

## **A Survey and Analysis of Church Growth Among the Bhojpuri of Northern India October 2000**

*“I preached for over 20 years in this region with little results, but now, if I witness to ten Hindus, seven will accept Christ. I do not know what has happened, but I hope it never stops.”*

- Older Swedish Baptist Pastor

**Purpose of the Analysis:** This analysis was designed to determine the character, methodology and status of church growth among the Bhojpuri people of northern India as of October 2000. The basic question addressed during the on-site interviews was—“Has the increased growth that has reportedly been occurring among the Bhojpuri since the early 1990s reached the status and scope of a Church Planting Movement as some have suggested?”

### **The Research Methodology**

The opportunity to perform a Church Growth audit of the Bhojpuri came only four and one-half months prior to the actual time of the survey. Even then, the plan to conduct the survey was off and on at least a couple of times within that four and one-half month period. In May and June of 2000, there were discussions with David Watson about a team of researchers attending the Annual Conference in October to determine the status and scope of church planting among the Bhojpuri people. He was excited about the opportunity and accepted responsibility to handle the logistics for the team to conduct the research. The team made plans to travel with him to India. Soon after those plans were made, David Watson was hospitalized due to at least two serious medical problems. Questions arose concerning the appropriateness and ability of the team to follow through with the research, but Roamer encouraged the group to continue. He then passed off the logistics to Will Carrion who, on very short notice, had to return to India from a furlough in Sweden to handle the Conference and the unexpected presence of three researchers. Questions then arose among the survey team concerning the wisdom of putting that much more responsibility on Will Carrion. The decision was to continue. Originally, Jim Slack and Scott Holste were to be the researchers, but family medical problems arose which brought into question Scott’s participation. This led the team to ask James O. Terry to join the team, just in case Scott had to withdraw. Eventually, all three went to India and participated in the survey. Having three researchers present was valuable in light of the way the research had to be conducted and in light of the number of people and groups to be interviewed within such a short time.

Based upon similar surveys in other parts of the world, an instrument was prepared and tested prior to departure for India. Initially the intention was to conduct extensive, in-depth interviews of conference participants. After some interviews it became apparent that

the survey methodology would have to be modified to fit the unique constraints of the research opportunity. It was quickly obvious that the instrument was challenging for conference participants who were very young Christians, and for individuals who had never been interviewed or seen anyone interviewed. Also, persecution continues as a threat to Christians, and some leaders, who knew little to nothing about the research, were concerned about giving so much information to people they did not know. Some likened it to a “police interrogation,” which was never the intent of the research team. Also, through the years, leaders had established a guideline for conferences, expecting every participant to be in every session. These young Christians and young pastor-church planters wanted to be in every session to hear everything that was said and to sing every song they could sing. The research team felt these were reasonable, so the research plan was adjusted on-site.

Consequently, a number of avenues of approach were worked out between the researchers and local leaders. Other in-depth interviews of older, more mature leaders who were comfortable with an involved interview were conducted each day. This allowed the team to probe a number of situations very deeply. In-depth, but less formal individual interviews with leaders of various mission entities, with pastors, and with church planters were conducted. During most of these a tape recorder was used to capture the full interview. Various conference leaders suggested that the researchers use an initial time slot at the beginning of each morning and afternoon small group session to conduct the interviews. This proved to be an effective means of securing the desired information from members, pastors, church planters, and evangelists. Conference leaders served as translators and moved person to person within each group in asking the questions on the shorter survey instrument. Volunteers from New Jersey churches, all of them pastors, and from First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Georgia came at The Consortium’s invitation to assist in some of the training modules during the Conference. After each daily session, the team debriefed those volunteers regarding their conversations and teaching experiences within their groups. Some of the volunteers were given some very specific questions for use during their sessions.

Rev. Will Carrion was very cooperative and obliged immediately, when asked if he would allow the team to take the registration forms and enter the contents of each one of them into a computer according to each of the categories on the form. This the team did, and left an electronic copy of the registration information with Will Carrion. The team then had that information to use in exploring the various aspects and facets concerning the data obtained from conference participants. Interviews were conducted with leaders about the make-up of the previous Annual Conferences, as well as the one planned for later in October of 2000 in Patna.

### **Background**

The Bhojpuri are a predominantly Hindu people, with a small minority of Muslims, living in the north Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. There are also substantial

populations of Bhojpuri people in the neighboring countries of Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Only a few Christian churches existed within the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in 1989 when David Watson, a Strategy Coordinator for CSI, accepted responsibility for evangelizing the Bhojpuri who make up a majority of the population in those states. Ed spent the first 14 months in language and cultural studies.

By 1991, Swedish Baptists, known as Free Baptists in India, had the largest number of denominationally aligned churches in northern India. Anglicans and Methodists had churches in only the largest cities. It is important to note that the Swedish Baptists entered the area in 1910, and there were only 25-32 Swedish Baptist Churches in the area by the early 1990s. Even that level of growth was respectable for the heart of Hindu life and worship that came to be known over the century as the “graveyard of missionaries.” Locals said during the interviews that those churches, Baptist, Anglican and Methodist, in the early 1990s were not primarily Bhojpuri churches. During this October 2000 survey, it was not possible to determine the exact number of Christian churches that existed in 1990. The most accurate number that could be determined would range from 40-80. In light of the current study’s findings concerning average members per church, average baptisms per church and average number of new church starts, it would have been valuable to know those averages for the pre-Bhojpuri churches. But, those averages could not be determined for the 40-80 churches that existed by 1990. Thus, changes in the average membership of the local churches over the nine-year period could not be analyzed. According to the testimony of a number of Swedish Baptists and a few Methodists attending the October Conference, it was very difficult and risky, in light of persecution, for any church to establish outreach points during those early years. They also said that persecution discouraged public announcements and records of church growth. Based upon the testimony of a number of older conference attendees, it was very hard in 1990 to get individuals to consider Christ and Christianity. One pastor-leader said he preached for years with little response until the late 1990s when people became clearly more responsive.

