Part D

Cultural Analysis

Part D contains the Sixth chapter.

Chapter VI  Impressions on Enculturation

This chapter contains one section

Section one: Hellenic Influence in the Formation of the Mimre
Chapter VI  Section 1. Hellenic influence in the formation of the mimre

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Chapter VI Section 1

Hellenic influence in the formation of the mimre

Introduction

The mimre of Mar Jacob as well as of other great Syriac poets are usually catalogued under the category, ‘Religious Poetry’. Van Rompey comments on this aspect of the Syriac literature: “As Syriac literature is, above all, of religious nature, no literary genre can be excluded from a study of the Syriac interpretation of the Bible”.\(^{1443}\) Fr. Romeo Thomas writes, “The literature of literary Aramaic is almost exclusively religious and Christian”.\(^{1444}\) But he also confirms the variety of fields into which Syriac Fathers placed their expertise and says, “The Syriac literature covers every avenue of the activities of the Syrian people – Biblical lore, commentaries on the Bible, liturgy, apologetics, theology, asceticism, history, lives of martyrs and saints, legend, civil and canon law, poetry, grammar, philosophy, natural science, astronomy and mathematics”.\(^{1445}\) A general view over the works of Mar Jacob of Sarug also gives us the same impression. But, a close examination of the mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ will reveal the fact that, this work of Mar Jacob has an individual identity beyond the label of a religious poetry and it can also be catalogued under general categories of poetry, because, it possesses essential elements of other major poetic genre.

It is true that Mar Jacob of Sarug was influenced by his predecessors of the same patrimony, especially by Mar Ephrem the greatest Syriac literary genius, on whom he had made a mimre.\(^{1446}\) Moreover, Thomas kollampampil affirms that Mar Jacob of Sarug had, to

\(^{1443}\) As quoted in *Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh*, Kollampampil, 43.
\(^{1444}\) Gabriel, *Syro-Chaldaic Grammar*, xv.
\(^{1445}\) Ibid.
a great extent, adopted Mar Ephrem as his model and thus he says, “It was in the theological-ascetical tradition, embellished by Mar Ephrem, that our author (Mar Jacob) lived and rendered his personal contribution, enriching the indigenous Syriac Christian theological tradition”.\footnote{Kollamparampil, Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh, 14-15.}

Sebastian Paul Brock points to another major influence also on Mar Jacob: “In several mimre (notably those on the Six Days of Creation) the influence of the exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia can be discerned, a legacy of Jacob’s education at the Persian School in Edessa”\footnote{Brock, Op. cit. 30.}

Here, in this section of my thesis, my attempt is to see his Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ from a slightly different angle, which is more based on the cultural ground than that of theological or scriptural bases. This endeavour is on the supposition that Mar Jacob had little bit acculturated and was using also some other patterns variant from Semitic, in the making of his mimre. Here I suppose that Aristotle, the ever green Hellenic genius in every field, has influenced Mar Jacob in the formation of the Four Mimre on Creation’. In this regard I search whether there had been contacts between Syriac and Hellenic cultures, to which Mar Jacob and Aristotle belonged respectively.

VI. 1. A. **Hellenic influence**

I rely upon the following backgrounds for the assertion that Mar Jacob was influenced by the Hellenic culture. Here I arrange the supporting backgrounds for the assertion into two sessions: the general conditions at the time of the poet and the supports from within the Mimre.
VI. 1. A. 1. General circumstance at the time of the Poet.

The general situation at the lifetime of the poet was suitable for the influence of the Hellenic culture upon the Semitic society. Following are some of the possibilities of such a situation.

VI. 1. A. 1. i. Association with the Classical Greek

There was a very close association between the classical Greek literature and the great literary genius of Aramaic literature during 5th, 6th and 7th centuries A.D. Sebastian P. Brock opines on this close contact as, “Over the course of the fifth to seventh centuries A.D, Christian literature in Greek came to have great prestige in the eyes of the Syriac Churches ... ... Greek was the main cultural language of the Eastern Roman empire and so the theological controversies of the fifth and following centuries were conducted primarily in Greek. Since Syriac readers were anxious to be brought up-to-date in theological developments, huge numbers of theological works were translated from Greek into Syriac”¹⁴⁴⁹ Thomas Kollamparampil underlines the importance of a better understanding of the influence of the Semitic and Hellenic cultures on Mar Jacob, to have a better perspective on him as well as on his works: “The reasons have been, on the one hand, his birth into the Semitic cultural milieu of the early Syriac Christianity and, on the other, his life in the political and religious ambience of the Eastern Roman Empire with its various strong Greek influences. Hence our author (Mar Jacob of Sarug) is an heir of two traditions; one inherited by birth and the other acquired from the epoch in which he lived. The two traditions had profound influences on his life and activities, especially upon his writings”.¹⁴⁵⁰ It is assumed that Mar Jacob of Sarug, lived

¹⁴⁴⁹ Brock, Bible in Syriac Tradition, 20.
between 451 and 521 AD, certainly had a great deal with this process of close association between the two cultures and through this he had a close acquaintance with the Hellenic literary works.

Sebastian P. Brock confirms the long tradition of this close association, especially through translation from Greek into Syriac: “Translation from Greek into Syriac obviously vastly outnumber translations from all other languages into Syriac. During the course of half a millennium, from c. 200 to c. 700, an enormous number of Greek texts were translated into Syriac. To these were added the many further texts that were translated into Syriac before being put into Arabic during the course of the great Abbasid ‘translation movement’ sponsored by various of the Caliphs in Bagdad in the late eighth and early ninth century.” And all scholars accept the fact that the earliest translations from Greek were of Gospels, probably made in the late second century.

When the experts assess the luminous stars in Syriac literature, especially those who were at the early periods, they stress their stainlessness from the Greek influence. Thus Sebastian Brock opines: “Writers of the first period are (with a few exceptions) largely untouched by Greek ways of thinking and Greek modes of theological expression; they are true heirs of the Semitic world into which Christianity itself was born. It is in the writings of this period .... above all, in the hymns of the great theologian-poet Ephrem, that we have the best representatives of the Semitic pole of Syriac Christianity”. As a result, one of the attributes on Mar Jacob Aphraat (early 4th Cent.), by Romeo Thomas is “His expressions are pure

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1451 Cf. Wright, A Short History of Syriac Literature, 67. Since no early documents mention the exact date of birth of Mar Jacob, Thomas Kollamparampil analyses various dates proposed by scholars and comes to the conclusion that he was born in 451 AD, Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh, 20.
1453 Ibid.
1454 Brock, “Two Poles of Syriac Tradition”, Marthoma Yogam, 59.
Aramaic, almost entirely free from Greek influence”.\textsuperscript{1455} This indicates the fact that the successors of Aphraat, that is, those composers in the Syriac literature after the 4\textsuperscript{th} century, were under the direct or indirect influence of Hellenic culture and wisdom.

A variety of fields of knowledge, such as science, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, history, medicine, literature, arts etc. in which these Syriac scholars had expressed their expertise, show that those Fathers of the Church were not confined within the limits of theology alone. This diversity of the fields is mainly because of the close association between the Aramaic and Hellenic worlds. Thomas Kollamparampil verifies and establishes it as, “Due to such Greco-Roman influences the Early Syriac pattern of Christianity became subject to a critical period in history with regard to its future course of development. In the milieu of the then Syriac world, on the one hand there was the vehement influence of the indigenous Syriac mode of theological reflection and on the other hand the philhellenic\textsuperscript{1456} trends of Syriac Christians. This fact could be well illustrated from the developments surrounding the Christological controversies of the later 5\textsuperscript{th} and the early decades of the 6\textsuperscript{th} centuries during which Mar Jacob lived and was active. The philhellenic trends of the Syriac world had generated a sort of binary opposition between the Semitic and the Hellenic poles of Syriac Christianity”\textsuperscript{1457}. This situation of ‘two poles’ has been well explained in the articles of Sebastian Brock, especially in his ‘Two Poles of Syriac Tradition’\textsuperscript{1458}.

The works of great Greek scholars also, along with that of the Syriac fathers, were part of the syllabus in the famous Syriac schools of thought. Mar Jacob had his education at the School of Edessa\textsuperscript{1459} According to H. H. Ignatius Aprem I Barsaum, by the middle of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century A D, Aristotelian philosophy had been a main part in the syllabus for the students at

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{1455}] Gabriel, Op. cit. xviii.
\item[\textsuperscript{1456}] ‘Philhellenic’ is the passion for Greek wisdom, culture, civilization etc.
\item[\textsuperscript{1457}] Kollamparampil, Op. cit. 20.
\item[\textsuperscript{1459}] Cf. Moolayil, \textit{Chithariya Muthukal}, 312.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the school of Edessa. Hence, Mar Jacob, a studious student at the school of Edessa, can’t but be
in close contact with Aristotelian works. But surprisingly, no such translation of Mar Jacob of
Sarug was enlisted in the catalogue given by Barsaum.\textsuperscript{1460} But this information doesn’t deny
Mar Jacob’s scholarship in Greek as well as in Aristotelian works.

