

# Nazrani Brahmin Mystery Resolved, Whereas . . .

ZACHARIAS THUNDY



# NAZRANI BRAHMIN MYSTERY RESOLVED, WHEREAS ...

***“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among  
wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as  
doves.” –Matthew 10:16***

Dr. Zacharias P. Thundy  
Northern Michigan University

*In Memory of My Late Sister Rev. Roselyn, SABS*

## Table of Contents

1. General Introduction (9)
2. Introduction to Volume One (15)
3. Method of Argumentation (19)
4. Traditional View of Nazrani-Brahmin connection (23)
5. Major Objection to This Nazrani-Brahmin Connection (17)
6. My Simple Answer (31)
7. Legal “Justification” for Nazranis to Claim to be Brahmins (33)
8. More on Legal Fiction (41)
9. Are Legal Fictions Necessarily Legal and Moral? (47)
10. Nazranis as Brahmins (51)
11. Brahmin Tradition According to Manu (57)
12. Vedic Foundation for Nazranis’ Brahmin Status and Nambootiris Meet Nazrani Arguments about their Brahmin Status (61)
13. So Please Read the Gospels and, of Course, My Own Books Between the Lines and With an Open Mind (75)

14. Did Jesus or the Gospel Really Teach This Brahminical doctrine? Yes (77)
15. Did Jesus Send out Emigrants to Other Parts of the World? Yes (83)
16. Jesus' Role in the Emigration of His Followers(89)
17. Nazrani Migration Started Even Before Jesus Was Born (101)
18. Emigration During the Time of Jesus? (115)
19. Ongoing Story of Nazrani Emigration (125)
20. Did Apostle Thomas Travel to India More Than Once?(135)
21. Role of the Jesus Movement and Early Emigration (145)
22. Destination of Early Jewish/Nazrani Travelers: Coromandel Coast or Malabar Coast? (153)
23. Apostle Thomas's Second or Third Travel to South India (167)
24. More on Nazrani Presence on the East Coast (173)

25. Brahmins of South India From 3rd Century BCE to 2nd century CE (195)
26. Immigrants Were Already Accepted as Brahmins on the East Coast of India (205)
27. Nambootiris on the West Coast of India also Accept Nazranis as Vaduka Brahmins (209)
28. Nazrani-Nambootiri Collaboration and “Cohabitation”(215)
29. Nazranis Changed and Adapted to South Indian Culture (237)
30. Doctrinal Crux of Nazrani Adaptation in South India and Kerala (241)
31. We All Ask: What Is Then [the] TRUTH/TRUE WAY? (247)
32. Indeed, Jesus Avoids Contradiction by Teaching Anekantavada (251)
33. Conclusion (255)
- APPENDIX-1: Rainbow Coalition of Jesus and Anekantavada Explained (259)**
- APPENDIX-2: Nazrani Iyengars: Observations Only (273)**

# 1. General Introduction

*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” --Isaac Newton*

This is Volume One of the series about the Nazranis of Kerala, South India. This volume is titled “Nazrani Brahmin Mystery Resolved, Whereas...”; the second volume is Nazrani Conflict with Western Christianity: Trying to Understand It and the Colonial Resolution that the Law of Peter Supersedes the Teaching of Apostle Thomas; the third volume is “Shankaravatara Mystery Resolved, Whereas ...”;

---

Bernard of Chartres said in the 12th century, following the lead of Priscian: “We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size.”

## 6. My simple Answer

My simple answer to the objections is that the critics who reject the Brahmin status of Nazranis are not fully correct nor are they fully wrong as in the Indian story of the four blind men who went to “see” an elephant by touching and feeling the pachyderm; one touched the ear of the elephant and declared that the animal is a fan; the second one touched one of the legs of the animal and declared that the animal is a pillar; the third one touched the tail of the elephant and said the elephant is a broom; and the fourth one touched the body of the elephant and concluded that it is a wall. The truth of the matter is, as in the Jaina theory of Anekantavada , each of the four blind men is right or rather not wrong; that is, no single, specific statement can describe the nature and substance of any person, object, or reality. The elephant is all that but more. Such is the case with the Brahmin connection of Kerala Nazranis.

