

## **DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

Doctor of Philosophy in Religion  
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**TITLE: THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN INDIA**

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A real need exists to provide a historical overview of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in India. No substantial or comprehensive research study is presently available. This dissertation seeks to fill the void by providing a chronological historical overview of the SDA Church from 1895 to 1947. It traces major branches of church organization including evangelism, education, publishing, medical, and relief and welfare work based upon existing primary and secondary documentary sources.

During the earliest formative period (1895-1909), the church began to establish a foothold in India through literature. After dispatching shipments of literature and sending church officials to survey the country, colporteurs arrived to disseminate literature and pave the way for permanent missionary work. A few years later, regular missionaries arrived and set up mission outposts. Most of these early efforts were conducted among

Westerners and Indian Christians. Thus, the earliest converts were already Christian. In the closing stage of this period, missionaries began to focus on reaching more Indians.

During the next phase (1910 to 1930), the denomination experienced significant growth, which caused the church to adjust its structure. The India Mission field developed into a union, and then later a division. The church gradually branched out from Calcutta to other parts of the country, particularly to South India. Missions moved away from rental property to permanent facilities with their own building. This provided stability and a base for growth. The publishing work expanded through scholarships and new colporteur system. These years were foundational for the educational work as several union training schools were established. Church growth occurred primarily among low- and out-caste Indians, which resembled other Christian missions.

The final period under consideration lasted from 1931 until 1947 when India achieved political freedom from British rule. Evangelism brought further membership growth and expansion. More religious literature became available in an even wider array of language groups. Mission schools became co-educational. Toward the close of this period, the church decided to introduce systematic medical training. By 1947, there was a continuity of leadership in the denomination as increasing numbers of indigenous leaders took the reins of leadership.

The early history of the SDA Church in India is an excellent case study in the development of early Adventist missions. The church followed a missiological pattern similar to that in other parts of the world in which the church, as it faced setbacks along with advances; establish a permanent presence through an organized structure.