CHAPTER THREE

JOSEPH WEPT

AS ALLEGORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave
nor free, there is neither male nor female " (Gal 3 26)

3.1. Jayakanthan was born in 1934 in Cuddalore. As his father had deserted the family quite early, his mother found it very hard to make a living. So Jayakanthan's formal education ended with the sixth standard and from the early age of ten he started to work for a living. He undertook various jobs like, a railway porter, a horse wagon driver's assistant and the member of a drama company. Later, his uncle got him a job in the Indian Communist Party office in Madras. There he worked as a messenger, receptionist and a compositor for the party Newspaper. He sold books and collected funds for the party. At the age of sixteen he became a full-time Communist Party member. The party appointed two teachers to teach him and supplied him with hundreds of books. There he came in contact with ancient Tamil Literature, Hindu religious scriptures, Indian epics like the Mahabharatha and the Ramayana and Western literature too. He read the works of many eminent writers in Tamil such as Cupramanya Pāraṭiār, Putumaippittān, Rakunātān and Citambara Cupramanyam; in Hindi, Premchand and Krishnan Chandar, Bengali: Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra; from British literature Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Bertrand Russell, D.H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley; French: Emily Zola, Balzac
and Maupassant; Russian: Tolstoy, Chekov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Maxim Gorky and Sholokov. The three most important influences on Jayakantan’s early creative writing career are Putumaippitan, Leo Tolstoy, and Russell.

3.2. Jayakantan’s *Joseph Wept*[^1] (*Yarukaka Alutan* (1962)), is a fictional reconstruction of the Jesus story. While Graves reconstructs a full-life Jesus story, Jayakantan recreates only the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. In this novelette, Joseph the Jesus figure, is a gentle, soft, humble and hard working servant of a middle class hotel with the name ‘Nataraja Vilas High-class Coffee and Tea and Meals Military Hotel’. Rathnavelu Mudaliar, the sole proprietor of this hotel is unhappy with the current trend in his business. While he is pondering over the means to obtain two thousand rupees to rebuild his business, a North-Indian businessman arrives in a drunken state one Monday night. While he is being conducted to the room, his purse falls down. Joseph picks it up and gives it to Mudaliar and the Sait asks Mudaliar to keep it safe and return it to him in the morning as it contains three thousand rupees. But the next morning, being oblivious of what had happened in the previous night, the Sait reports that his purse is missing. The owner takes it as a chance to rescue himself from financial troubles and pretends ignorance. Joseph who has been practising the ideal, ‘don’t see or hear or say evil’ does not reveal the truth. The Sait accuses Joseph as the thief and hurts him through insults and beatings. Joseph suffers it without any resistance until the cook of the hotel, Naidu interferes and threatens to bring the police which forces the owner to put back the

[^1]: All citations from the novel are from Jayakantan *Joseph Wept*. Trans A.A Hakim Madras The Christian Literature Society, 1974. All further references will be cited by page numbers in parentheses.
purse. Though the central theme of the story appears as the conflict between
the bourgeoise and the downtrodden, it bears close similarity to the Jesus
story in a nutshell

3.3.1. An important narrative technique adopted by Jayakantan to
produce the Christ story in this novelette is the use of allegory. Princeton
Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics states "We have an allegory when the
events of a narrative obviously and continuously refer to another
simultaneous structure of events or ideas, whether historical events, moral
or philosophical ideas or natural phenomena" (12) Joseph Wept is an
allegorical reconstruction of the Jesus story in that it tells a two dimensional
story. On the one hand it is the story of Joseph, a poor, illiterate, but
virtuous Indian villager. And on the other hand it is the story of Jesus
Christ, the suffering servant of God. Joseph Wept is an imitatio Christi in
the sense that the protagonist of the novel makes a conscious decision to
follow Jesus Christ. Jayakantan conforms Joseph to the Christ image by the
use of various types of narrative techniques. First and foremost, he
describes Joseph's own attempt to be a good Christian and a follower of
Christ. Being an illiterate Indian villager, Joseph's understanding of Jesus
Christ was very simple and straightforward. He was wearing an aluminium
cross hanging on his chest (6). He made the sign of the cross before going
to sleep (24) as well as to overcome temptation (35). He proclaimed Christ
as his model (36) and saw Christ in everything. Naidu a character in the
story thinks of Joseph, "He addresses all Gods and all men and women "my
Lord". He buys religious pictures and portraits of all kinds. Does he see
only Christ in all objects of the world?" (18). He keeps a Bible in his
suitcase (30). One soiled shirt without sleeves and collar and a pair of do this are his sole property.

