kumbham 6<sup>th</sup> Tuesday)

Died – 14-9-1957

After marriage accompanied her husband wherever he was posted.

Settled in Mancherly with family in 1913.

**Children****I. Mary Poulouse**

She was in the first batch of students in the Women's Christian College, in Madras. Died on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1984

Husband – Kadavil K.A. Poulouse BABL Retd. High Court Judge Cochin State.

Died on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1982

**Children**

1. **Lily Jacob.** B.A. Residing in Chembukkavu Thrissur.

Husband – Dr. P.I. Jacob MBBS (Pulikkottil Kunnamkulam)

Retd. District Medical Officer, Kannur.

Died on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2002.

2. **Dr. K.P. Abraham** Msc, PHD (Lond). Retd. Head of Metallurgy Dept. Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore.  
Wife – Sarala- Daughter of Mr. C.I. Mathai (Chungath Kunnamkulam)  
Settled in Bangalore
3. **K.P. Jacob** Bsc Eng.(Lond) Retd Superintending Engineer Kerala Electricity Board.  
Died on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> 1998.  
Wife.Mary B.A.B.ED. Daughter of Mr.C.C. Varghese Cherukakkasserri Kunnamkulam  
Died on Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> 2007.
4. **Reemy Korath** B.A.B.T. Residing in Chembukkav, Trichur.  
Husband Late Mr. M.V. Korath Bsc (Mazhuvanchery parambath) Ayyampilly. Divisional Engineer Telephones.  
Died on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1976.
5. **Dr. K.P. George** M.R.C.P, Retd Professor, Medical College, Kottayam.  
Wife. Mariam B.A B.ED (Ammu) Daughter of Mr. T.P. Thomas (Thevarthundiyl)  
Residing in Kottayam.
6. **Prof. K.P. Mathew** Bsc hons M.A. Retd. Head of Mathematics U.C. College, Alwaye. Residing in Chembukkav Trichur.  
Wife Late Prof. Thangam Mathew Msc, Retd. Head of Botany Department, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam. Daughter of Mr. C.P. Varghese (Cheruvathoor Kunnamkulam)  
Died on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> 2001.
7. **Col . K.P. Kuriakose**, B. Tech. Retired from the Corps of Engineers of the Indian Army.  
Wife Valsa M.A. Daughter of Dr. K. Abraham (Karippalayil)  
Residing in Chembukkav, Trichur.
8. **Dr. K.P. Zacharia** B. Tech Hons M.E. PhD.  
Wife Prema- Daughter of Mr. P. James (Panakkal Kunnamkulam)  
Residing in Chennai

**9. Mini John B.A.**

Husband Mr. C.A. John B Tech IRSE (Chundamannil Kumbanadu)  
Residing in U.S.A

**II. M.C. Abraham**

Civil Engineering Degree, Manchester, U.K, Returned to India, worked as Assistant to Mr. Robert Bristow in the Cochin Harbour Project. Later entered Ceylon Engineering Service and retired as Chief Irrigation Engineer. Settled in Bangalore. Died on 9-1-1999.

Wife Alummoottil Elizabeth B.A. (Kunjamma)

Died on 1-1-1979

**Children**

1. **Late Mary Abraham M.A. (Babu)** Principal, Isabella Thoburn College, Luknow, Retired, looked after father in Bangalore.

Died on 24-9-2005

2. **Anne Kovoov Bsc. (Oonnie)**

Husband Roy Ipe Kovoov, Rtd. Wing Commander Indian Air Force.  
Settled in Bangalore.

3. **M.A. Jacob B.E (Raju)** Mechanical Engineer, was in the Hindustan Motors, Calcutta and Best company, Madras. Retd. Residing in Bangalore.

Wife Elizabeth- M.A. BEd. (Ellan) Daughter of Mammen John (Mullasseril)

4. **Dr. M.A. Thomas MS Gen Surgery F.R.C.S. (Ravi)** Medical Degree from Vellore. Worked as Surgeon in U.S.

Wife Dr. Padmini Varma- Working in U.S.

5. **Late Elizabeth Thomas B.A. (Remani).**

Died on 3-4-2005

Husband - Retd. Brigadier P.J. Thomas (Panavelil)

**III Late Dr. Chakko George**

Graduated from the Madras Medical College. Practiced Medicine in U.K. for some 18 years. Volunteered for Army Service during 'World War II'. Returned to India. Took the initiative in organizing

The Malankara Medical Mission and the founding of the M.M. Hospital Kolenchery. Died on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1981.

