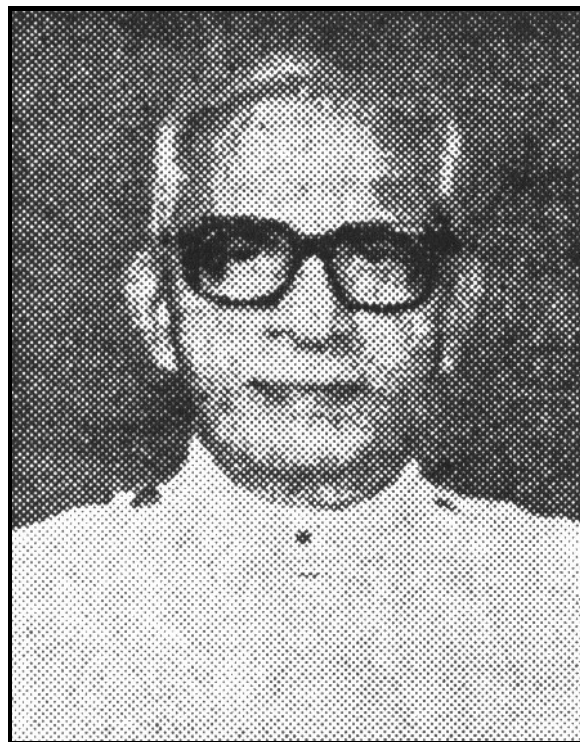


REV. A. C. ZACHARIAH.
(Missionary)

1909-1991



Biography of Rev. A. C. Zachariah
Co-Founder of Hoskote Mission Field
of the Mar Thoma Church.

Athinilkunnathil
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REV. A.C. ZACHARIAH

“Remember your former leaders, who spoke God’s message to you. Think back on how they lived and died, and imitate their faith” Hebrews 13:7

Introduction

“But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me; I only want to complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave to do, which is to declare the Good News about the grace of God” Acts 20: 24

This is a story of a central Travancore teacher who committed his life for mission work. God used him to open many doors for mission work in the villages of Karnataka. Many were saved through his work.

Hoskote Town, which lies about 25 Km North East of Bangalore City on National High Way No.4 (Old Madras Road), is the head quarters of Hoskote Taluk of Bangalore Rural District in Karnataka. It was to this place that God, in His gracious providence, sent the first missionaries of Hoskote Mission.

The Hoskote Town and Taluk of 1947 was quite different from what it is today. Hoskote used to be small town with around 350 under developed, backward villages around it. Agriculture was the main occupation, but the village people had to depend on scanty rainfall and run off water collected in artificial lakes. As a result, most lands were kept barren year after year; unemployment, malnutrition, epidemics, and famine were common experiences. Poor villagers suffered greatly due to the lack of hospitals or health centers. Only the rich could afford to go to hospitals in Kolar (52km away) or Bangalore. Most villagers resorted to witchcraft and divination for treatment of diseases. Only when this treatment failed, were the sick (almost at the point of death) taken to hospital. The infant mortality rate and maternity deaths were very high.

The literacy level was very low. Most adults didn’t know how to read or write. Children were usually sent cattle grazing. Adults and even children were bond in labour for life in return for money, borrowed to conduct marriages or to celebrate religious festivals. Superstitious practices, caste discrimination, untouchability etc. controlled life in the villages. It was to this environment that God sent His servants as pioneer missionaries of Hoskote Mission in June 1947.

First Christian Institution in Hoskote

Miss Bagshaw, an English lady belonging to the Brethren Mission, came to Hoskote long before Mar Thoma Church even thought of mission work at Hoskote. She bought a piece of land in the town and

started an orphanage called "House of Praise". Miss Bagshaw was a fully dedicated woman of God who courageously carried out work at the orphanage in the midst of an alien, non-Christian community. Of course, she had many friends both in India and abroad supporting her with their gifts and prayers. Miss Bagshaw and the 'House of Praise' represented the first Christian witness in Hoskote even before the beginning of the Hoskote Mission of Mar Thoma Church.