David Watson, after accepting the Bhojpuri assignment, created The Consortium to work in the area. He developed The Consortiums and networked globally in order to evangelize the Bhojpuri peoples. He attempted to do this according to the then defined UPG (Unreached People Group) methodology of an obsessive focus on a people group and the development of an indigenous, comprehensive strategy of evangelism that has every chance of planting multiple new churches among the people. He ultimately reproduced himself functionally, and thus effectively, as a Strategy Coordinator in the person of his co-SC, Will Carrion. This occurred over a nine-year period from 1991 to 2000. In 1994, Watson’s decision to seek permission and obtain Strategy Coordinator type training for two Indian leaders, Will Carrion and Bill Wingfield, contributed significantly to the early indigenization of the work.

Will Carrion was already a Baptist and had been a Christian for thirty years when David Watson was introduced to him by Clyde Meador. Will’s conversion occurred as a

result of the Swedish Baptist work, which dates back to 1910. Will is married to a Swedish Baptist missionary who is the granddaughter of Helga Modig, one of the two pioneer single women missionaries who arrived in Bhojpuri land in 1910 to open up the work. Helga Modig, after a few years in India, married another Swedish Baptist missionary, as did her daughter, the mother of Will's wife.

Rev. Will Carrion and David Watson continue to reproduce themselves in new leaders. An example of this is Bill Nexton, the persecuted son of a very important and powerful Hindu spiritual leader. Nexton accepted Christ and was hunted and persecuted for seven years, with numerous attempts on his life, instigated by his own father. After seven years Nexton was able to pacify his father without renouncing Christ and Christianity. His father now accepts and respects Nexton as being very different and looks to Bill among all his children to take care of him. His father has not accepted Christ, but has ceased to persecute Nexton and has even made restitution for some of the evil things he did to friends of Nexton in his attempt to catch him and kill him. Nexton is now Will Carrion's "right-hand man." This was evident during the conference. He has been asked by YWAM to supervise one of their major city units where he was the church planter for a number of years. Nexton has replaced himself with Don Goforth, an experienced and aggressive church planter.

### **Findings**

A picture of a **developing cadre of leaders** emerged out of Ed's and Will's ministry that has resulted in a very New Testament and Baptist view of evangelism, church planting, local church doctrine and polity. As leaders and church members in the churches were observed and interviewed, it was clear that pastors were expected to extend their churches by planting new churches (which they have done). It was also clear that church planters, upon planting new churches often pastored those churches for a brief time until local leaders could emerge and be mentored to assume the pastoral responsibilities. This was seen as strength over the option of searching for outside leaders to come and pastor the churches which would have severely limited church planting and provoked even more local and regional persecution of the Movement. The Consortium leadership understood this from the beginning.

In retrospect it can be seen that terms emerged among the churches concerning their **designation of leaders**. Terms commonly used were: "pastors," "deacons," "evangelists," "church planters," and "trainers," or "mentors" with the latter being more of a descriptive term than a title. The term "evangelist" seemed to be the most nebulous term of all as we attempted to understand what terms were given to leaders and what those terms meant. A leader would often identify himself as an evangelist, and other leaders would call him an evangelist, but when interviewed, it was observed that most of these evangelists actually functioned as church planters. In day to day practice, it seems that those they called evangelists seldom functioned as a pastor, and more often functioned as a church planter.

Most of the leaders who emerged under the influence of the Strategy Coordinator duo of David Watson and Will Carrion functioned as pastor-church planters or church planter-pastors. Only a very small minority of the leaders attending the Conference functioned singularly as pastors, or functioned singularly as church planters. It seems that the only ones who did function singularly as pastors were those who either trickled in from the outside to assist in the work, or those who were related to the previously established denominations and churches, such as Swedish Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans and others who seemed to relate more to their own entities and only loosely to the broader Bhojpuri work. As a result of David Watson's and Will Carrion's ministry, **the core of the work is doctrinally Baptist**. Due to conditions in this part of India (which include governmental attitudes and persecution) the Baptist name, or any other recognized Christian title, is seldom connected with the believers and the churches.

The research team observed a clear pattern of opening new work that characterized church planting among the Bhojpuri from 1993 to the present. The momentum of those base years continues, with no sign of diminishing. Some concerns do exist concerning events that could result in blunting the continued growth of the movement. Those concerns will be noted and addressed later in the analysis.

**A model of evangelism and church planting** developed in the early to mid-1990s that continues today as confirmed by numerous leaders during the October interviews. The discernable vision and practice was that of a church planter entering multiple new villages, looking for and keying on the Man of Peace. In each of those villages the plan was to relate to that Man of Peace, witness to him, seek his conversion, the conversion of his family, neighbors and friends, and gather those converts into a new church in as many places as possible. In most cases, the Man of Peace, after his conversion, depending upon his abilities and spiritual sensitivity, was intentionally mentored to become the pastor of the emerging church, while the church planter shifted his focus to other villages. In most cases, the interviews revealed that the church planter had to initially pastor the church until the Man of Peace developed to be the pastor. The new co-pastor learned from experience. This Man of Peace, in situation after situation, became a co-pastor with the church planter, and then a co-church planter as he was trained mainly through a personal one-on-one coaching--mentoring relationship. On the first day, during the trip from the Varanasi airport to the hotel, one of the church planters, Don Goforth, told the interviewers about the Man of Peace plan. Later that day, he showed them some of the Man of Peace literature written by George Patterson that is used by the Bhojpuri team as a teaching tool.

Within this broad, but common, pattern of evangelism and church planting, the research team was able to discern that the Gospel is continually being taken to the edges of lostness among the Bhojpuri, to new villages, to sub-dialects within Bhojpuri, and even to neighboring language groups. The spread of the Gospel is primarily two-pronged—church planter driven and lay member led. Church planters target from two to four villages

at the same time, in search of a Man of Peace, and follow that spiritual opportunity as far as possible, which more often than not is a church plant in most of those villages. However, once the Man of Peace is won to Christ and during the mentoring stage, that Man of Peace is coached to find a co-leader among those who are coming to Christ under his ministry in the village. The church planter then mentors both co-leaders to pastor the new village church. At the same time, he mentors one, or both, to go with him to plant a new church in other villages.

