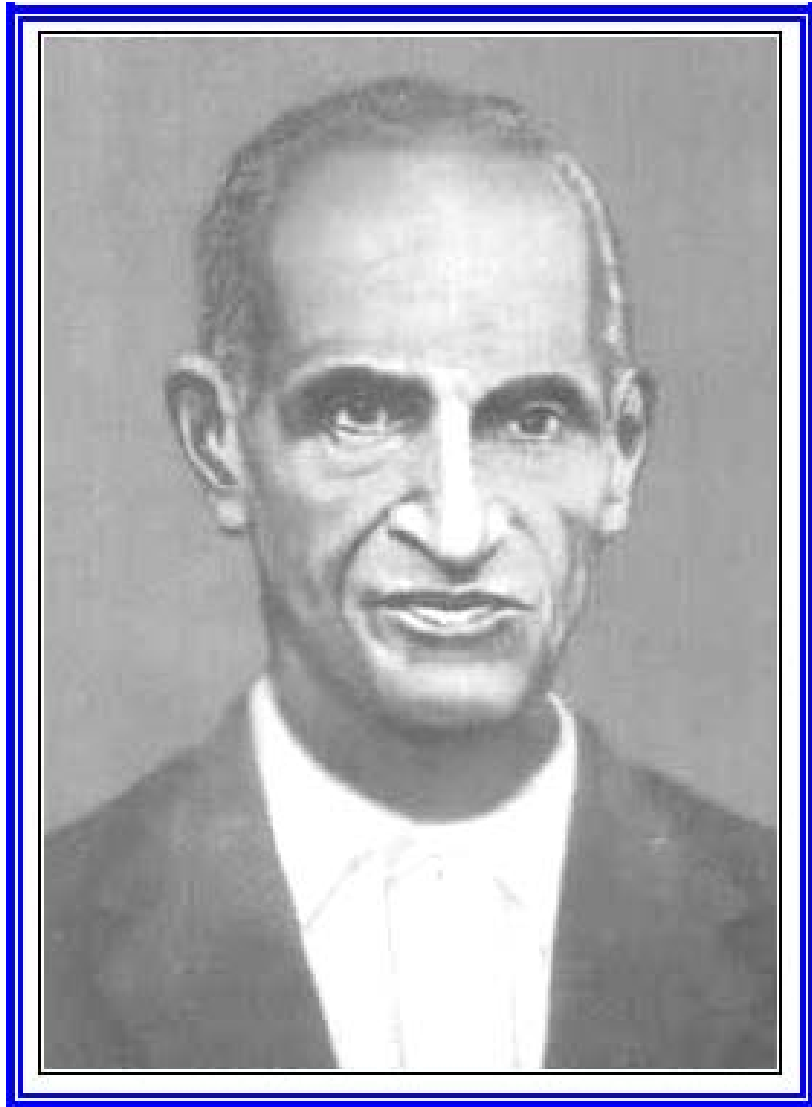


Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi



1868 – 1947

The Biography of
Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi
25 November, 1868 to 14 July, 1947

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Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi

"Elijah was a man just like us, he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops." James 5:17

This the life story of an ordinary man - Mammen Upadeshi who trusted in the Lord like the Old Testament Prophet Elijah and lived like Elijah, spoke the messages of the Lord like Elijah, fought against evil forces like Elijah and even performed miracles like Elijah.

Birth

Maramon Mar Thoma Parish (Est. on 28th August, 1440) is known as the cradle of the Reformation movement in the Malankara Church. Abraham Malpan of the Palakunnathu family was the leader of the reformation. Mammen Upadeshi was born in the Vadasseri house of the Punchamannil family on November 25, 1868, as the son of Mathai and Achiyamma. Upadeshi's mother was from Kallarakunnel family, a branch of the famous Malayil family of Punnakkad near the Aranmula Temple. Mammen's elder siblings all died while they were still infants. So Mammen was baptized at home when he was very young by the Parish Priest Rev. Titus (Later Rt. Rev. Titus I Mar Thoma).