Along with her orphanage work, she surveyed the area and many surrounding villages, studying the needs of its people. She prayed to God to send workers to help the villagers. So when news came of the prospect of a new Christian mission coming to Hoskote, she was greatly excited and proved to be a source of tremendous help and encouragement in the early days of the Hoskote Mission.

Birth and primary education

Zachariah was born on 3 July, 1909, in Kuriannoor, a central Travancore village on the northern side of river Pumba. Till the formation of a parish in Kuriannoor in 1879, people worshiped in the Maramon Mar Thoma Church. Zachariah's father A.C. Mathai and mother Aleyamma were God fearing, dedicated people.

After his primary education in Mar Thoma Lower Primary School (Kattel Pallikudam) in Kuriannoor, Zachariah joined the Maramon English Middle School and St. Thomas School, Kozhencherry for higher education. After which he did his TTC (Teachers Training Course) course.

Teacher in Kuriannoor School (1927-1935)

Kuriannoor M.T. English Middle School was established in 1920 by Rev. M.C. George Kassessa (Alexander Mar Thoma's father). George Kassessa was the vicar of three parishes in Kuriannoor. Till his death in 1923, Rev. George was the Manager of the school. During those days, Kuriannoor School was one of the best schools in Travancore. Punnathundiyl Rev. T.M. Mathai (District Scout Commissioner) was the headmaster for many years.

Zachariah started teaching in Kuriannoor in 1927. According to the custom of the day, he would come to class wearing a coat and tie. He was also involved in the Scout movement. He would attend scout masters camp held in Charalkunnu. He also taught in Sunday school. Special fellowship groups were arranged for its senior students and they would meet together on Sunday afternoons by the River Pumba, top of the hills in Kuriannoor, or in school compounds. Zachariah Sir would invite guests like Mr. M.G. Chandy (later Alexander Mar Thoma) and M.M. Thomas (Kozhencherry) for these meetings. During holidays, camps were held for 2-3 days. Through Zachariah Sir, many youth committed their life to the Lord and worked as missionaries in the various mission fields of the Mar Thoma Church.

Marriage

On 10 Nov.1927, Zachariah married Saramma (Kunjamma), daughter of M.C. Easow and Aleyamma of Maliyekkal, Kuriannoor. M.C. Easow was the younger brother of Rev. M.C. George (Alexander Mar Thoma's father).

Teacher in C.M.S School Kottayam (1935-1945)

In June, 1935, Zachariah joined the CMS (Church Missionary Society) School in Kottayam. M.G. Chandy (later Alexander Mar Thoma) was his co-teacher. In 1945, Chandy left his teaching job to study theology in Bangalore. It was during his stay in Kottayam, that Zachariah got the divine call for full time mission work. Being the eldest son, he was the bread winner for his family consisting of his aged parents, two sisters and five brothers, his wife and three daughters. It was a tough decision for him to leave a permanent job and to go for mission work with no salary. But because of his faith in God, he did not count the cost.

Zachariah at Kolar (1945-1947)

In 1945, Zachariah took a year leave from CMS School and joined the South India Biblical Institute in Kolar which trained young men and women from all denominations for mission work in India. While studying in Kolar, Zachariah came to know about the work being done in Hoskote by Miss Bagshaw, and visited Hoskote many times. He was sure that Hoskote was the place God had selected for him.

Bangalore Cubbon Park Prayer Fellowship

Members of the Mar Thoma Church in Bangalore used to have a weekly prayer meeting in Cubbon Park. Rev. Philip Oommen (Mar Chrysostom) and Rev. M.G. Chandy (Alexander Mar Thoma) were their successive vicars. They looked for a place around Bangalore City to start mission work. In answer to their prayers, God showed them Hoskote Town. Zachariah also got a chance to participate and share his ideas in one of prayer meetings in Cubbon Park.

Search for a co-worker

Zachariah came back to Kerala to find a suitable co-worker for the work in Hoskote. He shared his views with many church leaders and friends, but couldn't find the suitable person. So he returned to Kolar for his second year course and continued there. He was still in touch with the Cubbon Park Fellowship, and they prayed for a co-worker.

