

Badaga



Most new Badaga Christians do not openly confess their faith, out of fear of rejection by their community.

Population: 250,000 (2.5 lakhs)

Literacy: 60%

Scripture Status: New Testament is available.

Balan was shocked. He couldn't believe what he had heard from his friend and neighbour from his native village. "Yes, Balan, your father died two days ago, and the funeral was

yesterday." Even as these words kept echoing in his ears, he knew very well that this was the cost of his decision to follow Jesus. Balan was not welcome in his home or village, any more. The friendly and hospitable Badaga are spread throughout the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. Their traditional occupation was shifting cultivation, but now they have changed over to settled agriculture, tea plantations in particular. Traditionally the Badaga women are very hard working and are the mainstay of their families and community. Women till the soil, harvest the produce, collect firewood and water, and tend cows, in addition to caring for their families. They grow different kinds of vegetables, tea and coffee. Nearly 85% of them are Hindus and 10% belong to other religions. Christian work among the Badaga was initiated by the Basel German Mission from Mangalore in 1846. Today, Christians number nearly 5,000, consisting of those who are Christians



by tradition as well as new converts. It is interesting that out of these Christians nearly 50 have become Christian workers focusing on their own community.

Traditional Badaga Christians are usually city based and have integrated with multi-racial churches that worship in Tamil or English. Newer Badaga Christians have formed their own community churches that worship using the Badaga language. These churches also reach out to their communities and are growing, often through divine interventions such as miraculous healings. While some newer Badaga Christians openly confess their faith, most of them do not do so openly, out of fear of rejection by their community. Those who do so go through some painful experiences like Balan.

Several Christian resources such as the New Testament, Audio Bible (NT), Jesus Film, tracts, Christian songs on CD, and radio programmes are available in the Badaga language. People, resources and strategies are needed to promote Badaga Scripture that can penetrate the hearts of the Badaga and lead to lasting transformation.

Pray for:

1. God to open doors for the Gospel to reach all Badagas effectively, in their own language.
2. The establishment of many more indigenous worshipping groups that are culturally appropriate.
3. Those who put their faith in Jesus to stand firm, unafraid of opposition from their own community.
4. The Badaga New Testament and other resources to be used effectively by the Badaga churches.