As to **church growth results**, among those attending the Conference, the average age of a church was 9.2 years, with an average of 84.7 members and 18.85 baptisms. Each of these churches averaged 2.13 new church starts. At the same time, the existing churches, including the new churches, were already planting a new church in from 4 to 5 new villages. Most of those were already maturing into functioning churches in 2000. But, no questions were asked about church growth results in 2000 to avoid confusing those being interviewed to the point of securing mixed data, some reflecting 1999 events, and some reflecting 2000 events. Due to the specific nature of the research and observed differences in the data, it was sorted according to older churches and younger churches. Concerning the **older churches**, which were very much in the minority at the conference, the average age was 20.8 years, with an average of 70.58 members, with 13.41 average baptisms, with 2 new church starts last year and work going on at the time in 4.2 new sites. Concerning the **younger churches**, 3.43 years was their average age, with 91.31 average members, 21.35 average baptisms, 2.2 new churches started in 1999, and on-going church planting in 3.9 new sites. Among the older churches, it was taking an average of 14.2 months to start a new church, while taking the new churches an average of only 7.6 months to start a new church. These implications of this data will be addressed later.

The **unifying trait**, as the gospel spreads among the Bhojpuri, has been language and not castes. In interview after interview, it was observed that people from multiple castes come to Christ and worship together in the same church. The indication was that language groups (even sub-dialects of Bhojpuri) do not seem to mix. In this setting, language appears to be the primary criteria by which people divide or align themselves, and other variables do not appear to play a major role.

**Characteristics of the faith of Bhojpuri believers** give evidence of theological core within the Movement very consistent with Baptist faith and practice. They consistently give Scriptural testimonies, exhibit an understanding of the need to be baptized in obedience to Christ, and, at least initially, tend to follow a congregational polity. According to the initial plan, teaching, and observed practice of the SCs and the original Bhojpuri leaders, new pastors were taught to baptize, lead in the observance of the Lord's Supper, preside over funerals for members of the flock, and serve in every way as the functional and official pastor of the flock. As the work progressed, new church planters were introduced into the work by means of training programs.

The **youthful nature** of the Movement is evident in the registration data tabulated by the research team. Of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Bhojpuri Conference registrants, 35.6% of them indicated they had been Christians at least one year, while 16% of the participants indicated they had been Christians for only two years, and 38.7% of the attendees indicated they had been Christians for three or more years. The remaining registrants did not check any of the options. Based upon a debriefing of the leaders of the daily study groups, it is likely that a majority of those who did not check one of the options had been Christians for less than one year. Leaders remarked often that, while the previous Annual Conferences were attended mainly by leaders, many leaders brought some of their members this year for fellowship, encouragement, and training. For instance, in one of the study groups, one of the women from Woodstock (who was working with the women every morning and every afternoon during the week) said that at least half of the ladies in her group had not yet been baptized. They said they were born-again and knew they should be baptized as a testimony of obedience to Christ, but were waiting for their baptism to be scheduled. Rev. Will Carrion said he knew the Conference attendance was changing and wanted to revise the registration form, but did not get back into India in time to revise it prior to it being printed for use in this Conference. So much about the Bhojpuri work is so new, so fresh and so New Testament. The New Jersey pastors who have been long-term prayer partners with The Consortium, and who have come from time to time to the Annual Conference to see and to assist in the training, said that is the primary reason they come. One said: "I want to see a New Testament church planting movement in process, and that is why I want to come as often as I can." Another said, "I did not want to come back, but could not stay away from it."

**Leadership training** is, and has been from the beginning, a major concern and activity of the Bhojpuri leadership. There are four very common training approaches that exist among the Bhojpuri. In the order of their importance, frequency and volume of participation they are: 1) the weekly mentoring of the Man of Peace by the church planter who has led him to the Lord and is mentoring him to be both a pastor and a church planter; 2) the eight Consortium training centers, 3) the newly emerging training programs of the various agencies who have come to assist in the evangelization of the Bhojpuri, and 4) the occasional LEAD training courses that have been offered over at least ten years, mainly to the more established Swedish Baptist pastors and leaders.

The main training approach is conducted by the church planter or pastor who has found and focused on a Man of Peace, and who is in the process of mentoring that emerging pastor-church planter and his chosen co-pastor to both understand and assume those roles within an emerging local church. In terms of the number of individuals being trained and the amount of time spent in actual training, or mentoring, this type is by far the largest training approach among the Bhojpuri. Men of Peace, transitioning into pastor-church planters at this level in the villages, are mostly oral communicators, with few literates among them. The work is currently extending itself among and by oral

communicators. Those interviewed expressed that they have had the least help in designing or structuring this type of training in terms of defined content (curriculum design) and models. Some said they were using a form of Storying, but the interviews exposed no evidence of a systematic exposure and modeling of Chronological Bible Storying for this level of leaders. In November “That They May Hear” will begin production of a set of Bhojpuri audio tapes developed along a storying format.

The second most common approach to training, the eight mobile, sectional, training centers were in operation under the leadership of The Consortium. These training centers usually operate three a year for one month of training and have from 20-30 Bhojpuri leaders in each session. There is a sequence to the curriculum. The Consortium, like other training programs in India, such as LEAD, provides a partial subsidy for those who come for training. All types of leaders, literate, functionally illiterate and illiterate are encouraged to come. One of the more productive, literate, church planters among the Bhojpuri said: “the training provided in the Consortium’s training center really did help me spiritually, practically and theologically. I really grew as a result of that training. But, even that training is very Western and one has to be literate to understand it. When I am mentoring a Man of Peace who is developing to be a pastor of an emerging church, I cannot give him the training in the form that I received it. I have to repack the training for the non-reader leaders and that is hard for me to do since I have never seen it repackaged as it needs to be for them.” Will said: “Oral and literate leaders are encouraged to come to our training centers, but it is very tough for the oral leaders to be with the literate ones.” It is in this setting that Chronological Bible Storying as an evangelism, discipleship and pastoral training tool could be modeled with success in meeting an immediate need.