Childhood and Education

At the age of 7, Mammen was sent to the elementary school near his house. But he was not at all a bright student. Even after studying for three years he could not master the art of reading and writing. Even his parents tried their best but it was of no use. He decided to quit school. But God gave him the ability to read and memorize the Bible without any problem. This greatly surprised his parents, teachers and friends.

At the age of 12, Mammen lost his father. It was a great blow for him. He found consolation through his strong faith in God and he was sure that his father was in heaven. Within a year he lost his mother too. So at the young age of 13, all the family burdens came on to his shoulders. Till the age of 20, he did agriculture which was the only source of income to their family. The next two years he tried his luck in Business. But at the age of 22, he realized that God had a special plan for him, other than that of a farmer or merchant.

Maramon Convention and Mammen Upadeshi

The first Maramon Convention was held in 1895 (March 9-18) on the banks of the River Pumba near the famous Aranmula Temple. Rev. T. Walker, one of the Church Missionary Society missionaries from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, was the main speaker for the convention from 1899 - 1912. Mammen was attracted by the spirit filled messages of Rev. Walker. During one of the convention meetings, while Rev.

T. Walker was speaking, Mammen walked close to the stage, kneeled down and prayed to God that the Holy Spirit that was guiding Rev. T. Walker would guide him too. During his prayer Mammen felt the power of the spirit in his body.

Dedication

In 1898, there was an epidemic of small pox in Travancore. It was a deadly disease that killed thousands. There was no proper medical aid or cure for this disease. Mammen was infected with severe small pox and his condition worsened till he reached the verge of death. All his friends deserted him. As he prayed for recovery, he heard a voice say to him, "My grace is sufficient for you". He rededicated himself for God's work as a full time missionary and at once he was cured from small pox.

Divine Vision

At the age of 34, he had a vision like Prophet Samuel in the Old Testament. While Mammen was asleep at about 3 in the morning he heard someone calling him by his name three times. He did not respond thinking it was a dream. But then he heard a voice telling him, "I have selected you for my work as an evangelist". This time Mammen replied, "Here I am, Please send me". He had few more visions that night. Early next morning he got up and prayed and felt the power of the Holy Spirit.

For the next 45 years, God used him as his messenger like Prophet Elijah and John the Baptist. He started his preaching ministry in his own village and nearby villages. People were amazed that a man without any formal education or theological background could speak with such authority and power.

Marriage and Family Life

At the age of 30, Mammen married Annamma from the Padagonathu family of Edayarnmula. Annamma was a God fearing woman and they had a blessed family life. God gave them 2 sons and 6 daughters. They brought them up in strict Christian disciple.

First Convention Tiruvalla - Kizhakkenmuthoor

Mammen Upadeshi started his convention meetings in 1900. The first meeting was held in a place called Kizhakkenmuthoor near Tiruvalla. His messages were simple and penetrated the hearts of his audience. All who heard the message felt the need for repentance and a change of lifestyle. Many came forward and confessed their sins and accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour. Those who were addicted to alcoholism and smoking etc. put an end to their evil ways of life. People apologized to each other for the wrong they did and began to enjoy the fruits of spiritual life.

Authorization to speak in other Churches,

Even though Mammen Upadeshi was a member of the Mar Thoma Church, authorities from different churches opened their doors for him without any hesitation. Authorization letters were given to him by the Leaders of CMS, LMS, Mar Thoma and Jacobite churches, allowing him to speak in all of their churches. They sincerely supported him in his evangelical work. His messages were acceptable to all denominations, groups and sects of Christians. The messages also appealed across religions to large numbers of Non-Christians, who used to attend his conventions faithfully.

Man with out any formal education- Leader of Revival movement.

