



R. N. Prabhu Das

## Adventist Education and Its Impact: Educating for Eternity

The Southern Asia Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SUD) comprises the countries of India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives. Based on the varied religious practices represented in these countries, people in the SUD encounter many types of education systems, including the one operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the SUD, Adventists operate 297 elementary and secondary schools; four colleges offering nursing; six colleges; one university; and two special

schools for visually handicapped and speech-and hearing-impaired students. At the end of December 2019, student enrollment at all levels stood at 210,140, with 10,551 faculty members.

As a result, within this context, Adventist education plays a unique role and has a significant impact on the overall development of students. Today, throughout the Southern Asia Division, our schools and colleges display and promote unique characteristics such as presenting the principles of God's truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—and above all, our schools help students learn life's great lesson of unselfish service.

### A Different Perspective

Adventist education inspires students to see and understand the current world through the perspective of God's truth. The Bible becomes the foundation from which students view what they are learning. This helps focus their thinking on ultimate truth—a biblical vision for life where the world is created and sustained by God; where God has acted in history to deal with the distortions of creation caused by human rebellion; and where history is advancing toward a new creation in which all things are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

### Adventist Education and Its Impact on One Student

Rathish Kumar was raised in a



Students at the Seventh-day Adventist Higher Secondary School and Pre-University College in Bangalore display posters and a float created for a temperance rally in Bangalore, India. Photo courtesy of the SUD Education Department.

Hindu home by his grandmother. When he was 7 years old, Rathish lost his father; and at 13, he lost his mother. Due to the family's poverty, life was hard for him and his grandmother. Because of their financial challenges, his grandmother enrolled him in a local public school until the 10th grade; however, she could not afford to enroll Rathish in higher secondary education.

Rathish's maternal uncle had heard about E. D. Thomas Memorial Higher Secondary School in Nalavanniyankudikadu, Tamil Nadu, and took Rathish there to try to get him enrolled. They met the school principal, Ramaiah Samuel, and Rathish shared his life story and financial condition. The principal, moved by the young man's story, enrolled him as a student at the school.

Rathish had never been to a Christian school before and did not know much about Christians except that they worshiped a different God called Jesus. He wondered what his teachers would be like and if his classmates would be kind. When he arrived at his new Adventist school, his teachers and classmates welcomed him and made him glad to study there. His classes were different and unique when compared to the public school. Here he learned all things

afresh from the perspective of the Bible, and everything he learned made a lot of sense. Morning and evening worship, attending church on Sabbath, Adventist Youth (AY) programs, the songs, the Sabbath school programs, and sermons all positively impacted him and inspired him to say Jesus Christ is the only true God. After giving his heart to Jesus, he made two crucial decisions: to be baptized and to dedicate his life to serving God and humanity as a pastor.

He prayed about this decision. Soon, God sent Philip Jagadeesan, a faithful layman, to visit with him. Rathish shared his testimony, along with the two desires for his life. Deeply touched by Rathish's story, Philip Jagadeesan brought Rathish to visit me at the SUD headquarters. During our time together, I was blessed to hear Rathish's miraculous story and the impact of Adventist education on his life.

In December 2019, at the Jeevan Jothi Adventist English church at SUD headquarters, I had the privilege of baptizing Rathish. He was so happy to have started a new life with Jesus. But he still needed to fulfill his second desire, to serve as a pastor; so in my position as division education director, I made the arrangements and helped raise funds for him to



Student being baptized during one of the many division-wide Adventist Impact baptisms. Photo courtesy of the SUD Education Department.



enroll as a BTh student at Spicer Adventist University in Pune, India. I am overjoyed with how the Lord has led Rathish and look forward to his graduating from Spicer and serving as a pastor.

### The Call

Our teachers in the SUD teach and lead thousands of students to understand that God has called them. There are many examples of Bible characters whom God called to participate with Him in leading and helping others to come to know His love and to live as people of faith, just as He calls us today. Our teachers have come from different religious backgrounds with many levels of ability. Our Adventist environment has helped SUD teachers to understand and identify the call from God. The SUD is committed to supporting our teachers' personal, academic, and spiritual growth through continued in-service training and opportunities for upgrading.

### Extracurricular Activities

Learning does not take place only in the classroom. Through extracurricular activities, students learn about God and build practical and social skills. Students are involved in temperance contests, health rallies, sports, drama, music, choir, Adventist Youth programs, Vacation Bible Schools, weeks of prayer, and various school functions in SUD schools. These co-curricular activities in our institutions strengthen students' faith and spiritual growth. They also offer opportunities to engage in service to others, build social skills such as teamwork and empathy, develop practical skills such as public speaking and time management, and hone their talents and academic skills.

### Graduation Programs

Graduation represents an important stage in "qualifying" for the higher call. There is no other event that best typifies our call to "Raise Up and Shine for Jesus." Every year, special services and

lamp-lighting ceremonies recognize the thousands of students who graduate throughout the Southern Asia Division with diplomas and degrees in a wide variety of areas such as computer applications, education, business administration, medicine, nursing, and



**Investiture service for SID Pathfinders and Master Guides.**  
Photo courtesy of the SUD Education Department.



**Students and faculty administrators at the Seventh-day Adventist Higher Secondary School in Bangalore, India, displaying prizes awarded during a temperance contest.** Photo courtesy of the SUD Education Department.

more. The SUD administration is intentional about making sure that Adventist identity is visible in our schools throughout SUD so that each graduate can identify the impact of a Seventh-day Adventist education on his or her current accomplishments and future service. Whether at the secondary or tertiary levels, these students take the Adventist influence

throughout the various parts of the division where they serve and to other parts of the world.

### Reaching the Community

Each day, our administrators and K-12 teachers spend time together in the Word of God and in prayer before school starts; those at our colleges and university do this as well. Nothing can substitute for doing this. God has blessed our institutions and helped them grow and develop in all areas during this past quinquennium (2015-2020). One area that deserves special attention is the number of community outreach events that promoted health and temperance and the impact of the Adventist lifestyle on overall health. Several regional and division-wide temperance rallies took place during the quinquennium. Students at all levels participated in these rallies, poster contests, and parades that showcased not only topics relating to good health, but also the importance of the environment, building and maintaining good family relationships, and the appropriate use of video gaming and digital devices, for example.

Though Adventist institutions in SUD operate within a non-Christian society, we can reach the unreached through the grace of God and the impact of

the lifestyle promoted by Adventist education. As we increase the number of buildings on our campuses, we will have more space to accommodate more students, and Adventist education will have a more significant impact within the communities surrounding our schools and the larger society.

### A Prayer

Until our Lord Jesus comes, the SUD Education Department will continue to hold high the banner of promoting redemption as its core value. We are committed to having our Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, remain the focus, the power, and the fulfiller of those goals in our lives. ✍

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Elementary students display posters at a temperance rally in Bangalore, India. Photo courtesy of the SUD Education Department.