Again, Chronological Bible Storying is a form of training that leaders say has been introduced to the Bhojpuri. The Consortium has encouraged this form of evangelism, discipleship and pastoral training, but seemingly has no on-going training for church planters who need this tool. Will Carrion, during the interview with him, said: “We plan to give the Bhojpuri church leaders and members an oral Bible, and we are looking to Hosanna to put the New Testament on tape for us.” The Consortium has entered into an agreement with Hosanna’s “Faith Comes By Hearing” who will put the Bhojpuri stories into an audio format this November. Will said: “We have an SIL trained and certified person working with us on the Old Testament.” Will Carrion shared the plans and timetable for this audio, dramatized form of gospel communication.

The third most common of the four leadership training approaches is the emerging training offered by some of the agencies assisting in the evangelization of the Bhojpuri. Time did not allow the researchers to interview the various agencies in detail concerning the design or level of their training programs. Discussion took place revealing that a number of them are developing their own training programs and are urging the leaders that relate to them to come to those training programs. It was not discovered if those agencies were, or were not, encouraging those leaders to come to their training instead of the Consortium’s

training. It was discovered that some of the agencies encouraged some of the leaders that relate to them to come to their annual conference instead of the Consortium's Annual Conference. It seems that many Bhojpuri leaders ignored the latter suggestion and came to the Consortium meeting.

The least common type of training among the Bhojpuri in terms of frequency and volume of leaders being trained is the itinerating, Baptist-oriented, LEAD training. LEAD teams have been coming to the region for a number of years. Bill said "There has been a tie since the early 1990s with the SAPIM folks teaching LEAD classes. They first came at the request of Swedish Baptist pastors and churches. They came and taught at this campground. Clyde Meador came, as did McAtee, Ingouf and others." In 1999 and in 2000, at least three training sessions were provided by LEAD teachers (the Wardlaws, Burches, and Crittendons). Some of the courses taught were: Church Planting, Spiritual Warfare, Amos, Doctrine, Acts, Luke, and others. This teaching seems to attract the more literate lay leaders, pastors, and church planters. Average attendance was about 30 individuals during each training session. Some subsidy is given to the local training coordinator who uses the finances for travel, food, and lodging for the five-day seminars. Like The Consortium's training sessions, the amount provided is not enough to pay the full expense of those who come for training. The interviewers, during the October visit, were able to determine that the LEAD training has provided training for the more literate leaders and especially for those denominationally-oriented pastors and workers such as the Swedish Baptists. When asked, leaders and conference attendees spoke well of the LEAD training. They said that LEAD, from their perspective, tends to provide training for established and developing church leaders, lay and pastoral. In the words of a LEAD supervisor, "Anywhere on the sub-continent there is always a lower level of training needed. I don't think our two different approaches are in conflict with each other..." The visiting interviewers agree and see LEAD as filling a niche that other programs are not filling.

**A Changing Pattern** is emerging that is contrary to the initial plans, teachings, and practices modeled and taught by the SCs, and the "older" leaders of the Bhojpuri work. As more and more outsiders came to work or were allowed to come in and assist in the work, some of them brought with them and thus instituted a more clergy-oriented and institutional polity. They have tended to superimpose that polity among the leaders relating to them. The result has been that at least a majority of the pastors of village churches, due to the outsiders' teachings and directions, defer to an outside pastor or bishop from the assisting entity who comes in to baptize and officiate over the Lord's Supper. Among the pastor-church planter leaders who attended the Conference and who were interviewed, an outside bishop or pastor is habitually invited in to baptize and offer the Lord's Supper in at least 69% of the cases. Actual field percentage is probably closer to 50 percent, or less, since this conference was attended by a large number of agency and denominational type leaders. Even so, during the interviews as The Consortium's leaders of the Bhojpuri work learned

of the presence and extent of this practice, they, and especially Rev. Will Carrion, became visibly displeased to the point of confronting those pastor-church planters when they said they deferred to outside pastor-bishops. Thus, somewhat competitive influences, who came in to assist, are superimposing their own polity over those Bhojpuri churches they relate to, and especially within those churches that their church planters start. Sects usually appear when they hear of a harvest field, such as the Jesus Only, United Pentecostal Church, who this year bought at least thirteen churches away from the YWAM work in Varanasi. They, contrary to The Consortium's practices, offered pastoral salaries and other benefits to those pastors who would go with them, and thirteen of twenty-seven churches went with the Jesus Only group. Yet the work continues to grow at an unbelievable pace.

One of the researchers followed this changing pattern to its next logical step and noted that "this is a very fertile land for cults. The Consortium needs to watch and prepare for this to happen." This same researcher pointed out that many believers responded to the same Christian themes, such as "Jesus the Healer," and "Jesus the Rest Giver." It was very interesting that one woman, when asked what was so attractive about Christianity, replied "I have only one God to serve and worship." One of the researchers wonders if the pattern that is common elsewhere in India and in Asia is true among some of the Bhojpuri who are moving toward Christ. Elsewhere individuals are attracted to the "Jesus of healing," and the "Jesus who gives rest," as the one they desire to embrace, and only later really come to know "Jesus the Messiah" who saves their soul. This issue surfaced in the interviews, but time did not allow a deeper penetration into issues such as these. This should be on the agenda for study very soon.

