



Prospective LDS Outreach Case Studies

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Prospective LDS Outreach Expansion in Uttar Pradesh, India

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Overview

Supporting a population of approximately 200 million,^[1] Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India and the most populous country subdivision in the world. Hindus comprise a strong majority and Muslims constitute a sizable minority. Followers of other religions constitute one percent of the population. Most the population speaks Hindi or Urdu although several other languages are widely spoken such as Bhojpuri and Awadhi. The LDS Church maintains no presence in Uttar Pradesh with the exception of one small branch in the extreme west located on outskirts of the New Delhi metropolitan area.

This case study reviews the history of the Church's administration of Uttar Pradesh. Opportunities and challenges for future growth are analyzed. The growth of the Church in other Indian administrative divisions is reviewed and the size and growth of other missionary-focused Christian groups with a presence in Uttar Pradesh is summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

History

The India Bangalore Mission administered Uttar Pradesh from 1993 until 2007 when the state was reassigned to the newly organized India New Delhi Mission. The Church organized its first branch in Uttar Pradesh in 2008. The new branch was located in Noida - a suburb of the New Delhi metropolitan area. Little growth has occurred in the branch since its organization. Missionaries serving in the Noida Branch generally reported fewer than 30 attending church in 2013.

Noida is located in Gautam Buddha Nagar District - the only administrative district in Uttar Pradesh with an LDS presence. In 2011, 0.82% of the state population resided in Gautam Buddha Nagar District and 0.32% of the state population resided in the city of Noida.

A map displaying the status of LDS outreach for major cities in Uttar Pradesh can be found [here](#).

Opportunities

Uttar Pradesh presents significant opportunities for LDS missionary activity due to its massive population of 200 million and close proximity to the headquarters of the India New Delhi Mission. Approximately three percent of the world's population resides in Uttar Pradesh and the state's population is larger than all but four countries (China, India, the United States, and Indonesia). There are many large and medium-sized cities in the state including seven cities with at least one million inhabitants, 64 cities with at least 100,000 inhabitants, 339 cities with at least 20,000 inhabitants, and 905 cities or towns with at least 5,000 inhabitants. These population centers permit efficient use of limited missionary resource as urban environments provide missionaries with opportunities to reach sizable populations concentrated within small geographical areas.

The government and society of Uttar Pradesh has maintained greater religious freedom than many other Indian states with tiny Christian population. Uttar Pradesh has not enacted anti-conversion legislation like other Indian states with similar religious demographics.^[2] These conditions suggest no legal or societal prohibitions on LDS missionaries teaching and baptizing investigators who previously adhered to non-Christian faiths. However, societal and cultural norms may discourage open proselytism.

Cities with over one million inhabitants present the greatest opportunities for the establishment of an LDS presence due to the

size of the target population, accessibility from mission headquarters in New Delhi, and the importance of these cities in Indian culture, society, and economics. There may be some isolated Latter-day Saints who joined the Church elsewhere and have since relocated to some of these major cities. Isolated members and investigators petitioning church leaders to hold church services and assign missionaries will be key for mission and area leaders to determine the need and urgency of establishing the Church in these locations. Mission and area leaders may also begin investigatory efforts on their own without appeals from members or investigators. Mission leaders can organize a member group if there are several members who indicate that they will attend church weekly and if one of these members holds the priesthood and meets worthiness standards. Kanpur, Lucknow, Ghaziabad, and Meerut number among the most favorable major metropolitan areas for mission and area leaders to explore opportunities to place full-time missionaries and establish member groups.

