

A Tribute to Dr. Rajendran

**Former General Secretary, India Missions Association and
Missions Secretary, World Evangelical Association**

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Life is a journey. In this journey we meet many people. Some journey with you for a long distance, some do not. Dr. K. Rajendran is one of those with whom I had the privilege to share a substantial portion of my life spanning a quarter century.

First Meeting

We met each other in an unusual place. The board meeting of an organization (India Missions Association—IMA) was taking place in December 1997. I was supposed to be interviewed for a position but was not invited inside. Another person was also waiting for another position in that same organization. In fact, I was in low spirits as our family had shifted from Chandigarh to Chennai, without knowing our future. Dr. Rajendran was chosen and appointed later.

Teacher in Hindustan Bible Institute

I was doing my master's in theology (Missiology) in the Hindustan Bible Institute, starting in September 1998. He came to teach one modular course in early 1999. He found me to be asking several questions and giving new perspectives. Then he asked me to come and meet him in his India Missions Association office in May 1999.

Life-changing Conversations

What is your vision?

In his office Dr. Rajendran and I had a wonderful conversation. He asked me to explain about my vision for missions. I talked a lot about Urban Missions. I said something like this: "In the pursuit of reaching villages, the Indian Church has lost the cities. Now cities are more unreached than villages, and in many places people are becoming resistant to the gospel."

Write your vision.

Then Rajendran asked me to write my vision in a paper and meet him next week. I typed my vision sitting in an Internet Café, got a printout, and went to meet him. He read it for few minutes. As an encourager, he appreciated and approved my vision.

Implement the vision.

Rajendran said, "Implement the vision. India Missions Association (IMA) is your platform." I joined IMA as part-time staff, as my M.Th. was not yet complete. Mornings would be classes in Hindustan Bible Institute, and afternoons would be in the IMA office.

Paradigm Shift in Missions

It was wonderful to work with Rajendran as he trusted people, delegated authority, and gave freedom to innovate, experiment, and fail. That is exactly what I needed.

- Over the next three years (1999-2001), IMA facilitated over 50 urban consultations in over 50 cities across India. Awareness grew for prioritizing Urban Missions.
- The *India Missions* magazine was transformed to a journal, in which I had the privilege to write and sometimes edit articles.
- Initiated research in 100 cities in India, which was later published as a book in 2003.
- Developed tools (posters, PowerPoint presentations, Over Head Projector transparencies) to present mission challenges that were used for more than two decades.
- Initiated several e-groups to connect leaders who were interested in such specialized ministries as Urban Missions, Children At Risk, and Reaching the Middle Class.
- Information should be used as tool for intercession. I was entrusted with the task of organizing half-a-day prayer for an IMA conference in 2002 at Pune. The prayer time set new standards for prayer, and the PowerPoint used became a booklet for prayer.

More Open Doors

Rajendran created platforms for others. In many places where he was supposed to speak, he had sent me instead. Each time it was a baptism of fire. I had to step in the pulpit addressing stalwarts, seniors, and experts. Once, Rajendran quietly asked me to speak in his place in a conference in Singapore in 2001.

First Trip to the USA

I received an invitation to go for Haggai International training in Maui, USA. I informed Rajendran but deliberately forgot about the invitation. Our children were moving to higher education, and I was unable to think about registration fees and visa fees. One afternoon he called me and asked about what happened to my Haggai training. I replied that I might not go because of family needs. He gave me office advance (IOU or cash advance from salary) and asked me to go for a visa the next day. Standing in queue from early morning to midday, I procured my visa. When I informed Rajendran, he took me in his car. We stopped in a shop and bought me a trolley bag with wheels. "From now on you will have to use this bag for your air travel," he told me. Until that time, I had never travelled in flight. I used to travel in trains using a sturdy suitcase and a sleeping bag.

Later he sent me to other conferences overseas.

Sending Hosanna as a "Student Missionary"

When our daughter Hosanna got an opportunity to go to Russia (later to Belarus) for doing medicine in 2002, we were perplexed about paying her fees and sending her. Rajendran said to us: "You have done great work. People know you. But you have never asked for funds from friends. Write to a few people, asking them to gift you some money for sending your daughter as student missionary." He gave the first donation. We his advice, and God met our needs. That became a great model. From then on, hundreds of missionary kids went to Russia and other countries for their education. Like us, he grieved when Hosanna went to be with the Lord in 2011.

Speak, Write, Connect

If I sum up my experience with Rajendran, there are three words: Speak, write, and connect. He encouraged me to speak as voice of the voiceless, truth, and new ideas for missions. But not just

speak: he encouraged me to keep on writing. After several years (in 2019) he said: “Mano, whatever you write I read. Keep writing.” That was one of the reasons for writing over a dozen books. Connect was his third advice. He was a great networker and was always willing to connect people with his friends. It was a great learning experience to network using his model.

Challenge

One more legendary figure fades away from the horizon. He has gone ahead of us as a great model, inspirer, hand-holder, and a ladder to climb great heights. I am deeply grateful to God for blessing my life and our country with such leaders.