Continuing with the findings concerning **worship practices and habits**, believers are emerging among virtually every caste including Brahmans. With only a few exceptions, these diverse castes worship together. This is a very significant and surprising finding, the causes and implications of which should be addressed in future studies. During the conference the participants sang in Hindi and Bhojpuri. They obviously preferred to sing in Bhojpuri, and one who did not know either language could tell when they were singing in Bhojpuri. The excitement level increased dramatically. Numerous indigenous, and recently composed, Bhojpuri songs were sung during the services. Participants said they preferred their new songs to translated songs that came to them from other Christian settings. Even so, every once in a while it seemed that "How Great Thou Art," was sung. During the meeting a new Bhojpuri songbook was introduced. The songbook also had sections concerning church practices such as witnessing, baptism, Lord's Supper, and other topics needed by local churches. Bhojpuri leaders were asked about pentecostal evidences among the people. They said that Hindus do not look with favor on any practices such as "speaking in tongues," so that practice has not been that evident among the Bhojpuri. He said that prayers for healing are very common.

**Demonic evidences** surfaced during the Conference. Each night during the worship, and some nights during the impromptu prayer time of groups of the Bhojpuri who

gathered wherever they could to sing and pray, a woman (or women) seemed to demonstrate demon-possessed traits. The researchers asked Rev. Will Carrion about demon possession and these events during the prayer times and even during some of the services. He said that some of them are probably demon-possessed, but he did not believe that most of them were. Will says that many Hindu women are drawn into the Hindu temples and worship practices and are regularly abused. Some of these women have responded to Christ, becoming Christian. Will says that he and others have noticed that when it comes to invitation time that a woman with this Hindu temple service in her past sometimes goes into these fits of yelling and screaming. He went on to say that if the woman is removed from the service and is taken to a quiet place, she will usually return to normal immediately. Will commented, “those who are demon-possessed do not calm down when they are taken out of the services.” Leaders said it is difficult to tell if any given situation is one of demon-possession or not.

Evidence of the **spreading of the Movement** beyond the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh could be found among those being interviewed. There were a few Bhojpuri participants from Nepal, a country not too far to the north of the conference site. They testified to the Movement crossing that border. A local Swedish Baptist pastor told of work their church is sponsoring among Bhojpuri people in Bhutan. Others told of their Bhojpuri relatives in Bangladesh who have received Christ and who are gathering into local churches. No numbers concerning churches, or potential new church starts could be constructed from these discussions. The Movement is crossing different borders.

**Groups Represented in the Conference.** Some of the groups with a significant number of representatives at the Conference were: Mission India, Evangelical Church of India, YWAM, Every Home Crusade, Dutch Reformed Church, Pentecostal Holiness, Free Baptists (Swedish Baptists), Campus Crusade, The Methodist Church, and New Life Fellowship. Each of these were interviewed during the Conference.

## **Assessing The Current Scope of the Church Planting Movement**

The most accurate figure that could be established concerning the Bhojpuri work was the number of related leaders--pastors, evangelists, and church planters. The names of at least 1,600 pastor-church planters are on The Consortium's lists as those who are in some way their partners in church planting among the Bhojpuri. Annual Conference totals attest to the growing number of partners, and the accuracy of the lists of leaders associated with the Bhojpuri work.

Invitations and announcements of this year's annual meeting were sent to as many as 1,600 leaders. Preparations were made for 1,000 to attend the October meeting we attended, and at least 500 leaders were expected to attend the meeting in Patna which was scheduled for mid-October. The Patna conference was a "by-invitation-only" conference for leaders. Also, in 1999, agency partners began to hold their own annual conferences and a number of the pastor-church planters chose to attend the agency conference with their colleagues. Bill Nexton said "A majority of the churches will not be here. A leader-representative or two come and go back to their churches and share with them and other churches that could not come. They will have local meetings where they will pass on what they have heard."

Will Carrion, in his interview said: "I want to break this Annual Meeting into regional conferences so more leaders can attend. At least 300 leaders could not get to this meeting due to the news of heavy rains and floods which has made a poor Indian travel system worse. This is a very hard place for many of our leaders to get to. We are planning for 500 leaders in Patna later in October."

**Establishing A Base Line of Pastors and Churches.** At least 1,600 pastor-church planters are on Consortium lists as a result of annual conferences, on-going training events sponsored by The Consortium in their eight training centers, those leaders resulting from Consortium church planting efforts, and those leaders resulting from the efforts of agencies such as YWAM, Campus Crusade, Swedish Baptists, and others who are currently partnering with The Consortium. It was clear to the visiting analysts that, as of December 1998, The Consortium could attest to active relationships with up to 1,600

Bhojpuri pastor-church planters.

Thus, a verifiable total of 1,600 pastor-church planters were identified as a base count of those relating in an on-going way with The Consortium. Conference averages indicated that each of these represented at least one church plant, with many of them relating to more than one church plant. Confirmation was enhanced by a cross-check of The Consortium's testimony with: 1) first-hand testimonies concerning registration totals of those attending previous annual conferences, 2) the interviews of pastor-church planters attending the October 2000 conference, 3) the scope of the work as attested to by the leaders of the various partner agencies attending the October 2000 conference, and 4) the subsequent awareness that the more literate, financially able, and mobile leaders have been able to attend conferences and training, while other less literate, and less mobile leaders have not been able to relate as well at the conference level.

During the October 2000 meeting, agency leaders were interviewed as a group and data was collected from them about their affiliated churches. Individual pastor-church planters were interviewed within their small groups and data was collected individually in a round-robin fashion from them about their church planting and the churches they planted. That data was categorized and averages were computed that accurately represent evangelism and church growth within their churches. See the tables in the appendix for this data.

The projected data will include total churches; new churches planted in 1999; total membership in the churches at the end of 1999; total baptisms in 1999; and new churches being planted by those 1999 churches and their pastor-church planters.