James Puthuparampil emphasizes the influence of Hellenic culture on Mar Jacob: “At
the time when Mar Jacob was in the school of Edessa, the works of the Greek fathers had not
been taught in their original language, but in Syriac. He (Mar Jacob) knew Greek although he
had not written anything in Greek”.\textsuperscript{1461} Referring to T. Jansma, James Puthuparampil opines,
“Mar Jacob belonged to ‘two worlds’: the Syriac and the Greek worlds. Like most Syro-
Antiochene theologians, Mar Jacob inherited the Hellenic and Semitic Aramaic culture. Their
philosophy is Greek, but their theology is Semitic and Biblical. Their intellectual formation
was also influenced by this geographical cultural proximity with the Hellenistic world. That is
why there is a mixture of Hellenic and Semitic elements in their writings”.\textsuperscript{1462} Hence the
Hellenic influence on Mar Jacob is a fact.

VI. 1. A. 1. ii. Vowel System

Another major evidence for the influence of the Greek on Syriac is the adoption of
Greek pattern of vowel system into Syriac, especially in the western Syriac. As Sebastian
Brock asserts, “One important indicator of the way one culture interacts with another is the
extent to which it makes lexical borrowings ....... by the time that Syriac emerged, in the early
centuries CE, as a major literary dialect of Late Aramaic, there had been at least half a
millennium during which the impact of Greek vocabulary had been making itself felt on the

\textsuperscript{1460} Cf. Ibid, 235.
\textsuperscript{1461} Puthuparampil, \textit{Mariological thought of Mar Jacob of Serugh}, 68.
\textsuperscript{1462} Ibid., 69.
Semitic languages of the Near East”. Fr. Romeo Thomas narrates the development of the vowel system in Syriac language: “The Aramaic vowel system was very imperfect ....... To meet this defect a point was gradually introduced which by its position above or below a word, indicated the required vowel. Such vocalisation was very inadequate ....... A system of vocalisation was invented, in which one or more dots, placed in different positions above or below the consonants, represented the various vowels. This system of punctuation must have originated at east in the 5th Century AD. ....... The West Syrians began to use the forms of Greek vowels in the place of East Syrian dots”. He continues, “In the fifth century, the East Syrians, for the most part became Nestorians, while the West Syrians mostly became Monophysites or Jacobites. The two sections became linguistically distinguished by certain differences with regard to script, vowel system and pronunciation”

Here, my attempt is not to find evidences to prove that Mar Jacob had employed the Western vowel system, instead, I try to establish the strong Greek influence in Syriac language at the time of Mar Jacob of Sarug, to the extent of accepting the Greek vowel system into Syriac.

VI. 1. A. 1. iii. Syriac – a Bridge Language

Scholars are of opinion that Syriac had, for a long time, been a bridge-language for the exchange of culture and literature between Greek and Arabic worlds. Greek philosophy, medicine and science did not reach the Arab world direct, but by way of Syriac. The process was this, for the easiness and convenience, the Syriac scholars who were well versed also in Greek and Arabic translated the Greek texts first into Syriac and then from Syriac they were translated to Arabic. Sebastian P. Brock gives more details on this topic in some of his

1465 Ibid., xiv.
articles. Fr. Romeo Thomas narrates it as, “Besides the original Syriac works, there are numerous translations and adaptations from other languages, chiefly from Greek, which form an important part of Syriac literature. They include both profane and religious works ...... It was through this inter-medium that the Arabs became acquainted with scientific culture and came into contact with the Hellenic philosophy, so that, the important part they played in the propagation of science during the middle ages, had its origin in Syriac literature”. Sebastian Brock asserts its long and continuous practice as, “The reason for this seemingly cumbersome process was that he (translator) was able to benefit from the experience of a long tradition of translating from Greek into Arabic and so it was easier to work from one Semitic language (Syriac) to another (Arabic). He also adds, “Syriac scholars thus formed an important link in the chain of transmission of ancient Greek Philosophy and science to Western Europe”. Even though the peak of this kind of enthusiasm was during 7th and 8th centuries A.D, he asserts that the efforts have already been there from the very fourth century onwards. H. H. Ignatius Aprem I Barsaum states that the translations of Aristotelian works from Greek into Syriac had been enthusiastically done by Ibas, the Metropolitan of Edessa, his disciple Kumi etc. in the first half of the 5th century A.D, and it was Ibas who translated Isagoge. Through this bridging process the Semitic culture also had been enriched a lot. The Semitic scholars had great opportunities to come in close contact with the Hellenic literature and culture on a large basis, which in turn resulted in the Hellenic influence on the Semitic milieu.

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1466 Cf. Brock, “Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Greek”, Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity, also see, Brief outline of Syriac Literature, 218.
1468 Cf. Brock, Brief outline of Syriac Literature, 5.
1469 Ibid.
1470 Cf. Ibid, 3.
Greek influence on Jacob’s contemporaries

Authors are of common opinion on the sporadic as well as strong influence of Hellenic culture and wisdom on the contemporaries of Mar Jacob of Sarug. Even though Mar Ephrem was the original and pure Syriac poet, he too was not exclusively free from Hellenic influence. Even though Mar Jacob was not a contemporary of Ephrem, he had considered Ephrem as his model, then, naturally the Hellenic influence on Ephrem might have transmitted to Mar Jacob also. Narsai, one of the greatest among the Syriac writers, had profound knowledge in Greek, because, it is said about him, “He went to Edessa where, after completing his studies in Greek and in Biblical and theological subjects, he became the rector of the Edessan school”. But too much influence of Greek on his writings could not be detected. In one of his articles Sebastian Brock makes a comparison between Ephrem and Narsai in the context of their Hellenic influence. About Philoxenus of mabbug, a contemporary of Mar Jacob, Sebastian Paul opines: “Although his own knowledge of Greek was probably not very profound, he became aware of the need to translate key Greek texts, such as the New Testament and the Creed, with greater fidelity to the Greek original and so he sponsored revised translations of these”. But the very fact underlines that Philoxenus had close contact with the Greek culture. Moreover he gets applause from some other reviewers for the same work: “He produced a complete Syriac version of the Greek Septuagint Bible. His version was considered a standard work of the time”. If the contemporaries of Mar Jacob had been so much under the Hellenic influence, Mar Jacob cannot be counted as an exception.

Cf. Brock, Brief outline of Syriac Literature, 29.
Died in 523 AD.
Cf. Brock, Brief outline of Syriac Literature, 32.
The information that the translations of the secular Greek texts into Syriac had already begun by the fifth century AD reveals us about the possibility of their employment by Jacob of Sarug in his writings. Sergius of Reshaina, was one of the contemporaries of Jacob of Sarug who had been very much influenced by the Greek philosophy. A comment on Sergius is this: “The first Syriac author to pay serious attention to Greek philosophy was Sergius of Reshaina, who provided Syriac readers with introductions to the earlier of Aristotle’s logical works which formed the basis of all higher education in Late Antiquity”. Sergius translated an influential pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, ‘On the Universe’, and Alexander of Aphrodisias’ ‘Causes of the Universe’, together with a considerable number of works by Galan. Two introductions to Aristotle’s Logic, a longer one addressed to Theodore of Karkh Juddan and a shorter one to Philotheos, are also attributed to his authorship. Sebastian Brock enlists many such translations from Greek philosophical works into Syriac other than that of Sergius which were held during the period of Mar Jacob. Even though they are of anonymous authors, they also contribute to establish the intensity of the close association between Syriac and Hellenic cultures.

Although it is attested that Sergius is said to be the first Syriac author who paid much attention to the Greek philosophy my attempt in this section is to establish that Mar Jacob also had a very close association with Aristotelian thoughts. Because, as it is explained by Brock, Sergius himself underlines the importance of studying logic from the ‘Organon’ or

1481 Died in 536 AD.
1483 This work of Aristotle is known as ‘The Organon’.
1484 Brock, Brief outline of Syriac Literature, 126.
1485 Cf. Ibid., 127.
1486 Cf. Ibid.
1487 Cf. Ibid.
1488 Cf. Ibid., 126.
1489 This association of Mar Jacob with Aristotle is discussed under ‘Application of the principles of ‘Poetics’ in the mimre of Mar Jacob’ below.
‘tools’ of Aristotle, for the better interpretation of the Scripture: “Without which (Organon), neither can the meaning of the writings on medicine be grasped, nor can the opinions of the philosophers be known, nor indeed can the true sense of the divine scriptures be discovered”. This concept of the then literary, exegetical and theological milieu certainly had influenced Mar Jacob also.

All these factors tell us one thing: the Semitic environment during the time of Mar Jacob of Sarug was under the Hellenic pressure. Even though many contributions out of this relation had come out only during the later centuries, the contemporaries of Mar Jacob as equal to him, had already begun to produce better fruits from it. The attempts of Sergius allude to the intense practice of the then association of the Syrians with the Aristotelian works at the time of Mar Jacob. This life-situation of Mar Jacob points also to the possibility of his cherished association with the Greek philosophy, especially that of Aristotle.

