

UNP
Critical Comment

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The making of an Indigenous Clergy
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Lecturer: Dr. P. Denies

By

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CRITICAL COMMENTS OF THE INTERVIEW

Short Biography of the interviewee

Jacob Christopher David was born in 1910 in Pietermaritzburg. He went to school at St. Paul in the same town. Then taught for a few years at St Paul school. Later he decided to be a priest. He went to Lovedale to complete his studies before preaching to India.

In 1938, he was sent to the theological College in Nazareth, by the dioceses of Natal to take up the ministry. In 1941 on the 15th of May, he married Jessie Anandam and they have six children.

In 1941 Christopher ordained as a deacon, and he worked under Canon Moses in the Anglican Parish of Tuticorn (South India) where he worked for 6 months. In the same year 1941 he came to South Africa in Pietermaritzburg, he worked at St. Paul's church under Rev. J. W. Langley. After a year he was ordained as a priest and serve under Bishop Davies.

In 1947, he was transferred to Durban as an assistant Priest to Rev. W. H. Satchell at St Aidan's church. When Satchell left the country David was appointed as a priest in charge of the same church.

In 1958, he became a Canon of the church of the province of S.A. among Indians.

He died in Durban on Sunday 25th June 1961, after a short illness and he was ~~paid~~ ^{buried} by the Bishop of Natal, the Right Rev. T.G. Inman at a service, in St. Paul's church. Canon David studied for the ministry in the Bishop Theological college at Tinnivelly in S. India, and he was ordained in 1942. Canon Jacob Christopher David was buried at the Stellawood cemetery. The Bishop conducted the grave-side service, assisted by Rev. Z.M. Francis the Indian priest in charge of Christ Church Sydenham.

Material Circumstances of the interview

Though we did have slight difficulties with our tape recorder, we did manage to get a micro-phone to make things simple. But two of the people in our groups have a problem with tape recorder. We didn't have any crisis in our interviewers because we prepare them before hand. We did have a good communication because we were meeting every Wednesday 2pm to review our processes. We were also telephoning each other for update. Our relationship with interviewers was very good and cooperative.

Social structure of the interview

The impression was that the place where I conducted the interview was quite good, we didn't experience any inconveniences. Except the fact that my interviewee was not well because of the stroke, she was just fresh from hospital. However, the way she was talking (even though sometimes there was a pause in between) and

talking (even though sometimes there was a pause in between) and responding from the question she was just sympathetic.

Irrespective of the illness, (her illness) she was so friendly and kind, where she even remind me about the fruits of love.

Jessie was extremely happy to be interviewed and well prepared to give me relevant information about her husband. I would say that everything went well and I even managed to record her, and our interview took 45 minutes.

Personally, (or from my point of view) I really want to express an appreciation to her to be so kindly to me than to be rude because of her age and illness.

Non-Verbal signs

As I have already pointed out concerning the social structure (or as far as the social structure is a concern). Jessie David was very much free and open to give the information; not nervous but relaxed to be interviewed. Even though sometimes I felt afraid to put more questions on her, but she was ready to give me any information which she felt it is important to be known.

But one of our interviewee was very much emotional to be interviewed about his father's pastoral ministry, I sense that by looking to him, the way he was talking and his movement on a chair. He was even using words like mme...eh! and shaking of hands and heads. Nevertheless, from the point of view of our group (An Indian Indigenous Clergy), the group didn't experience much as far as this question is concerned.

Restructuring of Data

Jessie David did touch both aspects of her husband's life in the parish and Indian community (locally and wide). This was also the feeling of the group. Except one interviewee who had a funny character during the process. Instead of being relevant in responding towards the question, he was just relating his personal stories and experiences about himself than giving correct information to the interviewer. The information was completely incorrect because the interviewer was familiar with the history of the Indian Clergy as they both come from the same Parish and he knows most of the information of the aspect within the church. And this was not pleasant to the interviewer but hurtful.