Revivalism is a special approach to religion or one's faith that gives importance to individual religious experience rather than the main doctrines. It is always associated with fervent emotional singing, preaching, confessing, dancing etc. We had experienced many revival movements in our Mar Thoma Church. Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu state was the birth place of revival movements in South

India. It started in 1860, by CMS Missionaries and came to Travancore through an unknown preacher called Mathai Upadeshi and carried on by Viduwan Kutty Achen (Justus Joseph). In 1864, Mathews Mar Athanasius Metropolitan allowed Ammal, the daughter of a famous Tamil convert, Vedanayaka Sastri, to visit the churches and inspire the people through her Christian Songs. In 1873, Viduwan Kutty Achen became the leader of this movement. In 1894, Tamil preachers David and Wordsworth took over the leadership of revivalism. The Maramon convention started in 1895. Later the spirit of revivalism was continued by blessed leaders like CMS missionary Rev. Thomas Walker from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi and Muthampackal Kochoonju Upadeshi.

According to Abraham Mar Thoma "The revival movement in Kerala owed much to the evangelistic zeal of laymen. In the early days of the Maramon Convention, two friends from Tamil Nadu, David and Wordsworth helped with forceful gospel messages. Sadhu Kochoonju Upadeshi and Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi kept the fire burning for many decades, helping thousands to continue in spiritual joy and sacrificial living." (*The Mar Thoma Church - Heritage and Mission- Alexander Mar Thoma*)

Meetings in many places

Mammen Upadeshi was an acceptable preacher in all denominations of the Church. Thus he could conduct convention meetings in almost all parishes. In many places, Union Conventions (meetings co-coordinated by all denominations) were arranged for his messages. He even went to the Kingdom of Cochin (Travancore and Cochin were two different kingdoms ruled by separate kings before Independence) and to Madras to conduct conventions. Thousands were led to Jesus through his messages.

Here is a report about one of his meetings held in Anamala in Pullad "Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi conducted Gospel conventions at Anamala School. Each meeting went up to four to five hours. The Anamala prayer group had been divided into two rival groups and Upadeshi challenged the people to reconcile during his message. The two groups reconciled and shed tears of repentance. It was a wonderful experience to all those who attended it." (*"Half a century in Karnataka" by Rev. P. V. Philip, Hoskote*).

Mammen Upadeshi and Kochoonju Upadeshi

Kochoonju Upadeshi was greatly influenced by the messages of Mammen Upadeshi. When he was a youth, Kochoonju Upadeshi used to attend the convention meetings held by Mammen Upadeshi. In many places they jointly gave leadership for the revival movement.

Main Topics of the Messages

The main topics of Mammen Upadeshi's messages were:

- 1 Romans 1: 16-17: "The person who is put right with God through faith shall live."
- 2 Ephesians 2: 8: "For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith"

Mammen Upadeshi was a strong supporter of the reformation movement in the Mar Thoma Church. His messages helped the Church put a strong foundation based on the Bible and its teachings. His convention meetings provided an opportunity for the supporters of the reformation to meet together and share their experiences. In many areas, prayer groups and Bible study classes were started. Worship patterns were changed according to the light received through the study of the Word of God. More emphasis was given to the worship services and sacraments based on the Word of God. Mammen Upadeshi drew his inspiration from great reformation leaders like Martin Luther, Abraham Malpan and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan.

Crusade against Social Evils: Smoking, Drinking, etc.

Mammen Upadeshi fought against the social evils of the society. Alcoholism, smoking, paan eating, tobacco, etc. were some of the evils of the time. Toddy shops, paan shops, were common in almost all places. Upadeshi through his simple messages taught the common man about the bad effects of alcohol and smoking. Upadeshi's messages were based on the Bible verse *"From now on, then, you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God's will and not by human desires. You have spent enough time in the past doing what the heathen like to do, your lives were spent in indecency, lust, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties and the disgusting worship of idols"* 1 Peter 4: 2-3.