VI. 1. A. 2. **Supports from within the Mimre.**

When we go through the mimre we come across certain places where we obviously meet with the Hellenic, especially Aristotelian influence on the poet. Following are some of such occasions.

VI. 1. A. 2. i. **Utilization of Greek words in the Mimre**

Sebastian Brock proposes a criterion for finding out the measure of depth of such influence in a work or on an author: “One practical way of ‘taking the temperature’ (as it were) of Syriac literature at any given time is to look at the number of Greek words used”. Khalil Alwan, the editor of Mar Jacob’s Four Mimre ‘On Creation’, the primary stuff for my study, in

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1491 Brock, “Greek words in Ephrem and Narsai: A Comparative Sampling”, *ARAM*, 11-12, 439.
his index to the mimre,\textsuperscript{1492} gives a long list of words used in the four mimre which have either their origin in Greek or have very close affinity with it. They are being reproduced here as they are given in the index, in order to show the influence of Greek on Syriac at the time of the poet as well as on Mar Jacob and his close contact with Aristotelian works.


If so much of Greek words were loaned with in the Four Mimi 'On Creation', only a minor part of the huge works of Mar Jacob, there is no need of other gauge to measure the quantity of the Hellenic influence on him. Moreover, the lifetime of Mar Jacob was the period of the introduction of Greek words into Syriac. If so much of Greek words were loaned within the Four Mimi 'On Creation', only a minor part of the huge works of Mar Jacob, there is no need of other gauge to measure the quantity of the Hellenic influence on him. Moreover, the lifetime of Mar Jacob was the period of the introduction of Greek words into Syriac. 1493

VI. A. 2. ii. Application of the Art of Reasoning

Greek scholars were experts in the art of reasoning. Plato and Aristotle are, even now, considered its best protagonists. A good command in the art of reasoning was considered a strong back-up for defending and propounding theology or scriptural truths. “Before 5th century, Christian theology had been affected only marginally and indirectly by Aristotle. The elementary study of Aristotelian logic had proved indispensable for a disciplined training of theologians, and some of the concepts from Aristotle's physics and metaphysics that entered the field of theology.”
into the elaboration of this logic became equally essential for the formulation, in rational terms, of points of dogma”.\textsuperscript{1495} Even though this assertion is more applicable to the western theologians, the fathers of the Eastern Church can’t be excluded from this area, because, as Fr. Romeo Thomas writes, “Besides the original Syriac works, there are numerous translations and adaptation from the other languages, chiefly from Greek, which form an important part of Syriac literature. They include both profane and religious works. Among the former are the Greek scientific works, principally of Aristotle and his school”.\textsuperscript{1496} Hence, it is only natural to infer that the influence of Greek scholars upon the Syriac fathers was very strong, especially on Mar Jacob of Sarug, who lived during the peak period of persuasion of Greek culture and philosophy on Syriac Fathers.

The intensity of the influence of Aristotelian principles on the poet, especially of his syllogism and debate, can be seen in another occasion also where he condemns the haste of Eve (\textit{FMC} III 391) to accept the cunning words of the serpent without a serious debate:

\begin{quote}
"When he spoke to her, she did not receive him controversially (\textit{dorusoit}), also, when he betrayed her, she did not encounter (\textit{lo era'}) him with an opposite way (\textit{hepko})" (\textit{FMC} III 427-428).
\end{quote}

At the same, he applauds the wisdom of Mary who entered into a serious debate with the angel before accepting his word (\textit{FMC} III 387 ff.). Out of the poet’s expertise in the art of reasoning, he proposes arguments for Eve (\textit{FMC} III 465 ff.). On this basis also we can ascertain that Mar Jacob had a close contact with Aristotle and his works.

VI. 1. A. 2. iii. \textbf{Application of Logic in the mimre}

It is also to be understood that Mar Jacob of Sarug had been employing the Aristotelian

\textsuperscript{1495} \textit{Encyclopaedia Britannica}, I, 1157.
\textsuperscript{1496} Gabriel, Op. cit. xvi.
logic in his mimre. “Logic is the science of reasoning”. \textsuperscript{1497} And “Logician, however, is concerned primarily with the correctness of the completed process of reasoning”. \textsuperscript{1498} And “Inference is a process by which one proposition is arrived at and affirmed on the basis of one or more other propositions accepted as the starting point of the process”. \textsuperscript{1499} The following testimony proves the influence of Aristotelian logic during the period of Mar Jacob: “The increased sense of linguistic and national identity and the religious movements of the 5\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} centuries such as Nestorianism and Monophysitism, led to the foundations of Syriac centres of studies in the Persian and Byzantine empires, especially at Edessa and Antioch, Probe and Sergius of Resiana are among those who contributed, through translations of the basic logical texts and commentaries on them, to the establishment of Aristotelian studies in these centres”. \textsuperscript{1500} It is true that Mar Jacob’s name was not mentioned there, but one can’t exclude him, because, even though he was not an enthusiastic partner in the contemporary heated debate between monophysitism and Nestorianism, \textsuperscript{1501} as a contemporary erudite literary man, theologian, exegete and an able Church leader, he can’t but involve in those discussions and thus in turn, had close contact with Aristotelian theories.

Furthermore, there are clear indications for the use of Aristotelian syllogism of logic in the mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation”, especially in the second one. A proper and logical conclusion is arrived at only after an argument between opposite prepositions. For Aristotle, logic is an instrument of study of each and every branch of knowledge. In addition to that, for him, the heart of logic is syllogism. \textsuperscript{1502} Aristotle, the founder himself explains the syllogism as, “An argument in which certain facts having been laid down, something different follows with

\textsuperscript{1497} Copi, \textit{Introduction to Logic}, 4.
\textsuperscript{1498} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{1499} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1500} Encyclopaedia Britannica, I, 1157).
\textsuperscript{1501} Brock, \textit{Brief outline of Syriac Literature}, 30.
\textsuperscript{1502} Edwards, \textit{The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy}, 155.
necessity simply from their being so”. Moreover, “Syllogism is a valid deductive argument expressed in categorical statements, composed of two premises (a major and a minor premise) and a conclusion”. Evidently Mar Jacob reproduces the same theory of syllogism of Aristotle in his mimre:

“When doctrines (yida’to) fell (npal) upon each other, one against the other, a new common creed (haymonuto hadto), may reconcile (tsayen) them” (II 251-252).

On the basis of Aristotelian syllogism, Mar Jacob invites the opponents to refute his arguments:

“If anyone wants to refute my words with an opposite argument (hepto), let him bring his own and shall begin his argument (sarbo) with (against) our narration (tas’ito)” (II 237-238).

Also, he teaches them how one can come to the truth through arguments:

“My word is set in order simply and without any dispute (lo heryono); because, through the findings (skohto) it was sharpened noncontroversial (lo dorusoit) .......
One finds in it the words that of articulations (seryono) and that of dissolutions (meshtaryono)” (FMC II 239-245).

As a pastor-philosopher, he asserts:

“And if it is not agreeing with charity (hubo), its labour is in vain” (FMC II 250)

and he appeals for peace to be maintained at all levels of argument:

“Let it (faith) take the staff of love (hubo) and it will guide them while keeping them from the danger of pride.
Let it be a mother (emo) who rebukes one and punishes the other, so that, they shall not be puffed up by providing the schism throughout their words ” (FMC II 253-256).

All these are attestations for the influence of Aristotelian theories, especially of his logic, on Mar Jacob of Sarug.

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1503 As it is quoted in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 890.
1504 Angeles, Dictionary of Philosophy, 284.
VI. 1. A. 2. iv. Deductive and Inductive methods of Aristotle in the Mimre

Two methods are being employed commonly in order to arrive at a conclusion: i) the inductive method, where one generalises the facts and comes to the conclusion from the particular experiences, where the possibilities of error are very common. ii) The deductive method, where one comes to the conclusion only after verifying all possible data. Irving M. Copi distinguishes between these two methods: “Arguments are traditionally divided into two different types; deductive and inductive .... Only a deductive argument involves the claim that its premises provide conclusive grounds.... A deductive conclusion is valid when its premises, if true, do provide conclusive grounds for its conclusion..... And inductive argument, on the other hand, involves the claim, not that its premises give conclusive grounds for the truths of its conclusion, but only that they provide some support for it”. In deductive method, one can deduce the truth and arrive at a conclusion by analysing, comparing and verifying various factors of the problem. Mar Jacob proposes Aristotelian deductive method for the acceptance of his conclusions as well as for proving his statements.

In the mimre, the poet wants to prove the real nature of man. While there was a heated discussion on the creation of man, whether he was created mortal or immortal (FMC II 77- 84, 99-108 etc.), he doesn’t blindly side with any group. As per the deductive method of Aristotle, to arrive at his conclusion, Mar Jacob compares the nature of man with the natures of all other corporal and non-corporal beings (FMC II 37 ff). After finding out their natures - some are eternally mortal and some are perpetually immortal - his conclusion is that man is simultaneously mortal and immortal (FMC II 132 ff). This application of syllogism in his mimre is an evidence of the influence of Aristotle on him.