**Bhojpuri Projections**  
**High, Medium and Low Assumptions**  
**Based Upon 2,000, 1,600 and 1,200 Churches In December of 1998**

The **issue of scope** goes to the question: “What has happened and what is happening concerning growth within existing churches, the appearance of new churches, members, baptisms and outreach points among the Bhojpuri?” In attempting to quantify the scope, the following background facts have been stated or insinuated, 1) In light of growth, up to 2,000 existing churches could have existed by the end of 1998, 2) at least 1,600 pastor-church planters were identified as existing at the end of 1998 which indicated at least a 1:1 leader to church ratio, 3) the averages (Table 1) show that older churches tend to produce at measurably different levels than do younger churches, 4) for some churches and church planters the evangelism and church planting pattern has become more formal and institutional concerning who baptizes, and 5) as the work ages some pastors die, some do not produce at optimum levels due to sickness, some pastors and churches are initially hampered by persecution, some pastors spend more time pastoring than planting churches, some pastors are hired-away or lured away by sects, and some workers are brought into administrative positions within the agencies. Because of these realities, the use of a reduction formula within high, medium and low assumption projections is warranted. Such computations follow.

**High Assumption Projections**

**The Scope Based Upon 2,000 Productive Pastor-Church Planters and Churches Projected According to the Interview Averages and a Reduction Formula.** This would be the “best case scenario” of church planting among the Bhojpuri.

Assumption of 2,000 Churches at the end of 1998.  
3,461 New Churches started in 1999 from 2,000 base.  
5,461 Total Churches

374,536 Total Members.  
82,727 Total Baptisms in 1999  
17,680 Outreach Groups (Preaching Points).

### **Medium Assumption Projections**

#### **2. The Scope Based Upon 1,600 Productive Pastor-Church Planters and Churches Projected According to the Averages and the Use of the Reduction Formula.**

2.1. Assumption of 1,600 churches existing at the end of 1999.  
2,769 New Churches.  
4,369 Total Churches  
299,629 Members  
66,181 Total Baptisms in 1999  
14,144 Outreach Groups (Preaching Points).

### **Low Assumption Projections**

#### **3. The Scope Based Upon 1,200 Productive Pastor-Church Planters and Churches Projected According to the Averages and the Use of the Reduction Formula.**

3.1. Assumption of 1,200 churches existing at end of 1998.  
3.2. 2,077 New Churches at the end of 1998.  
3,277 Total Churches.  
224,722 Total Members  
49,636 Total Baptisms in 1999.  
10,608 Total Outreach Groups (Preaching Points).

When considering only the growth figures from interviews, one is justified in choosing the High Assumption figures as the status of growth for 1999. However, an analyst must ask “Would the interview data and averages have been the same if every pastor-church planter could have been present and interviewed?” Based upon historic church growth research, the answer is likely “No, the interview averages would probably not have been as high.” Therefore, high assumption, middle assumption and low assumption figures were projected based upon 2,000 productive pastor-church planters and their churches, 1,600 productive ones, and 1,200 productive ones. The conference growth averages would be the “best case scenario,” but the formula and the resultant projections are very conservative, obviously resting beneath the “best case scenario.” Therefore, the analysts can comfortably recommend choosing the medium assumption scenario as the most accurate growth figures for the current scope of evangelism among the Bhojpuri.

## **The Projected Baptist Core of the Bhojpuri Work**

The **issue of scope** leads to a second question: “What part of the growth can be considered Baptist. As stated in the findings, a number of agencies are partnering in the church planting task among the Bhojpuri. Some of those agencies have staff that come up through the ranks of the Baptist Bhojpuri movement. Some have staff members that come from a Baptist background such as Campus Crusade and Swedish Baptists (Free Baptists in North India). Yet, there are other agencies whose staff members do not always come from a Baptist background. Sects that have come in, as Ralph Winter and Donald McGavran often said: “are feasting on the harvest, which is a strong indication that there is an abundant harvest.” The Strategy Coordinator who initiated the work is a Baptist as is his co-SC, Will Carrion, who has been one for 30 years. He is married to a Swedish Baptist missionary. Clearly, the roots of the movement are Baptist, but parts of the movement are not as clearly Baptist.

In an effort to give a fair indication of the Baptist base, the following should help. The medium assumption favored by the survey team is used as the basis for these projections. No high and low projections are given. The formula used to determine the Baptist core is 50% of the established work and 75% of the new work. That results in the following projections. See the appended table for the projections.

1,600 Base Churches at the end of 1998.  
1,500 New Churches started in 1999.  
2,913 Total Churches in 1999.  
203,864 Total Members in 1999.  
45,676 Total Baptisms in 1999.  
9,367 Total Outreach Groups (emerging churches) in 1999

**An Analysis of Bhojpuri Growth Results.** There is no question concerning the fact that God is performing many wonderful things among the Bhojpuri. **First**, to grow from 40-80 total churches in the early 1990s in the States where the Bhojpuri live to over 4,000 churches, nearly 300,000 members, over 66,000 baptisms and 14,000 emerging churches in less than ten years, and to grow from 150 leaders in the 1995 Annual Bhojpuri Conference, to over 1,000 in attendance in two annual conferences is phenomenal growth indicative of a Church Planting Movement.

**Second**, it is very rare to be among pastoral leaders of churches attending a conference who have experienced an annual average of 2.13 new church starts each; 84.75 average members per church; 18.85 average baptisms per church; and an average of 4.55

new works in progress for each church with an average of 9.21 months per new church start. Considering what is known about historic church growth, even in frontier settings, any one of those characteristics by itself would be remarkable. All of them together among the Bhojpuri suggest that a Church Planting Movement is indeed in progress.

**Third**, though one cannot assume that every church among the Bhojpuri is producing at the levels found among those attending the conference, the interviews led the researchers to believe the averages are representative of a majority of the churches. If the conference participant church averages are representative of at least 51% of the churches, they are phenomenal. In historic church growth terms: 1) it usually takes a new group of churches at least 50 years to reach the level of 45 to 60 average members per church and the Bhojpuri were at 84.7 AMPC in October, 2) the 18.8 average baptisms per church is rare under any circumstances, much less for a harassed people within a persecutory environment, 3) 2.13 new church starts for any year is an average few church growth practitioners have ever witnessed personally, and an average few planners have ever set for their group of churches to achieve, and 4) for the average church attending the conference to be working with 4.55 emerging church groups indicates that the movement should have a number of good growth years left. That will happen if the issues are addressed appropriately. There is a positive and tight correlation between average church members and average baptisms per church. Also, there is a positive and tight correlation between church age and new churches. In historic church growth that has been healthy, these two correlations have been common.