# 19. Ongoing Story of Nazrani

## Emigration

Did Jesus and his cadre of disciples play a major role in accelerating the ongoing emigration of his followers to the safety provided by neighboring and foreign countries? The simple answer is yes then as it is now especially for the persecuted Jewish people and other nations of the Middle East if history is our guide. We know from history that it started with the tribe of Israel settling down first in Egypt as described in the story of Joseph in Genesis (chapters 37-50), culminating in the As mentioned above, after the siege of Jerusalem in 63 BCE and during the lifetime of Jesus, “emigration intensified.” Even as the Gospel of Matthew admits even Jesus’ family had to seek refuge in Egypt from persecution and death threats from fellow Jews. Add Roman persecution and the cruel acts of crucifixion to the ongoing

## 20. Did Apostle Thomas Travel to India More Than Once?

A good leader would show courage and wisdom in the way he leads followers. Jesus once warned his followers, “ If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit” (Matt.15:14); “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher” (Luke 6:39-40). The point is that wise and responsible leaders do not lead their followers to uncharted territories without having been there first by scoping the area exactly as Moses did when he had sent his 12 spies or emissaries to scout out the land of Canaan ( Numbers chapter 13); note well that the Bible says that Moses did so at the Lord’s command under one man’s leadership.

As for the question raised in the headline above, the answer is YES. In fact, the third-century Syriac work *Acts of Thomas* also supports this view saying that Thomas first went to northeast India to the

## 33. CONCLUSION

Mar Thoma Nazranis are Syrian or Chaldean followers of the Way (religion) of Jesus (Rabb Iso) as taught or preached by Apostle Thomas; they had escaped persecution and torture in Palestine and had settled down in South India along with earlier Jewish and Nazrani immigrants. Our Nazrani ancestors have been living in Kerala since the early days of Christianity; they also used to call themselves followers of the Law of Apostle Thomas, as opposed to the Law of Apostle Peter, which is the rule of faith and life in the Western world. Most remarkably, while they called themselves Nazranis, the Nairs of Kerala called them “Vadukar” (Brahmins from the north); these Vadukar of the west coast called themselves Mar Thoma Nazranis to identify themselves also as followers of the teachings of Jesus handed down to them by the father of their jati, Apostle Thomas. That means not all that the Vaduka Nazrani Brahmins of the east coast did move to Kerala; rather that most of them stayed behind

on the coast. In fact, immigrant Nazranis on the west coast and east coast have been claiming almost from the beginning to be Brahmins as well.

Readers, Thus, Nazranis, who claimed to be Brahmins and lived like them and with them in South India, knew what they were doing: They were following the Law of Thomas. They did so by adapting to South Indian culture without condemning those from the West living in the Western Roman Empire with its own laws and customs. So far so good, Nazranis thought. Alas, they were mistaken: they did not know anything about the Protestant reformation that had engulfed Europe of the sixteenth century nor did they know anything about the counter-reformation movement unleashed by the Catholic Church, which

# APPENDIX-1

## Rainbow Coalition of Jesus and *Anekantavada* Explained

*The Gospel portrait of Jesus is that he was a peace-loving person who tolerated co-existence by assembling a diverse group of disciples, and taught the doctrine of toleration or anekantavada.*

### Jesus' Rainbow Coalition

From Gospel records we can certainly conclude that Jesus' entourage consisted of a rainbow coalition of disciples, men and women, saints and sinners, publicans and prostitutes. We may even call male disciples a motley crew: fishermen (Peter, Andrew), the Boanerges (Aramaic *bnai regshe*, who are the two sons of Zebedee), Simon the zealot, the Buddha-like Nathaniel praying under the fig tree, the Judean Judas Iscariot (a Sicarius?), James the less, Levi (tax-collector who worked for the Roman government), and women disciples like the so-called Mary Magdalene,

Joanna, and Suzanna. On the surface, they were a motley group of different political and ethnic persuasions. Most importantly, Jesus was accused of being friends with publicans and prostitutes, who, he said, would go to heaven before the smug, narcissistic chief priests and elders of the Jewish society of his time:

*Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes enter the kingdom of God before you” (Matthew 21:31). Throughout scripture, Jesus shows kindness and favor to tax collectors and prostitutes. He is merciful to the adulteress from John 8:1-11, reclines with Levi in Mark 2:13-17, and, in Luke 19:1-10, inspires Zaccheus to give half his goods to the poor. This kindness, however, is interpreted as a weakness (or even a transgression) by the religious leaders. When a prostitute comes to anoint Jesus’ feet with perfume, for example, the religious leaders sneer, “If this man truly were a prophet, he would know that the woman touching him was a sinner” (Luke 7:39). When met with their scorn, Jesus responds by reminding them of their place—behind the prostitutes and tax collectors.*

## APPENDIX-2

### **Nazrani Iyengars: Observations Only**

Scholars and Scientists, if you have a better explanation about the “historical” origins of the Iyengars of South India, please put that information forward since I have not been able to come across any. I am really and truly open to genetic studies between the Iyengars of India and the Nazranis of Kerala. Such studies will prove or disprove my observations and enlighten us all. Let me begin this interesting disquisition.