It is also seen that Mar Jacob adopts the inductive method also in his mimre. When he

1506 See above in this section, ‘Application of Logic’.
speaks of the mortality and immortality of Adam, he mentions about Abel, Enoch and Elijah (FMC II 207 ff) who departed from this world without death. Pointing out them he says that there are immortal beings in the race of Adam and so man’s basic nature is not mortal alone but it is also immortal. From these particular incidents the poet comes to the conclusion of the immortality of man. Also, in order to prove his statement on the immortality of man, he takes examples from the common life which are also patterns for the adoption of his inductive method:

“For, when a man plucks a fruit from the tree, from it, he learns about its sweetness and bitterness. If a man gathers the first fruit from the branches, there is in it the taste of all the fruits of that tree” (FMC II 203-206).

The disclosure of Mar Jacob on his technique of employing the inductive method in one of his other homilies: “Through the revealed things the concealed things too are signified and through the visible things the hidden things too are proclaimed”,1507 is another proof for the acquaintance of the poet with the inductive and deductive methods of Aristotle.

VI. 1. A. 2. v. The ‘Golden mean’ of Aristotle and of the poet

Mar Jacob applies also the famous concept of Aristotle, ‘the Golden mean’ in his mimre. Aristotle excludes both the extremities and proposes the middle as the best position and he calls it ‘the Golden mean’. The ‘Aristotelian mean’ or ‘the golden mean’ is, “Associated with moderation, temperance, the avoidance of the extremes. The ethical principle that virtue consists in, following a course of action, somewhere between the extreme of too much (excess) and that of too little (defect)”1508 Mar Jacob, being influenced by Aristotelian ‘Golden mean’, wishes that in an argument between the opponents:

“Be the mediators (meš’oyo) and let the truth remain with you as a

1507 Kollampampil, Jacob of Sarug’s Homilies on the Nativity, 98.
1508 Angeles, Dictionary of Philosophy, 164.
In addition to what Aristotle said, Mar Jacob proposes love to be the mediator among the opponents (FMC II 249 ff) and he himself becomes the model:

“Now onwards let the love (hubo) be the furnace (kuro) to my word, for, my trust (tuklono) is not placed on the doctrine (yida’to) on which I debate.” (FMC II 263-264).

VI. 1. A. 2. vi. **The concept of rationality in man**

Aristotle highlights the rationality in man as his supreme capacity; hence he calls man a ‘Rational Animal’. Mar Jacob has been certainly influenced by this theory of Aristotle, because, the poet also emphasises in his mimre the rationality in man. He calls man ‘a rational vessel’ (FMC II 141). He conceives that God had fabricated the brain in man as the place of reason and this capacity of man differentiates man from other living beings and makes him god over them (FMC IV 119-120). The poet depends on the ‘rationality of man’ for the judgement of the veracity of his statements (FMC II 83) and exhorts people to use their rational ability in arguments (FMC II 125). He calls the image, a rational image:

“He (God) established a rational image (yuqno mlilo) in it (city) and made it (image) its (city’s) lord (moro)” (FMC IV 62).

In his other homilies also he uses the term ‘rational image’ to denote man, “For, He fashions and imprints rational images in married women”\(^\text{1509}\) and in the same homily while describing the angels’ announcements to the shepherds the poet calls man as rational sheep\(^\text{1510}\). Mar Jacob scolds Eve for not using her reasoning faculty against the serpent (FMC III 457 ff).

But it is to be noticed that, while Aristotle disregards the existence of the image of God in man and highlights the rationality as an independent supreme entity, the poet considers it only as a

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\(^\text{1510}\) Cf. Ibid., 110.
part and product of the image of God in man.\textsuperscript{1511}

VI. 1. A. 2. vii. \textbf{Conclusion of the poet verses Aristotelian conclusion}

Another reason why it is said that Mar Jacob had close association with the teachings of Aristotle is the conclusion the poet arrives at regarding the nature of man. Here, actually, the poet was refuting the Aristotelian conclusion which goes like this, All humans are mortal (major premise), Adam is a human (minor premise), therefore, Adam is mortal (conclusion).

But Mar Jacob, after analysing the various lives on earth, concludes contradictorily:

\begin{quote}
"The truth is present and manifested itself within the word, that He created Adam both as mortal and immortal (moyuto u lo moyuto)" (FMC II 305-306)  
and thus "He (man) was composed of both life and death, because of this, he is mortal and immortal (moyuto u lo moyuto)" (FMC II 165-166).
\end{quote}

Here, the model for the poet for his arguments is Aristotelian syllogism and his conclusion is the refutation against Aristotelian conclusion on the mortality of man.

VI. 1. A. 2. viii. \textbf{Application of Aristotelian physics in the mimre}

For Aristotle, the three basic principles and ingredients for the explanation of change are matter, privation and form.\textsuperscript{1512} It seems that Mar Jacob applies this principle of change while describing the immutability of God, the characteristics of the renewed world, the spiritual nature of the resurrected body as well as the supreme reigning of the Messiah (FMC IV 291 ff). On the basis of this principle of matter and change, since God is not made of matter, the poet establishes the immutability of God’s existence. Thus he argues:

\begin{quote}
"By which feet He (God) walked (halek) indeed in the garden?" (FMC III 693)  
and  
‘How did He (God) walk (halek) in human steps?’ (FMC III 695).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1511} See the segment – “Freedom and Freewill of Man”, p. 311.  
\textsuperscript{1512} Edwards, Op. cit. 156.
So, with firm conviction, Mar Jacobs affirms the immateriality as well as the immutability of God:

“He who was not composed (lo mra’ako) had composed (rakeb) the voice for the sense of hearing (ears)” (FMC III 694) and “The entirely self existent Being was not generated (on the principle) of change (shloypo)” (FMC III 696).\textsuperscript{1513}

For the poet, the renewed world will also be without matter; hence the principle of change is not applicable to the new world also (FMC IV 295 ff). The resurrected body of man also will be out of the principle of change (FMC IV 321-324 and 415 ff.):

“The passion, desire, hunger, thirst and the sloth, labour, sleep, sickness and all its seriousness: none of these approaches it (flesh) when it is resuscitated, for, it is glorified, and became renewed and spiritual. By the resurrection, the body rises up as a new creature while being not subjected to weakness and to change (shloypo)” (FMC IV 441-446).

It is true that Mar Jacob replicates his eschatology\textsuperscript{1514} from the Holy Scriptural narrations, but he elucidates the immateriality of the spiritual beings, including the renewed image and the world, on the basis of physical science which has its footing on Aristotelian principles.

Mar Jacob had applied the Aristotelian principle of change to prove the existence and immutability of God and said in his Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ that God is the unmoved mover.\textsuperscript{1515} This we infer from the following verse:

“He removes (a’bar) the times, but He is with the times; He never vanishes (lo ‘bar), and with a gesture (remzo) He changes (halep) the season, but He (remains) unchanged (lo methlap)” (FMC IV 315-316).

Thus the conviction of the poet on the immutability of God’s existence is firm and strong. God is not confined to any limit,

\textsuperscript{1513} Immutability of God is discussed in the section, “God’s Mercy as the Catalytic Code”, p. 441.
\textsuperscript{1514} See the segment, “Eschatological Perceptions of the Poet”, p. 587 ff.
\textsuperscript{1515} See also, ‘God is Immutable’ in the section, God’s Mercy as the Catalytic Code”, p. 441.
“For, the manifestation of the Messiah is not transmitted on (the principle of) change (sūhlopo).
There, the weak elements do not enslave the light, so that, it shall proceed within a measure; from this place to that place.
Messiah shines in all and every where, with all and in all, and the Luminary (Messiah) is not confined within a circle and thus to move along on its way” (FMC IV 310-314).

VI. 1. A. 2. ix. Basic elements of the material objects

Aristotle had devised his own philosophy of nature. Thus, according to him, every material constituent is under the principle of change. As per this principle of change every matter undergoes processes of dynamic and spontaneous change. From this principle of change, Aristotle developed a hierarchy of existences that begin with the four primary bodies – earth, water, fire and air. Even though we may not see in the mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ that he had reproduced the principle of hierarchy of existence in its hierarchical order as it is said by Aristotle, it is clearly visible that he had enlisted in the mimre the basic elements out of which every material thing has been created which is as exactly as it was suggested by Aristotle and hence definitely it is an adoption from Aristotle. We find this in his description on the creation of man. While confirming the basic elements in other material objects he states,

“Man also is fashioned from the elements (esṭukso) of the world” (FMC IV 355) and “It (image) was arranged from the elements (esṭukso) and was standing like a pillar” (FMC IV 89).

When he extols the greatness of the Creator of the image of man, we see the list of those four elements:

“Who is able: the dust, fire, water and air; to bind (them) in a yoke and to direct them in one single flow?” (FMC IV 45-46, 41-44, 47-50).