A Life based on Prayer and Faith

Upadeshi was a man of prayer and faith. He firmly believed in the following Bible verses - *"Is anyone among you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? He should sing praises. Is there anyone who is ill? He should send for the church elders, who will pray for him and rub olive oil on him in the name of the Lord. This prayer made in faith will heal the sick person; and the Lord will restore him to health and the sins he has committed will be forgiven."* James 5 13-15. Many sick people were healed through Upadeshi's prayers. He used to spend hours in Bible study and prayer.

Thorough Knowledge about the Bible

Even though he had no formal education, he was well versed in the Bible. His memory was amazing. He could recite many passages from his memory. He was a walking encyclopedia of the Bible. Upadeshi was known for his ability to give apt and instant references for any situation.

Upadeshi changes his residence

At the age of 22, Upadeshi shifted his residence from the Vadasseery house to the Punchamannil House in Maramon and in 1905, at the age of 37; Upadeshi shifted his residence from Maramon to Vattakottal a place very near to Eraviperoor. The Kalamannil family of Rev. K. E. Oommen and our present Metropolitan Chrysostom are his neighbors. For the rest of his life he was a member of the Eraviperoor Immanuel Mar Thoma Church.

Upadeshi and his Friends

Mammen Upadeshi had a great circle of friends from all walks of life. Titus II Mar Thoma and Vicar Gen. Ipe Thoma Kathanar were his close friends. Dr. Mathews Mar Athanasius Episcopa greatly appreciated the Upadeshi, and they used to spend time in prayer and Bible study together. In his childhood, Bishop C. K. Jacob of CSI church was cured from typhoid through the prayers of Mammen Upadeshi. They both were life long friends. Pastor K. E.

Abraham the founder of the Indian Pentecostal Church was also a close friend of Upadeshi. Upadeshi used to entertain many Hindu leaders and saints in his house and used to have religious dialogues with them.

Miraculous escape from the boat 'Redeemer'

On 16 January, 1924, Mammen Upadeshi was on a mission tour. He wanted to go to Alleppey from Quilon by boat (there was no bus service that time). Upadeshi took a ticket and went to the nearby hotel to have a cup of tea, thinking that there is some more time left for the departure of the boat (the name of the boat was Redeemer). But suddenly the departure bell rang and Upadeshi had to run to the boat. When he jumped onto the boat, he realized he left his umbrella at the tea shop. He requested the boat to wait while he went to get it. But the boat left without waiting for Upadeshi. They ignored his requests to stop the boat.

The same night, on its way to Alleppey, near Thottappally in a river called Pallanayar, the boat sank with all the passengers. The famous Malayalam Poet, Kumaran Ashan also died in this accident. No one knows the exact reason for this tragedy till date. There were no survivors and Upadeshi was safe by God's grace.

Mammen Upadeshi and Prophet Elijah

Mammen Upadeshi was always compared with Prophet Elijah of the Old Testament. Elijah was the most famous and dramatic of Israel's prophets. Elijah predicted the beginning and end of a three year drought. Elijah was used by God to restore a dead child to his mother. Elijah also represented God in a showdown with the priests of Baal and Asherah.

God worked overwhelming miracles through Mammen Upadesi

His Miracles

Upadesi went to Madras for a convention with translator C. P. Thomas of Ayroor, Cherukara who did the translation from Malayalam to English. During one of the meetings Upadeshi started speaking in English for about half an hour in front of the learned Tamilian audience. Then he went to see a ship in the Madras Port. There too he spoke in English to an English Lady on the ship. It was a real wonder for all his friends who knew about his lack of formal education.

There are many reported cases where people got cured through the prayers of Upadeshi. People all over had a divine respect for him especially people who came to hear him.

In another occasion, while a convention meeting was going on, some youths came to disturb the meeting. Upadeshi warned them to be quiet twice. But they didn't listen. The third time Upadeshi scolded them; all of a sudden a serpent came out of the crowd to the stage and started dancing with an open hood. All were amazed with this incident, and the serpent disappeared on Upadeshi's command.

