

clinic while negotiating for land to build a hospital. In 1955, 16 acres of land were acquired in Qalandarabad, and construction of the Bach Christian Hospital (BCH) was begun. The hospital was officially opened in 1956. The clinic building was completed first, followed by that of the ward in 1957. In 1962, the surgery building was erected. In 1970, adequate water became available for the hospital with the digging of a 365 m deep tubewell. A chapel was built in 1971, followed later by a nurses' hostel and a restructured clinic building. The other structures constructed on the hospital premises included staff quarters, bungalows, and a basketball court.

When the Karsgaards left Pakistan* in 1962, Phyllis Irwin carried on the hospital work from 1957 until 1990. Many doctors and nurses have come from at least eight countries, including Pakistan, to serve at the hospital from a few weeks or months to several years. The present staff of eight doctors serves in a well-equipped fifty-bed hospital. An average of 50,000 outpatients are seen yearly, with about 4,500 admissions, 1,400 deliveries, and 2,000 major and minor surgeries taking place there.

Various training programmes have also been developed at BCH, starting with training in laboratory and X-ray technologies. Later, a course for nurse aides and then one for midwifery were also begun. The most recent development has been the commencement of a physiotherapy course at the hospital. Many of these graduates now work in other mission hospitals. Medical students have come from abroad for short periods during their senior year internship. Pakistani residents from the Aga Khan Medical School in Karachi have taken rotations in surgery and family practice at the hospital. A Community Health Project, which was begun in the 1980s, now reaches over eighty villages.

There has always been a strong Christian evangelistic emphasis at BCH. The hospital was close to the epicentre of the devastating earthquake that took place in Pakistan on 8 October 2005, but suffered virtually no damage. It was strategically located to be able to treat hundreds of injured people, and the bed capacity was increased with the use of large tents. The hospital provided families tents and relief supplies as they returned home. Volunteers and former medical staff came from several countries to help in this crisis. Bach Christian Hospital plans a long-term recovery programme in the affected area for rebuilding homes and establishing local medical clinics. Thus, a whole new era of opportunity has opened up for this

important institution to bring relief in a tangible way to the devastated northern areas of Pakistan.

PHYLLIS VIVIAN IRWIN

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BADAGA CHRISTIANITY IN THE

NILGIRIS The Badaga community is the largest of the indigenous communities of the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu* where conversion to Christianity has taken place in a significant way. The Badagas are Hindus by religion and belong to the Saivite/Lingayat sect. Their language is 'badaga', a prototype of Kannada. Today their population is estimated to be around 2,00,000. They are spread out among 375 villages called 'Hatti'. They are generally agriculturalists though they are sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'tribes'. The state government of Tamil Nadu classifies them as a 'backward class', next to the 'forward class' in the social hierarchy. The Badaga identity is asserted through various cultural symbols such as music, poetry, dance, food, and dress. They take pride in their progressive attitude towards farming techniques, education, occupation, and living standards.

Christian missionary work among the Badagas was started in the year 1846 by the Basel Mission from the State of Baden-Württemberg in Germany. These missionaries faced many hardships and opposition from the Badagas in the beginning. The Badagas were reserved and closed in their attitude towards the missionaries and did not want to establish any contact relationship with them. They did not want to convert to another religion, but needed medicines and medical help. Some of the German missionaries were doctors. This helped the latter establish good contact with the Badagas. The missionaries studied two languages, first Kannada and then Badaga. The Christian conversion of the Badagas was, to an extent, due to economic and educational reasons. Mass conversions never took place among the

Badagas. The Basel missionaries worked among the Badagas with vision and commitment.

Today, there are around 7,000 Badaga Christians. Most of them continue to live in the Nilgiri Hills. Many of them have moved to big cities and towns outside the Nilgiris district, like Chennai, Coimbatore, and Bangalore, for occupational reasons. A sizeable number of them live in various other states of India and countries abroad, especially in the Middle East, North America, and Europe. This progressive Badaga Christian community tries to maintain its 'roots' and its relationship with its Hindu family members to which each Badaga Christian once belonged.

The Badaga Christians have, over the course of time, merged with the Tamil congregations of the Nilgiri Hills. The congregations in Kotagiri, Thanthanadu, Milidhane, Thuneru, Hulical, Kallatti, and Ketti are mostly Badaga Christians. The language in which they worship is Tamil. However, there are other newer congregations elsewhere in the Nilgiris where Badaga worship services are conducted under the leadership of Pastor Belliraj. These congregations are popularly known as *hosa bathukku*, which means new life. The Church of South India* (CSI) Coimbatore Diocese has nine Badaga pastors in active service, who are working in various congregations of the diocese.

TIMOTHY RAVINDER

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BAKHT SINGH MOVEMENT/ASSEMBLIES

Bakht Singh (1903–2000) is the spiritual father of and a spiritual role model to tens of thousands of believers across the world. He was an evangelist, revivalist, and indigenous church planter, who founded churches based on the New Testament principles.

After serving as an itinerant evangelist for a few years in Karachi and other parts of Punjab, Bakht Singh went to Madras* in 1938 and then on to Kerala* and other parts of south India. The first church, Jehovah Shamma, was established by him in Madras, Tamil Nadu*, on 12 July 1941 and soon thereafter, other churches were established across Andhra Pradesh* (AP) and other parts

of India. During the next twenty years, more than 200 local assemblies were formed by Bakht Singh. Today, assemblies are found in many parts of India* from Kalimpong to Kanyakumari as well as in Pakistan*, Sri Lanka*, Australia, and other parts of the world.

Bakht Singh and some of his co-workers moved to Elim, Hyderabad on 25 September 1950. In the mid-1950s, new facilities were created to house the local and extra-local church ministry. He called the new place Hebron. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the local churches established by Bakht Singh and his co-workers multiplied rapidly in India, especially in AP.

Worship in the Assemblies is culturally indigenous, with elements derived from familiar local cultural practices similar to those followed in the Gurdwaras of Punjab. Here is a distinctive north Indian cultural incarnation of the Christian Faith, in which Biblical practices are adapted to the Indian experience. Devotional singing, testimonials, shared experiences, the congregation seated on mats on the floor with participation by all as they are moved by the Holy Spirit, and the central prominence of the Bible are regular features of the Assemblies.

A defining characteristic of the movement is its Bible-centred preaching and teaching. Throughout his ministry, Bakht Singh gave priority to the Bible. He stipulated that every believer should own and carry a Bible everywhere. It is reported that during some campaigns, all available stocks of the Bible were sold out and fresh supplies had to be rushed in from the neighbouring states. The text of the Bible is carefully expounded for an hour or more, with translation as required, during the Sunday worship of the Assemblies.

The Assemblies have no official hierarchical structure or paid clergy. Elders are set apart to guide the spiritual life of the local church. Annual All-India Holy Convocations constitute a distinctive feature of the Movement, which was characterized by an eight-day meeting attended by as many as 5,000 to 10,000 devotees during the days of Bakht Singh's active involvement. These gatherings served to awaken the realization that 'every believer is called to serve'. Many of those involved in secular work became instrumental in starting worshipping groups in their own localities. Every group became active in street preaching, penetrating their own unreached areas.

To a certain extent, Bakht Singh managed to pull down the dividing walls between different cultures.