



## **Dr. Mar Aprem MOOKEN**

**Metropolitan of India**

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Mar Aprem (formerly George Davis Mookan) was born on 13 June 1940 at Thrissur, Kerala, India. George was the 4th of the ten children of Devassy and Kochu Mariyam of the Mookan family. He was active in the church since his Sunday school days. There were no priests in the families of his parents. Still he wanted to be a priest.

After studying at Bethel Nursery School in Mission Quarters he joined the CMS Boys Parish School and moved to the Chaldean Syrian School in 1949. After passing High School examination he joined the St. Thomas College, Trichur in 1955. He was in the final batch of the Intermediate Course of the Madras University in the St. Thomas College.

In 1957 after passing his intermediate examination he joined the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh. He excelled as debater and won Chief Minister Memorial Trophy of the state of Madhya Pradesh. When he was only 21 years old, immediately after four years of his B.D. course of the Serampore University at Jabalpur, he went to St. Boniface College, Warminster, England on a scholarship of the World Council of Churches. After his one year of postgraduate studies in England at St. Boniface College, Warminster (4<sup>th</sup> year course of the King's College, London University) he had short courses at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury as well as the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland in 1962.

He holds two master's degrees in Church History, one from the United Theological College, Bangalore (M.Th. of Serampore, 1966), and the other from the Union Theological Seminary, New York (S.T.M. degree in 1967). He was a candidate for Doctor of Theology (Th. D.) degree at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA. When he was made bishop and eight days later as Metropolitan at Baghdad, Iraq in September 1968. In 1976 he earned his D.Th. degree from Serampore University near Calcutta.

He was an active participant and supporter in most of the conferences and symposia held at SEERI (St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute) Kottayam. He has encouraged scholars abroad to co-operate with SEERI. He sent two students from his church to study at SEERI for M.A. degree courses and several others to do the certificate course. He has helped to project the ecumenical vision of the SEERI.

Mar Aprem has a collection of the rare Syriac Manuscripts in the Eastern Syriac. He took active part in encouraging ecumenical attempts for the preservation of these manuscripts in co-operation with SEERI. In 1995, Mahatma Gandhi University in Kottayam recognized SEERI as the Centre for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Syriac language and Literature.

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan registered for Ph.D. After 5 years of extensive research traveling and reading in Lambeth Palace Library, London, British Library, London, Oriental Institute, Rome, and the Harvard University, USA he submitted his Ph.D. dissertation in October 2000. In May 2002 he successfully defended his thesis. In October 2002 the Syndicate of the M.G.University decided to award Ph.D. degree to Mar Aprem.

Mar Aprem was given the Medal of Merit of the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre, Venice for his cultural and ecumenical experience. He was the recipient of the Literary Award of the Rotary Club of Thrissur in 1990. The first prize in the writing competition of the New Delhi based publishing House ISPCK went to him. They published that essay under the title *Adoption Abroad* (ISBN-81-7214-010-x) in 1991. He received *World Wide Award* of Thrissur as well as the *William Carey Award* of the Kraisthava Sahithya Academy. He was awarded the Mary Paul Chammanam Award by the Trichur Ecumenical Group for the best Ecumenical worker on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2002.

He delivered the 10<sup>th</sup> *Annual Chaplaincy lecture* in the Loughborough University of Technology in England in May 1994. The University published his lecture. He has lectured and preached in many places all over the world. He is at home in small groups of scholars or ordinary people as well as in large gatherings.

Ordained a *Deacon* on June 25, 1961 he became a *Priest* on the day he completed twenty-five years of age on 13 June 1965. He was consecrated *Bishop* on September 21, 1968 by Mar Thoma Darmo at Mar Zaia Cathedral in Karradat Mariam in Baghdad and promoted as a *Metropolitan* eight days later in the same Cathedral.

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan of the Chaldean Syrian Church of The East in India with headquarters in Thrissur was awarded the "MEN OF ACHIEVEMENT", Award of the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England. In 1984. This award is given to selected men and women all over the world for their distinguished achievements.

Mar Aprem has written 68 books mostly in English and a few in Malayalam such as biographies, autobiography, travelogue, church history, etc. His books *Bishop's Jokes* and *Laugh With the Bishop* have already attracted world attention. He wrote four more books in the humor series. *Laugh to Health, Holy Humour, Joy to the World* and *Holy Smile*. His seventh book of humour *Not So Funny* was released in 2004. ORBIS books in New York reprinted his book *Nestorian Missions*.