3.3.2. He receives baptism from Marimuthu, the John the Baptist figure in the novel and becomes a Christian. Joseph who has been a Hindu by name Murugesan happens to know about Jesus Christ from a Christian missionary priest who has been staying in the same street. Joseph is from Vellore. His father, Ramalingam Padayachi died when he has been so young that he does not remember his face. The Christian priest living near his house has been like his father to him. Whenever he sees the priest, he feels as if he sees Lord Jesus himself. He has worked as a gardener in the priest’s house for thirty rupees per month. He has accompanied the priest carrying the gaslight, when he has gone to address meetings. After listening to the Bible he takes a decision to follow Christ. He has then a friend called Marimuthu who has been reading to him religious notices printed by the priest. One day he says to Marimuthu, “Shall we both become Christian?” and he answers “I won’t, but you may, if you like.” Joseph buys an aluminium cross and starts to wear it around his neck. Marimuthu gives him the name Joseph and asks him to repeat the following prayer before the Bible. “My mother conceived me in sin and I am steeped in wickedness. My Saviour cleanse me of my sins and save me”(14). Thus he becomes a Christian.

3.3.3. Joseph is identified with Christ in the exercise of forgiving love. His mother forces him to marry Parvathy, his uncle’s daughter on the basis that it is his duty to look after her as she has no one else other than
them. He, on the other hand, considers himself as unworthy to marry her and so he can not think of her as his wife. Then, one day he happens to see Marimuthu and Parvathy in the house ‘talking like man and woman’. He is reminded of Jesus’ words in connection with the prostitute “Let him who has not sinned cast the first stone at her” (John 8.7) and gives Parvathy to Marimuthu as well as his job at the priest’s house and leaves the village (11-16) This forgiving response has a two-level parallel Joseph identifies himself with the Jesus who forgives the woman caught in adultery (John 8 11) as well as the Jesus who forgives his own enemies who persecute and crucify him “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23. 34). Parvathy and Marimuthu represent both the woman caught in adultery and the persecutors of Jesus Through the narration of this incident Jayakanthan gives one of the prominent Jesus-traits to Joseph. Joseph is depicted as the personification of what the Holy Bible calls, Agape love. It is a decision to consider the needs of others ahead of yours, to live sacrificially, to give without demanding a return, to overlook an offence

3.3.4 In the hotel Joseph leads a life-style in imitation of Jesus who had washed the feet of his disciples (John 13 4-15) The first scene in which Joseph is presented to the reader quite clearly justifies this argument “...a man with two water-cans, one carried on his shoulder and the other held in his hand, passed them He put the tins down, and started wiping the tables and the floor clean” (3). Joseph assumes it as his right to do work of all kinds while all the others restrict themselves to their allotted work. He will draw water and fill the tubs, clean and wash the vessels, and be at the beck and call of the lodgers. Similarly while the others have working hours
and holidays, Joseph considers all time and all days as working days. He doesn't bargain for wages. He is willing to receive whatever is given (4). He can not weep. He will feel a little sorry. Nobody has ever seen Joseph crying. Nor does he laugh. Nothing has ever moved him to tears or laughter. Here Jayakantan attributes Joseph with sama a quality attributed in Gita to God and a Brahman - God actualised human being- (Zaehner 65)

3.3.5.1. Jayakantan also utilises the response of other people around Joseph to his personality to produce the halo effect around him. Muthu says to Mudaliar "Sir, there is only one Joseph in all the world. If every worker is like him calling everyone else 'my Lord', you will be beyond anyone's reach" (4) Mudaliar finds comfort in "dreaming of a future when every one would be like Joseph!" (5) Naidu considers Joseph an extraordinary man (8), a special incarnation and an exceptional being (10) Naidu says after listening to Joseph's sacrifice of Parvathy to Manmuthu, "Joseph, you are not a human being- you are a god . . . . You are not just a Christian, you are like Christ himself . . . I feel like prostrating myself at your feet and worshipping you" (17)

3.3.5.2. Naidu's appraisal of Joseph after listening to his story is in parallel terms with the proclamation of Jesus as the son of God by different individuals like. Peter- "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt.16.16; Mark 8.29; Luke 9. 20)- and the centurion at the foot of the Cross- Truly this was the son of God (Matt. 27.54; Mark 15.39). When Joseph reveals his intention to buy some clothes for Parvathy with his savings, Naidu thinks "Joseph is great in mind ....he is an extraordinary
being, a special edition of the human species” (18). A little later he adds, “. . . you try to see good even in evil. What a mind you have! It is gold, pure gold” (20). The author speaks of the change that came over the girl after her interview with the beaten Joseph. “Till now she called him ‘my Lord’ only in fun. Now in all humility and seriousness she called him so, folding her hand respectfully” (36). This alludes to Mary Magdalene addressing the risen Jesus “Reb-bo’nî!” in John 20.16

