

JEDISTAN REPORT
20 NOVEMBER 2005

The presenter began by quoting I Thessalonians 5:24, “The God who has called you is faithful. He is also able to do it.” The presenter then indicated that the entire presentation would be a testimony to God’s faithfulness and that he really is bringing large numbers of Muslims to faith.

The country in question has a population of 140 million, almost all of whom are Muslims.

In 2002 an assessment was done which indicated rapidly multiplying congregations among the population, with total number of believers close to 100,000. The 2002 assessment generated a firestorm of skepticism and hostility which centered around 5 specific points.

- A. This is impossible. God cannot save that many Muslims.
- B. This must be a C-5, highly contextualized, movement which does not require people to become genuine Christians.
- C. The reporting of data is faulty and suspect and, therefore, the conclusions are not valid.
- D. For a group to grow this quickly, it must encompass bad theology.
- E. These groups must have non-standard, bad polity, which will make their congregational life suspect.

The presenter spent several days in the southeastern district of Cox’s Bazaar and Chittagong. This particular district has a population of 30-35 million. The presenter, along with another foreigner who was a local language speaker, and other local believers, arranged to interview a wide variety of MBBs and carefully documented the responses to a list of questions that were being asked throughout the country.

The presenter indicated that, for a variety of cultural reasons, it was not possible to verify the exact extent of the movement. The final report that will be prepared will not give a definitive statement regarding the number of new believers.

The report will confirm that:

- a. the growth is real,
- b. salvation is real,
- c. those coming to Christ answered all of the appropriate questions in terms of orthodoxy,
- d. new believers exhibited a strong faith in Jesus Christ,
- e. new believers have clearly separated themselves from their previous religion,
- f. believers have a solid understanding of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

There are several separate and distinct movements within the country, colloquially referred to as “Stream A” and “Stream B.” Stream A is totally indigenous, with only local leadership and local funding, and is growing by far the fastest. Stream B, which has received considerable financial support from the IMB, has numerous difficulties and problems which will not be addressed in this report. However, the bottom line is that these surveyors interviewed only individuals from Stream A. Stream A, the indigenous stream, is receiving some small amounts of outside money which does not reach the grass root edge where it is growing. However, that outside money does make it possible to provide an increased number of scriptures that would not be available otherwise.

The presenter gave two testimonies, detailing specific experiences of MBBs. The first was a 15 year old boy who became a believer at age 13. He was witnessed to by a peer who then encouraged him to “read this book”. After one to two weeks, the interviewee reported that he had encountered Isa frequently in the book and had determined that Isa was the true Son of God and was worthy of obedience. Immediately, this 13 year old boy felt that he must tell his father, for which action he was expelled from home. However, after a few months he was allowed to return home and gave his father a Bible. Two months after his father received the Bible he became a believer and started a small jamat in his home. The father led his wife to become a Christian. The wife led her adult sisters to become Christians. Her sisters led their aunts to become Christians, and several subsequent streams of multiplying jamats resulted through this series of salvation experiences.

The second interviewee whose situation was described in detail was a 24 year old university student who has been used to start numerous jamats through her intentional, persistent witness. The day she was to meet the foreigners she received a cell phone call threatening her with being disfigured by acid if she met with the foreigners and talked about what was going on. Her request to the foreign interviewers was only for prayer. Her testimony indicated that “God wants all the B.... people to come to Isa. Persecution is in the Bible. Persecution is normal. The treat against me is normal for believers here.” When asked by the foreign interviewer about the reason for the rapid growth in believers, her answer was, “The reason is Isa. People hear about Isa. When people hear about and study Isa they want to believe. It is Isa that draws people to Himself. When the interviewers expressed some hesitancy about her belief that many more would quickly become believers, she chastised them for their lack of faith, or at least the interviewers themselves felt this sense of chastisement when they heard of her faith. (It was unclear as to which of these was the real situation.)

The following are major truths observed throughout the movement.

1. Almost everyone has come to faith through mouth-to-ear (M2E) evangelism. Some shared with them about Isa and what Isa had done in their life. This new believer used the Bible, reading it to others, giving portions (such as Luke or the

New Testament) to non-believers and asking them to read it for themselves. Or they heard stories in some situations, or they watched the “Jesus” Film. In all cases, the stories, Bible readings, or film pointed to Isa and it was the impact of the scripture that was the common element. Some indicated that they originally became interested through reading the book of Job. Others became interested through reading Luke. A few testimonies indicated that the temptations of Isa had particularly moved them. The common element in all the testimonies about M2E evangelism was that Isa impacted the non-believer.