His first two humor books were translated into Russian language and released in Moscow in 1992. Some of his jokes were translated into Malayalam and published by Deepika Books, Kottayam under the caption *Vishudha Phalithangal*. This book is out of print for many years. Doma Publications, Ernakulam brought out another book in 2002 captioned *Aprem Phalithangal*.

His biography of *Mar Abimalek Timotheus* Metropolitan was translated in to the Assyrian language and published in Chicago. His books, *Council of Ephesus of 431 AD* and the *Nestorian Fathers* were translated into Arabic language and published in Iraq and Chicago. His books *Sermons From the Gospels* Vol.1 and Vol. 2 were translated into Assyrian and

published in Canada. His biographies of his two predecessors, *Mar Abimalek Timotheus* and *Mar Thoma Darmo* were published in Thrissur in Malayalam translations. The biography of Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV written by him in 1994 was sold out within a few months, His second Doctorate thesis History of the Assyrian Church in the 20th century was published in 2003 and a Malayalam translation due in 2009.

The biographical details of Mar Aprem have been given in the *Men of Achievement*, Vol. 10, Cambridge, England in 1984. His biography appears in the *International Who's Who of Intellectuals*, Vol. 6 Cambridge, 1985. The *International Directory of Distinguished Leadership*, First Edition, USA, 1986 also gives the biographical details of the Metropolitan. Similar details are found also in *Reference Asia* Vol. 2 in 1986 and Vol. 4 in 1989. *Biography International*, Delhi, 1993 also has details about him. The *Akhila Vinjyana Kosham*, DC Books, Kottayam, 1989 and many reference books in Malayalam and English languages have published details about him.

He is also a writer of devotional songs broadcast over *All India Radio*. His song *Behold the Cross of Calvary* was published in 50 Indian and 50 foreign translations. His album of 16 songs composed by Mar Aprem was released in 2007 under the title Alaha (God), Mar Aprem who has spoken in various platforms throughout India and abroad is a linguist.

He founded *The Mar Thimotheus Birth Centenary Technical Training Centre* in Trichur in 1980, which imparts free training in printing technology to students without any discrimination of caste or creed. This is funded from the World Council of Churches, Geneva through CASA, Delhi.

In June 1990 Dr. Mar Aprem read a paper in the one-man-symposium organized by the *Pro Oriente*, Vienna. The title of his paper was "Was Nestorius a Nestorian?". This was the first step to form a Syriac commission by the Pro Oriente, Vienna. He has been active in Pro Oriente since the Syriac Commission was formed in 1994. He has participated actively in its deliberations.

He is the co-Chairman of the ten-member Joint committee for Theological Dialogue between Vatican and the Assyrian Church, which meets once a year. This committee has made significant studies on the Liturgy of Mar Addai and Mar Mari as well as the Sacraments of the Assyrian Church of the East.

Since 1968 he is the head of the Church of the East in India with his headquarters in Thrissur. He was the President of the *Church History Association of India* during 1976-1982. He is a member of the *National Board of CASA* (Church's Auxiliary for Social Action) since its founding in 1976 in New Delhi. He is active in several religious and social organizations, all over India.

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## Books of Mar Aprem

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### Biographies

- 1 *Mar Thoma Darmo – A Biography*, pp. 214, 1974
- 2 *Mar Abimalek Timotheus - A Biography*, pp. 282, 1975
- 3 *Mar Abdisho Thondanat*, pp. 136, 1987

- 4 *Strange But True: An Autobiography*, pp. 236, 1981
- 5 *Not So Strange: An Autobiography, Part II*, pp. 236, 1991
- 6 *Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV. The Man and his Message*, pp. 312, 2004

### **Church History**

- 7 *Nestorian Fathers* (Reprint 2002), pp. 168, 1976
- 8 *Nestorian Missions* (Reprint 2002), pp. 134, 1976
- 9 *The Chaldean Church in India*, pp. 241, 1977
- 10 *The Council of Ephesus of 431 A.D.*, pp. 196, 1978
- 11 *Sacraments of the Church of the East*, pp. 142, 1978
- 12 *Nestorian Theology*, pp. 183, 1978
- 13 *Nestorian Lectionary & Julian Calendar*, pp. 142, 1982
- 14 *Western Missions Among Assyrians*, pp. 152, 1982
- 15 *A Nestorian Bibliography*, pp. 128, 1982
- 16 *Indian Christian Who is Who*, pp. 210, 1983
- 17 *The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East* (ISPCK, Delhi), pp. 64, 1984
- 18 *Good News Festivals in India*, pp. 224, 1984
- 19 *Indian Christian Directory*, pp. 264, 1984
- 20 *Mar Aprem, Theologian & Poet*, pp. 136, 1990
- 21 *History of the Assyrian Church in 20th century*, pp. 308, 2003
- 22 *Lectures on Indian Church History*, pp. 100, 2007