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1516 This idea is developed above in this section, ‘Application of Aristotelian Physics’.
1517 New Encyclopaedia Britannica, I, 555.
1518 See above in this section.
He repeats in the mimre the same notion of basic elements of objects while describing the
destruction of the corpse also (FMC IV 69, 71, 77-78, 93, 349 ff). We can make it for sure that
these descriptions are on the pattern of Aristotelian list.

VI. 1. A. 2. x. **Application of Athletic rules in the mimre**

The ever greatest and well defined sporty event in history of all ages is Olympics,
which had its origin and progress in Greece from 776 B.C and among many items, wrestling
was an important sporty event. Even though, Mar Jacob might not have eye-witnessed the
Olympic games because, it was abolished by the Roman emperor Theodosius I, in 393, such
a great event, having strong tradition of more than thousand years, can’t simply be ignored all
of a sudden. Moreover, its imitations might have been continued at least in its simplest forms.

The Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ reveals that the poet possessed indeed a
good amount of knowledge about athletic contests. The picturizing effect of those lines,
especially of a wrestling (FMC III 135-154, 569), ascertains its deep influence on the poet and
to a certain extent his vigorous involvement in such sports and games. He borrows the
techniques of an expert wrestler who defeats his opponent and applies it to depict the contest
between Adam and Satan (FMC III 135-150). And sin also is described in the terms of a
contest between Adam and God’s commandment and also among the couple (FMC III 549 ff.).
It must be believed that Mar Jacob had good awareness of the details of conducting the
athletics and games in Olympics, because, he employs those precepts of the game in his mimre.
In Olympics, “An open space in front of the altar of Zeus was the arena for boxing and
wrestling.” For the Greeks, Zeus was the god of sky and weather and he was also
considered the god of victory. So, a big statue of Zeus was placed at the temple of Zeus and on

1519 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 925.
1520 *Ibid*.
1521 Bowara, *Classical Greece*, 129.
his stretched out right hand he holds the statue of Nike (victory). It is believed that the statue was erected about 430 B.C. The wrestling contest in Olympics had been performed before this statue. It is to be understood that it is in this context that Mar Jacob intentionally describes sin as the wrestling contests between Adam and Satan and between Eve and Adam which took place in front of God, the supreme Judge:

“The Justice (Just one) (qaṣṭo) effected as a spectator (ḥazoyo) to that contest (aguno) and it (He) waited for the whole contest (daro) be brought to an end” (FMC III 553-554).

Certainly the poet was employing his familiarity with these precepts of the games to describe the sin of man which was committed before God.

The close association of the poet with athletics and games, to a wider sense, with Olympics, can be established from another context also, where he speaks of crown to be conferred on the winner:

“Unless a man fights (aqreb), he neither fails nor wins and if he doesn’t meet with contest (taktugo), he is not victorious. Also, an athlete (atliqo) doesn’t have a crown (klilo) with out a contest (daro) and without a battle (qirso) bravery (qrabtonuto) can’t be ascertained.” (FMC III 191-194).

Crowning the winner with the crown made of Olive branches had been a practice in Olympics, “Winners at the great Pan-Hellenic games received only garlands – wild Olive branches at the Olympics”. When the poet speaks of crown (klilo) of the winner of the contest (FMC III 193), he refers this practice of the Olympics in his mimre. This in turn establishes Mar Jacob’s close relation with the Greek culture and life-style.

1522 New Encyclopaedia Britannica, XII, 910 ff.
VI. 1. A. 2. xi. **Warfare and the poet**

The familiarity of Mar Jacob with the techniques of battle and war also points to his direct or indirect acquaintance with Hellenistic culture and his contact with Aristotle. The planning of Satan to defeat Adam’s image (FMC III 287 ff) are exactly the planning of the commander of an army who prepares for a triumphant battle. Also, he uses various technical terms particularly related to war and battle field, such as, horse and horseman (FMC III 865, 871-876, 883 etc.), warship and sailor (FMC III 866), shot of arrows (FMC III 876, 879, 881 etc.), quiver (FMC III 931), charioteer (FMC II 145), chariot (FMC IV 115) etc. The imagery of chariot and charioteer used by the poet is deliberate. Apart from the war field, he assumes its implication in his work from the sports and games. It is said that in olden days, in sports and games, competitors contested in the fields without clothes and “Charioteers were one of the few clothed athletes in Olympics”. While the poet compared the freedom of man as charioteer, he might have had in is mind the picture of it being clothed by the flesh and its limbs as a clothed charioteer. Thus he said,

“*Besides, the freedom (hiruto) existed in him as a charioteer (henyuko) and it held bridles to guide his senses*” (FMC II 145-146).

Even though there were wars, great or insignificant, at the time or before of Mar Jacob, he might have been influenced by the schemes of war of the greatest and triumphant warrior, Alexander the great (BC 356-324), whose victories are thrilling even to the common man of today. Alexander was a student of Aristotle. The rationale for his influence, and through him the influence of Aristotle, on the poet is his fame as the ever known greatest victorious warrior who conquered a great part of the then known world, including Persian Empire and thus he became a legend through out the world. Greatly thrilled in the war history, the poet presents

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1524 Ibid., 128.
1525 *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*
in the mimre the verdict of God on the serpent, Eve, Adam etc. in the scenario of a battle (FMC III 865 ff.)

VI. 1. A. 2. xii. The poet; a lover of wisdom

Elsewhere in the mimre we see Mar Jacob’s quest for wisdom. It is quite natural in an erudite man. But we see in the poet, an extraordinary and ardent thirst for amassing wisdom, which could be because of the Hellenic influence on him. The Greeks were passionate for wisdom and Greece was the capital of wisdom at that time. This zeal for wisdom facilitated them to produce eminent scholars like Plato, Aristotle and others. But what differentiates Mar Jacob from them is, while they were looking for the wisdom of the world, Mar Jacob sought for divine wisdom. The poet’s acquaintance with the Hellenic high firmament of wisdom aided him to fly in the air of wisdom. Thus he claims that he daily meditates in the scholarship of God (FMC II 3). His enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge is clear from the verse,

“My tongue will dig diligently in the vineyard of your mysteries” (FMC II 13).

So what he asks from God is neither a heap of material blessings nor any hike in his earnings, not even a seat in heaven, but, since he knows the preciousness of wisdom and as a lover of wisdom, the only thing that he asks God is the wisdom from His boundless treasury (FMC II 1-20) and he wishes:

“Let the reason of the Wise (havno dhakimo) make the word flow in its zeal” (FMC II 107).

VI. 1. A. 2. xiii. Attribution of wisdom on God

The Psalmist exclaims on the infiniteness of the wisdom of God\textsuperscript{1526} and we see in the Book of Job certain descriptions on the mightiness God’s wisdom\textsuperscript{1527} and the perfectness of the

\textsuperscript{1526} Cf. Ps. 147/5.
knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{1528} But we don’t see in the Scripture too much elaboration on the wisdom of God except few other sporadic allusions. However, in the Four Mimrei of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’, we see an over enthusiasm of the poet to picturize God as the perfect wise Being. It is to be particularly noticed that he gives almost equal importance in his mimre to portray God as the seat of wisdom as he allotted space to narrate God’s mercy. It is true that he imbibed the honey of God’s mercy form the Scripture. But Mar Jacob might not have received this concept of God’s wisdom from the Scripture by the reason of the absence of its frequent recurrence in it as the concept of God’s mercy occurs. Then the most probable chance for the repetition as well as the reiteration of the concept of God’s wisdom in his mimre is his association with the Greek culture where this concept was one of the favourite and basic topics of discussion of the scholars, especially of those great stars like Plato, Aristotle etc. Philosophical arguments were for the attainment of wisdom as the term ‘philosophy’ itself connotes.\textsuperscript{1529}

Looking at the magnificence of the creation as well as of the image of man the poet pinpoints no other aspects of God except His wisdom; hence he admiringly calls God the most and eternal wise (\textit{FMC} II 1, 107, 139, 201, 269, 303, III 949, 958, IV 27-28, 30, 42, 55 ff. 138 etc.). The very first verse of the second mimre, where we see the strong Aristotelian influence on the poet, begins with addressing God as ‘the Wise’ (\textit{FMC} II 1). Moreover elsewhere in the mimre we see the same mood of the poet; for eg.

\textit{“The Wise one (\textit{hakimo}) had stringed together the living nature with the dead lump of earth” (FMC II 139, 201).}

The existence of every thing is a manifestation (\textit{FMC} IV 11) and consequently they are embodiments of God’s wisdom:

\textit{“His (Adam’s) image declared how much wise (\textit{hakim}) is his fashioner” (FMC IV 9 and 55).}

\textsuperscript{1527} Cf. Job. 36/5.
\textsuperscript{1528} Job. 37/16.
\textsuperscript{1529} Philo - sophia = love of wisdom.
Pretty long space had been provided in the fourth mimre also from the first verse onwards for praising God’s wisdom as it is manifested in the creation, especially in Adam (FMC IV 1ff, 53 ff.). These help us to prove that Mar Jacob was very much fascinated by the Greek concept of wisdom. But he attributes the perfectness of the wisdom in God alone which may defy the Hellenic concept.