Wife Late Achamma, daughter of Mr.M.C.Kunjipaily (Mazhuvanchery Parambath)

Died on Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> 1987.

### Children

1. **Late Mohan Chakko George**.Retd.Engineer Burma Shell, Hague. Died on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2001.

Wife Ammini . Daughter of Mr. C.C. Joseph (Chembalathara). Residing in the U.K.

2. **Valsa Varghese Paul** M.A.

Husband Dr. Varghese Paul M.R.C.P. Co-ordinating Chief of the Department of Medicine in Jubilee Memorial Mission Medical College of Trichur.

He is the son of Mr. Mathew Poulouse (Thombra, Perumbavoor). Residing in Gitanjali, Perumgavu, Trichur.

### IV Late Sarah Chakko M.A.

Born on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1905, the first Malayalee woman who gave leadership to the Ecumenical Movement from its beginning. She rose to great heights in different spheres as the renowned Principal of Isabella Thoburn College the prestigious academic Institution of North India, Vice President World Y.W.C.A., eminent leader of the World Student Christian Movement and the first Malayalee and lady President of the World Council of Churches.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1954, she played for the faculty in the Basketball match between the staff and the final year students in the I.T. College and passed away during timeout, beside the basketball court in the hostel Verandah.

### V. M.C. Jacob I.F.S.

Imperial Forest Service, Chief Conservator of Forests Assam. Died on 23-10-1994.

Wife Mariamma (Omana) –Daughter of Mr. K.V. Eapen. Son of Kandathil Varghese Mappila. Died on 5-2-1997



## Children

1. **Ranjit Jacob** B.A Hons B.L  
 Manager (Legal) of India Radiators and Oars, Madras and consular officer of Netherlands Consulate, Madras.  
 Wife Achamma Vallakkalil.  
 Residing in Chennai.
2. **Premi M.A.** Husband Mr. Roy Joseph B.E PhD. Chembalathara.  
 Son of Mr. C.C. Joseph.  
 Residence – Canada
3. **Ashok Jacob** M.A. Deputy General Manager, State Bank of India, Hyderabad.  
 Wife Saramma Kandathil BA. BEd. (Geetha) Teacher, Military School.
4. **Sarah M.A.** Husband Mr. Abraham Kurian, B.E. Engineer Rourkala Steel Plant. Son of Mr. P.M Kurian, Plackal, Kunnamkulam .
5. **Late John Jacob** B.A PhD, M.B.A. Professor, Denver University, U.S. Passed away on 8-6-2007.  
 Wife Elizabeth(Chikku) M.A BEd. Daughter of Mr. Chakko, Bangalore.  
 Residing in U.S.A.
6. **Salome M.A.**  
 Husband Mr. Ranju Jacob Varghese B.E. Engineer, Son of Mr. Varghese, Chakkalakkal, Thumpaman.  
 Residing in Chennai.

## VI. Salome Joseph B.A.(Chinnamma)

Husband.Late Kuriappen Joseph (Chungath Kunnamkulam) Advocate, Bombay High Court. Died on 10-11-1968. Salome resided in Bombay till 1974: for the next 22 years rendered honorary service in the administrative Department of M.G.D.M. Hospital Kangazha. Residing in Bangalore from 1997.

## Children

1. **I.C. Joseph (Sabu)** BSC. B.E  
Retd. Dy General Manager, Larsen and Toubro, Bombay  
Consulting Engineer, Bangalore.  
Wife Romola M.S.W. Daughter of Mr. A.M. Pothen (Padanupurakkal) .  
Residence – Bangalore.
2. **C.K. Joseph (Bachu)** B.E. I.A. and A.S. Retd. Dy Controller  
and Auditor – General.  
Wife Dr. Nirmal Lal M.B.B.S., D.A, M.S. Central Health Service,  
Retd.- Head Anesthesia, Moulana Azad Medical College, Delhi.  
Residence- New Delhi.
3. **M.C. Joseph (Manu)**  
Computer Engineer- U.S.A.  
Wife Penny Prior – American citizen  
Residence – U.S.A.
4. **Anila Jagan** M.Sc  
Husband Late Jagan Philipose (Elanjickal)  
Died on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1999  
Residence- Alleppey.