3.3.6. Allusions to Bible quotations are also used to bring in the Jesus story element. Two main events in the novel, Joseph’s reaction to Parvathy’s infidelity and his response to the Sait’s interrogation show Joseph as a Christian committed to Jesus’ commandments not to fight back Matt 5.38-48; Luke 6 27-30, not to judge others: Matt. 7 1-2; Luke 6 37-38, 41-42; love your enemies Matt 5 44, Luke 6. 27; do not resist one who is evil Matt 5 39 and Matt 5. 40 “ if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well” “His silence seemed to indicate that he wouldn’t mind even if the Sait took all his savings” (31 - Matt 5 40)

3.3.7. Some memorable emotional expressions of the Biblical Jesus are recreated in the novel. Jesus could love His persecutors so much that He could even pray, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (John 23. 34) Joseph shows a similar love to Parvathy and Marimuthu and later to his physical persecutors. “Joseph felt sorry for the Sait” (30), on seeing the Sait considering the five-rupee and ten-rupee notes found in Joseph’s asafoetida tin as the changes stolen from his missing purse.
Similarly, when the two thieves try to win his confidence by telling him that their occupation is pick pocketing, "... Joseph looked at them with compassion as if they were sinners confessing their crimes" (34) Matt. 14. 14; Mark 6 34 "... he had compassion on them [crowd]"; Matt. 15. 32; Mark 8 2 "I have compassion on the crowd". And like the Jesus of the 'Acce Homo scene' (John 19 5-6). "Joseph came out on the verandah and stood there alone, a pathetic figure"(34)

3.3.8.1 Characters in the novel are compared to certain prominent Biblical personages connected to the suffering-Jesus. The Sait plays the roles of the elders of the Jews who plotted the arrest of Jesus and Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor who convicted Jesus to the Crucifixion (28). Like the elders who had accused Jesus (Matt 26.57, Mark 14 53), the Sait accuses Joseph as the culprit (28) And like Pilate he questions him (28=29) Pilate was a foreigner to Jesus and the Sait was a foreigner to Joseph. The gambler and his friend function as Annas and Caiaphas, the priests of the Gospel (John 18 13-14) as well as Herod and the soldiers (33-340) After arrest, Jesus was taken to Annas (John 18 13) and Caiphas (John 18.24) From the Sait Joseph was taken to the room of the gambler (31) Like Herod the gambler and his friend belonged to the same ‘tribe’ of the accused (33) Like the soldiers they slapped Joseph on the face. "When his efforts for half an hour bore no fruit, the gambler lost his temper. He stepped forward and slapped Joseph in the face" (34=Matt. 26.67, Mark 14.65; Luke 22.63).
3.3.8.2 Similarly the girl performs multiple roles. Superficially she is the prostitute (23). Allegorically she is the women of Jerusalem whom Jesus consoled on the way to Calvary (Luke 23.27). "The sight of his swollen lips and bruised nose brought tears to her eyes" (35), "Don't weep my Lord, said Joseph" (Luke 23.28). She is the Veronica who, according to Christian tradition had wiped the bruised face of Jesus. "She bolted the door and wiped his face with a wet towel" (35). Again she is the tempter. She asks him,

'"Did you see the purse?"

'"Yes."

'"Where is it now?"

Joseph did not answer.

'"Though you did not take the purse yourself, you know who did. Why do you then allow yourself to be beaten up?" (Ibid)

He overcomes the temptation by making the sign of the cross and telling her a story from the *Mahabharatha* The girl is also identified with Mary Magdalene who addresses the Resurrected Jesus "Reb-bo ni!" (John 20.16). The author describes the change that came over the girl after her interview with the beaten Joseph. "Till now she called him 'my Lord' only in fun. Now in all humility and seriousness she called him so, folding her hand respectfully" (36).

3.3.8.3 Naidu also represents different personalities related to Jesus' life. He is Peter at Caesarea Philippi and the centurion at the foot of the Cross, who had announced Jesus as the Son of God. He is the Nicodemus who came to Jesus in the night (7=John 3.1-3). Nicodemus was a teacher of
Israel (John 3.10), he recognised Jesus as a person from God (John 3.2) and later supported Jesus in the Sanhedrine (John 7.50-51) "Naidu was respected by everyone in the hotel. He drew the highest salary and had the longest service.... Naidu talks to Joseph till late in the night" (7) "Naidu considered Joseph an extraordinary man and thought he alone understood him."(8). He stands up for Joseph with the question, "should you thrash a god?" (40). Mudaliar plays the role of Peter who denies Jesus (Matt. 26. 69-75, Mark 14 66-72, Luke 22 56-62; John 18. 15-18, 25-27). Even though he knows Joseph's innocence and goodness he deserts him for the sake of money and later he repents. The author comments, "They looked at each other for a few moments" (37). Luke 22. 61-62 states, "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter .And he went out and wept bitterly". After his conversion, "Mudaliar felt like prostrating himself before Joseph He wished he could take his heart out and lay it at Joseph's feet" (42). Thus in a consciously allegorical rendering of Joseph's story, Jayakantan presents the Jesus story in its original historical background.