Missionary activity may be most effective if it targets the tiny Christian community in major cities due to greater theological similarities with LDS teachings than with Hinduism or Islam. The Church in India has established a presence in multiple cities where there are comparable religious demographics to major cities in Uttar Pradesh. The Church has achieved steady growth in these locations such as New Delhi and Hyderabad. Thus, comparable results may be achieved if the Church opens member groups in major cities in Uttar Pradesh

Social media advertising has tremendous potential for the Church to identify receptive individuals among an enormous target population. Church leaders, missionaries, and ordinary members can target specific locations in Uttar Pradesh by promoting LDS-themed advertisements regardless of whether there are missionaries assigned to their area or if there is an LDS unit nearby. For example, advertisements on social media platforms such as Facebook can be modified to reach individuals on a variety of demographic domains ranging from personal interests, religious background, geographical location, marital status, and education. Mission leaders can maximize their efforts to open cities to proselytism by using social media to target these locations with advertisements. Advertising on Facebook is relatively inexpensive and provides a methodological and coordinated method to reach vast online audiences. Advertisements can also be tailored to the religious background of Hindus and Muslims and promote LDS materials available for free download at lds.org that have been translated into Hindi and Urdu.

There are a sizable number of translations of LDS materials in Hindi and Urdu. The Church has translated the entire Book of Mormon and approximately 40-50 gospel study and missionary materials into Hindi and Urdu - the two most commonly spoken first and second languages in Uttar Pradesh. These materials will provide valuable teaching, testimony development, and gospel study resources for initial missionary efforts within the region. Some inhabitants of Uttar Pradesh speak English as a second language. The utilization of English translations of church materials and scriptures may adequately meet local needs among English-speaking individuals, especially in the most populous cities.

Challenges

The extremely small size of the LDS Church in India poses the greatest barrier to opening additional cities to missionary work in Uttar Pradesh. There are likely only a handful, if any, Latter-day Saints who reside in this state outside of the Noida area. There are over one billion people who reside within the geographical boundaries of the India New Delhi Mission. No LDS presence has ever been established in the heartlands of Uttar Pradesh where approximately 200 million people reside. The extremely small size of the Indian full-time missionary force poses serious challenges for opening additional major cities to missionary activity such as Kanpur, Lucknow, and Ghaziabad. The Church in India has faced chronic challenges with acquiring a sufficient number of foreign missionary visas to adequately staff its two missions. Consequently, no additional cities in northern, eastern, or western India have had an initial LDS presence established since the organization of the India New Delhi Mission in 2007. The Church has yet to establish a missionary presence in Kolkata, India where one LDS branch operates notwithstanding a metropolitan population of nearly 16 million.

Initial efforts to expand missionary work in Uttar Pradesh will require outreach to primarily target Hindus as Hindus comprise as many as four-fifths of the state population. This religious group has historically received extremely limited LDS outreach. Current LDS missionary tactics have been tailored for those with a Christian background, suggesting a need for the development of Hindu-specific outreach resources in order for prospective outreach to be more effective. Few formerly Hindu converts may join the Church as Indian society has discouraged conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. Similar challenges exist for Muslims to contemplate investigating or joining the Church.

Recent religious conflict in some locations in Uttar Pradesh may discourage the expansion of missionary activity in the region. Communal violence has recently occurred between Hindus and Muslims, especially in Muzaffarnagar. Clashes in August and September 2013 resulted in 65 deaths, 68 injured persons, and as many as 40,000-50,000 displaced individuals.^[3] These conditions will require mission and area leaders to carefully assess safety conditions in locations being considered for the placement of full-time missionaries.

The Church has yet to translate all LDS scriptures and a larger number of gospel study and missionary materials into Hindi and Urdu. No translations of the Doctrine and Covenants or Pearl of Great Price have been completed in Hindi or Urdu. A lack of translations of essential LDS scriptures may result in challenges for some investigators and members to adequately learn the gospel, develop a testimony, teach lessons, and prepare talks. The Church has yet to translate mormon.org into Hindi or Urdu, resulting in limited scope and efficiency in using this website in English for online missionary efforts in Uttar Pradesh.

