

The Historical Process of the Formation of the Liturgical Texts in the Major Archiepiscopal Period

The Major Archiepiscopal period witnessed a remarkable development with regard to the formation of the liturgical texts. The number of liturgical books prepared and published in this period is indeed much large in comparison to that of the period prior to the Major Archiepiscopal period. The only liturgical texts which were restored and published prior to the Major Archiepiscopal period are the Pontifical and the Raza. Though the entire text of the Pontifical was restored and published in Syriac language, not the entire text was translated into Malayalam. With regard to the Qurbana the entire propria given in Supplementum Mysteriorum in Latin language was not translated into Malayalam. Only the prayers for one week were translated and included in the Malayalam Taksa. The second and third Qudashas attributed to Mar Theodore and Mar Nestorius were not translated into Malayalam in view of celebration.

When the Syro-Malabar Church became Major Archiepiscopal and especially when the Church got the autonomy with regard to liturgical matters in 1998, good number of liturgical texts could be prepared and published in a short time.

1. Methodology

The Synod proposed a definite methodology for the preparation of the liturgical texts. The task of the preparation of the liturgical texts was primarily entrusted with the Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Liturgy. The Chairman with the help of two member bishops and the secretary of the Commission organize the work of the preparation of liturgical texts. For this work the commission is helped by the Central liturgical committee (CLC).

- Once the Synod decides to restore and publish a liturgical text, the task is immediately entrusted to the Liturgy Commission.
- With regard to the formation of liturgical texts in the Syro-Malabar Church the principle of the II Vatican Council, enunciated in the Constitution on Liturgy (SC24, 44) “restoration, renewal and adaptation” is followed.
- Basic principle held as the point of departure for any discussion is the fact that the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church is that of the East Syrian tradition. However, the historical reality of the influence from other liturgical traditions is also taken into consideration.
- Process of the formation of the Text: Depending on the importance of the liturgical text, the Commission entrusts the task to the Central liturgical Committee and then to the sub-committees as per the direct initiative of the Commission or through the proposal of the CLC. The draft text prepared is at first scrutinized by the experts for its fidelity to the original source and then the text is discussed and studied by the CLC. The draft text discussed, modified and recommended by the CLC will be forwarded to the bishops of the Syro-Malabar Synod. With the modifications suggested by the bishops, the text is sent to the dioceses and institutes for their study and observations. The draft text modified in the light of the observations from the dioceses is again discussed by the CLC. The text thus modified and finalized by the CLC is presented in the Synod after necessary language corrections. The synod either approves the text with some modifications, or proposes further language correction and in some cases, a further discussion by the CLC. The text approved by the Synod is given the final shape under the

guidance of a scrutinizing committee of the bishops (eight bishops including the three commission members). Then the text is sent to Rome for *recognitio*.

Evaluation of the Process of the Formulation of Liturgical Texts

We can be really happy about the fact that following the principles of the formulation of liturgical texts we could make a number of liturgical texts. However, we may not claim that we have texts which are perfect in all the aspects of liturgical reformation envisaged by the II Vatican Council. There are defects with regard to the questions of restoration, renewal and adaptation. For some texts we may not find essential conformity with the Syriac original. There are observations that some texts have not followed the principle of renewal and adaptations. In order to be faithful to the original texts there should be sufficient number of people who are experts in the original language. Moreover, such a work of maintaining maximum fidelity to the sources would require great amount of time and effort. It is true that attempts have been made to embrace as many meaningful adaptations or inculturations as possible. However, we cannot say that there are enough adaptations already made. Relevant adaptations may be made only after profound study on the subject, and on the true cultural and religious significance of the adapted elements. Lack of proper co-operation from the part of the dioceses and institutes also may be considered an important factor negatively affecting the process of liturgical reform. Though there is the provision that drafts of the liturgical texts are discussed at various levels, like diocesan liturgical commission, often very little or no such discussion takes place.

2. List of the Texts prepared and published during the Major Archiepiscopal period

1. English text of the Qurbana (2005) (An English text with English language modification)
2. Taksa of the Sacraments (Malayalam, English) (2005)
3. Propria of the Qurbana for all seasons in four volumes (2005). (Proper prayers of one Sunday of each season are included in the main Taksa of Qurbana.)
4. Pontifical Taksa –Ordinations- Installation of the Bishop/Archbishop/the Major Archbishop and the Rite of the Blessing of the Oil (2007)
5. Translation of Psalms from Peshitta for liturgical usage (2008)
6. Liturgical Text for the liturgical service of the beginning of Lent, Text for the liturgy for the Holy Week and Nativity (2009)
7. First Profession of the Religious; Final Profession of the Religious; Order of the solemn commitment of the Secular Institutes (2009)
8. Liturgy of Hours (SMBC Text): English (2012)
9. Marriage with Non Christian partner (2012)
10. Old Testament, Epistle, Gospel Lectionaries (2013)
11. Anaphora of Mar Theodore - Taksa (2013)
12. Consecration of Church –Taksa (2014)
13. Re-Consecration of Church- Taksa (2014)
14. Taksa of the Installation with the new Title “Taksa of Entrusting the Ministry of the Bishop or Metropolitan (2014)
15. Syriac Taksa of Qurbana: Editio Typica (2018)
16. Rite of Betrothal (Malayalam & English) (2018).