But some of us (interviewers), we did have cross references which materials are linking from the information we got during the process of interview. My impression was that most interviewees were very open and free to deliver the goods we expected from them.

Any significant omission

From the point of observation, our group failed to attend other Indian churches or clergy than to focus on two churches (catholic and Anglican). But as far as the interview was concerned within

the two churches, there was no point of omission. Yet, I would like to admit that our interviewees were very much familiar with us. I would like to think that maybe this familiarity with them was the one which closed our mind to see any significant of omission. I could see this as one of the group sickness to be stereotype and onesided.

Cross-References

The information was quite correct from both the interviewees and the references we got. Especially the people that were from catholic or Anglican backgrounds. There was a great link of materials, because the tradition of Anglicanism is much similar to catholicism even though there are slight differences.

But one has to understand that in the whole process of the interview, we cannot expect the interviewee to cover each and every point to emphasize negative and positive aspects. But all in all the material across the board was quite good.

The overall quality of the interview

The interviewee was very good and gave lots of details, being very keen to share personal contemporary life, easy to follow even though she was just fresh from a short illness which took her two weeks in hospital. Her English was very good and stimulating. She was highly educated and a retired teacher.

However, I have to admit that the person whom I dealt with was very open enough to answer whatever question was put forth to her, even though I was more limited than herself. But she did try to give the best of herself according to what was asked. I believe that if people could be consistent in the interview process, most of us would learn a lot. Especially things which are hidden and very important. I say this because before I conducted this interview to find out about the Indian Clergy, I was having a negative concept with Indians as far as the historical background is concerned which I learned from secondary school. But now I understand that those who wrote an Indian history were giving one sided information. They said that indians were coming here (South Africa) for a contract of a sugar plantation for a period of 5 to 10 years, then thereafter they could go back to India. Yes, it was partly true and partly untrue, because some of them went to different places with a certain task to perform (mission work, work in other factories). I would say we still need enough time to have this kind of research not especially in Indian communities or clergy, but also in other tribes.

The overall value of the interview in terms of historical research.

Before the post exile of South African apartheid most people tend to take for granted that the policy of segregation exists between whites and blacks. And this was coming from the historical point of view of the people who wrote historical books. But after people make the research of the whole process they find that this segregation is also applicable to other races (which involve also

the Indians). I am saying this, because after conducting this interview I find that apartheid was also a problem within the Indian communities. All along the way from India to South Africa they were coming as a slave for sugar plantation (by the colonies).

However, let me say that this interview was very, very much important and significant to me, because much of Indian history is not written in historical records. But out of the interview session I learnt a lot about Indian Clergy and some of the important events which happened amongst them which are not recorded.

Also the destructiveness of apartheid has destroyed the growth of the church among the Indian Community. Today we have more Indians in the province of Natal (KwaZulu Natal) than in the Cape, Transvaal, etc, because of apartheid.

I would also like to point out that when Indian immigrants came to Natal between 1860 and 1911 were not an only indentured labourers. No, they were also those who came for the sake of Gospel. Amongst them they were christians, Anglicans, methodist, baptists and Roman Catholics. Moreover we find the majority of Hindus and Muslim.

Others came to work in many different fields, like Mrs M. Frank's grandfather who worked in the Corobrick Factory and many others. But finally, I would like to apologise that our concentration on Anglicanism and Catholicism than to link to other churches of the Indians. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that the group which is coming next should see that they focused on Bethesda and others, to find out its existence, background, historical events, etc. And they should give enough time in this phase of research. I suppose they would come out with important things which are left out in our interview. Because I believe that some of the interviewee we dealt with, their grannies were part of the process of the establishment of Bethesda. This would help most of our African Societies who are dominated in oral and visual traditions which are not recorded. By so doing they would be digging out the most important things which are not known to our communities and societies. And some negative attitudes towards Indians would be changed and transformed to take them as part and parcel of the new South Africa like other races.