3.4.1.1 Though Jesus was born, brought up and accomplished His ministry in the Palestinian Jewish culture of the closing years of the B.Cs. He became an epoch maker by inaugurating the Christian civilisation of the A.Ds. So the epoch in which Jesus lived acquired two equally relevant racial atmospheres: the Jewish and the Christian. While Graves attempted to enclose Jesus in the Jewish epoch, Jayakantan enclosed Him in the Christian epoch. As the Jews dreamed of a political Messiah, the Son of Man coming in power and glory, they refused to admit Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. But the Christians who believed Jesus to be the Messiah took
Him as the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant. Graves adopted the attitude of a First century AD Jew and Jayakantan views Jesus through the eyes of a First century AD Christian. While Graves attempted to reconstruct Jesus as the Son of David—the glorious king, Jayakantan tries to fix his hero into Jesus’ garb of the ‘Son of Man’—the suffering servant. Both viewpoints originated from equating the Messiah to the ‘Son of Man’ prophesied in the vision of the seer in the Book of Daniel,

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (Dan 7:13-14)

3.4.1.2. The Jews, who were a chosen people, always in wait for the political liberation of their nation, linked this prophetic passage in Daniel with the Son of Man passages in Enoch, in which the Son of Man is a divine, superhuman, apocalyptic figure, waiting beside the throne of God, ready to descend in victorious power from heaven against the enemies of God. And this was the popular picture that the title Son of Man (bar nasha in Aramaic and ben adam in Hebrew) would have painted in the mind of a Jew of the first century B.C. William Barclay declares.

Even in their darkest days, even when they were a captive and subject nation, the Jews never lost the sense of being the chosen people, and never lost the confidence that soon or late the kingdom
would belong to them and to God. To that end they never ceased to expect the Messiah who was to be God's agent and instrument in the liberation of his people and the bringing in of his kingdom. It was only natural that they should nourish their hearts on passages of prophecy like the Daniel passage (153)

To the Jews Jesus could not be the Messiah on account of Deuteronomy 21.23 which states, "for a hanged man is accursed by God"

3.4.2.1. Even to His followers Jesus' piteous death on the cross appeared a scandal which suggested that His mission was a failure. The disciples going to Emmaus say that they are talking about things. "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:19-21). Later the appearances of the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit experience might have helped them to understand crucifixion as the way to exaltation (Kereszty 118). This enlightenment opened their eyes to the fact that Jesus repeatedly used this title 'Son of Man' in connection with His sufferings and His death. Jesus says in the Gospels, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45, Luke 9:56, 11:30).

Again "The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third
day' (Matt. 20.18; Mark 10.33; Luke 9.44, 18.31). He repeats in another context. "The Son of Man must suffer many things" (Matt. 17 12, 22, 26 2,24,45; Mark 8.31, 9.12, 9. 31, 14. 41; Luke 9. 22, 22. 22,37, 24. 7). According to these verses, the Son of Man to be glorified must fulfil the destiny of the suffering servant. "as the Suffering Servant he must accept the Cross, and that as the Messianic King he must enter into glory." (Barclay 157). The first Son of Man, Adam was expelled from Paradise by his attempt to become like God; Jesus the new Adam re-entered Paradise by sacrificing His equality with God by obeying God unto death on the cross (Phil 2 6-8) and opened the gate of Paradise for forgiven sinners exemplified in the 'good thief' Kereszty explains the relevance of the Cross in the following passage. "Thus this transcendent heavenly man, the last, the eschatological Adam, has shown us the way to become truly human in a direction exactly opposite to what human wisdom would suggest, not by achieving independence, power, and greatness, but by the way of humility, obedience, and embracing one's cross" (132) Hengel looks with wonder at this reformulation process in which the 'cursed' death of a false Messiah was transformed into the salvific event.