2. This sharing was along multiple relationship lines. Children became believers and immediately went to parents, brothers and sisters. Adults became believers and immediately led their children and siblings to faith. People living in close community were invited to come, sit down, and see what was going on in these churches which usually met in the open air. Generally, they began a 3-6 month process of coming to faith. Commonly, the relationship chains were among blood relatives, but sometimes it was along friendship or employment lines. Several interviewees indicated that the same day became believers, they immediately began to share with friends, relatives, and close family.
3. This sharing was characterized by boldness and passion. New believers had the DNA to share. They immediately went to family and friends without fear, and with an intentional desire to see them come to faith. They referred to it as boldness combined with peacefulness, and passion combined with patience. The presenter indicated that new believers did not want embarrassment to come to their parents. They peacefully shared their salvation experience. They peacefully asked them to watch the “Jesus” Film, read the gospel of Luke, or read the Bible. They did not delay in sharing their newfound faith, but boldly and immediately told family members what Isa had done for them. They were patient, recognizing that often it would take weeks, or even as long as 3-4 months, but the consistent testimony was that if a Muslim hears the truth, s/he will come to Christ when they understand about Isa.
4. Prayer is a huge piece in this CPM. Jamats typically have up to 45 minutes of intercessory prayer per service. Individual MBBs pray for family, friends, and all the lost. They pray for other Muslims around the world who are lost. It was not clear the extent to which this prayer also includes the realm of praying for ill friends, praying for jobless friends, or praying for God to help people in distress.
5. Reproduction is not church to church, but is person to person. A person is normally baptized by the person who led them to faith. A new believer in an area where there were no believers and churches, would normally simply begin a new church and would begin to lead it. There was not an evidence of churches intentionally deciding to start daughter churches, but strong evidence of

individual believers who are passionate to bring the lost to faith, going out on their own initiative to share and start new jamats. The pattern sketched by the presenter indicated a random, jumbled mess in which reproduction often looked like a spider web rather than a neat Western flow chart resembling a pyramid. It was evident that many Christians had a burden and recognized the responsibility to immediately pass the faith on to others.

6. Everyone had a strong confession of Christ as the Son of God, which was expressed in their baptismal experience. When asked about the meaning of baptism, many were able either to quote scripture or refer to scripture, indicating that the baptism was the baptism commanded by Isa, and represented his death, burial and resurrection and also represented their new birth into the Christian community. Baptism was generally considered to be a “confession of faith.”
7. They expect other Muslims to come to faith when they hear the simple truth of Isa/Jesus. New believers have a real confidence in the power of God and His Word. They have a built in competence and confidence that came with their salvation. The commonly heard phrase went something like this, “Of course, when other Muslims hear about Isa they will also follow and obey him.”
8. There was a clear break with their past. These MBBs immediately left the mosque, got rid of their Quaran, stopped observing Ramadan and Korban. in a sense, they acquired a brand new DNA for their lives. There was little to no evidence of syncretism, returning to the mosque, or continuing with explicitly Islamic practices. When asked what they did with their Quaran, many indicated that they returned it to the local mosque.
9. There was very little outside assistance, either financial or in usage of volunteers. Volunteers have not been used in any of the evangelism. They have been used in a number of training situations, but most of these volunteers are experienced cross-cultural workers who are involved in training at an upper level. It was unknown as to the extent to which these volunteer trainers were used in Stream A or Stream B.
10. There were usually non-believers visiting and being a part of most jamats. Lost people are invited to come and listen to what is happening in the jamat, sometimes by friends and family, and sometimes simply as a drop in. Since most jamats meet outside, possibly under a tree, it is normal for closely packed, dense populations to be aware of what is happening, walk by, and be invited to join. When baptized members are absent from a regular worship service, it is normal for someone to immediately go check on them and determine why they are not in worship. The average size of a jamat seems to be between 20-40 persons. When believers were asked by interviewers what happens when someone sins, the

answer was a totally Biblical pattern was that first the Imam would go one to one to talk to the individual. If that did not bring about a resolution, then several people would go. Thirdly, often the entire membership would take on the unrepentant individual. There seemed to be a strong, biblical pattern of dealing with those who failed to live up to the expectation of Scripture.