**Fourth**, the harvest is limited only by the number of workers available and mentored according to New Testament church growth in order to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in extending the Gospel farther onto the frontiers of Bhojpuri lostness. One reason this movement is healthy is because almost all of the local church pastors come from within the emerging churches that are forming on those frontiers of lostness.

**Fifth**, for this kind of growth to occur in an environment known as the “graveyard of missionaries,” and in a territory known as the historic bulwark of Hinduism and holiness in India, is remarkable indeed.

**Issues Facing Future Evangelization of the Bhojpuri.** There are a few issues that could easily plateau the current church planting movement.

Seeking out the Man of Peace as a friend in a village, and attempting to bring this person to Christ and develop him as the Spirit leads into the pastor of an emerging local church has been the most common and most productive church planting approach among the Bhojpuri. It seems to comfortably fit the highly relational Bhojpuri environment, and seems to give the Gospel a chance to enter and live in a persecution prone Hindu environment. Maintaining this approach is a key to the continued growth of the church planting movement.

The church planting movement has been lay led to this point in time, but faces the danger of being more institutionalized year by year. As of the October conference, as stated earlier, at least 60% of the pastor-church planters who attended defer to ordained clergy who come “from the outside” to baptize the converts and preside over Lord’s Supper celebrations. This is a dangerous trend and could easily stop the church planting movement within a year or two.

The current types of training have been productive and should continue, for each seems to provide training for a specific group of Bhojpuri leaders. However, more deliberate efforts should be expended to model Chronological Bible Storying as an evangelism, discipleship and pastoral training approach for the large number of lay, non-readers who are being mentored by less than a planned approach. Interviews revealed that most of the local church leaders are non-readers or at best functionally illiterate, having less than an eighth grade education.

The growing edges of the work should be nourished and freed up to grow as much as the Holy Spirit will bring to pass through lay leaders. Chip Riggs, Missions Director of Woodstock Baptist Church North of Atlanta, Georgia said: “I was in my afternoon session and the interpreter helped me understand the group I was leading. The interpreter pointed out that the older pastors have slowed down and the younger pastors are more aggressive. In reference to the projection of new work, the interpreter told me: ‘We teach that new leaders should be pastor and baptize and offer the Lord’s Supper yourselves. We tell them not to wait on or call in the outside pastor-bishop to baptize. We tell these new leaders that they must be Biblical.’”

As already stated under the topic of “A Changing Pattern,” there is the potential of mission agencies, Indian and foreign, friends and foes, carving the Bhojpuri territory into agency and denominational fiefdoms. Bill Nexton, Will’s right-hand man and newly chosen leader of YWAM in a major city said “In the beginning groups tended to fight over turf, and Will, along with his close associates, developed unity among them by settling disputes and pointing them to new sites where no workers or churches existed.” The mission agencies were appropriately brought in to assist in the evangelization of the Bhojpuri. However, The Consortium should preach continued cooperation and preservation of a New Testament oriented, lay led, church planting movement. The tendency seems to exist for most of these agencies to solidify their base and develop their own identity in contrast to that of The Consortium. In reference to this issue, Will Carrion said: “This is the biggest challenge to the Bhojpuri work. We must try to bring agencies together and get the theology and the agenda right. If not, the agencies will come against each other and Satan will win.”

Therefore, as para-church agencies and denominational agencies increase in identity as participants in the Bhojpuri work, the researchers see the need for the Baptist presence to

be strengthened. This could possibly be done in a number of ways: 1) by strengthening the Swedish Baptist (Free Baptist) work as the opportunity arises; 2) by inviting another acceptable and cooperative Baptist group “to the table,” along side Campus Crusade, YWAM, and the others, and 3) by encouraging LEAD to increase their itinerating among the Bhojpuri, and add the most basic form of Chronological Bible Storying to their teaching tools, thus providing that on-going service under a Baptist identity to as many of the leaders and churches as possible. Otherwise, as the identity of the other agencies increases, the Baptist identity will continue to recede into the background.

May God continue to bless the Bhojpuri people and those who introduce them to Christ. May God’s harvesters indeed be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. If there is any way to allow the Holy Spirit to continue to drive the movement and take Christ’s Gospel where He will, no sacrifice will be too great.

**Summary of Findings.** The research indicated that David Watson’s planning and networking to implement a comprehensive strategy that singularly focuses on the evangelization of the Bhojpuri contributed significantly: 1) to the initiation of church planting among the Bhojpuri, 2) to the annually increasing church planting that has reached the magnitude of a Church Planting Movement, and, 3) to the indigenization of leadership resulting in the mentoring of a highly competent and productive Indian Strategy Coordinator counterpart. Findings of the October interviews indicate The Consortium as the primary influence giving direction to the Bhojpuri church planting movement in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar States. It was clear in the interviews that the movement has begun to spread into Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh among Bhojpuri people in those places. This is underlined in a look at the average church age of 9.2 years, with 84.7 average members per church, an average of 18.85 baptisms in 1999, an average of 2.13 new churches started in 1999, and the average church nurturing 4.55 outreach groups into churches.

