

## DABOH – An India Account

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by

Professor Siga Arles, Ph.D.

Director, Centre for Contemporary Christianity, Bangalore

This is a great privilege for me to give an account of what is the status of the Documentation, Archives, Bibliography and Oral History process in the Indian setting. Dr HS Wilson was expected to bring a report but in the context of his inability to be here with us, I was asked by Dr Michael Poon to quickly put together a 10 minute presentation which I shall now attempt. I am grateful to Dr Michael Poon for this opportunity.

### 1. First phase in the twentieth century

During the colonial and missionary era, the efforts under the International Missionary Council in link with the earlier National Missionary Council of India (1914) and later the National Christian Council of India (1922) took to a series of serious study processes.<sup>1</sup>

The well known among them were: [\[See PPP #1\]](#)

- a. The Lindsay Commission Report of 1928 which studied the place, role and effectiveness of the Christian colleges for Higher Education;<sup>2</sup>
- b. The Pickett Commission Report of 1933 which studied the place, role and effectiveness of the Christian Mass Movements in India;<sup>3</sup>
- c. The Ranson Report of 1945 on the Christian Minister in India which took a national survey of the then existing theological education.<sup>4</sup>

Then in the post-colonial era the World Council of Churches in link with the National Council of Churches of India undertook a study of the Rapid Social Change that took place in the mid-twentieth century. Globally it produced the Paul Abrecht report on *Rapid Social Change* and for India the outcome was the edited work by PD Devanandan and MM Thomas titled *Christian Participation in Nation Building*.<sup>5</sup> The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) was highly productive in researching, analyzing, documenting, publishing and continuing the process of seeking to guide the church in her mission to the nation of India. CISRS produced series of books to help

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<sup>1</sup> I had dealt with these in the first part of my doctoral thesis written at Aberdeen under the able mentorship of our DABOH Guru (as named by Dr Jonathan Bonk) Professor Andrew Walls. See *Theological Education for the Mission of the Church in India 1947 to 1987*, Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity No.76, 1991 and *Missiological Education: An Indian Exploration*, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> See AD Lindsay, *Report of the Commission on Christian Higher Education in India, An Enquiry into the Place the Christian College in Modern India*, London: Oxford University Press, 1931, pp381.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India, A Study with Recommendations*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1933; Lucknow Publishing House, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> See Charles W. Ranson, *The Christian Minister in India: His Vocation and Training*, Madras: CLS, 1945; London: Lutterworth Press, 1946, pp317.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Abrecht, *The Churches and Rapid Social Change*, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., London: SCM, 1961. A three year study in India culminated at Bombay in 1957 in a three day consultation which produced the volume *Christian Participation in Nation Building* edited by PD Devanandan and MM Thomas, Bangalore: CISRS, 1960.

shape the mission of the church in the context of the social and religious realities of the Indian sub-continent.<sup>6</sup> CISRS journal *Religion and Society* became a major tool to spread the new found impetus, information and intelligence to educate the church and to form the mind and method for mission.<sup>7</sup> For the next quarter of a century, CISRS in link with NCCI and Ecumenical Christian Council led the church in India into what we later identify as the ecumenical missiology. CISRS not only led the church in India, but as Philip Potter jokingly said, CISRS held “the Indian mafia” which led the whole World Council of Churches in the pursuit of its contextual missiology.<sup>8</sup> DAB process was in a way healthy and growing in the Indian setting during this period of 1957 to 1982.

## 2. Second Phase in the Twentieth Century

In the independent India, as the church began to identify her self identity, her mission and tried to organize her ministry, she developed certain emphases in response to the national ethos and global theological thought developments.

### a. Areas of Emphasis [See PPP #2]

Around the globe during the sixties and seventies there was the concern for contextualization. Led by Latin Americans and the Theological Education Fund, the demand to develop contextual theology took prominence in the third world theological education. As a result theses at Master and Doctoral level began to address the areas of **Dalit Liberation, Female Emancipation and Tribal Awakening**. Soon in tune with the emphasis in the World Council of Churches, JPIC – **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation** became a guiding and shaping force for theological reflection and action. Literature emerged from these areas of emphases in India. One could easily avail a bibliographical listing of such documentation.

### b. Areas of Involvement [See PPP #3]

If one were to ask “what are the major challenges for missional involvement in India”, the answer normally was to face the Context of Poverty and the Context of Religious Pluralism that is acute in India. Hence, much investigation and writing began to emerge on Poverty and Development; and on Pluralism, Religions and inter relationships. Socio-economic concerns loomed large in the church’s mission thought. Religious fundamentalism and militancy arose to bring conflicts amongst people in the name of religion. Gnana Robinson attempted to shape the concept of Communal Harmony from his PEACE centre.

### c. Problem of Polarization [See PPP #4]

In the church’s mission approach, it was unfortunate that there developed an acute polarization between those who identified themselves as Evangelicals and those who were in the Ecumenical movement. This is a farcical divide and needs eliminated as the true evangelical is truly ecumenical and a true ecumenical has the basis in the evangel. In the cross we have the basis of reconciliation. *Evangelicals are True*

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<sup>6</sup> See Siga Arles, *Missiological Education*, op.cit., chapter 5 on CISRS, pp99-128.

<sup>7</sup> This was the particular concern of MM Thomas – to form the mind of the church in mission.

<sup>8</sup> See Arles, *ibid.*, p121. Quoted from *Religion and Society*, XXX:3&4, September-December 1983, p2.

*Ecumenicals* argues JJ Harris in his doctoral dissertation.<sup>9</sup> Much of the church's resources are wasted in duplicating as a result of polarization. Initiatives to bridge the gap and to develop working relationships, is urgent.

Documents and bibliography are considerable from India in this period and beyond. CISRS and ECC along with NCCI published much. By now ISPCK began to help colleges to publish their theses and collected essays.

### 3. Efforts of Documentation

#### a. From the Churches

[See PPP #5]

A major documentation effort was that of the Church History Association of India (CHAI) when it set up a project to produce an ecumenical History of Christianity in India. Catholic and Protestant church historians wrote and published numerous volumes.<sup>10</sup> Beside CHAI, there were attempts by NCCI and its URM to document developments in church and mission areas.

#### b. From the Mission Societies

[See PPP #6]

The 1977 born India Missions Association brings together over 220 indigenous mission structures of India. Except for promotional pamphlets and journal articles, most of these mission initiatives are not documented. The oldest among them, the Indian Missionary Society and National Missionary Society have published centenary and other volumes but are hagiographical. Friends Missionary Prayer Band and Indian Evangelical Mission have Silver Jubilee volumes and are now reaching to their Golden Jubilee write ups. As Board Chairman of COUNT (Christian Outreach Uplifting New Tribes), I was successful to produce and release two books on the history and development of COUNT at the Silver Jubilee celebration in 2005.<sup>11</sup>

I was keen to develop documentation and research publications. Hence, I started my own Centre for Contemporary Christianity in 1994. It was both a renewal centre promoting renewal seminars and thought developments as well as research centre to promote relevant studies and publications. Through CFCC I had now developed series of books – Studies in Gospel interface with Indian Contexts known as CONTEXT series in which all the scholarly works done as research theses and dissertations on anything Indian is published;<sup>12</sup> In the Missiological Classics Series (MCS) we reproduce the global

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<sup>9</sup> JJ Harris, *Evangelicals are True Ecumenicals*, Chennai: Mission Education Books, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> CHAI History of Christianity in India volumes included, 1. *History of Christianity in India upto the middle of the Sixteenth Century* by AM Mundadan; 2. *History of Christianity from the middle of the Sixteenth to the End of the Seventeenth Century (1542-1700)*; *History of Christianity in India during the Eighteenth Century*; 4. *History of Christianity in South India during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*; 5. *History of Christianity in North India during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*; 6. *History of Christianity in India during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries – All India Developments*.

<sup>11</sup> See Siga Arles and Gollapalli John, *Transforming Links in Mission*, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity for COUNT, 2003; C.V. Ellitt, *Too Great to Count...* Bangalore: CFCC for COUNT, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> In this context series, we now have 8 books released: 1. Eric Sharpe, *The Riddle of Sadhu Sundar Singh*; 2. P Solomon Raj, *A Christian Folk Religion in India*; 3. HL Richard, *Exploring the Depths of the Mystery of Christ*; 4. Siga Arles, *Missiological Education: An Indian Exploration*; 5. Christopher Smith, *The Serampore Mission Enterprise*; 6. Mathew Philip, *The Unique Christ: Dialogue in Missions*; 7. Geomon

missiological literature in Indian print and make it affordable to Indian missiology students.<sup>13</sup> The Pastoral Concern Series (PCS) is another effort and there still is the general series (GS) in which we have published festschrifts and other titles. [See PPP #8]

SD Ponraj has developed his Mission Educational Books program through which he has published basic text material for grass roots missionaries. TRACI from Delhi has done some good work in the first two decades and similarly there had been various short lived attempts. Mylapore Institute of Indigenous Studies attempts to promote research and publication and the Tiruvalla based CSS has come up with a series of documents in the recent past. Christian Literature Society, Evangelical Literature Service, Gospel Literature Society, etc have had a role to play in the past. At various Indian missiological gatherings we have been reflecting on the need for us to set up a process of documenting the histories and development struggles of indigenous missions of India.

My own efforts at CFCC is one of the few attempts. MES and MIIS are also to be recognized in this connection.

There are various institutions which are involved in research studies and publications. The status throughout the nation of India could be summarized as follows: [See PPP #7]

Delhi:	ISPCK, TRACI, Vidyaniketan,
North East:	ETC, ATC, JRTS
Serampore:	Serampore College, SCEPTRE
Pune:	Ishvani Kendra, UBS CMS
Hyderabad:	IMA
Bangalore:	UTC, CISRS, ECC, SATHRI, TBT, CFCC, SCM, SAIACS, Dharmaram, CSA, ATC, NBCLC
Chennai:	MEB, MIIS, GLTC, HBI
Madurai:	TTS, IDEAS
Tiruvalla:	CSS, GFABS

During the 1990s IMA felt the need for documenting the indigenous mission history and held a Documentation Workshop at Chennai with Professor Andrew Walls as the resource person. A decade later when I asked the CEO of IMA, he said nothing happened as a result, since the leaders were too busy with the daily routine of running their mission organization, fund raising, church planting, administering, etc., Hence, I am of the opinion that there is much lacunae in the documentation of the church and mission history in India and we need to set relevant structures to tackle the challenge.

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George, *Religious Pluralism: Challenges for Pentecostalism in India*; 8. MT Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights – A Christian Response*.

<sup>13</sup> In this series we published David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*, Jan Jongeneel's *Missiological Encyclopedia part 1 & 2*, Luis Bush's *Catalysts for World Evangelization* and Steve McDowell and *Liberating the Nations*. Books being processed are Olav Myklebust's *Mission and Theological Education*, Henrik Kraemer's *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Stan Nussbaum's *Study Guide for Transforming Mission*, Andrew Walls' two classic books, works of Wilbert Shenk, Stephen Bevans, Charles Van Engen, Charles Kraft, Martin Conway, etc.,

#### **4. Indian Christian Archives** [\[See PPP #9\]](#)

The William Carey Library and Research Centre at the Serampore College campus houses the Carey Archives. It is often referred to as a gold mine of research material with all the books that Carey and his team left behind. But except for the few Bengali post graduate students, mostly Hindus, who come and use the archives, it is little used by Christian researchers. There is no infrastructure to facilitate scholars to come and reside and do their researches. For a short period I served as the Professor-in-charge of this centre and found that Serampore College had no long range plan to develop the archives. Maintenance is the agenda and there is no visionary goal to make it a viable place of research. Lack of vision added with lack of resources of funds to develop the archives and the lack of guest rooms and facilities need tackled.

United Theological College at Bangalore has archived the many collections and had been a centre for scholars to go and stay and research both for their theses as well as writings. There is good prospect of this library and archives being central to the research study process for the future.

Union Biblical Seminary at Pune has also developed its archive section. Leonard Theological College houses an archive of the Methodist heritage. SAIACS is newly in the process of developing its archive section. The Roman Catholics have their many archives.

#### **5. Bibliography** [\[See PPP #10\]](#)

The best place in India where one could go to do research in missiology is Ishvani Kendra in Pune. The library has developed index of articles in journals as well as books. Thus it provides the best prospect for a researcher.

Whereas attempts were afoot to link the libraries of UTC, UBS, Serampore, Gurukul, etc., progress is slow.

Senate of Serampore College has a Textbook publishing program. This has had a glorious past but is at a low ebb presently. SSC published a listing of thesis titles from its member colleges; but it is outdated. After the number of post graduate students has increased and more theses were produced, we are in need of up-to-date list of topics researched and published. Lack of such a list leaves room for duplication in research studies. Hence, the Indian Theological Librarians Association has resolved to publish the latest list which is now being prepared by its secretary Yesan Sellan. ITLA has great prospects to develop the library and bibliographic services to enhance missiological research studies.

#### **6. Oral History** [\[See PPP #11\]](#)

There is much that is urgent for us to collect from the older generation in order that we do not lose the precious history of the way mission work has started and grew in India and the sorts of growth struggles that were suffered. The need is to clearly plan for the whole process of Interviews, Collection of Data, Analysis of Data, Documentation, Preservation and a Methodology and Means for it.

My intention is to let the BD and MTh students to take up this task of Oral History and to collect all the data that they can and to preserve and document them.

## **7. In Closing...**

We have a long way to go. But we need to start. I am of the opinion that we are still at the very beginning stage of the whole challenge of DABOH in India. [\[See PPP #12\]](#)

Clear planning should happen in a national consultation of librarians, theological education leaders, church leaders and mission leaders, where there shall emerge

Documentation – the Method & Means for it;

Archives – Development, Preservation & Link-Up to research studies;

Bibliography – Collection & Computerization;

Oral History – Worldwide Documentation.

DABOH and IAMS may have to facilitate such beginnings and come up with ways and means to involve in constructive ways with a sense of urgency before too much more time is lost... and along with it much more of mission history is lost!

***Dr. Siga Arles,***

Director, Centre for Contemporary Christianity,  
#47, 10<sup>th</sup> Cross, 3<sup>rd</sup> Main, Hoysala Nagar,  
Bangalore 560016, India.

[arles@sify.com](mailto:arles@sify.com)

[sigaarles@gmail.com](mailto:sigaarles@gmail.com)

Cell: +91-98453-90155.

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Dr Siga Arles

1928: Lindsay Report – Christian Higher Education

1933: Waskom Pickett Report – Mass Movements

1944: Ranson Report – Theological Education

1954-7: Rapid Social Change – CISRS/Christian Participation in Nation Building

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## Areas of Emphasis

Dalit Liberation

Tribal Awakening

Feminist Emancipation

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation



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## Areas of Involvement

Context of Poverty

Context of Religious Pluralism

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Problem of Polarization

Evangelical Perspective

Ecumenical Approach

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## Documentation / Church

CHAI – Church History Association of India

NCCR – URM

BUILD – etc.

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Documentation / Mission

India Missions Association

FMPB & IEM

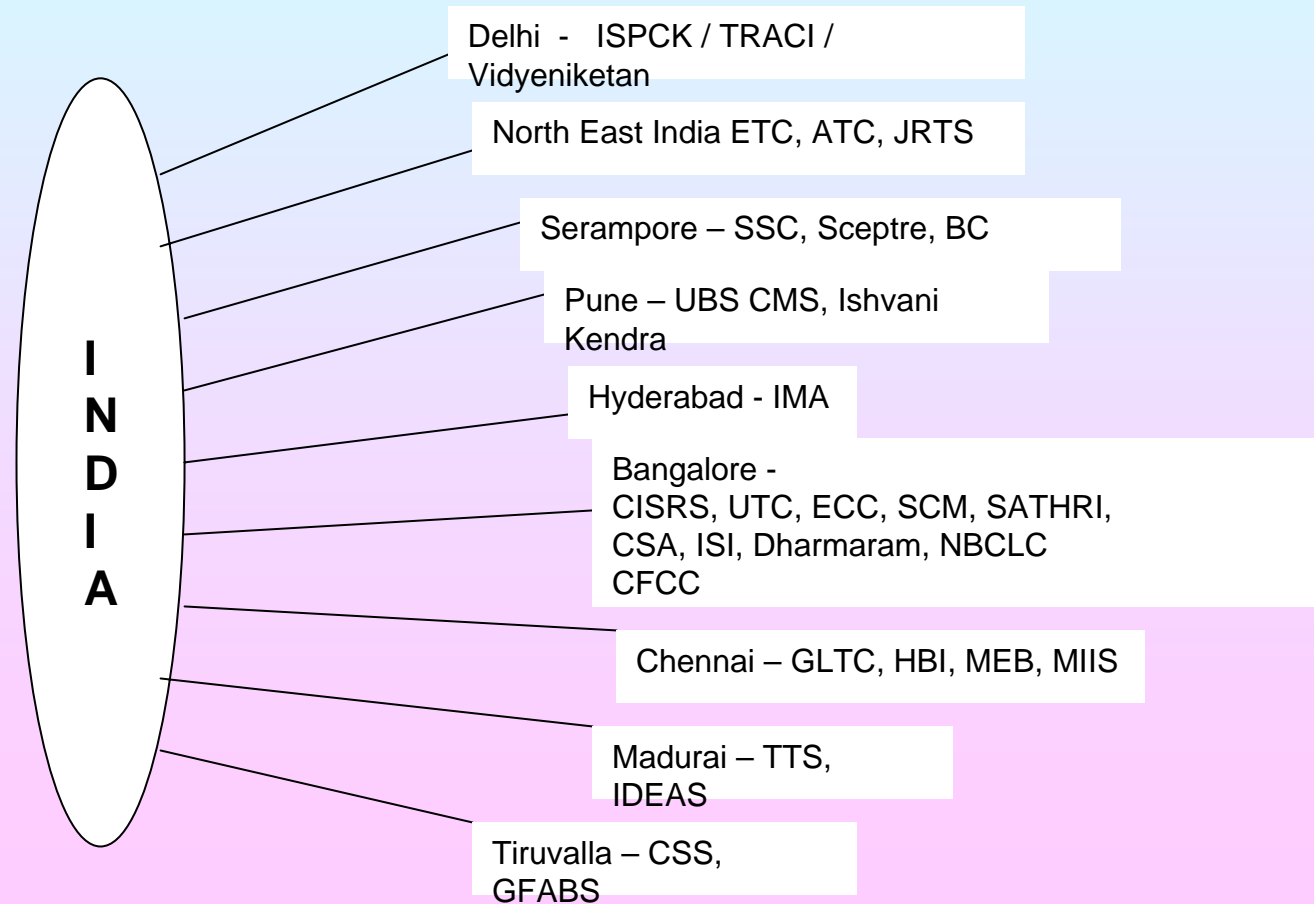
COUNT & CFCC

Feschtscripts

Missiological Educational Books

# DABOH - an Indian Account

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# DABOH - an Indian Account

Dr Siga Arles

Documentation

AF WALLS Workshop

CFCC efforts

# DABOH - an Indian Account

Dr Siga Arles

## Archives

UTC

UBS

SC

LTC

SAIACS

# DABOH - an Indian Account

Dr Siga Arles

## Bibliography

ISHVANI Kendra

ITLA - Thesis List



# DABOH - an Indian Account

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## Oral History

Interviews

Collection of Data

Analysis of Data

Documentation

Preservation

Methodology

# DABOH - an Indian Account

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Documentation – Method & Means

Archives – Development, Preservation & Link-Up

Bibliography – Collection & Computerization

Oral History – Worldwide Documentation