Three unexpected results:

1. There was very little “perceived” persecution. There were some documented beatings, some being expelled from homes, and some oral abuse. Many did not even consider these incidents as persecution, but normative to being a believer in this situation. Some of those interviewed had heard of other things, but had no personal experience of more severe persecution. More than one person indicated that even in situations where someone was expelled or driven from their home, two or three months later they were usually allowed to return, and within a few more months their entire household believed.
2. There was very little usage of the Quran as a book. Some explained that if they were not able to move people to the Injil, they would use one or two short verses from the Quran in order to move the person to the gospels. After that there was no more usage of the Quran. Most gave their Quran back to the mosque upon conversion. If they happened to use one, they asked the person they are sharing with if they have one and then show them the verses using their own Quran. Those that did use a few verses stated that some knowledge and ability to use these verses helped them overcome their fear when speaking with someone who knew the Quran. They said, “If I am dealing with someone who has had training in Quranic school then I might use a few Quranic verse.” However, that is not the normal method of witnessing. The normal method of witnessing is to start immediately with Isa, both what He is doing in their contemporary life and what He did in his earthly life 2,000 years ago.
3. There was no usage of Chronological Bible Storying (CBS) in the evangelism phase. Stories were shared on a situational basis, always leading to Isa. CBS is being used in some training after the initial lessons on obedience and assurance of salvation. Stories of Isa that seem to be particularly effective include the miracle stories, Isa walking on water, Isa’s demonstration of His relationship with his Father.

The following ten truths were considered critical keys for Muslim work.

1. Strongly emphasize mouth to ear (M2E), face to face, person to person evangelism, utilizing stories or scripture about Isa.

2. The Bible in a Muslim friendly version, which uses words such as “Allah,” “Isa,” and other names familiar to Muslims is a significant help in this evangelism. Having the Bible use words that are not offensive to Muslims make it easy for a believer to give a book of Luke, New Testament, or whole Bible to a Muslim, ask them to read it, and then be prepared for the Holy Spirit to work and for the witness to answer questions that arise from the scripture.
3. Usage of some Quranic verses with some select people might be effective. This could be used with Muslims who are stronger in their understanding of the Quran, such as those who have attended madrassahs or are mosque leaders. However, this was not considered necessary in most personal witnessing encounters. The summation statement was as follows, “If no bridge is needed, go straight to Isa.”
4. Don’t get in the way of someone coming out of Islam. Be bold, be straight forward, be patient. Do not try to force them to do something they do not want to do. Show respect, but don’t put up barriers such as a building or formal classes as a requirement for someone to come to faith.
5. Take every opportunity God gives you to share, and watch for the “super spreaders.” This is the concept of massive seed sowing. Some individuals do this naturally and are gifted in it. They are super spreaders. The presenter gave an extended example of a poor, humble rice farmer who has started about 100 separate jamats. When he is harvesting his rice, he is sharing Isa with the hired hands. When he is taking his rice to market, he shares Isa with the rickshaw pullers. When he is selling his rice in the market, he is sharing Isa with customers and other vendors. He is continually sharing about Isa, following up with those who believe, and has started approximately 100 jamats. He is a super spreader, even though he apparently has much less formal education than other typical believers.
6. Build streams around those people who are obedient. Model for them and disciple them. People start new churches. Churches do not start new churches. Build the support of prayer, discipling, and scripture around those who are starting multiple streams.
7. Learn from the lost. They will show you what they need to come to faith. Be patient with them. God will bring them to faith. It was repeatedly reported that when you are sensitive to what non-Christians are saying, you will learn from them what their questions are and then you will learn how to lead them to faith. Do not assume that you know another person’s barriers. Patience is recommended because it sometimes takes two, three or four months, but there is a quiet confidence that God will bring them to faith.

8. Be clear on what a person professes when they come to faith. What are their real allegiances? Make sure their allegiance is not to you as a person, to a church, to an agency, to a job, or even to the Bible. Probe the motives and testimony of every new believer and ensure that their faith is rooted in Isa.
9. Be certain of what you believe the gospel is asking of people.
“Salvation causes a life shift.”
“Baptism causes a community shift.”