Visit of Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma, 1946-1947

Abraham Mar Thoma had a great zeal for the evangelization of India. During one of his visits to the Bangalore parish, he came to know of the possibility of starting a mission work in Hoskote. During the first week of January, 1947, Bishop Abraham visited Miss Bagshaw at the House of Praise in Hoskote and collected detailed information about her work, the people of Hoskote, their culture, language, social life, etc. He was greatly impressed and prayed for a piece of land in Hoskote to start the work.

God Prepares the Josephs

Mr. M.T. Joseph, Manon was the Anchal Master (Postmaster) in Maramon. His wife Mariamma (Pennamma) was a school teacher, who was also trained by the Vanitha Mandiram. They were active members of the Mar Thoma Parish in Maramon. Both Joseph and Mariamma prayed for an opportunity to do mission work.

One day, Zachariah met Joseph at the post office where Joseph worked, and shared his plans, and also the difficulties in finding a co-worker to do the Mission work in Hoskote. On hearing Zachariah, Joseph readily agreed to work with him. Joseph and Mariamma resigned their well salaried jobs, without counting the cost.

Hoskote mission, Pioneering team, 1947

A.C. Zachariah, his wife, Saramma, and their three daughters Mary, Mercy and Sally, and M.T. Joseph, his wife, Mariamma, and their daughter Molly were the first members of the Hoskote Mission.

Evangelistic Association and the Mission

The leaders of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association fully supported the new venture. A special meeting of the senior leaders of the association and new missionary team was held in the St. Thomas Church, Kuriannoor. Very Rev. V.P. Mammen gave instructions and guidelines to the missionary team. With the authorities' blessings, the new team visited many prominent parishes to inform the members of their plans. They received contributions as support for the new mission field.

On 26 June, 1947, the team left Kerala and reached Hoskote on 27 June, 1947. Rev. M.G. Chandy, the then vicar of the Bangalore parish, rendered all the help and assistance for their stay at Hoskote. They were accommodated at the *House of Praise* by Miss Bagshaw, for 6 months before they rented out houses in the Hoskote town for Rs. 6/ per month and continued mission work.

Christa Sakshya Sangha, Hoskote (1947-1961)

The new missionaries adopted the name *Christa Sakshya Sangha* and lived the ashram style of life and shared all duties and responsibilities, as well as financial contributions received from friends and well wishers.

They started with distributing tracts and Gospel portions to villagers. They learnt Kanada with the help of local teachers before they could obtain their vernacular language certificates to qualify them for their Karnataka State work. They started Sunday Schools for village children and conducted open air meetings in the market place. Literacy classes for the youth and adults and a night school to coach school going children also started. They visited villages and distributed gift items and food sent by the friends of the mission.

Rural Welfare Homeopathic Dispensary

Zachariah, who had learnt Homeopathy through correspondence, opened a clinic in town with the name "Rural Welfare Homeopathic Dispensary". Treatment was free but voluntary contributions were accepted. The clinic functioned during evening time. First Aid Kits were furnished by Miss Bagshow for emergency treatments encountered on their mission.

During night time adult literacy classes were held in the dispensary. Through this clinic many became the friends of the missionaries.

Expert in Kannada

Like the other pioneer members, Zachariah was an expert in Kannada. It was a real blessing to converse with villagers in their own language. Services were conducted in Kannada. Whenever villagers from Karnataka came for the Maramon Convention Zachariah would translate the message to Kannada for them.

Hoskote Mission and South India Bible Institute Kolar

Zachariah and Joseph were the ex-students of the South India Bible Institute. SIBI whole heartedly supported the work of the mission in its early years. Students chose Hoskote Mission Field for their field experience. At times they were sent from the institute to help the mission work, and their project work. Two graduates (Mary Thomas and Ruby Jacob) from the Institute joined as mission workers in 1950s and later Thankamma Zachariah and T.T. Mariamma joined. They were instrumental in the spreading of the Gospel in the village of Jattiganahalli and Gonakanahalli where they stationed to work which now known as the home town of the first believers Abrahamappa and Saramma.

First Believers

A young man named Puttappa (Christian name Mathai) was the first convert (1953). Then Abraham Appa and Saramma from Gonakanahally village (1958) were converted. They were baptized on 9 December and they considered the day as their Christian Birthday as they did not know their real birthdates. Later many more were added to the number of believers.

