Moses, Mathi Daniel (1919–1996)

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Mathi Daniel Moses served the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the first Indian national union president, as well as a pioneer evangelist, educator, and church administrator in the Southern Asia Division, along with Davy Pundiah, his wife.

Early Life
Moses was born November 30, 1919, to Pastor and Mrs. Mathi Pakhir Daniel, Adventist pioneers of Andhra, who brought up their children to serve the church. Moses had two brothers, Solomon and William; as well as four sisters: Mrs. Kanthamma B. S. Moses, Mrs. Rajamma William Sharalaya, Mrs. Jaya P. Krupa Rao, and Mrs. Vijaya P. Samuel.

Education and Marriage
Educated exclusively in Adventist schools, Moses attended Spicer College when it was at Krishnarajapuram and graduated from the two-year ministerial course in 1939.

Just before the outbreak of World War II, the Burma Union sent Davy Florida Pundiah to take the nurses’ training course at Nuzvid. Unable to return to Burma during the war, she remained in India and married M. D. Moses in 1942. They had four children: Pansy, Franklin, Frederick, and Pearly, all educated in Adventist institutions.

Early Career and Ministry
After his graduation, M. D. Moses began work in the denomination during the latter part of 1939, first being assigned to western India as an evangelist in the Marathi field. After studying the Marathi language for nine months in Poona, he was able to assist in evangelistic programs.

In 1940 he conducted the first of his own numerous evangelistic series. At the age of 29 he received ordination to the ministry at the division council meetings held in Kirkee in 1948. The following year administration appointed him superintendent of the North Marathi Mission.

For years he continued to conduct two series of meetings a year, establishing numerous churches and baptizing hundreds of people. He was not only a passionate evangelist, but also a talented singer fluent in English, Telugu, Marathi, and Hindi. Aurangabad was one of the places where M. D. Moses helped open the work in 1951.

Pastor Moses became president of the South Marathi Mission Field at its reorganization in 1952. Next the Central India Mission elected him president during its organization in 1954. Three years later when the North Maharashtra Section formed in 1957, it made him its president.

Later Ministry—Accepting Challenges
The division year-end committee in 1962 elected Moses, at the age of 42, as president of the Western India Union, the very first time that an Indian national had become a union president.

The small division committee that met in Detroit, Michigan, during the 1966 GC Session replaced him with V. P. Muthiah as president of Western India Union and appointed Moses as the director of the Voice Of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School at the division Office, adding that he would continue as a member of the division committee. However, the larger division committee that met in Poona a month later appointed him as division evangelist, assigned to the Western India Union up to the end of 1967. Meanwhile, the South India Union placed a call for him to serve as president of the Andhra Section from where his parents hailed. The division released him from the assignment as evangelist and approved the request of the South India Union.

At the time one of the major projects in the Andhra Section was the establishment of the New Andhra School, envisioned first in 1961 to be established in Ibrahimpatnam. Administration intended the school to supplement the meager facilities at Narsapur which then would scale back to an elementary boarding school. Meanwhile, the division had authorized the South India Union to close the English language boarding middle school in Bangalore and instructed the union to divert part of the appropriation to the New Andhra School project. Also, the entire Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow Offering for the first quarter of 1965 coming to Southern Asia had been designated for the New Andhra School. However, the project had encountered delay and some funds had been loaned to the hospital in Ottapalam, Kerala, and some for immediate relief at Narsapur. Finding it difficult to repay the two loans and at the same time to provide the union share for the New Andhra School, in 1967 the South India Union recommended indefinite postponement of the Andhra School project and asked the division for permission to upgrade the facilities at Narsapur, which would include renovation of the girls’ hostel, construction of a new boys’ hostel, construction of new teachers’ quarters, etc. The union assigned the new Andhra Section president, M. D. Moses, to assist the school principal. With permission from the General Conference, the division authorized the shelving of the New Andhra School project and the diversion of remaining funds to Narsapur. The burden on Narsapur was great, and finally Moses accepted the appointment as principal of the school, serving there during 1969-1971. He upgraded the building facilities and successfully converted the school to English as the medium of instruction.

The 1971 division year-end meetings resulted in a general reorganization of the unions in India, removing the Andhra Section from the South India Union and merging it with the former Western India Union to form the new Central India Union.
Union. The first constituency of the new union elected Moses to serve as the secretary of the lay activities, Sabbath School, and stewardship departments of the union. Barely a year later administration released him from those departments and assigned him the ministerial association and the department of public affairs.

