

മാർ യൗസേപ്പ് കീർത്തനം

Thāpasāvaranāya Mār Yousepp

(തൊകയാറ)



Song in praise of St. Joseph | Set to the tune of Thokayara

1 താപസാവരനായ മാർ-
 യൗസേപ്പു പുണ്യമഹാമുനേ
 2 പാപഹര സകലേശ മാത്യു-
 മരിയ നിന്നുടെ ഭാര്യതൻ
 3 കന്നിമുദ്ര കെടാതെ ഗർഭിണി
 യായവിധമറിയിക്കയാൽ
 4 ധന്യനായ നിനക്കുവന്നപ്ര-
 സുതികങ്ങളുമായതിൽ
 5 പിന്നെയുന്നതനായ ഗബ്രിയേൽ
 നിന്നെയനുകൂലനാക്കുവാൻ
 6 വന്നു ദൈവസുതൻ ജനിച്ച-
 വിശേഷവിധമറിയിക്കയാൽ.
 7 അപ്പോഴാശുഭവിച്ച നിന്നുടെ
 മോദവും പുനരോർത്തുമേ-
 8 ചിത്തസംശയമൊക്കെ നീക്കുക.
 താപസാവര പാഹിമാം
 9 ദൂരദർശി വയോധികൻ ശിമ -
 യോൻ തെളിഞ്ഞവിലേശനെ.
 10 ഭാര ഭക്തിമുഴുത്തു കൈ-
 യിലെടുത്തു മാത്യുവോടോതിനാൻ.

11 തദ്ദിശ്ശീ മരിയാ സഹാ-
 മരിയോദരോൽഭവനേ മമ-
 12 അത്തൽ തീർന്നവർ തത്ര വാണതും
 എത്ര എത്ര മനോഹരം.
 13 വത്സകന്നു വയസ്സുപത്തൊടു-
 രണ്ടുമങ്ങു തികഞ്ഞ നാൾ
 14 ഉത്സവത്തിനു ഭാര്യയാ സഹിതം
 മരിയ കുമാരനേ.
 15 കൊണ്ടുപള്ളിയിലങ്ങു ചെന്നു
 തിരിച്ചു പോന്നോരനന്തരം
 16 കണ്ടതില്ലവിലേശനേ-
 അതുകൊണ്ടുപുണ്ടതിവേദവും
 17 നേത്രവൃഷ്ഠിയോടന്വേഷിച്ചു
 ദിനത്രയത്തിൽ ദേവാലയേ
 18 ശാസ്ത്രികർ സഹശാസ്ത്രിയുക്തി-
 വദിച്ചിരുന്നൊരു തന്നുടെ
 19 നേത്രഗോചനേ ലഭിച്ചതും
 ഓർത്തുപോയ ഗുണം മമ
 20 ചേർത്തുവാണു സുഖിപ്പതും തവ
 താപസാവര പാഹിമാം.



The anonymous author of the song presents the text in the form of a prayer addressed to St. Joseph. The forty verses in twenty couplets cover selected events from the infancy narratives in the Gospels according to St. Mathew (Mt 1:18-25) and St. Luke (1:26-38, 2:22-52). When the Bible was not yet available in the Malayalam language, the song served as a means of catechesis.

From a literary point of view, the text may be placed in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The Italian missionaries promoted the devotion to St. Joseph in South India in the eighteenth century. Constanzo Joseph Beschi (Viramamunivar, 1680-1747), an Italian Jesuit who worked in the Tamil speaking area, wrote an epic poem, *Tempavani* ("Honey-sweet Verses"), 3615 verses in honor of St. Joseph.

Varghese put the word "thokayara in parenthesis. The word may be of Tamil origin and is not in current use in Malayalam. The word may mean either the poetic meter or a melody that used to be popular in the previous century. We do not know if the author of the Malayalam text used Tempavani as a source.

There are a few interesting elements in the text. The name of St. Joseph appears in the original Aramaic form, *Yawsep*. The Aramaic prefix, *Mār* ("holy/saint/Lord") is added to Yawsep. Catholics in those days used the Aramaic versions of biblical names. The English version, "Joseph," became popular only in the British era. Even then, the English version was used only in legal documents. Baptismal records show the Aramaic version. For example, my baptismal record shows that I was baptized as Yawsep. And the priest who baptized was Yawsep, too. In contrast, the name of Mary (Mariam in Aramaic) appears three times in the song in the Italian version as *Maria* (see couplets 2, 11, and 14). Jesus is referred to as *Mariyakumaran* ("Mary's son") in couplet 14. Also, the author uses the word *Ulsawam* to refer to the festival at the Temple of Jerusalem (Couplet 14). However, in contemporary Malayalam, Ulsawam refers to Hindu temple festivals and *perunnā!* ("grand day") refers to church feasts. The author uses the term *palli* to refer to the Jerusalem Temple (couplet 14). The proto-Dravidian speakers in Kerala adopted the term Paḷḷi, which is of Pali-Sanskrit origin, to refer to the non-Hindu places of worship. Thus, a Synagogue is Jūdappaḷḷi, a mosque is Muslim paḷḷi, and a church is palli with the name of the patron saint as a prefix. Buddhism had a prominence presence in Kerala in the early Christian era.

We are still in search of a printed version of the song. There are eighteen hymns St. Joseph in the *Syriac Malayalam Hymnal* that Fr. A. Saldanha, S. J. compiled in 1937 (see <http://aramaicproject.com/resources/the-syriac-malayalam-hymnal>). This is song is not in the book. We do not know if there are regional variations to the text. We rely on an autographed, handwritten copy by K. J. Varghese, who owned the Carmel Dress Makers at Carmel Center at Aluva, in 1980. I was a member of the St. Antony's Monastery at that time. The Monastery owned the Carmel Center. Interestingly, in those days, I was dreaming of establishing a liturgical music center on the Monastery campus. I probably initiated a conversation with Mr. Varghese about this song, and he wrote it down from his memory.

We do not know if there are other melodies to this song or regional variations to the melody. The melody presented here is from my childhood recollection from the 1950s. My father used to sing this melody at the end of family prayer in the evening in March. March is devoted to the devotion to St. Joseph.

The musical grammar of the melody is simple. The strophic melody employs only four notes of a major tetrachord. The second verse of the couplet cadences on the second degree of the tetrachord. At the end of thematic units (couplets 8, 12, and 20), the melody cadences on the first degree (tonic). The melody employs a 7/8 (3 + 4 = 7) rhythmic cycle in medium tempo. This rhythmic cycle is popular in South Indian music.

Joseph J. Palackal, CMI
New York
19 May 2021

In 1974, I was residing at St. Antony's Monastery at Aluva. The Carmel shopping Center belongs to the Monstery. Varghese owned the shop, Carmel Dress Makers. He used to visit the monastery chapel almost every day. That is how we first met and then became friends.

Joseph J. Palackal, CMI
New York
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See more information at “മാർ യൗസേപ്പ് കീർത്തനം Thāpasāvaranāya Mār Yousepp”
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