Comparative Growth

The Church maintains official wards or branches in nine of the 36 administrative division of India including Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh. The Church has a presence in all regions of India except the northeast. In eastern India, the Church operates one branch in Kolkata. In northern India, the Church operates seven branches in New Delhi that form a member district. However, no other cities in northern India have an LDS presence. In southern India, the Church has experienced the most rapid growth and reports a presence in several major cities. A stake functions in Hyderabad and districts operate in Bangalore, Chennai, Coimbatore, Rajahmundry, and Visakhapatnam. In western India, the Church operates one branch each in Goa and Mumbai. Missionaries have served in Goa for many years and the first proselytizing missionaries began serving in Mumbai in 2012.

The size and growth trends of nontraditional Christian groups in Uttar Pradesh significantly varies by denomination. However, essentially all missionary-focused Christian groups report extremely few members despite the massive population in the state. As few as 0.2% of the population in Uttar Pradesh is Christian. Evangelicals report that almost the entire population is unreached by their proselytism efforts.^[4] The Seventh-Day Adventist Church numbers among the largest and most rapidly growing Christian denominations in Uttar Pradesh. Adventists in Uttar Pradesh reported 10 churches (large or well-established congregations), 246 companies (small or recently-established congregations), 12,437 members, and approximately 3,200 baptisms in 2004 and 47 churches, 401 companies, 64,135 members, and 2,912 baptisms in 2014. Adventists experienced the most rapid membership growth in the late 2000s.^[5] Adventist publications are translated into Hindi. Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a minimal presence in Uttar Pradesh with eight congregations. Witnesses have translated their official website, jw.org, into Hindi and Urdu.^[6] The Church of the Nazarene does not appear to maintain a presence in Uttar Pradesh.^[7]

Limitations

No reports were available on whether Latter-day Saints reside in Uttar Pradesh outside of the Noida area. The Church does not publish the number or location of its member groups. Consequently it is unclear whether any member groups operate in Uttar Pradesh. The Church does not publish plans on its efforts to open additional cities to missionary work until these plans are executed. It is unclear whether the India New Delhi Mission has any plans to open additional cities in Uttar Pradesh to missionary activity within the foreseeable future.

Future Prospects

The outlook for the Church to open cities in the heartland of Uttar Pradesh to missionary work and organize congregations in these locations appears unlikely for many more years to come. The Church in India remains extremely small with less than 12,000 members as of year-end 2013 despite a massive national population of 1.2 billion people. Difficulties augmenting the number of full-time missionaries assigned to India, extremely few Christians in Uttar Pradesh, and societal and cultural conditions that discourage conversion from Hinduism or Islam to Christianity all pose serious obstacles to the expansion of the Church in the state. Thrifty and time-efficient proselytism tactics, such as social media advertising, will be necessary for the Church to target specific cities, identify interested individuals, and assign full-time missionaries once there is a sufficient number of investigators and members residing in a specific city. Ghaziabad appears to be the only city in Uttar Pradesh outside of the New Delhi metropolitan area that is likely to have missionaries assigned and a member group organized due to its large population and close proximity to New Delhi. Delays in the Church establishing a presence in additional cities in Uttar Pradesh may result in missed opportunities for growth, especially if religious freedom conditions deteriorate.

^[1] "India: Uttar Pradesh," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/India-UttarPradesh.html), retrieved 25 March 2015.

^[2] "India," International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, retrieved 14 March 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222329>

^[3] "India," International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, retrieved 14 March 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222329>

^[4] "Country: India State: Uttar Pradesh," Joshua Project, retrieved 27 March 2015. http://joshuaproject.net/states_districts/IN/IN36

^[5] "Northern India Union Section (1978-Present)," [adventiststatistics.org](http://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=2610289), retrieved 27 March 2015.

^[6] [jw.org](http://www.jw.org), retrieved 27 March 2015.

^[7] "Nazarene Church Data Search," [nazarene.org](http://app.nazarene.org/FindAChurch), retrieved 14 March 2015.