VI. 1. B. **Hellenic Culture, Aristotle and Mar Jacob**

What we have analysed above were the backgrounds for the Hellenic and Aristotelian influence on Mar Jacob, in order to establish the fact that Mar Jacob had close contact with Hellenic culture and literature. This assertion leads us to investigate further: how far the poet was influenced by the literary works of Aristotle, especially by the ‘Poetics’, one of the classics of Aristotle. A close look into the Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ enables us to ascertain that Mar Jacob had applied in his Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ the principles put forward by Aristotle in the ‘Poetics’. Because, Aristotle, the genius, who embraced and enriched all the then known branches of knowledge had been the most prominent and shining star in Greek wisdom and cultural firmament and hence nobody could fly in the sky of Hellenistic wisdom and culture without picking precious pearls from him. Moreover, a close contact with the Greek language, culture, and wisdom is impossible without knowing its eminent personalities like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle etc. and their works. When we affirm that Mar Jacob had relation with the Greek culture, especially with Aristotle, it is included that he had gone through the works of Aristotle. Thus, it can rightly be assumed that Mar Jacob had contact with the ‘Poetics’. The Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ gives ample testimonies for the same. Before looking into it we look into Aristotle and his works.

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VI. 1. B. 1. Aristotle and the ‘Poetics’

Aristotle lived between 384 – 322 BC. He had his education under Plato and became a genius in various fields of knowledge. Among other great contributions, he brought the ‘Poetics’ to the light towards the end of his life, in which he analyses various aspects of poetry. Aristotle, after having a detailed critical study based on the works and theories of his predecessors as well as of his contemporaries, had formulated his own assumptions and had suggested guidelines in ‘Poetics’ for creating as well as categorising various kinds of poetry. The ‘Poetics’ cannot be dated, but it appears to be a late work by Aristotle. No other classical cataloguing measures were prevalent for long centuries to come better than that of Aristotle’s, as the publishers of the ‘Classical Literary Criticism’ opine: “Aristotle’s ‘Poetics’ has long been recognised as a seminal work of literary criticism. His analysis of tragic drama, epic poetry and stylistic devices such as metaphor, and his famous notion of the cathartic purging of the emotions, have defined a critical terminology for generations of later writers”.

Aristotle’s works are considered as the foundations for various branches of knowledge and he is considered as one of the fathers of literary criticism, protagonist of research methodology, dominie of the art of reasoning or logic, prophet of moral science etc. Scholars affirm: “Almost no branch of knowledge seems to have been alien to him. Aristotle was rightly called by the poet, Dante, ‘the master of them that know’.”

VI. 1. B. 1. i. The ‘Poetics’

This study is mainly based on T. S Dorsch’s English translation of Aristotle’s

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1531 Cf. Ibid., 15.
1532 Ibid., cover page.
1533 Balan, *World Classics*, 164.
‘Poetics’. Other bases are the detailed study on ‘Poetics’ by David Daiche, and also a Malayalam translation in “Wiswa Maha Grandhangal”, by Punalur Balan. Since the translations in the first two works seem almost alike, I try to quote and refer mostly from the first one.

VI. 1. B. 1. ii. Aristotelian guidelines in ‘Poetics’

In his ‘Poetics’, Aristotle considers poetry as an art of representation that uses language as its medium in a metrical manner. Among the many, he speaks of mainly three kinds of poetry; Epic, Tragedy and Comedy. Aristotle defines tragedy as follows; “Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude. Aristotle enlists six constituents of a tragic poetry; plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song. And according to him, Epic poetry possesses all the constituents of a ‘tragedy’ except the last two, spectacle and song. They differ, however, in that, epic keeps to a single metre and it is in narrative form. Another point of difference is their length: tragedy tries as far as possible to keep within a single revolution of the sun whereas the epic observes no limit in its time of action. And so, here, the constituents of tragic and epic poetries are treated together.

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1537 = World Classics
1538 Balan Punalur, *Wiswa Maha Grandhangal* (World Classics), Kerala, State Institute of Languages.
1540 Ibid, 36-37.
1541 Ibid., 38.
1542 Ibid., 39.
1543 Ibid., 66.
1544 Ibid., 38.
VI. 1. B. 1. iii. Application of the principles of “Poetics” in the mimre of Mar Jacob

Satisfying Aristotelian theories on tragedy as well as on epic, Mar Jacob takes a very serious topic to represent an action that is ever worth serious of our attention – the creation of Adam, his fall, the intervention of divine mercy to raise him up and his final resuscitation. It is not the story of one person, Adam, but it is the story of the whole human race, because he is the head of the race. As per the Aristotelian norms for an epic, the mimre is complete in itself: it gives an entire picture of the mankind from the creation of man till his final resuscitation. Regarding the requirement of length for an epic, the Four Mimre together has sufficient length that is required to satisfy Aristotelian gouge: altogether it has two thousand, one hundred and fifty verses and approximately fifteen thousand words. The events in an Epic have no time limit in comparison with the time frame of a revolution of the sun for ‘tragedy’. We see that, since the mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ deals with the entire history of man; there is no specific timeframe for the events that are narrated in it.

Mar Jacob seems to be very much delighted in this scope of poetry. He gives the feeling that while discussing the main theme, he was interested in inserting different plots within the mimre that suit the situations and the topics. The best example is the inclusion of the story of Blessed Virgin Mary while he was narrating the meeting between Eve and Satan (FMC III 437 ff.). Mar Jacob sequentially puts the incidents in his mimre: the making of the image in the likeness of God in the first mimre, description of the superior quality of this image, its possession of soul and the freedom of choice etc. in the second, and narrations on the misuse of freedom, commission of sin, fall, trial, verdict, execution of punishment etc. in the third and the resuscitation and the final victory of the image in the fourth. Thus the first impression that we

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1545 See above in this section.
1546 About this attribution on Adam, see the section, “Anthropological concepts in the Mimre”, p. 379.
1547 The norms are discussed above in this section.
1548 These requirements are discussed above in this section.
1549 See the details above in this section.
get from the mimre is that Mar Jacob might had composed the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ on
the guidelines of Aristotle in the ‘Poetics’.

VI. 1. B. 1. iv. The Aristotelian concepts of ‘Thought’ and ‘Diction’

Aristotelian ‘thought’ includes all the effects that have to be produced by means of
language; among these are proof and refutation, the awakening of emotions such as pity, fear,
anger etc. and also exaggeration and depreciation.1550 We see that they are cleverly utilised in
the mimre of Mar Jacob.

Thought, according to Aristotle, is what characters say when they are expressing an
opinion; some general opinion is being expressed.1551 And diction is the arrangement of verses
in its expressive forms. In the systematic arrangement of incidents in a plot, there must be a
beginning, middle and an end.1552 Here, we see Mar Jacob, as some one who is very particular
in maintaining the ‘Diction’ that was proposed by Aristotle, applies it in his mimre without
loosing the least of its essence. He connects each verse of all the mimre very logically and
systematically in its highest possible expressive forms. If we borrow the expression of the poet
which he had used in another context, the diction of the mimre can be seen like this,

“On the thread of the soul, in the form of a necklace of pearls” (FMC IV 101).

The poet evaluates his own creation,

“My word is set in order simply and without any dispute;
because, through the findings it was sharpened noncontroversial.
I plaited a crown with simple words, in all my explanations” (FMC II 239-241).

He was also very fanatical in combining each plot of the mimre in the manner of natural and
perfect fixations of petals in a beautiful flower. It is clear from the poet’s own comments; when
he feels that he moves a little away from the main topic, he pauses a while, mentions of its later

1550 Dorsh, OP. cit. 58.
1551 Ibid., 40.
1552 Ibid., 39-42.
description and then comes back to the main stream (FMC III 157-164). Mar Jacob keeps the pattern also suggested by Aristotle: a beginning, middle and an end. In the first and the second mimre we see the beginning; the narration on the creation as well as the properties of the image. Then, the misuse of man’s freedom, revolt against God, commission of sin, consequential calamitous fall, the trial, the verdict and the expulsion from the Paradise are narrated in the third mimre as the middle and finally, the resuscitation as well as the final victory are the end of the mimre.

VI. 1. B. 1. v. Reversal and discovery theory of Aristotle

Aristotle speaks of four kinds of tragedy: i) complex tragedy, entirely based on reversal discovery theory, ii) tragedy of suffering, iii) tragedy of character, iv) spectacular tragedy. He speaks also of simple and complex plots in a tragedy, of which the complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by a discovery or a reversal or both and that is followed by a calamity. According to him a reversal is a change from one state of affairs to its opposite, a discovery is a change from ignorance to knowledge and calamity is an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as death openly represented, excessive suffering, wounding etc.