In 1974 the Central India Union voted to form a “Union Region” with the CIU portion of Orissa and five neighboring districts of Maharashtra, and appointed Moses as director. The village of Khurda had served as the headquarters for the Orissa Mission since the 1930s, but in 1952 the Orissa Mission merged with the Assam, West Bengal, and Bihar Missions into the East India Section and the headquarters moved to Ranchi. The bungalow in Khurda had been leased and almost given up for lost when, with the help of U. C. Das, it was reclaimed. The division approved the Central India Union request for this territorial adjustment of the new union region with headquarters at Khurda. The union region was not reported to nor listed in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks, and many were unaware of its formation. Like the biblical Moses, Pastor Moses went from Bombay, one of the largest cities in India, into the wilderness.

He moved into the reclaimed bungalow in Khurda, and, as director of the union region, in 1975 he established a boarding school in Khurda. The location, beautiful in in the midst of rolling hills and thick woods, started with nine boarders, eight day students, and two staff members.

Finally, the division council in December 1975 elected Moses as director of the Sabbath School department of the division, a post he served until his retirement.

Later Life

After 41 years of faithful service Moses retired in 1980. Although the division leadership requested him to continue a little longer, he is quoted as saying, “No, I must step down to make room for younger workers. No one is indispensable.”

His death on March 22, 1996, followed a prolonged illness triggered by a stroke. He was laid to rest at Riverside, California.

Contribution and Legacy

Those who knew him regarded M. D. Moses as a great evangelist, a seasoned and highly esteemed administrator, and as a talented singer. However, they remember him most for the dignity and equanimity with which he accepted the decisions of committees. In the midst of the most trying circumstances, he put his every effort into whatever post assigned him, regardless of where asked to go or what to do.

Sources


“Adventist Centre opened in Ahmedabad.” Southern Asia Tidings, August 1, 1979.


“Appointments.” Minutes of the South India Union Committee, April 8, 1969.

“Bangalore Middle School—Discontinuance.” Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, June 29, 1961.

“Call for M. D. Moses.” Minutes of the South India Union Committee, September 5, 1966.


“From Mud Walls to a Beautiful Hostel.” Southern Asia Tidings, July 1, 1979.


“Kerala Hospital Loan.” Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, October 11, 1966. Southern Asia Division archives. Krishnagiri Dist., Tamil Nadu, India.


“Meet Our Workers.” Eastern Tidings, December 1, 1951.


“Northeast Union Headquarters—Transfer.” Southern Asia Division Committee Minutes, April 30, 1951. Southern Asia Division archives. Krishnagiri Dist., Tamil Nadu, India.


“Release from Call as Division Evangelist.” Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, September 13, 1966. Southern Asia Division archives. Krishnagiri Dist., Tamil Nadu, India.


“Union Region,” and “M D Moses, Director Union Region.” Minutes of the Central India Union Committee, December 9-11, 1974.

NOTES


8. English and Telugu and two more that must have been Marathi and Hindi (Ibid.).


17.
“Release from Call as Division Evangelist,” Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, September 13, 1966, # 66-394, 90.

18. “Andhra Section New School,” Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, June 29, 1961, # 61-223, 55. Narsapur was to be an elementary school after that.


21. “Kerala Hospital Loan,” Minutes of the Southern Asia Division Committee, October 11, 1966, # 66-422, 96; authorized SIU to loan Rs 4,00,000.

22. “Narsapur School Advance,” Minutes of the Division Committee, January 22, 1964, # 64–34, 8; authorized a loan of Rs 50,000.


27. Meesarapu, “First Union President,” 122.

28. “Nominating Committee Report,” Minutes of the First Constituency of the Central India Union March 1-4, 1972, #72-17, 10.

29. “Southern Asia Division,” Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, relevant years. Also, “Nominating Committee Report,” Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Central India Union, Dec 1973, #73-283, 73.

30. “Union Region,” Minutes of the Central India Union Committee, Dec 9-11, 1974, #74-232, 49; “M D Moses, Director Union Region,” # 74-233, 49. The SDA Yearbooks merely referred to territories administered directly by the union in the list of territory.

31. Comparing the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks for 1952 and 1953 with reference to the missions in the Northeast Union. The union headquarters which had been in Ranchi moved to Karmatar. See “Northeast Union Headquarters–Transfer,” Division Committee Minutes, April 30, 1951, #12899, 3500.


34. Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, second rev. ed. (1996), s.v. “SDA High School (Khurda),” refers to Moses as the director of the Orissa Region.


37. Fowler, “A Life to Remember.”

38. Ibid.