In another meeting, few youths were sitting outside the pandal under a coconut tree without giving importance to the meeting going on inside the pandal. Upadeshi requested them to come inside the pandal. As they walked into the pandal, a pacha madal (green branch of the coconut tree) crashed down on the spot they were sitting. They escaped from any major injury that could have occurred.

Upadeshi used to pray in convention meetings with his eyes open. Once, in a meeting held in Keezhuvaipur, while

he was praying, he noticed one lady combing her hair sitting right in front of the meeting. Upadeshi warned her and next year the lady attended the convention meeting with her head covered with a white cloth (she had lost her hair due to some sickness).

In another incident, while Upadeshi was conducting a convention in Keezhuvaipur, one of the nearby farmers put a fence on a country road to prevent people from using that road to attend the convention meetings. On hearing this Upadeshi was distressed. But on the same night while that farmer was walking near the fence he was bitten by a snake and he was brought before the Upadeshi. Upadeshi said it was too late and that praying wouldn't help, thus the farmer died.

While Mammen Upadeshi was conducting an open air meeting in Ezhumattoor, near Kuriannoor, the local landlord Koithampuran tried to stop the meeting by putting questions to Upadeshi. The landlord wanted the answers to his questions immediately before starting the meeting. Upadeshi agreed to answer all the questions in the night meeting and requested Koithampuran to be the chairman of that meeting. Just before the beginning of the night meeting it began to rain with thunder and lightening. Then Upadeshi lifted his Bible in his hand and prayed and ordered the rain to stop. It rained heavily in all the nearby places except for that meeting place. Koithampuran who witnessed the incident invited Upadeshi to his house and presented him with gifts.

Upadeshi was a good farmer. He used to have many banana plants in his compound. One night a thief stole the fruits of one of his banana plants, while Upadeshi was away from home for a convention meeting. Next day when he came back, his children told him about the theft. Upadeshi just prayed. The thief who took the banana couldn't sleep that night and the next morning he brought it back to the Upadeshi and apologized.

Even today God speaks through ordinary people without any special talents. God has work for us to do even when we feel fear and failure. The real miracle of Mammen Upadeshi's life was his personal relationship with God. And that miracle is available to us also.

Mammen Upadeshi's Children

Upadeshi had 2 sons and 6 daughters. God was faithful to all of them and they all followed the footsteps of their great father. Rev. P. D. Mammen is Upadeshi's grandson, and Rev Daniel Mammen and Adv. Varghese Mammen are his great grandsons.

Final days and Demise

"As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. I have done my part in the race, I have run the full distance and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord the Righteous Judge, will give me on that Day-and not only to me, but to all those who wait with love for Him to appear." 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

This passage of Paul was true in Mammen Upadeshi's life too. In 1947, at the age of 79, while conducting a weekend revival meeting he became sick and returned home to take rest. His intimate relation with his Master revealed to him that the race was going to be over and the end was near. He wanted to receive Holy Communion from Dr. Juhanon Mar Thimotheous Episcopa. Thirumeni was away on Parish visits and could not fulfill this final desire. But before Upadeshi's demise Thirumeni came and anointed him with oil.

Mammen Upadeshi was called home on Thursday, July 14, 1947. Dr. Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan led the burial service which was held in the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church in Eraviperoor. He was laid to rest in a specially prepared tomb in the presence of thousands of people from all walks of life. But his memory lives on in the heart of all who had the privilege to see or hear him.