**Table 1: Interview Data For 1999 Year By Older & Younger Churches**

Age Group of Designated Sample	Percent In Set	Avg. Age Church	Avg. Church Members	Avg. Baptisms	Avg. New Ch. Starts	New Work Involvement	CPG: Months
Average in Total Sample	100%	9.21 Years	91.31 Avg. Mbs Per Ch.	18.85 ABPCh.	2.13 Per Church	4.55 New Work Sites	9.75 Months
Younger : 6 Years & Younger	66.67%	3.43 Years	89.1 Avg. Mbs. Per Ch.	21.35 ABPCh.	2.2 Per Church	3.93 New Wk. Sites	7.65 Months
Older: 7 Years & Older	33.33%	20.8 Years	70.58 Avg. Mbs. Per Ch.	13.41 ABPCh.	2.0 Per Church	4.2 New Wk. Sites*	14.22 Months
Younger Set %	66.67%	66.67%	68.33%	68.52%	65.22%	73.68%	68.0%
Older Set %	33.33%	33.33%	31.67%	31.48%	34.78%	26.32%	32.0%
Range in Sample		>1-100	5-450 Mbs.	0-65	0-9	0-25	1-36 Mo.
“0’s” in Sample	-----	-----	00%	18.52%	26.09%	5.26%	-----
“0s” in Younger	-----	-----	00%	10.8%	13.33%*	7.14%	-----
“0s” in Older			00%	35.29%	31.25%	0.00%	-----

**Notes:**

The data is from the six groups where interviews took place through asking individuals the basic questions through a one-by-one process.

Each individual response was taken out of the group and put into an “All Groups” database, a “Churches 6 Years and Younger” database, and a “Churches 7 Years and Older” database.

Each category was computed based upon the responses in that category.

Group Six of leaders with longer tenure in the ministry did not give a projection as to new

works being started by them or the church they were a member of at the time. Some stated that they were in a development and not new church start stage.

\*: Among the Older Churches in this category of Outreach Groups, one church's outreach points was much larger than the others, which by means of a STD-1 analysis warranted removing them from the averages. Thus, an unjust skew was avoided, making the projections even more conservative.

**Table 2: Figures Used In The Reduction Formula Projections**

Category to Compute	For Churches Dec. 1998	For New Churches	For 1999 Members	For 1999 Baptisms	For 1999 Outreach Gps.	Ch.Pltg. Grid
Full New	1,600 for all	2.2 per Ch.	89.1 MPC	21.3 BPC	3.9 per Ch.	7.6 Mo.
75% New	1,600 for all	1.6 per Ch.	66.8 MPC	15.9 BPC	2.9 per Ch.	NA
50% New	1,600 for all	1.1 per Ch.	44.5 MPC	10.6 BPC	1.9 per Ch.	NA
Full Old	1,600 for all	2.0 per Ch.	70.58 MPC	13.4 BPC	4.2 per Ch.	14.2 Mo.
75% Old	1,600 for all	1.5 per Ch.	52.94 MPC	10.0 BPC	3.15 per Ch.	NA
50% Old	1,600 for all	1.0 per Ch.	35.29 MPC	6.7 BPC	2.1 per Ch.	NA

**Notes:** Realizing that the data received during the interviews, and the averages developed from that data likely represents the “best case scenario,” the following reduction formula was used to compute a more accurate scope of evangelization among the Bhojpuri. One-half of the known churches will be projected using the full interview averages for the specific category. One-fourth of the remaining one-half will be projected based upon figures representing only 75% of the full interview averages for the category. The remaining one-fourth will be projected based upon figures representing only 50% of the full interview averages for a category.

**Table 3: 1999 High, Medium and Low Assumption Projections Using The Interview Averages Projected According to the Reduction Formula**

<b>Assumption Type &amp; Figures</b>	<b>Established Churches</b>	<b>New Churches</b>	<b>Total Churches</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>Outreach Groups</b>
2,000-High	1,600	3,461	5,461	374,536	82,727	17,680
1,600-Medium	1,600	2,769	4,369	299,629	66,181	14,144
1,200-Low	1,600	2,077	3,277	224,722	49,636	10,608

**Table 4: 1999 Annual Statistical Report Of Status Of Bhojpuri Evangelization.**

<b>Annual Report</b>	<b>Established Churches</b>	<b>New Churches</b>	<b>Total Churches</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>Outreach Groups</b>
1998	1,200	800	2,000	50,000	16,000	10,000
1999	2,000	600	2,600	62,000	12,000	10,000
2000	2,600	1,600	2,900	200,000	45,000	9,000

Note: The Regional Leader gave the 2000 projections after a review of this report. Numbers were rounded to indicate they are projections, driven by averages secured from the interviews.



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**Projections Obtained Through the use of High, Medium and Low Assumptions Including the Application of a Reduction Formula.** Data coming from a research setting like this one is best projected according to a historic analysis method--High, Medium and Low Assumptions. Averages, such as those secured in the Conference, however accurate, that cannot be proven as representative of averages throughout the universe, also suggest the use of a reduction formula. **Doing so results in conservative projections throughout.**

The **High Assumption** of 2000 churches at the end of 1998 assumes that the 1600 leaders represent multiple churches (a fact that emerged in the interviews). The **Medium Assumption** of 1600 churches at the end of 1998 assumes a one-to-one correlation between the number of leaders and the number of churches they represent. The **Low Assumption** of 1200 churches at the end of 1998 assumes that some the 1600 leaders came from the same church.

A **Reduction Formula** is applied within each of the assumptions. Here, it is assumed that the churches in whole Movement performed at a level less than the averages of those attending the Conference (i.e. that those attending the conference were a "best-case-scenario"). One-half of the churches were calculated at the observed averages; while one-fourth were calculated at 75% of the averages, with the remaining one-fourth calculated at 50% of the averages. This was a second conservative step in the process.

The entire list of churches were further separated into **older** (33% of churches attending the Conference) and **younger** churches (66% of churches attending the Conference), and all

projections were carefully projected using the averages appropriate to their grouping. This process injected yet another conservative means of projecting the growth in order to approximate reality of those churches throughout the Movement.

### **The Consortium's Annual Conference Attendance**

1995 = 150

1996 = Over 200

1997 = Over 400

1998 = Over 1,000

1999 = Over 1,000 with about 800 at one site and about 500 in another site (Patna). Note that beginning in 1999, the annual conference was held in at least two different places.