Chandu Menon

(1778-1837)

Mr. **Chandu Menon** (1778-1837) is the man credited for helping with the translation of the Bible from English to Malayalam. Menon was born in Chunangad village (to a known Hindu family) near Ottapalam town of British Malabar. He lost his mother when he was very young and was brought up by his uncle who taught him martial arts.

After that he moved to Madras and continued his education and became an employee of the Madras Revenue Department. Later, he became a tutor of the Travancore Divan Mannadiyar Raman Menon, after which he became the Tahasildar of Chengannur. Chandu Menon married Parvathiamma of Pulivelil House in Aala, a village near Chengannur Town.

Chandu Menon was an expert in Malayalam, English and Sanskrit. While he was working as the Kottayam Tahasildar, he befriended Rev. Benjamin Baily, missionary of the Church Mission Society (CMS). Rev. Baily was in need of a person like Chandu Menon to help him translate the Bible from English to Malayalam. Moved by Baily's request, Chandu took leave from the Travancore Government Service and joined back after two years, completing the translation work in 1819.

The Bible translation transformed his life and he accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour. On 2 November, 1831, he was baptized in the Anglican Church in Calicut and was given the name Joseph Fenn. Later members of his family were also baptized. Chandu Menon had to resign from his government job as Travancore Rules dictated that "non Hindus were not allowed to hold the post of Tahasildar".

However, he joined the British Government Service and worked as a 'Salt Peshkar' (one who maintains accounts of the State) in Ponnani, Record Keeper in Calicut; and District Munsif in Cochin.

He passed away in 1837 at the age of 57 and was buried in St. Francis Anglican Church, Cochin. The Church in Kerala is indebted to this great man who aided in the translation of the Bible to Malayalam.

(Ref. Malayalam Bible Acts 19:35 "Town Clerk "translated as "Pattana Menavan")