

# Southern Asia Division

## *Upgrading, Growth, and Development*

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K. Jesuratnam

**T**he wide network of church-operated schools in Southern Asia reaches out and touches the lives of children throughout India and Nepal.

Thousands of children would never hear the name of Jesus if it were not for Adventist education.

The history of Adventist education in Southern Asia is a story of undimmed vision, growth, and challenge. It extends back to 1895, when early Adventist pioneers gathered as many orphans as they could in the remote village of Karmatar, 170 miles northwest of Calcutta. Today there are 175 elementary schools, 78 secondary schools, 23 higher secondary schools, one senior college and graduate school, two nursing schools, and one laboratory school in the Southern Asia Division.

### **Enrollment**

The Adventist Church operates the largest privately operated school system in the division, which cared for 100,948 young people as of the end of the 1993-1994 school year, an increase of 14,856 or 17 percent over 1990. The Southern Asia Division operates several schools with the largest enrollment in the Adventist world: Madurai Central, Madras, Pondicherry in the South Indian Union; Surat School in the Central India Union; and Lucknow and Jalandha in the Northern India Union.

Of the current student enrollment, only 8.95 percent come from SDA homes, a decrease of one percent since 1990.

### **Teachers**

In 1994, we had 6,403 teachers, compared to 3,573 in 1990. Currently, some 66 percent of the teachers are SDAs, a decrease of 13 percent compared to 1990.

The Southern Asia Division has as a continuing goal to provide a teaching staff with high academic standards. We have therefore mandated that every teacher have professional training and a valid degree or diploma. To achieve this goal, we have implemented an upgrading program of teacher training, in-service, college extension schools, and sponsorship of teachers. Most of our institutions have had trouble hiring enough qualified staff, especially in the areas of mathematics and science. In order to reduce the number of non-SDA teach-

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*Students writing exams at Flaiz Memorial Higher Secondary School, Andra Pradesh, India.*

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*Teacher prepares materials at division-wide Bible teachers' workshop.*

ers and to prepare Adventist-oriented leadership for our schools, a regular sponsorship program has been approved for graduate and post-graduate studies in mathematics, physics, and chemistry.

### Major Events

Early in the quinquennium, the division education department called a special meeting of the division and union officers and education administrators to study the present education programs from regional through division levels and to provide guidelines that would streamline our school system operations.

The committee brought a number of recommendations, which were subsequently approved by the division executive committee and are being implemented in the schools.

Bible workshops for all the Bible teachers in the North India, North-east India, Central India, and South India unions were held during May 1991. A total of 201 teachers and principals attended these workshops. Dr. Agripino Segovia of the General Conference Education Department held an additional workshop for teachers in the central Indian cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad in September 1992.

A major event of the quinquennium was the division-wide administrators'

conference held at Madras in September 1992, which included participation by General Conference and division personnel. The principals of major institutions who attended were immensely blessed by the program.

Additional conferences included a teachers' workshop for south Andhra Section teachers in 1993, the Southern Asia Division Headmasters' Conference at Hyderabad in January 1994, and teachers' institutes in June 1994 at Calcutta School and Manipur, Nagaland Section.

### Upgrading of Schools

Between 1990 and 1994, a number of schools were evaluated and upgraded. Six schools in the South India Union and two in the North India Union were upgraded to high school level. Upgraded from high school to plus-two (junior college level) were the Seventh-day Adventist High School and James Memorial High School, both in South India.

### Examinations

The old 10th Standard examination continues to provide entrance not only to our own institution of higher learning (Spicer College), but also to schools in other countries. A newer examination is the plus-2 examination. These examinations have proved useful in maintaining educational standards throughout the division.

Seventh-day Adventist schools in

the Southern Asia Division are known for their academic achievements. Of 53 Adventist high schools in the South India Union whose students took the government examinations in 1993, 35 schools had 100 percent success, with many students receiving first class or distinction scores. With the exception of seven schools, all others achieved more than 75 percent passing rate in the public examination.

Schools in the other unions also did well in the public examinations in 1993. This past year, Central India Union students performed well in the ICSE exams, with a number of schools achieving 100 percent passing scores.

### Baptisms

The effort to make known the message of Jesus Christ to every student has borne fruit in baptisms: 6,155 baptisms came from direct contact by schools between 1990 and 1993, most as the result of weeks of spiritual emphasis, a regular feature in all our schools. This contrasts with 1985-1989, when we had only 1,358 school-related baptisms. We are encouraging all our schools to get involved in direct evangelism, including cooperation with local churches.

The church-school relationship is one of the strongest factors that contributes to the development and growth of evangelism in Southern Asia. Take, for example, the school in

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*Students in the laboratory at Lowry Memorial Junior College, Bangalore, India.*

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# Roorkee School Witnesses to Neighbors

*Ernakulum Higher Secondary School, Kerala, India.*

Nuzvid, which invited the author to conduct an evangelistic campaign in December 1993. The teachers were fully involved in every aspect of this program, and we were able to baptize 212 persons. Follow-up work by the school produced an additional 54 baptisms.

While we rejoice in the achievements of our schools, we also strive to overcome some weaknesses. One major problem is the lack of trained teaching personnel. Nearly half of our staff do not possess any type of certification. Out of 6,403 teachers, 2,815 have recognized teaching certificates. The rest are graduates of our division SDA college (Spicer).

At present, 34 percent of our teaching staff is non-Adventist. This trend should be reversed by a strong sponsorship program for mathematics and science teachers.

The other weaknesses in the system fall in the area of facilities, financial self-support, and integration of faith and learning. The Adventist schools have served the church well in Southern Asia. But the future demands that we maintain and re-emphasize three distinctives of Adventist education—the redemptive imperative, the educational imperative, and the personal imperative.

We seek God's guidance as we move forward for Him in Southern Asia.—*Kodali Jesuratnam, Director of Education, Southern Asia Division.*

**W**ith the cooperation of our lay members and the Roorkee School in the Punjab area of India, 1,200 people have been brought to Jesus.

Some teachers have conducted cottage meetings in our vicinity, thereby providing Bible studies every Sabbath. This year, some of our staff members will hold an evangelistic crusade in town. We have conducted several eye camps on our campus and have provided free service to people from the nearby villages who have come to stay on our campus under the care of our nursing staff. During their stay, our staff and students have explained to them about the love of God. These people have left our campus highly impressed and convinced that there is a living God who controls our lives.

We have been also ministering to the African and Indian groups in Jamnagar, about three hours' drive from our school. We recently baptized three persons there, and more are preparing to join the church.

We have also constructed a three-room school building for the nearby

village where there was no school. The villagers have become great friends of the school and are very thankful for what this Christian school has done for them.

On campus, our faculty teach Bible classes and conduct baptismal classes. As a result, several children are baptized every year. Recently, students conducted a 24-hour marathon prayer session on their own and have been rewarded by the Lord for their efforts.

Every Friday evening, the teachers conduct a prayer session with the students in their dormitories. The students bring their written petitions and place them in a barrel. A general prayer is offered. These prayers include the petitions of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Afterward, all prayers in the barrel are burned to protect the confidentiality of the requests.

This past year, many of our staff and students conducted branch Sabbath schools in nearby villages.

Ravi Gill and his

team have provided an untiring ministry at the lepersorium, where they regularly provide the lepers with emotional and spiritual nourishment.—*Kodali Jesuratnam, Director of Education, Southern Asia Division.*

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*Roorkee School*