VI. 1. B. 1. v. a. The reversal: A close look at the mimre of Mar Jacob on creation will make us understand for sure that he was skilfully setting his piece of art within the frame work of a complex tragedy entirely based on reversal-discovery theory and was employing requisites of a complex plot with all its constituent elements such as reversal, discovery and calamity as suggested by Aristotle. One may also find elements of tragedy of suffering as well as tragedy of character in them as he moves on through the scenes of the expulsion of Adam and Eve.

1553 Ibid., 56.
1554 Ibid., 45.
1555 Ibid., 45-46.
from the Paradise, the destructive fall of them etc. Changes take place in his mimre due to both reversal and discovery and they take the events to a calamity.

At the beginning, Mar Jacob meticulously describes the greatness of the image of man. He also narrates the exalted position Adam and Eve enjoyed in their original status. The entire second mimre is the description on the magnificence of the image on the basis of its freedom of choice. Afterwards, we see in the mimre, the application of the reversal theory of Aristotle; an overturn from one state of being into its opposite. There is a detailed narration of an unfortunate fall from this highest position and then of the misfortune that happened in their life due to their sin (FMC III 317 ff.). The richest ones became beggars (FMC III 635 ff.), the powerful ones became fearful (FMC III 633 ff.), and the glorified ones became shameful (FMC III 602 ff.), and the lords became fugitives (FMC III 1062).

VI. 1. B. 1. v. b. The discovery: In Mar Jacob’s mimre ‘On Creation’, we see the discovery factor also. The Aristotelian concept of discovery is a change from ignorance to knowledge. He confirms that the discovery by means of a visible sign is the best among other possibilities. Here, in the mimre, the discovery is by means of a visible sign. The sole mark of identity for the discovery of Adam is his image of God. This image of God relates him with the Triune God and with other creatures. The behaviour of Adam and Eve are evaluated and judged on this image and the maltreatment of this identity becomes the basis of their calamity.

1556 The greatness of the image is discussed in the section, “Image and Likeness of God in man”, p. 271 ff.
1557 This topic is discussed in the section, “Anthropological concepts in the Mimre”, p. 364 ff.
1558 See the segment, “Freedom and Freewill of Man”, p. 305 ff.
1559 For details on the catastrophic effects of sin, see the section, “Sin as the Soteriological Causality”, p. 539 ff.
1560 See above in this section.
1562 This topic is discussed in detail in the segments “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
Adam and Eve were not fully conscious of their origin and of the value of their image as the poet himself says,

"Until then Adam did not know which his origin was and He was revealing him that his clod is assumed from the earth" (III 951-952).

We see a process of discovery - a transition from this ignorance to an attempt of making them conscious of their nature - in the explanations of the poet on the punishment given to Adam (III 921 ff) as well as on the saying,

"You are dust and through death you will return to dust" (III 953 ff).

Besides these, the poet opines that God’s own image in man is the only magnetic power that attracted God so as to descend towards the dust, seek him, discover him and save him. Thus, as a means of transition from the ignorance on the integrity of the image towards a greater revelation of the image’s magnanimity, the image of God in man becomes the discovery factor in the mimre (FMC I 31 ff.).

Aristotle suggests that this reversal and discovery must lead the story to a calamity. And according to him, this calamity is an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as, death openly represented, excessive suffering, wounding etc. Now, it is visible in the mimre how the application of reversal-discovery theory has helped the poet to lead the story towards the natural evolving of the calamity. Because, we see after a long trial, in addition to other verdicts, Eve and Adam were sentenced for the expulsion from the Paradise (FMC III 888 ff.). Here, Mar Jacob carefully and openly conveys the excessive suffering and pain that was experienced by Adam and Eve at the punishment they received from God and at their expulsion from their residence (FMC III 889 ff.). In the fourth mimre, while the poet gives more explanations to this calamity, he intensifies the suffering describing the calamity as death and picturing its worst forms (FMC IV 67 ff.).

1563 This characteristic of God is discussed in the section, “God’s Mercy as the Catalytic Code”, p. 431 ff.
VI. 1. B. 1. vi. **Fear and pity theory of Aristotle**

Aristotle, while describing the pity and fear theory, warns that neither the misfortune of a good man nor the prosperity of an evil one should be shown at the very outset of a poem, nor the falling of an utterly worthless man, because they would create neither pity nor fear among the audience but only disgust. According to him what creates pity in us is an undeserved misfortune to some noble men and what makes fear in us is the identification of ourselves with the inflicted. Along with that, the character’s fall into misery should not be due to vice and depravity, but rather due to some error and this man should have been a member of a reputed family and enjoying prosperity at a high standard.\textsuperscript{1565} It is very clear that Mar Jacob, being convinced of the advantages of applying this fear and pity theory of Aristotle for establishing comprehensively what he wanted to tell the public, has excellently adopted it in his mimre. He is cautious to avoid reciting the misfortune of his characters at the very beginning of the mimre, except a few sporadic allusions (eg: *FMC* I 207 ff.). In its place, we see that he was trying to disclose the greatness and prosperity of the image in the first two mimre and only towards the latter part of the third mimre there are more details on the reasons that led the story towards a tragedy and only at its end we find a total disaster.

As part of satisfying Aristotelian precept on the membership of the hero in a highly reputed family in order to create pity at his misfortune in the minds of the audience, Mar Jacob has to select none other than Adam, the royal as well as divine descendant.\textsuperscript{1566} According to the poet,

\begin{quote}
*The Creator wished that Adam should become great like God* (FMC I 203, 205, IV 120 etc.)
\end{quote}

and thus he exclaims,

\textsuperscript{1565} Ibid., 48-49.
\textsuperscript{1566} See the greatness of Adam under ‘Radiances of Adam’ in the section “Anthropological Concepts in the Mimre”, p. 373 ff.
“This is great that he is powerful like God 
he will lead death and life which are placed in him” (FMC II 289-290).

He was elevated to the post of god of flesh for the creatures (FMC IV 3, I 60, IV 62, 139-140 etc.) and was having eternal life like God (FMC II 271). Like the only begotten Son, Adam was also a child of God (FMC III 726, I 124, III 1016, IV 173 etc.) and

“The anointed one of God was Adam until he sinned” (FMC I 283), so that, “The creatures shall see the image of the Lord in Adam and it should fear him and be obedient to him, for, indeed he is its lord” (FMC I 269-270, 274 etc.).

Thus, through exposing in detail the greatness of Adam, Mar Jacob was fulfilling Aristotelian guidance of the worthiness of the hero at whose misfortune pity may be created in the poetry as well as in the mind of the readers.

Mar Jacob’s narration of the tragic story of Adam and Eve is planned to breed in the minds of the readers not pity alone, but it aims at generating fear also. As Aristotle says, the reason behind this fear is the identification between the reader and the afflicted one, Mar Jacob produces this sentiment of fear within us confirming our identity with the afflicted one, as the children of Adam and he as the head of our family (FMC II 201 ff.). And the poet intensifies this mood of fear by describing in detail the terrible defeat and dishonour Adam and Eve faced (FMC III 571 ff.), severe pain of the verdict as well as of the expulsion from the garden (III 888 ff) and disgraceful shattering as well as the destruction of the image (FMC I 207 ff., 164, IV 91 ff.). There, the poet gives warnings against our passion for worldly affairs (FMC IV 363 ff.), and exhortations for repentance and renewal (FMC IV 375 ff). Who can be at peace at the hearing of the sharp Judgement and warning:

“Go away, you accursed, to Gehanna, that is prepared for the devil and all of his powers”!
Through the sharpness of His judgment we should learn now, that, one should neither to seduce nor to fall in error” (FMC III 51-54).

1567 ‘Adam as the Head of the Family’, see “Anthropological Concepts in the Mimre”, p. 401 ff.
VI. 1. B. 1. vii. **The Marvellous Factor**

In order that the fear and pity emotions to be more effective in a poem, Aristotle suggests few more things to be taken care of. For him, fear and pity rise in poetry only when the characters involved are either friends, or both of them are enemies or neither. Thus according to him, when sufferings involve those who are near and dear to one another, we have a situation of the kind to be aimed at.\(^{1568}\)

If we feel sentiments of fear and pity as we go through Mar Jacob’s mimre, the only reason behind it is his application of this Aristotelian principle in it. These responses arise in the mimre mainly due to two reasons: the fall of Adam becomes pitiable and fearful primarily because of his affinity with God; he is the image of God.\(^{1569}\) And so, a parting from this intimacy due to the sin and the consequent disastrous fall create fear as well as pity. Aristotle’s second criteria of the marvellous factor for the normal rising of fear and pity, enmity between the characters, is also found fulfilled in the mimre of Mar Jacob. Here, the reason behind the emergence of the sentiments is the contact of Eve with Satan through the serpent (*FMC* III 333 ff.), who, in addition to his enmity with God (*FMC* III 57-58), is always envious and hostile towards the image of God (*FMC* I 207, III 181 ff.) and who is waiting for a least chance to make the image fall (*FMC* III 185 ff.).