The discrepancy between the shameful death of a Jewish state criminal and the confession that depicts this executed man as a pre-existent divine figure who becomes man and humbles himself to a slave's death (Phil 2 6-8) is, as far as I can see, without analogy in the ancient world. It also illuminates the riddle of the origin of the Christology of the early Church. Paul founded the community in Philippi in about the year A. D. 49, and in the letter which he wrote to the believers there about six or seven years later he will have
presented the same Christ as in the preaching which brought the community into being. This means that the "apotheosis of the crucified Jesus" must already have taken place in the forties .. (Hengel 1-2).

3.4.2.2 And on the basis of such realisations the Christians of the first century AD and the apostolic Church, started to relate the ‘Son of Man’ passage to the prophecy of Isaiah (Kereszty 122).

Behold, my servant shall prosper,

he shall be exalted and lifted up,

and shall be very high

As many were astonished at him-

his appearance was so marred.

beyond human semblance,

and his form beyond that of the sons of men-

(Is 52 13-14)

and I was not rebellious.

I turned not backward

I gave my back to the smiters,

and my cheeks

from shame to those who pulled out the beard.

I hid not my face

from shame and spitting.

(Is 50. 5-6)

He was despised and rejected by men

a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Is 53 3)

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows; (Is 53. 4)
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearsers is dumb.
so he opened not his mouth. (Is 53. 7).

and was numbered with the transgressors,
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors (Is 53 12)

3.4.2.3 These Isaiah prophecies are dramatically projected into the figure of Joseph in the novelette. After the manhandling by the Salt and the gambler, Joseph's appearance is so marred, his lips are swollen and nose bruised. He is not rebellious against the injustice shown against him. He does not try to avoid the ill treatment. He permits the others to beat him. He doesn't even express anger or ill feeling either to Mudaliar who has the purse or to his persecutors. His own co-workers reject and suspect him. They whisper, "Three thousand rupees lost and it seems our rogue eye is the culprit" (29). Joseph bears the insults and the punishments for the sake of Mudaliar. His silence protects the good name and prestige of the real
culprit, the owner and proprietor, Mudaliar. Even though he knows the truth, he doesn’t open his mouth.

3.4.3.1. There are four main characteristics attributed to this ‘Son of Man’ by St Paul and the early kerygma of the Church: humility (Phil 2:6), obedience (Phil 2.7), vicarious suffering (Heb 2.15) and exaltation (Phil 2.10). And the result of His sacrifice is redemption and new life (Rom 5.12-21) “He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil 2.7) According to Richard Niebuhr “The humility of Christ is not the moderation of keeping one’s exact place in the scale of being, but rather that of absolute dependence on God and absolute trust in him, with the consequent ability to remove mountains. The secret of the meekness and the gentleness of Christ lies in His relation to God” (Niebuhr 27) He eats with the sinners and the marginalised (Matt. 10.12) He washes the disciples’ feet (John 13:5) He accepts indignities and scurrilities Paul says, “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3) Jayakantan reinstitutes this radical humility in the hero of this novel, Joseph. Joseph considers with the love and respect all – his fallen wife, false friend, the prostitute, the gambler, the pick-pocket, the drunkard and the real thief of the story. Mudaliar. He calls them all ‘my Lord’. He values himself as the lowest servant with extreme meekness. He bears insults like being addressed in the nickname, ‘the rogue-eyed’ and beatings and the suspicion of being the thief. The source of this Christ-like humility is his love of Jesus who is his God and the Agape love resulting from it (18). Agape is the Greek word used in the New Testament to denote the unconditional, universal love.
3.4.3.2. Another Christ-quality that Jayakanthan projects on to Joseph is Jesus' extreme obedience. The Apostle describes it in the following words: "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:9)". Similarly, the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). Jesus projected a radical obedience which involved His whole being. Obedience is the practical acceptance of the authority and will of God. To be disobedient is to yield to self-will instead of surrendering to God. In this novelette Joseph exercises a similar obedience to the teachings of Christ. Even though he was beaten very badly he did not tell anyone that Mudaliar was the culprit. In short all the qualities needed for a person leading a new life in Christ are attributed to Joseph by the novelist. "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Do not be conformed to the world. Hate what is evil. Outdo one another in showing honour. Be patient in your tribulation. Practise hospitality. Repay no one evil for evil but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12). His humility and obedience made Jesus a man for others. St Paul says, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3). Jesus himself states his solidarity with the whole humanity in his Son of Man statement, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45; Luke 9:56, 11:30).

3.4.3.3 In the novelette Joseph undertakes the guilt of Parvathy, Marimuthu and Mudaliar. When Parvathy and Marimuthu commit adultery, he takes the guilt upon himself, telling that he wronged Parvathy by
marrying her just because she had no one else to look after her. As punishment he gives Parvathy as wife to Marimuthu and leaves the village as a lone man. In the missing purse incident, he protects the image of Mudaliar, the real culprit, by silently bearing the punishments executed by the Sait and the gambler and his friend.

3.4.3.4 Through His Resurrection, Jesus’ was confirmed as the anointed Messiah. “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” In the novelette almost all the other characters exalt Joseph after the redemption of the purse. “Mudaliar felt like prostrating himself before Joseph. He wished he could take his heart out and lay it at Joseph’s feet.” Joseph’s suffering effected changes in the lives of the Sait and Mudaliar. The Sait stopped drinking. “The Sait stood like a statue with the purse in his hand. ‘In future, even if I should die of my aches, I must not touch alcohol.’ thought the Sait.” And Mudaliar gave back the purse and requested Joseph’s forgiveness.

3.4.4.1. In reconstructing the Jesus story Jayakantan has completely given up his personal impressions as a Marxist living in the Indian milieu. It was the Communist Party of India that shaped Jayakantan’s literary career. Like many other young men in India in the twentieth century Jayakantan took Marxism as the fittest medicine to eradicate social evils like untouchability, class disparity, oppression of women, communal disharmony and poverty. Marxism inspired its followers to wage war against social prejudices. “Marxists, believing that men make history,
regard trust in the grace of God as a sleeping pill as potent as the hope of heaven”(Niebuhr 7)

3.4.4.2. But Jayakantan in Joseph Wept shows religion as something serious and important to the individual. This novelette glorifies many values that are considered by Marxists as weakness and foolishness such as faith in God, non-resistance to evil, forgiving love, passive suffering and meekness Jesus’ teachings, “the meek shall inherit the earth”, “turn the other cheek”, and “do unto others what you expect the other to do to you”, are redefined with moral force and life-energy. All these go to prove this novel as an enclosure within the epoch. Jayakantan’s handling of Jesus reveals the Indian Marxists’ temperamental difference from the Russian.

3.4.4.3.1 An analysis of Indian culture and social set up reveals the truth of the argument that Joseph Wept is an enclosure within the epoch. Christianity came to India with the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, at Kodungalloor, Kerala in AD 52, earlier than it reached Europe, England and Germany. But it stayed here as a small community of two percent of the population for two thousand years and it is still looked upon as a foreign religion because the first Indian Christians following the Indian tradition considered themselves as separate race to be kept apart. And they distanced their community away from the main social tract. The main cause for it is the special cultural situation in India. India is a multi-religious country. As she has been subjected to invasions by different races at different periods of history, she has become a land of communal conflicts. Indo-Aryans, Mongols, Muslims and European Christians all had
invaded India. The rule of these invaders resulted in the formation of a pluralistic society. Dube states.

Indian society is old and it is extremely complex. According to a popular estimate, it has covered a span of five thousand years since the period of its first known civilization. During this long period, several waves of immigrants, representing different ethnic strains and linguistic families, have merged into its population to contribute to its diversity, richness, and vitality (Dube 1).

3.4.4.3.2. The first among the invaders were the Aryans. When they reached the South, with their class-consciousness (Varna) and caste consciousness there occurred considerable cultural conflict and confusion that resulted in different levels of cultural consciousness and intellectual development. Later in the third century, Muslims from Persia, Turkey, and Afghanistan invaded India and established their mighty empire which remained predominant until the British replaced them in the seventeenth century (Srinivasan 13-14). With the arrival of Vasco de Gama, European Christians too arrived in India and started staunch efforts to make Christ known in India. Through their educational institutions and dispensaries, the Indians came into personal contact with Jesus Christ. To many of them, Jesus and Christianity appeared as a means to escape the social disparity created by the Varna system of Manu's Code. Even though His message of love centred on the idea of one family and brotherhood was adopted by prominent Indian leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Lokamanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus was rejected by the majority in this society.
with the concept of myriad Gods, because of His demand to be the one and only God.

3.4.4.3.3. Diverting from this Indian and Tamil milieu Jayakantan's hero in *Joseph Wept* proclaims Jesus Christ as his Saviour (14). He sees Christ in all objects of the world even in the Hindu Gods like Krishna (18). Conversions, either to Christianity or to Islam ignited communal riots and large scale destruction in the post-independent Indian society. Fanatic Hindus watched other religions with fear and apprehension that they may wipe them out and establish their own religion and culture in India. Muslims feared of losing their minority rights in a Hindu-India. This mutual fear culminated in the partition of Pakistan from India. In this communal sensitive context Jayakanatan speaks of the hero's self-willed conversion into Christianity. Joseph does not fit into the caste and status dominant Indian context. In the Indian society it is a rare scene to see prostitutes, thieves, servants and the upper class live in an atmosphere of equality. *Joseph Wept* depicts such a rare society which leads a life exactly parallel to the social life led by the Biblical Jesus.

3.5.1. Jayakanatan shows a religious inclination in this novelette. It may have resulted from his early upbringing. He admits that he came to know Tamil through devotional literature like *Tevāram* and *Tiruvāchakam*. Even though Tamil is considered as the oldest language among the Dravidian languages, Tamil novel as a literary form emerged only after the arrival of the Portuguese Christian missionaries like Beschi alias Viramamunivar. The missionaries wrote many religious oriented stories in
Tamil

The native speakers of Tamil imitated them in their early novels. As a critic observes,

More than the specific and individual influences, the very exposure to western liberal tradition and writings animated the first generation who strove to create Tamil works, often in the image of literary works that moved them. In creating new forms and genres they openly expressed indebtedness to certain models and authors (Kailasapathy 89)

With the induction of the Communist party in India many writers belonging to the lower strata of the society emerged on the literary scene. They "are from the depressed castes who are still, in many ways socially untouchables. Traditionally they have had no access to learning and were considered culturally backward. Jayakantan in India, Daniel and Dominic Jeeva in Sri Lanka, to cite three examples, who are outstanding fiction writers, never had any formal education" (Ibid 44)

3.5.2.1. Jayakantan's hunger-filled, poverty-stricken, rootless childhood may have played an effective role in shaping his understanding of Jesus Christ. As his father had deserted the family quite early he grew up as the mother's son. This similarity with Jesus might have produced in him an affinity with Jesus. His less fortunate social status may have inculcated Jesus-like compassion and sympathy towards the poor and downtrodden. His life as a common teenager in search of a livelihood shaped a mental frame that can see Jesus the epitome of suffering humanity in the face of each and every working class individual of the Third world Indian society
3.5.2.2. In the fifties he started writing stories at the age of nineteen. His short stories show the influence of Putumaippittan Jayakantan confesses that he was “crazy about Putumaippittan’s writings” (Srinivasan 21) The narrative technique adopted in his novels and novellas clearly brings out the impact of Tolstoy on his creative imagination. He admits, “I was attracted towards French and Russian creative writers of 18th and 19th centuries. Among them Tolstoy was the first and foremost in attracting my taste and thinking” (Ibid) Srinivasan states Jayakantan’s short story ‘Nirankal’ (Colours) as an example for his free adoption of Tolstoy’s syntactic patterns (Ibid) Regarding Russell’s influence, he says, “Russell has diverted the focus of my thinking. He has released me from my dogmatic attitudes. I fully recognise and whole heartedly accept his view on morality (ethics), society, politics and man” (Ibid 22)

3.5.3.1. He is an admirer of Vivekananda. He follows his message. “Don’t be afraid. Don’t be scared of anything that confronts us” (Jayamohan 136) He has formulated a philosophy of his own through a study of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Bharatiar and Carl Max. He dreamed of a society that is a blending of the Marxist socialist society and the Hindu Socialist society envisaged in the Vedas. Srinivasan cites Jayakantan’s story “Pirammopatecam (Divine Initiation) as an example for this theory. There shall be no discrimination among the people in that society; all are equal. all things are for all, and all property to be regarded as public property. In his perception there should be no discrimination socially, economically and religiously. When he found Marxism and Hinduism lacking a possibility to realise this utopian Hindu-socialist society he might have found the story of
Jesus as a plausible medium. The kingdom of God propagated by Jesus appears identical with Jayakantan's dream society.

3.5.3.2. Walter Kasper summarises various explanations given to the Kingdom of God by prominent philosophers. Kant views it as the highest good, the kingdom of the spirit and freedom. According to Albert Schweitzer and Weiss, Jesus predicted not a better world but a New World, the new heaven and the new earth. Developing on this view, modern political theology states the Kingdom of God as "a political and social utopia, to be created by kindness and brotherly love" (Kasper 72). In Joseph Wept, the Jesus figure, Joseph creates such a utopian Paradise through his way of life that appears foolish to the world. The author narrates Naidu's response to Joseph, "He admired Joseph's uncomplicated approach, but a man had to be wise in the ways of the world" (17). Naidu evaluates Joseph, "Marimuthu would be happy in the thought that he had deceived a fool. For that matter everyone in the hotel thinks Joseph is a fool" (18).

3.5.4.1. The socio-historic environment of the nineteen sixties also might have propelled Jayakantan's Jesus reconstruction. In Tamil Nadu, the Dravidian movement initiated communal rivalry by propagating strong anti-Brahmin stance highlighting Tamil literary and cultural pride. As Jayakantan hated separatist ideologies, he attacked the policies of the movement. He was earnestly concerned with the religious animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims that staked the realisation of the Gandhian concept of religious amity. These social realities might have convinced him that rebellion against oppression and suppression would
only produce conflicts and hatred. It is not a solution for social injustice. He drifted away from the Communist party too due to some differences of opinion with some friends in the party.

Jayakantan opens his mind to Jayamohan in a recent interview. "Social change was a great dream of that time. My leaders had firm faith in it. That caught me too. It is better to say that I wished to believe in it." The fact that even during the present interview at the mentioning of this matter the writer sat numb for some time (Jayamohan 135), reveals the shock that he might have experienced during the disillusionment period. He speaks about his changed attitude to Communism that the Communists believe that Man's substance/beingness is formulated through his social life alone. They are against spirituality. Those who support spirituality believe that man's substance is something within himself. The aim of all art is to reach this substance within man. He considers revolution as a strike in which mercy as well as responsibility has to be combined. "My Ghenarippatti", "Yugacanti" and Joseph Yarukka Alutan are revolutionaries. The cause for which they fought might have lost relevance today. Time has changed, but that sentiment is ever living (Ibid 137). Jayakantan agrees with Gandhiji "If the means is not good then the objective/target also is not good" (Ibid 139). And admits that in his younger years he thought that the Communists' intention to establish a new society would compensate for their evil means - violence. O V Vijayan states that Marxism was an attempt to solve the ever-alive riddle of social inequality. And as it was a non-conclusive riddle Marxism turned out a failure in the
course of time. He considers Christ’s crucifixion as an attempt to escape the pain of this riddle’ (Vijayan 1998, 148-49)

3.5.4.2. S Sudhish states that the impact of Communism in the Indian society was only on the intellectual, political and thematic level. A Communist culture similar to the Shaivite/ Vishnavaite/Christian/ Muslim moral cultures has not been established in India. It cannot even produce a lifestyle equal to that of Buddhism or Gandhism (Sudhish 140). All these forced him to write as a spokesman of the meek, the poor and the exploited (Srinivasan 23) He might have found a suitable framework for this in the story of Jesus Christ reflected in the Sermon on the Mount. It advocates the spirit of ‘turning the other cheek’ as a way of overcoming injustice Mahatma Gandhi said. “The gentle figure of Christ, so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck but to turn the other cheek— it was a beautiful example, I thought, of the perfect man” (Gandhi 1963, 3)

3.5.5. Another important element, which shaped Jayakant’s Christ image, is his attitude to art. Unlike other writers, he focuses on providing solutions to the social problems, which he reflects in his works. In the novelette, Joseph Wept he has reproduced a photographic picture of the poor workers of India. Srinivasan states, “The central thesis of the story lays bare the evil designs of the bourgeois in hunting down the socially weak and the down-trodden people. These people are hopelessly trapped in an unfriendly, oppressive social environment” (Srinivasan 63). The gambler summarises the crux of the social problem, “That is why they say one must
not be born poor in this world” (43). Jayakantan’s solution to poverty is the Jesus Christ who taught, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 6. 20). Following Gandhiji he believes that the solution should come from within and not from outside.

3.5.6 Another social problem dealt within this novelette is religious conversion and the social response to it. Through the picture of Joseph, Jayakantan shows faith in a particular religion as a matter of the personal relationship between the individual and his/her God. Jayakantan narrates Joseph’s conversion from Hinduism to Christianity in the following manner:

I was then called Murugesan. I had then a friend called Mamuthu.

One day I said to him. ‘Shall we both become Christian?’ He said. ‘I won’t, but you may, if you like.’ I bought this cross and began wearing it. He gave me the name Joseph. He took the Bible and stood before me and made me repeat. ‘My mother conceived me in sin and I am steeped in wickedness. My Saviour, cleanse me of my sins and save me’ and I became Joseph (12-14).

3.6. Even though the fictional situation presented by Jayakantan in this novelette is rather simple, he succeeds in rediscovering the Biblical Jesus of the first century A. D. Christians. Telling the story of a simple man who fills the world around him with love in spite of the painful treatment given to him by the world, he gives hope to the suffering multitudes in India. His message is that there is an alternative way other than hatred and violence to overcome the evil in this society. That is the way of the Sermon
on the Mount Srinivasan attests, "Jayakantan has begun his life as an angry young man and blossomed into a fine humanist identifying with sinners and sufferers irrespective of their caste, creed and ideology" (84). This analysis confirms Jayakantan's *Joseph wept* as an allegorical reconstruction of the Jesus story in the enclosure within the epoch format. The biographical background of the author, socio-cultural milieu in which the author lived and the literary traditions and the philosophies and ideologies to which the author assigned his commitment all have played a role as the formative influence behind it.