### **Travelogues**

- 23 *America Revisited*, pp. 148, 1977
- 24 *From Baghdad to Chicago*, pp. 168, 1985
- 25 *Australian Assyrians*, pp. 132, 1988
- 26 *Belgium and Holland, via U.K. & U.S.A.*, pp. 124, 1989
- 27 *Sydney to Canberra*, pp. 128, 1989
- 28 *The Assyrians in Iraq*, pp. 112, 1989
- 29 *Germany via Vienna*, pp. 140, 1980
- 30 *Washington New York*, pp. 133, 1992
- 31 *London to Moscow*, pp. 134, 1994
- 32 *Los Angeles to Tokyo*, pp. 136, 1993
- 33 *Oxford to Austria*, pp. 144, 1995
- 34 *Salzburg to Boston*, pp. 140, 1995
- 35 *Israel, Scandinavia & U.S.A.*, pp. 112, 1996
- 36 *Hassake to Hollywood*, pp. 112, 1998
- 37 *Italy, Liban & Iran*, pp. 112, 1998
- 38 *To U.K. Via U.S.A.*, pp. 104, 1999
- 39 *USA, Canada, Europe & Thailand*, pp. 104, 2000
- 40 *Austria to Australia*, pp. 104, 2001
- 41 *India to Indiana*, pp. 112, 2002
- 42 *Two Trips in 2002*, pp. 104, 2003
- 43 *Budapest to Rugby*, pp. 128, 2003
- 44 *UAE via U.K. and USA*, pp. 120, 2005

- 45 *Sharjah, Qatar & Brazil*, pp. 104, 2006
- 46 *Wiesbaden to Moscow*, pp. 105, 2007
- 47 *Dubai to Duhok*, pp. 144, 2009
- 48 *Sydney, Melbourne & Perth*, pp. 116, 2009

### **Humour**

- 49 *Bishop's Jokes* (3rd edition, Light of Life, Bombay), pp.180, 1983
- 50 *Laugh with the Bishop* (8th edition, St.Paul's,Bombay), pp. 95, 1988
- 51 *Laugh to Health*, C.L.S., Madras, pp. 82, 1992
- 52 *Holy Humour*, pp. 104, 1993
- 53 *Joy to the World*, pp. 104, 1994
- 54 *Holy Smile*, pp. 100, 1997
- 55 *Not So Funny*, pp. 112, 2004

### **Malayalam**

- 56 *An Introduction to the History of the Eastern Churches* (Revised Reprint, 1990), pp. 196, 1976
- 57 *Christeeya Bhakti Ganangal*, pp. 124, 1985
- 58 *Sabha Charitra Dictionary*, pp. 424, 1985
- 59 *Christuvinte Kalpadukalilude* (Travelogue), pp. 168, 1985

### **General**

- 60 *From Relief to Development*, pp. 282, 1979
- 61 *Teach Yourself Aramaic*, pp. 152, 1981
- 62 *Behold the Cross of Calvary*, pp. 208, 1987
- 63 *Sermons From the Gospels*, Vol. I, pp. 208, 1988
- 64 *Sermons From the Gospels*, Vol. II, pp. 138, 1988
- 65 *The Nestorian Canon Law*, pp. 138, 1990
- 66 *Mesopotamia Light*, pp. 120, 1993
- 67 *Voices of the East*, pp. 128, 1998
- 68 *Mother of the Motherless*, pp. 112, 2002
- 69 *Poems and Prayers*, pp. 100, 2002
- 70 *Chicago Via Abu Dhabi*, pp. 124, 2010
- 71 *Assyrian Manuscripts in India*, pp. 240, 2011

### **To be published in 2011**

- 1 *The Chaldean Syrian Church in Trichur*, D.Th. dissertation submitted to Serampore Senate in 1976
- 2 *Assyrian Fathers*
- 3 *Los Angeles to Dubai*