## VII. Susanna Zacharia (Sosamma)

Died on 9-7-2007.

Husband Late K.C. Zacharia BA LLB – M.L.A. Editor , Kerala Bhooshanam. Kuzhiyelil, Karimpana Koothattukulam . Died on 30-6-1982

## Children

1. **K.S. Chakko** BSC (Jimmy) Retd. Ground Engineer Nairobi -  
Residing in Njarakkad.  
Wife Late Kunjannamma Chakko MSC  
Samma Chakko MSC Nursing (nechooppadam)
2. **Bala Mohan** B.A (Hons) Retd. Professor, Assumption College  
Changanasseri.

Husband Mohan Jacob B.A (Arakkal, Pallom)

Residing in Kottayam.

**3. Sasikala George M.A.** Teacher, Bombay.

Husband George Chalappuram B.A, Mulamthuruthy. Contractor (Chembur)

Residing in Bombay.

**4. Rohini Varghese Mathew (Kunjumol)** MA BEd, Teacher

Husband Varghese Mathew BA LLB. Mangalathu Pambakkuda Anchelpetty

Advocate, Muvattupuzha.

**5. Vinod Zacharia M.A LLB,** Federal Bank

Wife Late Annamma Vinod MSC. Daughter of Dr. A.V. Isaac, Kozhimuttathu, Kolenchery. Died on 15-4-2008

**6. Ulhas Zacharia M.A LLB, MPHIL** Professor of English, Baselius College Kottayam.

Wife Shaila Ulhas BSC. Daughter of Thundiamparambil George, Piravam.

Residence – Koothattukulam

**VIII. Annie Mathew B.A.**

Husband Mr. P.C. Mathew B.A BPE Illampallil, Chengannur. Director of Physical Education, Rajkumar College (for the children of the Maharajas of the Native States) Later became Guardian of the Minor Maharaja of Bastar. After that joined Harrison and Cross field, Cochin. Retired as the shipping Manager of Pierce Leslie. Died on 9-11-1993.

Residing in Manjusha, Palarivattom Cochin.

**Children**

**1. Prof. Sudha Jacob Koshy M.Sc.Retd.** As Head of the Department of Zoology, Maharaja's College Ernakulam.

Husband Jacob Koshy BE, Mavileth Mavelikkara . Retd. Chief Engineer, Kerala State.

Residence- Manjusha , Palarivattom, Cochin.

2. **Maya Reju C.A.** Chartered Accountant. New Jersey  
Husband Late M.V. Reju C.A. Muttathottil, N. Parur. Chartered Accountant worked in U.S.A. Died in 2001.
3. **DR. Anna Joseph Chakko Panicker (Usha).** Practised Medicine in Ajman (U.A.E)  
Husband Dr. Joseph Chakko Panicker F.R.C.S.  
Residing in Bangalore.
4. **Arun Cherian Mathew – C.A,** Chartered Accountant managing his own Emirates Auditing Company in Sharjah.  
Wife Suma Cherian, M.A. Daughter of Mr. P.I. Ukkuru (Pulikkottil Kunnamkulam)

#### **IX Late Martha Mathews (Minnie) B.A.**

Lived in Richmond Town, Bangalore.

Husband Late I.K. Mathews G.D.A. Kakkasseri, Kunnamkulam.

Retired from Audit Department, Delhi. Worked also in Iraq.

Died on 10-04-1989

Son Lebias Mathaias Mathews (Leby)

Head of the Computer Department in the Union Bank of Switzerland.

Wife Irene . Swiss citizen

Residence – Switzerland

#### **X John M. Chakko**

Engineering Degree from U.K. A British citizen, was one among twelve honoured by the County of Cumbria, U.K. , for his “dedication to supporting others,” on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2007, at a Civic reception. He is actively engaged in social work among the aged and Alzheimer’s patients. He is an active worker and supporter of “Carers” groups involved in the nursing of geriatric and disabled home- bound patients. Multiple charitable organizations unknown to the beneficiaries enjoy his patronage and promotion.

Residing in Cockermouth , Lake District, U.K.

Died 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

Wife - Late Grace John- Scottish citizen. Died on 13-10-1999.

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