3. Texts under preparation

1. Qudasha of Nestorius

2. Liturgical Texts (Qurbana, Sacraments) in the European Languages
3. Restored Liturgy of Hours in Malayalam
4. **Liturgical Catechesis, Homiletic Directory**

Two important contributions of the Commission, though not directly liturgical books, are the Liturgical catechesis (Araadhanakrama Viswasa Pariseelanam) and Homiletic Directory. The Liturgical catechesis aims at providing the faithful of this Church with a uniform understanding of liturgy. The Homiletic Directory, prepared in the model of the Roman Directory, deals with the basic principles of a homily. It also gives the necessary link between the four readings.

Challenges of the Commission for Liturgy

The most important task of the Commission is concerning the preparation of the liturgical texts.¹ The Church looks for complete and perfect liturgical texts from the Liturgy Commission. There is a general impression that most of our liturgical texts are given as *ad experimentum*. Since the work of the restoration, revision and adaptation of our liturgy is not completed the existing Taksas may not be considered the complete and perfect Taksas. For example, the Taksa of the Qurbana will be complete only when all the three Qudashas are included and all the proper prayers are included. Since the Church has not yet a perfect Malayalam translation of the Pshitta text of the Psalms, all liturgical texts which include Psalms seem to be incomplete. The central task of the Commission would be accomplished only when we have Taksas similar to the Roman Missal and the Latin Sacramentary.

The reality of liturgy is existentially linked to the reality of the Church. The Second Vatican Council decree on Ecumenism says: “The Church of God is built up and grows in stature through the Eucharist.” (UR 15). The very existence and growth of the Church requires a meaningful celebration of liturgy. We need a liturgy contributing to the growth of the Church. In this context we may ask the question. Did the liturgical development of our Church in 25 years substantially contribute to the growth of the Church? It is true that the history of the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church is characterized by difference of opinions, conflicts and even divisions in the Church. However, the negative experiences on account of liturgy need not be detrimental to the growth of the Church. Such negativities can indeed contribute to the liturgical and theological growth of the Church. The differences of opinions and conflicting views with regard to the understanding of liturgy inspire us to study better liturgy and its theology. Thus we find that the so-called liturgical controversies in the Syro-Malabar Church accounted for lot of research work. Compared to the Syro-Malankara Church and Latin Church the number of liturgy scholars is very high.

The central concern of the Synodal Commission of the Church is to contribute to the fruitful liturgical life of the Church. The Particular of the Syro-Malabar Church in its guidelines for the functioning of the Liturgy Commission underlines the task of the Commission in this regard. “Preparation of specific and concrete directions to enhance an intelligent, devout and active participation, both internal and external, of the faithful through a deeper understanding of the spirit and meaning of the liturgy in its various celebrations.”² The Commission ought to contribute to the ‘ars celebrandi’ (art of proper celebration) and the ‘actuosa participatio’ (active participation) of the liturgical assemblies. It is to be

¹ Code of the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church, Guidelines for the Functioning of the Liturgical Commission, 2.a,b,c,d,e.

² Guidelines for the Functioning of the Liturgical Commission, 2.d.

noted that the word "participation" does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life. The conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* encouraged the faithful to take part in the eucharistic liturgy not "as strangers or silent spectators," but as participants "in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, actively and devoutly". (Sacramentum Caritatis 52) (See also SC 48) *Ars celebrandi* is the best means for *actuosa participatio* (Sacramentum Caritatis 64)

As our Church is becoming more and more global the task of the commission with regard to the preparation of liturgical texts becomes all the more challenging. There is still insistence for the Malayalam liturgical texts to be used in the migrant communities. But it goes against the principle of inculturation. For the second and third generation of the migrants it is almost a burden to have the entire liturgy in Malayalam. If we want that they should appreciate the Syro-Malabar liturgy, then it should be given in the same language which is dear to their hearts. First of all, the migrants need to be convinced of the relevance of liturgy in the language of the place. The most important task for the commission in this regard is to prepare the liturgical text in the 'good language' of the place. For this the Commission needs the co-operation of the experts of the language of the place.

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