Zachariah becomes Rev. Zachariah, 1948

As the number of believers increased, the services of an ordained clergyman became a necessity for the mission field. The church ordained Zachariah as deacon on 25 Dec.1948 at the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in Kuriannoor (his home parish) and later, on 20 Sep.1949 he was ordained as Kassessa, in Bangalore Church. This new development helped him keep close contact with other sister churches in and around Bangalore city. He provided necessary help for the formation of the Jalahally Mar Thomas Parish (Est.1948), Mysore (Est. 1954) and Vellore parishes.

Property for Mission field, 1952

In 1951-52, a nine acre plot was purchased at a cost of Rs.5000/- for the Mission. Two quarters were constructed for the missionaries. A chapel and a camp shed were also built in the compound. The members of the Christa Sakhya Sangha continued their work effectively and reached out to more villages increasing the number of believers considerably.

Rev. Zachariah as Parish Priest, 1961

In 1961, Rev. A.C. Zachariah was transferred to Mar Thoma parishes in Bombay. He worked day and night for 14 years in the Hoskote Mission Field. Even though he left Hoskote, he propagated the message of the Mission field wherever he went. He would introduce the mission field to many of his parish members who later became supporters of the mission.

Parishes

Rev. Zachariah served 18 parishes as vicar (Jalahally, Mysore, Vellore, Bombay, Kalyan, Kuriannoor Salem, Pullad Sehion, Vellara, Mavelikkara, Cherukole, Perigelipuram, Chennithala, Eramathoor, Kuriannoor, Kaneettukara, Kumbanad Valiya pally, Kumband Salem, and Nellimala).

He was superintendent of the Dharmagiri Agathimandiram in Kumbanad and Field Director of the Karnataka Navajeevana Samithi in Devanahally.

With Devanahally Mission (3 years)

Zachariah Achen served many parishes of the Mar Thoma Church both in and outside Kerala after he left the Hoskote Mission. After his retirement from the Church he served the Karnataka Navajeevana Samithi, Devanahally area near Bangalore as its Field Director for few years.

Personal Life

Zachariah Achen was faithful to His master till the end. When the prospect of full time missionary work came up, he was a teacher at CMS School, Kottayam with a good salary. Many of his relatives and friends tried persuading him to change his mind. According to worldly standards it was foolishness to go for full time mission work without any salary. According to the Syrian Christian tradition, being the eldest son it was his responsibility to look after his aged parents and six younger siblings, and his three daughters. But like Paul who said, "And So, King Agrippa, I did not disobey the vision I had from heaven" (Acts 26:19), he obeyed the vision he got from God.

He was a well disciplined man in his personal life. He would pre plan all his programmes so that he didn't waste time. His room was always neat, and clean. He set timings for everything he did, personal prayer, Bible study, domestic work, house visits, village visits, and open air meetings, recreation etc. He was very particular about his personal devotion. In addition to the usual daily family prayers in the morning and evening, he had set apart time for personal devotion. He always used Bible reading notes for Bible study. He used the Magazine "Upper Room" in Kannada till the last day of his life. He used to keep a diary with details of the happenings of the day. He kept accounts for his personal and public life. He continued this practice till the end of his life.

Rev. Zachariah was a good letter writer. His handwriting was small and very legible, so he could include pages of matter in a small post card or an Inland letter pad.

Family Members of Rev. A.C. Zachariah

His brothers & sisters were M.M. Thomas, A.M. Chandy, A.M. Mathai, Dr. Miss Annamma Mathew, Miss Aleyamma Mathew and Dr. A.M. Chacko.

His daughters, Mary George married Rev. K.T. George (Kidangalil, Kozhencherry East), Mercy Elizabeth Varghese (B.Sc. B.Ed.) married Rev. Dr. V.E. Varghese (Ayroorkuzhy Vazhayil, Arattupuzha) and Sally (Samma Ninan, B.Sc. B.Ed) married Rev. K Ninan George (Love Dale, Angadical, Chengannur).

Final Days

Rev. Zachariah spent the final years of his life with his eldest daughter in Kidangalil House, Kozhencherry. He passed away on 3 June, 1991. He was ready for his home call, as all those who cared for him, including staff members of Muthoottu Medical Centre, Kozhencherry, could see in the preparedness in his face to meet his Master in heaven.

