

Title: Oral history of Religious Conversion: SAIACS Library and Twentieth Century Indian Indigenous Missions and Conversion to Christianity.

Study Group: DABOH

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Proposal Abstract:

South Asia institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) library is strategically seen as a repository of 21st century mission agencies archives and missionary activities in India as well as individual stories of experience of conversion to Christianity. This study presents viability of developing a repository of oral history of religious conversion in North India among five people groups. It proposes to develop space and content in digital formats through data collected from pilot study of North India Research at SAIACS and to develop documentation and archives repository for Indigenous Mission agencies and its archives. The oral history of religious conversion offers vast information to support the study of church growth in India and formulate contextual theologies, and relevant strategies to meet missiological needs

Historical evidences of church growth in the form of archival materials like letters, manuscripts, and field reports of missionaries and oral history of religious conversion need to be preserved. These resources are immense value to study the history of Christianity in India in the 20th century. The role of SAIACS as mission study centre is to provide infrastructure facilities for both repository purpose and digital dissemination of information to cater to the needs scholars globally.

Most of the indigenous missionary organisations in India do not have adequate facilities such as preservation and digitization of their primary sources of information to document the church growth movement. Also it is noted that often mission organisations are unable to maintain these historical resources in their premises due to lack of expertise to preserve such valuable resources, more importantly these agencies are not equipped technologically and professionally to share this important collection with outside world. So in this context, SAIACS has been considered by these agencies for a potential partnership and networking for providing access to mission resources.

The proposed repository at SAIACS will hold missionary archival collections from the following indigenous missions in India and oral historical information collected through North India Research Project.

- a. Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB)
- b. National Missionary Society (NMS)
- c. Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM)
- d. Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, Kedgon

Source: North India Research Project and its data available in SAIACS will provide wealth of information to study these groups and offer viable solutions to preserve such oral history of religious experience. NIRP also provides the platform for mutual benefit between practical and empirical data as documented by mission agencies and missiologists. Thus, SAIACS through the repository of NIP fosters partnership between missionaries and missions studies.