No further tragedy could be created on Aristotelian ground on any topic other than this, because, no other intensive proximity could be narrated more than that existed between God and Adam, and no other crueller resentment could be described more than between God along with His image and Satan. Thus, through both the lines of Aristotle, the line of friendship and the line of enmity, pity and fear were created in the mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’.

\(^{1569}\) See the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
VI. 1. B. 1. viii. Formation of the Characters

When the poet selected Adam and Eve as the chief characters in his mimre, he was fulfilling yet another requirement of poetry proposed by Aristotle: characters’ worthiness to obtain audience’s sympathy. Aristotle invites the attention of the poets into four things to be considered in the formation of characters in poetry: i) they should be good, ii) they must be appropriate, iii) they should be lifelike and iv) they should be consistent. Adam, is naturally the greatest living being very next to God, because, he is the image of God, first fruit of the humanity, lord over creatures, possessor of all riches etc. and Eve also possessed same measure of greatness as the spouse of Adam. And quite often the poet mentions, with the intention of producing emotions of pity among the audience, an appalling fall of noble Adam and Eve from their highest position (FMC IV 1-2, 53 ff., 111 ff.).

Mar Jacob is seen very particular in maintaining propriety in the mimre and thus he was satisfying the second requirement, appropriateness in the formation of characters. For Aristotle, it is not appropriate to give manliness or cleverness to a female character. It is clear that Mar Jacob had certainly followed this idea while he formed his characters, especially Eve. One of the major defects of Eve, as the poet finds, is the improper attempt of Eve to overcome Adam

Other guidelines given by Aristotle were also followed in the mimre by Mar Jacob. The poet was also particular in presenting his characters lifelike, because, they resemble ordinary man and woman and all the situation-narrations in the mimre are matching to the daily life of a common man. Consistency of the characters is also found being kept through out the

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1570 See above in this section.
1572 See the section, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
1574 This phase of Eve is discussed in detail in the section, “Anthropological Concepts in the Mimre”, p. 393 ff.
1575 On this requirement, see above in this section.
mimre. Thus he assured the perfect implementation of all the precepts suggested by Aristotle which are to be considered in the formation of characters.

No eyewitness is there or there is no direct allusions in the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ to vindicate the fact that Mar Jacob had in mind the Aristotelian guidelines at the composition of the mimre, but the mimre themselves give sufficient evidences to defend the utilization of those principles given in the ‘Poetics’ in the formation of the mimre. The aforementioned supports for proving the Hellenic influence on Mar Jacob also assist the argument for the employment of the ‘Poetics’ by Mar Jacob.

Conclusion

The style of Mar Jacob is very eloquent, his imagery is very colourful, his expression is flowery and his talent for comparison is patently conspicuous. And when we say that there was Hellenic influence on Mar Jacob it is not to be considered as something negative on his calibre, but it is to be treated as a positive aspect of his wider perspective, because, it only elevated his greatness, enriched his poetry and supplemented to the growth of the language. If the foundation of a language is strong and unchallengeable whatever is added to it in the course of time will only help to build up the mansion of the language. The attempts of Mar Jacob to adopt certain techniques into his mother-tongue only helped to enhance the classiness of Aramaic. The Four Mimre of Mar Jacob remains so stylish, elegant, rich and perfect, also by the reason of his close association with the Hellenic culture. Hence I consider this association of the poet with the Hellenic culture very positively.

And it is with this aim, I have enlisted the evidences for the possibilities of close contact between the Hellenic and Aramaic cultures. With the support of the opinions of the scholars I could establish that there had been a strong association between both the cultures and
to a greater extent Aramaic had been for a long time the bridge language between Greek and Arabic worlds. Since this association between the Hellenic and Aramaic worlds grew stronger during the life time of Mar Jacob of Sarug, it was a suitable opportunity for him also to have a good and dynamic involvement in the process, to have acquaintance with the great works of the Greek wisdom as well as to employ those worthy materials from them into his own works.

It is visible in the mimre how the Aristotelian techniques like art of reasoning, logic, inductive and deductive methods, golden mean etc. are well employed in the mimre and how, they, in turn, added to the beauty, impressiveness, perfection and acceptance of the mimre. Following Aristotle, Mar Jacob also conceives man as a vessel of reason. But, apart from Aristotle, he attributes to God the creator, the authorship, ownership and parenthood of all the properties and qualities in man. Again, even though Mar Jacob doesn’t mention the names of those who oppose his arguments, from his verses it is clear that he puts forward arguments against those opponents (FMC II 77 ff, 99 ff, 237 ff.). In the same way, it is true that he doesn’t mention the name of Aristotle in his mimre, but he contradicts in his mimre the conclusion of Aristotle about the destiny of man as ‘man is mortal’ and affirms that ‘man is mortal as well as immortal’. This is a very strong evidence for Mar Jacob’s definite and explicit relationship with Aristotle.

It is also to be ascertained that Mar Jacob had employed the ‘Poetics’ of Aristotle in the formation of The Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ and even though we do not find the verbatim adoption of the Aristotelian precepts in the mimre of Mar Jacob, it is quite sure that the poet had them in his mind while he was compiling the mimre. Because, being an erudite literary man, especially an inspired, refined, imaginative and creative poet, Mar Jacob might have more interested in acquiring information which are related to his field from the guidelines proposed by Aristotle in ‘Poetics’ for creating a classical poem, than dealing with his philosophical or
scientific theories, although he doesn’t overlook them. Besides that, up to his period, since other standard criteria for the formation of literary artworks was not available either in his mother tongue or in other common languages, there were all possibilities for Mar Jacob to embrace the guidelines of Aristotle in ‘Poetics’. Moreover, there are clear indications for the applications of those literary theories of Aristotle in Mar Jacob’s Four Mimre ‘On Creation’. An analysis of the application of the Aristotelian guidelines in the mimre helps us to discern how brilliant and admirable the poet is and how coherent and attractive his mimre is!

Since the Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ satisfies all the requirements of an epic poem proposed by Aristotle in his ‘Poetics’ – considerable length of the mimre, narrative representation of many incidents that are relevant, concepts on thought and diction, fear and pity theory, reversal, discovery and marvellous factors, variety of interests and diversity in its episodes, the application of the hexameter, which Aristotle suggests as the best metre for the creation of epic – the mimre has proper inclination to be called an epic.

It is surprising to notice that even according to the modern criteria also, which are more applicable to the poems of the modern languages, especially of English – the mimre is eligible to be labelled an epic.

Birjadish Prasad, a professor in English, on the basis of great epics, gives the list of five essential features as well as requirements of an epic. They are;

i) The theme of the Epic is stated in the first few lines, accompanied by a prayer to the Muse. The statement of the theme is technically called the ‘preposition’ and the prayer, the ‘invocation’. We see the fulfilment of this requirement of an epic in the Mimre of Mar Jacob and we see him fulfilling this criterion by invoking the divine assistance not only at first of the entire episode, but he does it at the beginning of the first three mimre (FMC I 1-50, II 1-38 and

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1577 Prasad, Background to the study of English Literature, 29 ff.
III 1-20). And we see the ‘preposition’ also at the outset of all the first three mimre: in the first mimre it is,

“The Father, when He created, said, “Let us make man in the Image” (FMC I 29),

in the second it is,

“Oh, hearers, this is the subject of the discourse, ‘Of what is the creation of Adam at the beginning?” (FMC II 37-38)

and in the third the subject is,

“Now, therefore, I have to say more or less on the spoiler who revolted and transgressed the commandment” (FMC III 19-20).

ii) The Epic employs certain conventional poetic devices such as the Homeric Epithet—a term or phrase, some times quite lengthy, applied again and again to a particular person, place or thing. In the Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’, this epithet is ‘the uniqueness and the comeliness of the image of man, its destruction and its revival’ and very often the poet refers this and, in a way, it is the central theme of the mimre.

iii) The action of the Epic is often controlled by supernatural agents. Mar Jacob seems to be more enthusiastic in this regard than any other poet and goes a step ahead and narrates the sovereignty of God’s mercy throughout the entire mimre, and he invokes for the same.

d) The Epic contains a number of thrilling ‘episodes’, such as the mustering of troops, battles, duels, wanderings, ordeals and the like. Even though not many descriptions on war could be found in the mimre, a few allusions can be seen such as contest between Adam and Satan (FMC III 135 ff.), Adam and Eve (FMC III 549 ff.), and an astute pre-planning of Satan for a triumph over Adam and Eve (FMC III 297 ff.) etc.

e) The Epic is divided into books. The whole mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ is divided into four books.

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1578 This topic is discussed in the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 281 ff.
1579 See the section, “Eschatological Perceptions of the Poet”, p. 603 ff.
1580 See the section, “God’s Mercy as the Catalytic Code”, p. 427 ff.
Thus, in this section I tried to establish that the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ of Mar Jacob of Sarug is strongly influenced by the Hellenistic culture as well as the Aristotelian thoughts. I find this not contradictory to the great calibre of the poet but it only added to his excellence. Mar Jacob had composed the mimre almost according to the criteria for an epic proposed by Aristotle in ‘Poetics’ and hence the mimre can be catalogued under the category of an epic.