His body was kept in mortuary till 6th morning, so that relatives could come. On 6th, his body was taken to his eldest daughter's house in Kozhencherry (Kidangalil- Kozhencherry east). Short services were held there and also in the nearby Mar Thoma prayer hall where the body was kept for some time for public viewing. After that, the body was taken to his home parish, St. Thomas Church, Kuriannoor, for the funeral. The final service was conducted by Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan assisted by Rt. Rev. Zacharias Mar Theophilus and Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius, priests and a large crowd.

Members of the Hoskote Mission and Karnataka Navajeen Samithi in Devanahally took part in the funeral service. During the service, Saramma from Gonakanahally Village, made a very emotional speech. She praised God for sending Zachariah Achen to her village so that her family and many other could know the Lord.

Main Events connected to the life of Rev. A.C. Zachariah

1879		Formation of Kuriannoor Mar Thoma Parish
1897		Formation of St. Thomas M.T.P., Kuriannoor
1902		Formation of Salem Mar Thoma Church, Kuriannoor
1909	July 1	Birth of Rev. A.C. Zachariah
1927	Nov.10	Marriage to Saramma Maliyekkal, Kuriannoor
1927-1935		Taught in Kuriannoor School
1935-1945		Taught in CMS School Kottayam
1945-1947		Student of SIBS, Kolar
1947	Jan	Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma visits Hoskote
1947	Jun 27	Beginning of Hoskote Mission, named "Christa Sakshya Sangha"
1947-1961		Missionary to Hoskote Mission
1948	Dec 25	Becomes deacon in Kuriannoor St. Thomas Church
1949	Sep 20	Becomes priest in Bangalore
1961		Becomes Vicar of Bombay Dadar
1965		Restructuring of the Mission

1965	July 11	Medical work started
1965		New name assumed "Hoskote Mission & Medical Centre"
1969		Formation of Karnataka Navajeevna Samithi
1970		Leprosy work started
1980		Santhi Mandiram started
1986-1994		Rev. K.P. Mathai - Hoskote Missionary
1986	June 19	Mrs. Mariamma (Mrs. M. T. Joseph) passes away
1991		Evangelists Training Institute started
1991	June 3	Zachariah passes away
1991	June 6	Burial at Kuriannoor St. Thomas Church
1992		Mrs. A.C. Zachariah (Saramma) passes away
1195	Feb 18	M. T. Joseph passes away
1996		Nursing School started

"The wise leaders will shine with all the brightness of the sky. And those who have taught many people to do what is right will shine like the stars for ever." Daniel 12:3

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Notes

South India Biblical Seminary (SIBS)

South India Biblical Seminary was founded by Dr. James R. Bishop in 1937, based on the vision of God given to Dr. Miss Anna McGhie, as an institution for training young people for various ministries in the Churches of India and in Christian organizations. Since 1942 the Seminary has been co-educational.

In the beginning, the Seminary was sponsored by an interdenominational society, the World Gospel Mission, but in 1972, the South India Biblical Seminary Council was set up to govern the school. The institution was at the time legally registered as a society in Kolar District, Karnataka. In 1981, the Church of the Nazarene officially became a co-sponsoring partner in the Seminary. And since then the Immanuel General Mission of Japan and the First Free Methodist Church of Seattle, WA, USA, have also become sponsoring partners.

In 1963, the Seminary was accredited by the Board of Theological Education of the N.C.C.I. for the granting of a Diploma with the Graduate in Theology Distinction. In 1970 it was accredited for the granting of the Bachelor of Theology degree, and in 1976 the school was affiliated with the Senate of Serampore College at the same degree level, but later withdrew from this affiliation. The B.Th. degree program of S.I.B.S. was accredited by the Asia Theological Association, and it is under this accreditation that it is currently carrying on its academic program.

S.I.B.S. is regarded as evangelical and conservative in doctrine and in life-style. It lays much emphasis on practical evangelism and on the development of spiritual life and scriptural holiness. It has pioneered the Vacation Bible School movement in many parts of India, and annually conducts the Summer School of Evangelism, primarily for those who have not had theological training.