Be very clear in communicating what the gospel requires and asks of people when they come to faith. Do not downplay the commitment and obedience required to become a believer.

10. It is going to be messy! Don't think that non-believers will understand everything at first, or that new believers will immediately understand everything. There will be huge mistakes. Structures of the Christian movement will be fluid and flexible at best. A strong Christology, a strong applied theology, a strong ecclesiology are not going to happen at day one and probably not at day two. This will come with additional, intentional training.

The team received a new definition. A “fundamentalist” simply means the person is passionate. They desire to please God. Win these folks and they will become great evangelists.

It is estimated, based on interviews, that in the one district this 2 person interview team surveyed, there are approximately 4,000 jamats and 100,000 believers. This is only one small part of the nation.

The following is a summary of the question and answer dialogue with the presenter.

1. Local and foreign believers do not seem to have any fear in protecting their platform.
2. Most evangelism seems to be M2E about Isa. It was repeatedly pointed out that the subject of most conversations is Isa.
3. The dense population could possibly have some effect on how quickly the gospel is spreading person to person. Almost all persecution is by family, although after someone has been a believer for a few years that family persecution seems to dissipate.

4. It was pointed out that some kinds of training are not effective. The Central Committee contains two persons from each district. Below the district level there are also committees with two persons from each division. It would appear that not much formal training is being conducted below the district level. There was a genuine invitation to have foreigners assist in some training.
5. Additional questions were asked about training. In response to one question, a local leader answered as follows, "The same Holy Spirit that teaches you also teaches us from scripture."
6. Individuals were burdened for their relatives, family, friends, or neighbors who dropped into a local jamat. There did not seem to be much organized, intentional, planned church planting.
7. The RSA for South Asia was mentioned, as were others from that region who made comments about the LEAD team.
8. Signs and wonders were referenced after salvation, but generally not before salvation. A few divine healings were reported, but not many. Some believers who are not yet baptized reported that Isa appeared to them in a dream and told them to go be baptized.
9. This movement may have begun as early as 1986, began explosive growth by 1998 and through 2002. The typical time for an individual to come to faith was 3-4 months. The typical wait for baptism following belief was two months.
10. All levels of society are represented. The presenter had interviewed individuals with a university master's degree, as well as a poor, uneducated rice farmer. (This is the rice farmer who has started 100 churches.)
11. A typical jamat service on Friday consists of the following order of worship.
 - Prayer
 - Song
 - Read or tell a story from the Bible
 - Questions and application of that story to personal life, with the imam often explaining that truth
 - Personal application
 - Songs (it was noted that new believers love to sing)
 - Prayer requests which can take from 45 minutes to an hour of concentrated prayer.
 - Giving of the 10% to the jamat treasurer
 - Prayer
 - Determining immediately what to do with the funds, such as

purchasing a Bible, helping someone in need, etc.
Determining where to meet next week
More songs and prayers

12. Typical jamats have 15-40 persons. Size varies. Services are normally on Friday.
13. Lord's Supper is sometimes a special service, not on Friday. Coke and Marie Biscuits are the normal elements.
14. Most of the families are involved in daily morning and evening scripture reading, which lasts up to 30 minutes. A typical believing family might have 30 minutes of scripture reading in the morning, 30 minutes in the evening, averaging one hour of scripture reading/study per day. This seems to be one of the reasons for the strong biblical basis of the movement, and the ability of average believers to answer questions about the Bible.
15. The general population appears to be much more able to learn from reading scripture than was originally assumed. Many people want Bibles, use Bibles, and greatly benefit from individual/family Bible readings.
16. Sometimes mothers gather children from the community 2-3 times per week either to read the scripture to them or tell them a Bible story. One mother who was being interviewed brought her 5 year old, who wrote out a simple, few line testimony. Reading and studying the Bible seems to be a high value activity for believers.
17. New believers frequently reported that they went out and told their family immediately about Isa.
18. There was a question raised about whether these believers consider the "Allah" of the Quran to be the same as the "Allah" of the Bible. It was emphatically reported that the Allah of the Quran shows no love, no compassion, and none of the characteristics of the Isa of the Bible. The Allah of the Bible is the Allah of love, mercy and compassion.