Main Events during the time of Punchamanni Mammen Upadeshi

1868	25 November	Birth of Mammen Upadeshi
1876		Synod at Mulanthuruthy
1877	15 July	Mathews Mar Athanasius Metropolitan passes away
1877		Thomas Mar Athanasius as Metropolitan
1880	30 October	Birth of Abraham Mar Thoma
1883	29 November	Birth of Sadhu Kochoonju Upadeshi
1888	5 September	Formation of Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association
1890	22 March	Launch of Manorama Newspaper
1892		Salvation Army starts work in Travancore
1893	7 August	Birth of Dr. Youhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan
1893	10 August	Thomas Mar Athanasios Metropolitan passes away
1894	18 January	Consecration Titus I Mar Thoma
1895		Brethren Church starts work in Travancore
1898	9 December	Consecration of Titus II Mar Thoma
1905	25 February	Formation of Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam
1909		First Mission field outside Kerala – Karwar Mission, Karnataka
1909	20 October	Metropolitan Titus I Passes away.
1909	5 December	Consecration of Titus II as Metropolitan
1910		First Mar Thoma Students Conference
1914	28 June	Beginning of First World War
1917	27 January	Kovoorachen – Ipe Thoma Kathanar - passes away
1917	27 December	Consecration of Abraham Mar Thoma
1918		Sadhu Sunder Singh visits Maramon Convention
1919	14 February	Formation of Sevika Sanghom
1919	28 June	First World War ends
1921	June	Establishment of Union Christian College in Alwaye

1923	13 October	Rev. M. C. George (Father of Alexander Mar Thoma) passes away
1923	13 December	Silver Jubilee celebration of Consecration of Titus II
1924	16 January	Mahakavi Kumaran Ashan dies in "Redeemer Boat tragedy"
1924		Formation of Voluntary Evangelistic Association
1925		Beginning of the Malayalam wing of the Christian Literature Society (CLS)
1926		Establishment of Mar Thoma Theological Seminary at Kottayam
1927		Birthday offertory during service introduced by Titus II
1928		Establishment of T. A .M. Press
1929		Wall Street Crash. The beginning of the Great Depression
1930		Medical aid fund for sick clergy - Introduced in the Church by Titus II
1931	19 July	Kottarathil Thomas Kathanar - Co-Founder of Evangelistic Association passes away.
1933		Formation of Yuvajana Sakhayam
1936	27, 28 Dec	Centenary Celebrations of Reformation in Maramon Mar Thoma Church.
1937	30 December	Consecration of Juhannon Mar Thoma and Mathews Mar Athanasious
1939	September	Beginning of Second World War
1940		Beginning of Ankola Mission.-North Karnataka
1944	4 July	Titus II Mar Thoma passes away.
1944		Abraham Mar Thoma becomes Metropolitan
1945	2 September	End of the Second World War
1945	30 November	Sadhu Kochoonju Upadeshi passes away
1947	27 June	Beginning of Hoskote Mission, near Bangalore Karnataka
1947	14 July	Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi passes away.
1947	15 August	Freedom for India
1947	1 September	Abraham Mar Thoma Passes away.

Notes

Upadeshi: Upadeshi in Malayalam literally means 'a person who gives advice'. But in Christian literature, Upadeshi means a gospel preacher or an evangelist.

Elijah: Elijah was a Hebrew prophet of the 800's B.C. His complete story is mentioned in the Bible, in the Books of I and II Kings.

Maramon Convention: A mammoth religious convention of Christians, (started in 1895 by The Mar Thoma Church but attended by people belonging to all communities), is held at Maramon, every year on the vast beds of river Pumba. The convention takes place in February in an atmosphere of devotion and lasts for a period of eight days. Addressed by speakers of international repute and attended by innumerable devotees, this is the largest Christian convention in the world.

Reformation: Reformation is a process of reforming for the better. It can also be an improvement. Reformation in the Syrian Church was started by a priest called Abraham Malpan, (1796-1845) of Maramon.

Rev. Thomas Walker: A CMS Missionary from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. He was the main speaker of the Maramon convention from 1899 to 1912.

Revival: Revival is an awakening or increase of interest in Religion.

Kumaran Ashan: .Kumaran Ashan (1873 – 16 Jan, 1924) was a famous Malayalam Poet.

Note from the Author:

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All for HIS glory.

Your's in Christ,

John Joseph

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