Historians’ claim of the arrival and settlement in India and Iran by immigrants known as Indo-Europeans is based primarily on the proven linguistic claim that most of the European languages from Ireland to Russia to North India and to Iran are based on a proto-Indo-European or Aryan language spoken by the marauding emigrants from central Asia who could not travel eastward to China, which prevented the



Digital Library of Christianity in India

[www.marggam.com](http://www.marggam.com)

**A digital archive of Christian Art, Books,  
Manuscripts & Manuals, Imagery Literature and Music.**

### Support Our Ongoing Projects

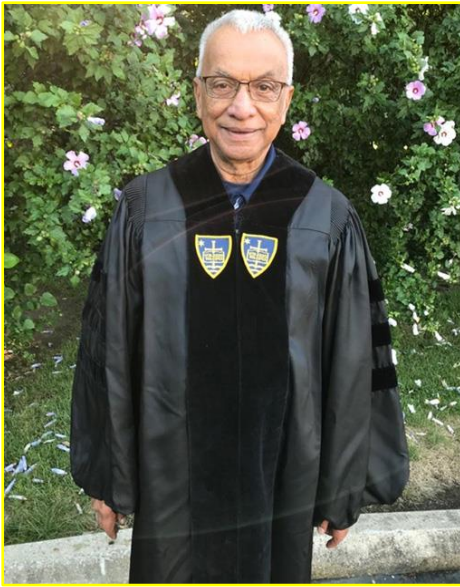
- Marggam Digital Library of Christianity in India.
- Aramaic Project - Reclaim Syriac to Reaffirm Identity.
  - Encyclopedia of Syriac Chants.
  - Resources for Researchers.
  - Directory of Christian Songs.
- Christian Arts / Music Iconography.



C H R I S T I A N  
MUSICOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF INDIA

[www.TheCMSIndia.org](http://www.TheCMSIndia.org)

An international forum for interdisciplinary discussion, and dissemination of  
knowledge, on Art, Literature and Music of about  
thirty million Christians in India



**Dr. Prof. Zacharias P. Thundy**

## DR. ZACHARIAS P. THUNDY

**Professional Details** - Linguist, Philosopher, Theologian, Medievalist, and Anthropologist

**Designation / Status** - Emeritus Professor (retired in 2001)

**Presently Working** - New York

**Education** - Ph.D. (English) 1969. University of Notre Dame. | M.A. (English) 1966. DePaul University, Chicago. | M.A. (Religion) 1963. Pontificium Athenaeum, Poona (summa cum laude) | B.A. (Religion) 1961. Pontificium Athenaeum, Poona | M.A. (Philosophy) 1959. Pontificium Athenaeum, Pontificium Athenaeum, Poona (cum laude).

**Service and Experience** - Professor, English Department, Northern Michigan University (1976) Associate Professor, NMU (1972-76) Assistant Professor, NMU (1968-72),

**Teaching** : Department of Philosophy, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, India (1963-64)

It is indeed an honor to introduce Dr. Zacharias Thundy to the audience of the Aramaic Project. I have known Dr. Trundy for a long time as a friend and a scholar; whenever I had questions about Aramaic language, he is the one who would answer my questions and translate Aramaic passages for me. The Encyclopedia of Syriac Chants of the Syro Malabar Church contains much material that Dr. Trundy provided. See one example of Dr. Trundy's erudite and informed comments on the Christological hymn, Sagdinar Mar . Dr. Trundy is much more than an Aramaic scholar. He is a linguist, philosopher, theologian, medievalist, anthropologist, and a literary scholar. He has written and published more than thirty books and numerous articles and lectured in many parts of the world. He retired in 2001 from Northern Michigan University and resides in South Bend, Indiana, near the University of Notre Dame from where he had received his Ph. D. in 1969. Currently, he publishes books on social issues like the abortion question in the Bible, moral issues of contraception, same-sex marriage controversy, Gospel writers' use of Buddhist sources. His rationale for discussing controversial topics is this: "Dying dudes don't tell lies because soon, as Mark Twain says, they have to meet their maker (or destiny) and be accountable for all their deeds. So be it for now by telling truths."

For the last twenty years Dr. Thundy has been studying the problem of the literary indebtedness of the New Testament to the vast collection of the pre-Christian Buddhist Scriptures (see, *The Stupa and the Cross; Gospel Narratives of the Passion and Death of Christ and Their Buddhist Source*, Kindle Book, 2014)). For years, he had the hunch that there must be Buddhist parallels to the gospel narratives of the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus.