

St. Mary & The Apostles

Cor-Episcope K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.



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Contents

Preface.....	v
1. St. Mary, Mother of God	1
2. St. Peter, the Disciple.....	6
3. St. Paul, the Disciple.....	9
4. St. Andrew, the disciple	13
5. St. James, the Disciple	16
6. St. John, the Disciple.....	18
7. St. Philip, the disciple	20
8. St. Bartholomew, the disciple.....	22
9. St. Thomas, the Disciple.....	24
10. St. Mathew, the Disciple	29
11. St. James, the disciple, the son of Alphaeus ...	32
12. St. Jude, the disciple.....	34
13. St. Simon, the Zealot.....	36
14. St. Mathias, the disciple	39
References.....	41
Name Index.....	45
Other Books by the Author	47
About the Author.....	51

Preface

This book is a collection of the biographies of St. Mary, Mother of God and the thirteen Apostles. I have compiled biographies of St. Mary and the Apostles which are spread out in different volumes of *Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Vol. I-V). Therefore, my purpose here is to incorporate the details in a single book which will help teachers of catechism.

Some authors have stated that St. Mary entered eternal rest at a very old age which is not true. According to Abdul Ahad Ramban (1948) St. Mary lived only for five years after the ascension of Our Lord and passed away at Jerusalem at the age of fifty-one. Also, there are tenets of the Church relevant to St. Mary, Mother of God. Another important purpose of the book is to bring out the Syrian tradition which in the recent past is being challenged. The sketches of the lives of Apostles are also coupled with the prayers of Syrian tradition to affirm the historical facts.

St. Simon, the Zealot is referred to as Cananean Simon which is often wrongly interpreted to mean 'from Cana.' There are similar instances of misinterpretation which are brought to light in this book. There is no dearth of information about the life of St. Mary and Apostles in the age of information overflow but the challenge is

to delineate the Syrian tradition of the Apostolic Fathers who had left behind the true facts for us.

I acknowledge all the authors cited in the reference. Mr. Aji Jacob Kurien, my brother-in-law, who gifted me the book - *The search of the twelve Apostles* which provided much information that I had been looking for.

I am much obliged to JSC Publications, Puthencruz, for taking up the publication of the book. I sincerely thank Mr. Julius C. Abraham, M/s Megapixel Graphics, Kottayam, for the layout and cover design of the book.

I sincerely wish and hope that the faithful of Syrian Orthodox Church will find this book useful to understand the life of St. Mary and the Apostles.

16 April 2017

Cor-Episcopo (Dr.). Mani Rajan

1. St. Mary, Mother of God

(B. C. 14? A.D. 37?)

Mary was born in B. C. 14 in the little Galilean village of Nazareth to a holy couple Joachim and Ann of the royal race of David. They were already far advanced in age and had almost ceased to hope that God would bless them with a child. Their long-felt desire was gratified by the birth of Mary, the chosen one of Adam's race.

Joachim was the second son of Eleazar of the tribe of Juda and the race of David. Ann (Deena) is of the tribe of Levi and the race of Aron. Joachim is also known as Yunochir or Heli (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

The gospels refer to Joseph to whom Mary was betrothed as the son of Jacob (Mathew 1:16) and the son of Heli. The genealogy of Joseph makes it evident that Joseph is the grandson of Matthan (Mathew 1:15-16; Luke 3:24). One explanation of the above reference to Joseph as the son of Jacob and Heli is that Joseph is the son of Jacob by birth and Joseph is the son-in-law of Heli (Heli's daughter Mary is betrothed to Joseph). This genealogical analysis is available

in Abdul Ahad (1948). However, *The Orthodox study Bible* (1993) advances another possibility. There was a law (Deut. 25:5,6) that the brother of a man who died without a child should marry the wife of the deceased and raise up an heir for his brother. The most likely explanation is that Jacob and Heli were born of the same mother, but of different fathers. When Heli died after a childless marriage, his brother Jacob married the widow, who became the mother of Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter from Nazareth. He had seven children. James, Joses, Judas and Simon are referred to as brothers of Jesus Christ (Mark 6:3).

Mary was given to the Jerusalem temple at the age of three in accordance with a vow. Until the age of thirteen Mary helped in the church by stitching the vestments and preparing the accoutrements. It was customary that children beyond the age of thirteen were not allowed to stay in the church. Thus, Mary was entrusted to the care of Joseph of Nazareth.

Mary appears in the New Testament first when the Angel Gabriel announces the message of the favour of God (Luke 1: 28). Then Mary is seen, when Jesus was dedicated in the Jerusalem temple for naming (Luke 2:21-22), when they went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-42), at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1), when a multitude was listening to Jesus (Mark 2:31), at the cross of Jesus (John 19:25) and when Mary together with disciples (Acts

1:14) was praying in the upper room (St. Mark, Jerusalem). The role and virtues of St. Mary, the Mother of God, can be gauged from these verses in the Bible.

All Christians accept St. Mary as a model to emulate. The early Church at Jerusalem had a close association with St. Mary. Protestant theologians content that Mary was a passive instrument in the salvific act of Jesus Christ. However, St. Mary was not timidly submissive for she had the free will to choose. This is evident from her response: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). There is another argument that Mary became the Mother of God 'only by grace' (*sola gratia*). This would suggest that God unilaterally imposed the mission on her. It would again go against the basic theological teaching of free will. St. Paul suggests the need for meaningful response to the divine call as is evident in the following verses. "We beg you who have received God's grace not to let it be wasted" (2 Cor 6:1). "Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation" (Phil. 2:12).

There is an important role for St. Mary in the redemption of mankind. However, the Catholic and Protestant Churches occupy the opposite poles on this matter. The Catholic Church goes to the extent qualifying St. Mary as *corredemptrix* (Macquarrie, 1991). This term projects St. Mary to have an equal status in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ. The Protestant Church considers

Mary as a lady used for Jesus to take flesh from, which was possible for any woman (Genesis 3:15; Gal 4:4). The Syriac Orthodox Church qualifies St. Mary with different names, which are indicators of the theological teachings about her. Perpetual virgin (Yacoub III, 1985), Mother of God (Cayre, 1935), Mother of Church (Bernard, 1960), first among the saints and the second Eve are a few of the qualifications. The teachings of Patriarch Severios of Antioch and that of Philoxinos of Mabug are relevant in understanding the concepts about St. Mary.

The Syriac Orthodox Church does not accept the immaculate conception of St. Mary as declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854. In contrast, Mary was born with the original sin. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). "Therefore, just as through one man's sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all man, because all sinned" (Rom 3:23; Rom. 5:12). "All" refers to mankind and it will be reasonable to include St. Mary in the group. The concluding prayer of the holy *Qurbono* after the final blessing includes St. Mary for whom the sacrifice was made.

The New Testament is silent about the life of St. Mary after Pentacost. Some writers content that she lived with John, the disciple, as entrusted by Jesus Christ at the cross (John 19:25-27). A few suggest that she spent the rest of her life at Ephesus and departed for heavenly abode in

A. D. 66(?). However, Abdul Ahad (1948) suggests that St. Mary lived only for five years after the ascension of Our Lord and passed away at Jerusalem at the age of fifty-one. The body of St. Mary was wrapped in linen cloths used for the burial of Jesus and entombed in the Gethsemane. After that St. Mary was taken to paradise with her body in the company of angels and saints. The intercession of St. Mary is a basic tenet of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

There are seven feasts in the intercession of St. Mary.

1. January 15 - for seeds
2. March 25 - Annunciation to St. Mary
3. May 15 - for crops
4. June 15 - Dedication of the first church in honour of St. Mary
5. August 15 - Assumption of the Blessed Mary, intercession for the vine
6. September 8 - Birth of Virgin Mary
7. December 26 - Glorification of Virgin Mary.

2. St. Peter, the Disciple

(A. D.? - 67)

Peter was a fisherman from Beth- sa'-i-da, a city of Galilee (John 1:44). He was from the lineage of Naphtali (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Peter was known earlier as Symeon or Simon in Greek. Peter is the Greek translation for the Armaic name *Kepha*. "You are Simon, the son of Jona: you shall be called Ce-phas" (John 1:42).

That Jo-na is the father of Peter which is evident from Mathew 16:17: "Blessed are you, Simon, Bar-Jo-'na." Peter was married (Mark 1:30) and it is believed that he had a daughter (Abdul Ahad, 1948). They moved from Beth-sa'-i-da to Capernaum (Moothedan, 2001). The house of Peter is located near the Synagogue of Capernaum. A church has been built over the remains of Peter's house. Wife of St. Peter might have accompanied him in preaching the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:5).

It is believed that Peter was the disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:40). His ardent belief in Christ (Mathew 14:28), confession of faith (Mathew 16:16), and anxiety about the well-being of Jesus Christ (John 18:10), are all evident in the Gospel. The liturgy and sacraments of the

Syriac Orthodox Church, proclaim the primacy of St. Peter. He is the head of, and first among, the disciples of Jesus Christ. The name of Peter appears first in the list of disciples (Mathew 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). Peter presided over the meeting convened for the election of Mat-thi'- as (Acts 1:15-26).

Peter is the man behind organizing the Church at Antioch. St. Peter established the Holy See of Antioch in A. D. 37 (February 22). Disciples were in touch with Antioch, from where they were commended to the Grace of God for the work (Acts 14:26). The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Jesus Christ stayed in the house of Peter (Hoever, 1989). Jesus travelled in the boat of Peter. Peter was the spokes-person of Jesus and the disciples (Mathew 17:24). St. Mark, the Evangelist, was the disciple of St. Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the napkin that had been around His head (John 20:7) was handed over to St. Peter (Mose Bar Kipho's Easter Instruction Chapter 18; cited in Abdul Ahad, 1948). Bar Sleebi has recorded that St. Peter used this napkin as headdress or head-gear (*Koobatho*).

Heord Agrippa imprisoned Peter at Jerusalem in c. A. D. 44 (Acts. 12:1-19). He escaped from the hands of Agrippa. Thereafter, he preached Gospel in different places, ordained Bishops, and established churches at several places. Peter

presided in the synod held at Jerusalem in A. D. 51. He was in Antioch during A. D. 53-60. Then he proceeded to Rome as a part of his visit where Nero was persecuting Christians. On the way to Rome Peter met Paul. They together went to Rome to strengthen the followers in the apostolic faith. Nero imprisoned them. It is certain that St. Peter and St. Paul were together in prison for about nine months before their martyrdom on 29 June A. D. 67 (Pollock, 1985, p. 307).

Abdul Ahad (1948) has recorded that St. Peter was crucified head downward on his request to kiss the feet of his master. According to Tertullian, St. Peter was crucified in the last year of Nero's reign at Rome (Hoever, 1989). Eusebius recounts that St. Peter was hung head downward according to his own request, not deeming himself worthy to die as his own Divine Master (White, 1991). The evening prayers on the feast of St. Peter also affirm this description. The feast of St. Peter is celebrated on 29 June along with that of St. Paul at the end of the lent in the intercession of Apostles from 26 June to 29 June.

The successor of St. Peter is the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Now, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, is the 123rd successor of St. Peter.

3. St. Paul, the Disciple

(A. D. ? - 67)

Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 22:3). Before the conversion, his name was Saul. Paul's father was a rich and famous Jew of the Bennyamin tribe and was a businessman (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His father was a Roman citizen and thus Saul was also (Acts 22:28). His mother died while he was a child.

Saul started his education at the age of six in a Jewish School at Tarsus (Aphrem, 1963). At that time there were three famous seats of higher learning - - Tarsus, Alexandria and Adena. Of the three, Tarsus was of the Hebrews to which tribe Saul belonged (2 Cor. 11:22; Abdul Ahad, 1948). At the age of fifteen he was sent to Jerusalem and was a student of Ga-ma'-li-el (a famous Jewish Rabbi of the time), a Pharisee and a famous doctor of law of reputation. Paul was probably the best educated among the apostles and New Testament writers (White, 1991). According to the Jewish law, every Jew should know a craft (work). So Saul learned tent making (Aphrem, 1963).

Saul was a zealous Jew and was in the group who stoned St. Stephen (Acts 7: 58). Some Church Fathers suggest that the martyrdom and prayer of St. Stephen, changed the course of Saul's life.

He went to Damascus to threaten and slaughter the disciples of the Lord. When he came near Damascus, suddenly there shone around him a light from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads or spikes" (a proverb implying the futility of actions against an invincible force). So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9: 1-6).

After this, Saul spent about three years in Arabia as a solitary (White, 1991) to prepare himself for his future missionary activity (Hoever, 1989). Thereafter he returned to Damascus, a focal place in the growth of the Church (Galatians 1:17; *Nelson's encyclopaedia*, 1913). Paul preached that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 9:20).

Jews plotted to kill Saul but it came to be known to him. He escaped through the wall in a large basket (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor 11:33). Saul went to Jerusalem and wanted to meet St. Peter, the head of the Church, and to join the apostles. But, the Church at Jerusalem did not accept Saul for they knew what Saul had done to the Church.

The work of Saul at Jerusalem resulted in the threat to his life. So, he returned to Tarsus (Acts. 9:30). It is believed that he stayed at Tarsus for

seven to eight years (Aphrem, 1963). Paul went to Jerusalem with Barnabas during the famine in A. D. 44 with donations. He then went to Cyprus where Sergius Paulose, the governor, confessed the faith. Paul and Silas went to different places preaching gospel (A. D. 49-52) and Paul along with Barnabas attended the first synod at Jerusalem in A. D. 51 (Aphrem, 1963).

Paul had to face two problems that are relevant even today. They are: (1) The discrimination between Jewish Christians and those converted from gentiles and (2) The Christians newly converted at the instance of Paul, were considered to be lesser in rank than those baptized by the (original) early apostles. Also, the conservatism of converted Jewish Christians and the ultra spiritualism of those converted from the gentiles (*Nelson's encyclopedia*, 1913, pp. 257-258) were all matters of concern as much as it is for the present day Church in the wake of charismatic and other similar movements.

St. Paul suffered a lot for the Gospel. Once he was stoned and dragged out of the city of Lystra thinking that he was dead (Acts. 14:19). He recollects all those troubles and persecutions. "From Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles,

in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness . . .” (2 Cor.11: 24-28).

Paul was in prison for about two years (A. D. 57-59) and then went to Rome. Under the persecution of Nero, he was sentenced to death. Being a Roman citizen he was not tortured for long but was beheaded on 29 June A. D. 67. Before the martyrdom Paul and Peter were together in prison for about nine months (Pollock, 1985). St. Paul’s missionary work spans over thirtyone years. He supported himself and fellow workers by working with his own hands (Acts 20: 34). He also accepted material help for his basic needs (Phil. 4: 15-19). The feast of St. Paul is celebrated along with that of St. Peter on June 29 at the end of the lent observed in the intercession of the thirteen apostles.

4. St. Andrew, the disciple

(? - c. A.D. 69?)

Andrew, the brother of St. Peter was a native of Bethsaida, (John 1:44) on the northern coast of Lake Galilee, twenty five miles east of Nazareth. His father's name was Jonah and mother's name was Joanna (Matthew 16:17; John 1:44; Mc Birnie, 2002).

Andrew was first a disciple of John, the Baptist. He heard about Jesus from John who proclaimed "Behold the lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). This testimony prompted him to follow Jesus. He told his brother Peter about finding the Messiah and introduced him to Jesus (John 1: 41-42). The first practical approach of Christian evangelisation is exemplified here.

Andrew was given the title '*Protokletos*' meaning 'the first called/chosen' (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). He was unmarried. As he was a disciple of John the Baptist he followed rigid abstinence and an ascetic life. Peter was the elder brother of Andrew. The society of those times gave prime importance to elder brothers and so Peter was the leading disciple. On the list of disciples Andrew's name comes second

(Matthew 10:2; Luke 6: 14) and in some contexts he occupies the fourth place (Mark 3:18; 13:3; The Acts 1: 13).

Andrew was a true Christian who was instrumental in bringing many to the saviour. Just as he brought his brother, Peter to Jesus (John 1: 41-42), it was Andrew who brought the lad who had five loaves and two small fish to Jesus (John 6:8-9).

It is assumed that he travelled in Jordan, Arabia, Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) Osreon (South eastern Turkey) and preached the Gospel among people who spoke Armenian language (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Besides that he travelled across Cappodocia, Bithynia, Galatia around the Black sea and went to Acacia (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

He is said to have been martyred by crucifixion as he precipitated the anger of the Roman provincial Governor. When he reached Patras/Patrae in Achaia/Acaia, he heard the Governor's wife Maxilla (Maximilla) was on her deathbed. As he arrived at their palace he found Aegeates, the Governor with a drawn sword ready to kill himself after the imminent death of his wife. As St. Andrews prayed she recovered and accepted Jesus as her saviour. Her brother-in-law also accepted the Christian belief. The Governor was furious as his brother and wife converted to Christianity and consequently Andrew was imprisoned (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

It is recorded that a debate ensued as St. Andrew spread the true faith and spoke against the worship of idols and during the trial he was condemned to be crucified (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Mc Birnie, 2002). In prison he could influence other prisoners and many repented. The Governor on hearing about this issued orders to crucify him on 28 November A.D. 69 (62?).

When he saw the cross made of olive wood in the shape of 'X' (St. Andrew's Cross) he hugged it with great happiness. He prayed, "May Jesus who saved me through the cross accept me now by the same cross." He was not nailed but bound to the cross tightly and the cross was made to stand erect. He suffered hunger, thirst and pain for two days in the same posture. Even in the midst of his agony he was preaching the word of God.

Nearly twenty thousand believers gathered at the time of his crucifixion. Aegeates ordered the soldiers to untie his bonds and to bring him down. But it was in vain as their extended hands soon withered. Half an hour before his ordeal came to an end his face lighted up and his soul departed for its heavenly abode. This occurred on 30 November A.D. 69 (62?). With the assistance of Maxilla his body was interred in Patrae.

His relics were transferred in A.D. 357 to the church of the Holy Apostles in Istanbul by Constantius, the son of Emperor Constantine (Hoever, 1989; Mc Birnie, 2002). The Emperor had constructed this church in A.D. 336-356. St. Andrew's feast is celebrated on 30 November.

5. St. James, the Disciple

(? – A. D. 44?)

James is the son of Zeb'-e-dee, a fisherman (Mathew 4:21), and Salome. Salome is the sister of St. Mary. James, the Lord's brother, the first Bishop of Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19), is known as the James, the Just. James, the son of Zeb'-e-dee, is known as James, the greater. Some historians infer that James, the Greater was called Greater, because he was called by Jesus ahead of James, the son of Alphaeus. James, the Greater is at least twelve years older than James, the Lesser. James, the son of Alphaeus who is younger is known as James, the Lesser.

James, the son of Zeb'-e-dee, is also known as *Bo-a-ne'r-ges*. The Greek word *Bo-a-ner'-ges* means the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17). The impetuosity of James and John is the reason for the name (*Nelson's Encyclopaedia*, 1913). Samaritans did not receive Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. Then, James and John said: "Lord will you command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elia did?" (Luke 9: 52-56). This indicates the quick temper of James and John, which earned them the name *Bo-a-ne'r-ges* (White, 1991). It is also suggested

that *Bo-a-ne'r-ges* is an unknown Armaic title (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1988).

James was with Jesus Christ to witness many important events - - at the mountain of transfiguration (Mathew 17:1-2), when the only daughter of Ja-i-rus (a ruler of the synagogue) was raised from the dead (Luke 8:42, 49-56), at Geth-sem'-a-ne (Mathew 26:37) for prayer, and when Peter's mother-in-law was healed (Mark 1: 29-31). He was always in the company of Jesus Christ.

James preached the Gospel at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9) and Judea. St. Paul speaks of James as one of the pillars of the Church. James is the first martyr among the disciples. He was killed with a sword by King Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2) in c. A. D. 44. The body of James was entombed at Jerusalem. Later, the holy relics were transferred to different places. The feast of James, the Greater, is celebrated on 1 May in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

6. St. John, the Disciple

(? - A. D. 100)

John is the younger son of Zebedee and Salome of Bethsaida. James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother were the disciples of John, the Baptist. John, the Baptist testified: " Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). On hearing this the two disciples (Andrew and John) followed Jesus (Adbul Ahad, 1948). James and John were fishermen (Mathew 4:21). They were called "Sons of Thunder."

John was different from the other disciples in various ways. John was the youngest of all disciples. Jesus loved John the most (John: 19:26). John is the only disciple who is seen standing by the cross. It is believed that John is the only disciple who did not receive martyrdom.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were surnamed *Boanerges* (Mark 3:17). The basis of this surname is attributed to their special traits of the character such as impetuosity and zeal (Mark 9:38, Luke 9:52-56; Nelson's encyclopedia, 1913). John was a witness to some important events during the ministry of Jesus Christ - - when the only daughter of Jairus was given life (Luke 8:41-

42; 49-56) in A. D. 28; when Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a fever (Mark 1:29-31); at the mountain of transfiguration (Mathew 17:1-2) in A. D. 29; and at the Mount of Olives (Mathew 26:37) in A.D.30. (The year of birth of Jesus is often reckoned as 4 B.C.).

After the crucifixion of Jesus, John spent the rest of his life at Jerusalem and Ephesus (Hoever, 1989). St. Mary lived with John until her death as was entrusted by Jesus (John 19:25-27). Until A. D. 52 John lived at Jerusalem and later moved to Ephesus (Moothedan, 2001).

Once John was challenged by a Priest of Goddess Diana and gave him poison. John survived even after drinking poison (Day, 2002). Tertullian has recorded that at Rome Emperor Domician put John in boiling oil and he came out unharmed (Moothedan, 2001). He was later (A. D. 95-96) exiled to Patmos Island.

John built several churches in Turkey. John wrote the Gospel according to John, the three epistles and the Revelation. The gospel was written at Ephesus and the Revelation was written at the Island of Patmos. John departed for heavenly abode at the age of one hundred and twenty in A. D. 100. St. John was entombed at Ephesus and a church was built over his tomb. Later, this church was converted to a mosque (Hoever, 1989). The feast of St. John is celebrated on 8 May.

7. St. Philip, the disciple

(1 ? B.C. – A.D. 89/90)

Philip was born in Bethsaida (John 1:44; 12:21). He was a fisherman and a friend of Peter. There are no historical records to endorse if he was from Sebluna or Ashir tribe. Philip, the Greek word means friend of horse.

Jesus called him to the Apostolate with the words “Follow me” and he did. The next day he introduced Nathaniel to Jesus (John 1: 43-51). Nathaniel’s acceptance of Christ is the first fruit of Philip’s Christian mission.

Before the miraculous feeding of five thousand people on five barley loaves it was to Philip that Jesus turned to ask, “Whence shall we buy the bread that they may eat?” (John 6: 5-13). It is a proof that he was the caretaker of the community of disciples.

Towards the end of the public ministry of Jesus, some Greeks came up to worship in the feast of the Passover. They approached Philip to express their desire to meet Jesus (John 12: 20-22). They may have approached him as his name was a common Greek name. It is the Greek name which made him the friend of the heathens.

In his last exhortation Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God and believe also in me. I am the way, the truth and the life. If you had known me you should have known my father also.” Philip who did not fully understand the message said unto the Lord, ‘Show us the Father and it suffices us’ (John 14: 1-14). Jesus then turned to him to say, “Have I been so long with you and yet do you not know me? He that has seen me has seen the Father...” Philip then comprehended the basis of Christian belief that those who see Jesus see God.

Philip preached the Gospel in Samaria (A.D. 36). Simon the sorcerer who had bewitched the people of Samaria believed Philip speaking on matters concerning the kingdom of God and received baptism from him (The Acts 8:9-12). In Gaza Philip baptised a eunuch who had come to Jerusalem from Ethiopia (The Acts 8: 35-39).

St. Philip had four daughters named Hermione, Carline, Irayis and Yutticane (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Some records mention only three daughters (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His wife and children helped him in the work of evangelisation. He suffered martyrdom in A.D. 90 in his eighty-ninth year in Hierapolis, Turkey (Mc Birnie, 2002). Hierapolis is a town situated six miles from Lavadosia and sixteen miles from Colossia. He was crucified upside down during the reign of Emperor Domitian. He is commemorated on 14 November.

8. St. Bartholomew, the disciple

(? – A.D. 62?)

Bartholomew was born in the town of Kothine in Galilee. There are not enough historical records to affirm whether he belonged to the Ashir tribe or Yissakkar tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His first name was Jesus. To differentiate him from the Master (Joseph, 2005) he accepted the name, Bartholomew which means son of Tolmai (White, 1991).

Bartholomew's name is seen on the list of names of the twelve apostles both in the Gospels (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14) and the Acts of Apostles (1:13). It is strongly believed by historians that the reference to "Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee" (John 21:2) is about Bartholomew (Mc Birnie, 2002; Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

It was Philip who met Bartholomew, considered to be Nathaniel and led him to Jesus (John 1: 45-51). Philip and Nathaniel were friends who awaited the coming of Christ. It was at this time Jesus found Philip and asked him to follow him (John 1:43). It was not accidental that he informed the matter to Nathaniel. "We have found

him, of whom Moses in the Law and prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). The traditional belief of the Jews was that nothing good came out of Nazareth because there is no reference to Nazareth in the Old Testament. Philip asked Nathaniel ‘to come and see’ Jesus. The meeting between Jesus and Nathaniel caused the completion of faith and the anticipated waiting (John 1: 47 – 51).

After the Pentecost he preached in Yemen, Arabia, Asia Minor, and Parthia in modern Iran (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1988). He was to be crucified with Philip in Hierapolis, Turkey (Mc Birnie, 2002) but they were saved by an earthquake (Abdul Ahad, 1948). He escaped to Greater Armenia. Later he reached Lycaonia near Caspian Sea. This place was known as Albanopolis or Urbanopolis (Derband, on the west coast of the Caspian Sea). Today it is known by the name Azerbaijan and lies partly in Iran and partly in the Soviet Union (White, 1991; Mc Birnie, 2002).

While he was travelling in Azerbaijan, Astyages the ruler captured him under the influence of the pagans. He was flayed alive and crucified upside down. This horrible event is recorded to have happened on 24 August. The Syrian Church commemorates his martyrdom on 11 June.

9. St. Thomas, the Disciple

(? – A. D. 72)

St. Thomas, one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, was a Jew. He was probably from Galeele (Aphrem, 1964; White 1992). Thomas in Armaic Syriac is known as *Teoma* and in Greek *Didymus* (John: 11:16; 20:24). The meaning of these words is twin (*The encyclopedia Americana*, 1988). The name “twin” was called because of his twin-brother Adai who later was the Episcopo of Edessa (Aphrem Aboodi, 1966; Curien, 1982). Thomas was most probably a carpenter (Britannica, 1988). The Bible has only a few references to Thomas, the disciple. Jesus went to Bethany after the death of Lazarus. Thomas along with other disciples went with Jesus. Thomas said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). The willingness of Thomas to follow Jesus unto death was fulfilled in his life.

On another occasion Jesus said, “And where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:4). Thomas said unto Him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Jesus said to him “I am the way, the truth, and the life . . .” (John 14:6). Thomas puts questions like a child for he

wants to know and believe. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He appeared to the disciples and Thomas was not with them (John 20:24). The other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord” so he said to them, “unless I see in His hands, the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Doubt is the first step to belief. Jesus Christ cleared his earnest doubt. “. . . Jesus came and said to Thomas, reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and My God !” (John 20:26-28). This confession of faith is repeated in the Holy mass when the second coming of Jesus is commemorated. This proclamation is the sum total of the salvific act of Jesus Christ on earth.

Apart from the New Testament references, Mor Aphrem, the Syrian (306-373); Gregory of Nazianzen (330-395), John Chrysostom (347-407), and Jacob of Sarug (451-521) have described the work of Thomas in India (Panicker, 1989; Koodapuzha, 1984; Kolangadan, 1995-96). These accounts are based on the ‘*Acts of St. Thomas*’. Some stone writings, coins and Tamil writings have been triangulated to suggest the work of St. Thomas in India (D’Souza, 1952; Paul, 1997). Moreover, the prayers of Syrian Church Fathers written in the 4th and 5th centuries are relied on to establish that St. Thomas preached Gospel in India.

In the *memre*' of Jacob of Sarug, it is said that the lot fell on Thomas to go to India. Thomas was hesitant to go to the black Indians (Panicker, 1989). Then, Thomas was sold as a slave to Haban (Aban), a merchant. It is also mentioned in prayers that he was sold as a mason for the construction of a building for a king (Abraham, 1981, p. 212). This first century king's name is given as Gondaphorus (Kolangadan, 1995-96). The king is also referred as Gudnapher (Menachery, 1973). Some coins of Gondophares and Gad (brother of the king) were discovered in North India in the 19th century. It must be said, however, that it by no means certain that Gordophares of the coins is the same person as Gudnapher of the Acts of St. Thomas (Menachery, 1973, p. 3).

St. Thomas was ordered to build a palace for the King. He was entrusted with twenty pieces of silver. However, when the King was absent, he used the silver for charitable purposes. When the King returned, he imprisoned St. Thomas, intending to flay him alive (White, 1991, p. 360). At that juncture, the King's brother died, and when the brother was shown the place in heaven that Thomas's good work had prepared for the King, he was allowed to return to earth and offer to buy the spot from the King for himself. The King refused, released Thomas, and was converted by him. The incident is alluded to in the evening prayer (*Bovuso*) of the first Sunday after Easter.

There are other accounts regarding the life of St. Thomas in India referred to by other writers. It is said that the King's brother (Gad) was called to life by St. Thomas after his death (Menachery, 1973). It is also mentioned that St. Thomas attended the marriage of the King's daughter. He was beaten up at the banquet. That person's hand was torn off by a dog, which St. Thomas healed (Panicker, 1989, p. 61). The miracle done at the wedding feast is referred to in the morning prayer of the first Sunday after Easter (Abraham, 1981, p. 213).

The Evangelisation of St. Thomas was primarily in the Kingdom of Gudnapher and then in places under King Mazdai (Menachery, 1973, p. 3). It is believed that St. Thomas landed at Kodungaloor in A. D. 52. He preached gospel to Jews and then to Gentiles. He established houses of worship at Maliankara, Kollam, Niranam, Chayal (Nilakkal), Gokkamangalam, Paravur (Kottakkavu), and Palayoor (D'Souza, 1952; Aphrem, 1964). He appointed elders as priests from four Brahmin families, namely; Shankarapuri, Pakalomattom, Kalli and Kaliyankal and then went to Malakka.

In A. D. 72 he was pierced with a lance on 18 December and entered the heavenly abode on 21 December at Mylapore near Chennai, India. St. Thomas was entombed at Mylapore. On 3rd July A. D. 394 the holy remains were transferred to Urhoy (Edessa) and interred there on 22 August

(Aphrem, 1964). The relocation of the relic of St. Thomas to Urhoy is described in the *Hoothomo* of the feastday. Later the holy relics were transferred to the St. Thomas Syrain Orthodox Cathedral in Mosul, Iraq. A portion of the relics was discovered by His Grace Mor Severios Zakka (later Patriarch) in the altar of the St. Thomas church, Mosul, Iraq, during renovation work in 1964.

St. Thomas is considered to be the patron of builders by the Western Church. Three dates are observed as the feast days of St. Thomas. They are: New Sunday (a movable feast), July 3 – transportaion of the relic to Urhoy, and December 21– Martyrdom.

10. St. Mathew, the Disciple

(? -A. D. 70?)

Mathew is one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. He is from Nazareth or Galilee and was of the Essakkar tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948; White, 1991). He was a Jew and the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). His original name might have been Levi and he accepted the name Mathew after becoming a disciple. In Greek, the word for disciple is "*Mathethai*." Thus, it is likely that the Jew (Levi) was later known as Mathew in the Greek. The evolution of the name is detailed in some books (e. g., Kallarangatt & Puthukulagara, 2001).

Mathew was called by Jesus while he was sitting at tax collector's place (Mathew 9:9; Luke 5:27) at Capernaum in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas (*The new encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1988; Mc Birnie, 2002). Mathew means the "gift of God." The name of Mathew appears in the list of disciples as seventh or eighth (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Mathew 10:3). This suggests that he joined the disciples much later than the other disciples.

Jews scorned the tax collectors. Tax collectors collected tax for the Roman government. They

were considered to be anti-nationalistic. It was difficult to collect tax from Jews for they thought that they were God's people and giving tax was to submit themselves to other people. Therefore, native Jews were appointed as tax collectors for the Roman government. A tax collector was a corrupt person and it was an embarrassment to be known as a collaborator of Rome. Several verses in gospels allude to this hostile attitude. ". . . saw Him eating with tax collectors and sinners . . ." (Mark 2:16). ". . . let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Mathew 18:17).

According to Pappias of Hierapolis, Mathew composed the gospel in Aramaic (Eusebius, 1980). Since the time of Irenaeus (c. A. D. 130-200) it is believed that the gospel according to Mathew in Greek is the translation of the original text in Aramaic (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1988). The gospel was written during the second half of the first century. The gospel was designed to convince that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, Our Lord, in whom all the promises about the Messianic Kingdom had been fulfilled.

Mathew evangelized a number of countries, which include Ethiopia, Persia and Parthia. Mathew went to Ethiopia during the reign of King Aeglippus. He raised the King's son (from the dead) and several people believed in Christ. At his direction they constructed a church, which was named "the Resurrection church." An antique document, *The contendings of the Apostles*,

has reference to this incident (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Mathew spent twenty-three years in Ethiopia.

It is uncertain whether he died a natural death or received the crown of martyrdom. Many authors also give the place of martyrdom differently. A few suggest that he was martyred during the rule of Emperor Domician at Ethiopia. The place of burial is either Jabala or Antioch according to Mor Michael Rabo and Mor Bar Saleebi (cited in, Abdul Ahad, 1948). Robert Guiscard transferred the holy relics of St. Mathew to the Cathedral in Salerno, Italy from Brittany (White, 1991; Mc Birnie, 2002).

Six feast days of St. Mathew are given in the Syriac Orthodox Church calendar. They are: February 24, May 20 (Four Evangelists), June 30 (the twelve disciples), August 24, September 21, and November 16. These different dates suggest that the relics of St. Mathew were transferred to different places during the course of time.

11. St. James, the disciple, the son of Alphaeus

(24 BC? – A.D. 62?)

James (Bar Halpphai Simon) son of Alphaeus is the uncle of Jesus (White, 1991). He was born in Capernaum on the west coast of the lake of Galilee (Mc Birnie, 2002). He was a tax collector of Manessa tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His mother Miriam is said to be the sister of St. Mary (Hoever, 1989).

On the scene of the crucifixion are Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, the Less and Joses and Salome (Mark 15:40). Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister Mary, wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). The gospel of Mark refers to James' mother Mariam whereas it is Mariam, wife of *Cleopas* in John's gospel. *Halpphai* is the Hebrew name and *Cleophas* is the Greek version of the same name (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

James, the son of Halpphai who is younger than James, the son of Zebadee. James, the son of *Halpphai* is called James, the Less to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee, who is referred to as James, the Great.

Whether James, the less, is the brother of Jesus is a topic which had been researched a lot (Mc Birnie, 2002). James, the brother of Jesus, is the prime prelate, the pillar of Jerusalem community and the first bishop of Jerusalem. He is the son born from the first wife of Just Joseph (Joseph, 2005, p. 21: Abdul Ahad, 1948, p. 217). James, the brother of Jesus is not included among the disciples.

In A.D. 28 James the Less became a disciple of Jesus Christ (Abdul Ahad, 1948). On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon him. He preached the Gospel in Gaza, Sur, and Arabia and Egypt. He is believed to have been crucified in Egypt. He is commemorated on 23 October.

12. St. Jude, the disciple

(? – A.D. 50?)

Juda Thaddaeus or Labbaeus was one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 10:4 he is called Labbaeus whose surname is Thaddaeus. This description is left out by modern translators.

The Greek expression “Juda of James” means the son of James (Mc Birnie, 2002). The expression became ambiguous. When the name “Judas Yacobos” was translated it was “Judas, the brother of James” in (Luke 6:16) and “Judas, the son of James” in The Acts 1:13. This is translated with exactitude in the Pshitha Bible (Abdul Ahad, 1948). “The son of James” is the correct expression.

To distinguish him from Judas Iscariot the usage “not Judas Iscariot” in John 14:22 is noteworthy. Who really is Judas’ father remains a controversial question. Is he the son of James, Zebedee’s son? (Mc Birnie, 2002) or is he the son of James, the brother of Jesus?

Many historians have recorded that James, the brother of Jesus, was a holy man who led an ascetic life and was probably unmarried. So it

is evident the reference is not to the first bishop of Jerusalem, the apostle and martyr James. Not only that in the epistle of Jude (verse 1) the writer introduces himself as the brother of James. Neither will it be logical to consider him as the son of James, Zebedee's son. Zebedee could not have had a grandson old enough to be the disciple of Jesus. The most suitable deduction will be he was the son of a person named James (Joseph, 2005).

St. Jude had preached the Gospel in Samaria, Mesopotamia and Persia. While in Persia he met Simon, the Zealot and together they spread the word of God (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Mc Birnie, 2002). It is assumed that either he was stoned to death in Yarvada islands (Abdul Ahad, 1948) or he suffered martyrdom in Arathas, near Beirut (Kallarangatt & Puthkulangara, 2001) and he was entombed in Beirut (Mc Birnie, 2002). The burial place is believed to be Kara Kelesia. His feast is celebrated on 10 May.

13. St. Simon, the Zealot

(? – A.D. 61?)

St. Simon was one of the most obscure among the disciples of Jesus. Little is recorded of him aside from his name. Simon who hailed from Galilee was the son of Cleophas of the tribe of Aphraem (Abdul Ahad, 1948). To distinguish him from Peter he is called Kananean.

Simon, the disciple is referred to as Simon in Matthew 10:3, Canaanite or Cananean Simon in Mark 3:18 and as Zealot in Luke 6:15 and The Acts of Apostles 1:13. Simon bears the surname, *Kananeos* or the *Kananean*, often wrongly interpreted to mean “from Cana”. *Kananaios* is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic word, *qena na*, meaning “the zealot” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1988, Vol.10, p. 821). It thereby ensues that Simon was not from Cana but the term *Canaanite* is a misinterpretation of the Aramaic word *qena na* during translation (e.g., Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

Peter was referred to as Simon, the Great and Simon as Simon, the Less. He was a nationalist and an enthusiast in following the Jewish rituals and customs. He was a member

of the Zealots, a Jewish group (Nationalists) that fanatically opposed the Romans prior to A.D. 70 (*Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1988; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1988). He earned the name zealot because of this. It is also believed that he was a member of the group that was organised to chase the Romans who invaded Palestine (Mc Birnie, 2002; Kallarangratt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

After the Pentecost Simon accompanied Peter to Jerusalem and later to Samaria. The Jews who listened to his speech rose against him, revolted and chased him out of town. An incident that occurred while he stayed with the Christians is cited in *The contending of the Apostles* (cited in, Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001, p. 343).

Yacoub, the son of an eminent person in charge of the Jewish synagogue died. As his disease worsened, one of the believers told the grieving father to allow Simon, a disciple of Jesus, who was present there to pray for him. Simon came there accordingly and he enquired the father whether he believed in the crucified Christ. The father replied he would if his son was raised from death. Then he would accept that Christ who died on the cross was god himself. Simon turned to the east and prayed, "Christ, our Lord, the one who was crucified during the times of Pontius Pilate, please raise this boy from death so that they will believe you are God and your name will be hallowed and everyone will believe in you." Then he walked towards the dead boy

and spoke, "Rise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so that all should believe in Jesus Christ." Suddenly the dead boy opened his eyes and sat up. Simon asked them to serve him food. The assembled crowd knelt before him and cried, "How can we be saved?" Believe in Christ and you will be saved was his answer.

Simon, the Zealot, preached the Gospel in Aleppo, Mabug, Clovedia. It is believed that his headquarters was in Kuros and he constructed a church there (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Joseph, 2005). He suffered martyrdom by crucifixion along with St. Jude in Persia on 10 May (Hoever, 1989; Mc Birnie, 2002; Joseph, 2005). The feast of Simon, the Zealot is celebrated on 10 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

14. St. Mathias, the disciple

(? – A.D. 64?)

St. Mathias was born in Bethlehem in the Ruben tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Eusebius the historian says he is one among the seventy emissaries appointed by Jesus (Hoever, 1989; Mc Birnie, 2002). He was considered as a candidate for discipleship due to his efficient leadership.

He was selected in place of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. In the upper room of the house of St. Mark, St. Peter announced to the hundred and twenty people who had assembled there the need for selecting a new disciple (The Acts 1: 15-22). Judas had been numbered with them and had obtained a part in the ministry but he betrayed Christ and lost his position; thereby St. Peter explains the quality of the person to be considered in his place.

“Wherefore of these men who have companied with us all the time that Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (The Acts 1: 21 – 22).

They nominated two; Joseph called Barsabas who was surnamed Justus and Mathias. They then prayed to the Lord who knows the hearts of all men to show them which of these two must be chosen to take part in the ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell by transgression. Then they cast their lots and the lot fell upon Mathias and he was numbered with the apostles.

St. Mathias preached in Palestine, Cappadocia and Abyssinia (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The disciple Bartholomew, Canaanite Simon, Andrew, Thaddevoos and Mathias played a significant role in evangelising in the Armenian tradition (Mc Birnie, 2002).

There are different opinions about the martyrdom of St. Mathias. One is that he was stoned to death by Jews in Jerusalem on 14 May, A.D. 64 (Abdul Ahad, 1948; McBirnie 2002). Another belief is that he suffered martyrdom in Colchis, Ethiopia (?) (Hoever, 1989; White, 1991).

It is believed that his mortal remains were taken to Rome by Queen Helen (A.D. 311 - 328?) and later it was interred at Trier, Germany (Mc Birnie, 2002). His feast is celebrated on 30 June (twelve Apostles), 4 March and 24 August.

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Name Index

Andrew, the disciple	13
Bartholomew, the disciple.....	22
James, the Disciple	16
James, the disciple, the son of Alphaeus	32
John, the Disciple	18
Jude, the disciple	34
Mary, Mother of God.....	1
Mathew, the Disciple	29
Mathias, the disciple	39
Paul, the Disciple	9
Peter, the Disciple.....	6
Philip, the disciple.....	20
Simon, the Zealot	36
Thomas, the Disciple	24

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About the Author

Corepiscopo Dr. K. Mani Rajan is the Vicar of St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana Church, Arthat, Kunnampulam, Kerala, India, since 1984. He has served St. Peter's Syrian Simhasana Church, Thrissur during 2010-16. He has served the M. M. D. M. Patriarchal Center (now, St. Mary's Church, Ithithanam, Changanacherry) from 1994 to 2003. While he was a doctoral student at University of California, Riverside, USA, he has served St. Mary's Syrian Orthodox Simhasana Church, Los Angeles, California, from 1989 to 1993. He was a faculty member and principal at St. Joseph's Training College, Mannanam, Kottayam from 1983 to 1988 & from 1994 to 2014. He was a CERC Fellow at University of California, Riverside, U.S.A. during 1990-93.

Dr. Mani Rajan holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, U.S.A. He received his B.Sc. degree (1978) from the University of Kerala, his M.Sc. degree (1980) from Jabalpur University, his B.Ed. Degree (1981 - First Rank) and M.Ed. degree (1983) from Calicut University. At present, he is a research

guide in Education at the School of Pedagogical Sciences, M.G. University, Kottayam.

Dr. Mani Rajan was ordained priest in 1984 by His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas at Damascus, Syria. His Holiness decorated him with a pectoral cross in 2000 in recognition of his services to the Simhasana church and his literary contributions to the Church. He was elevated to the rank of Cor-episcopo in 2009.

In addition to *Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of Syrian Orthodox Church* (Vols. I-V), he is the author of *Queen of the Sacraments* (1991), *The prayer book of the Syriac Orthodox Church* (1993), *Perspectives in physical science teaching* (1999), *A treatise on form and style of thesis and dissertation* (1999) and *Science of Science Education* (2004). He has authored a chapter in *Secondary Education: The Challenges Ahead* (2002) published by NIEPA, New Delhi. He is the co-author of the book - *Teaching of physical science: Theory, perspectives & practice* (2010).

He has published about twenty articles in journals and has presented half-a-dozen papers at national and international conferences. He has successfully guided two Ph.D.s in Education. He secured the best paper award in 1998. He has associated with UGC, SCERT, IASE, and SME as a resource person for workshops and seminars. He has authored,

compiled and edited a few other books in Malayalam and English. He has attended American Educational Research Association (AERA) meetings at Chicago (1991) and San Fransisco (1992). He is a member of the executive committee of the All India Association for Educational Research (AIAER).

Dr. Mani Rajan is a member of the Manjinikkara Dayra Committee. He is a visiting team member of National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). He has served Kerala Public Service Commission as a subject expert.

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