Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair of Inter-religious & Inter-cultural Dialogue

Ethics and Society: An International Journal Religions and Cultures for Peace and Harmony

Vol. 5

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Edited by
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THE CARDINAL PAUL POUPARD FOUNDATION

The Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation has been constituted under Italian law and recognised by the Republic of Italy. It has legal base at Crema, Via Dante, 24.

In a world oscillating between indifference and fanaticism, His Eminence Cardinal Poupard, collaborator of the sovereign Pontiffs John XXIII, Paul VI and Benedict XVI is one of the most qualified representatives for the way of dialogue, identified by Popes as being able to establish peaceful and long-lasting co-existence between nations and different civilisations.

The Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation intends to conserve and make use of the considerable patrimony of culture and relations that the Cardinal created over many years, in seeking to create and encourage cultural initiatives that can foster the coming together and understanding between traditions and religions of all the world.

It seeks to promote congress, conferences, publications, create Chairs in universities throughout the world, help students with grants and promote the Prize "The Dialogue of Cultures".

In order to do this, it is composed under the direction of His Eminence Cardinal Paul Poupard, of a President, who will have responsibility for all the activity of the Foundation, assisted by a scientific Committee made up of men and women from the field of culture and the world of business and finance, and will be a place of contact able to erect solid bridges between countries and cultural institutions. The members of this Committee witness, by their adherence, to the richness of different cultures across the world: France, Italy, Russia, United States, Latin America, India and Middle East.

THE CARDINAL PAUL POUPARD FOUNDATION: INSPIRED BY AN OPEN HUMANISM

One can synthesize the specific character of Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation, saying that it is inspired by an open Humanism and it is committed to its spread.

It is *Humanism*, because at the core of its concerns there is the human being, that means the one who has to defend himself from all the ideological, political and economic forces which tend to enslave him.

It is *Open*, because it recognises within each human being the spiritual openness, that means the religious dimension which constitute man's nature.

Therefore, it works through the initiatives that I am going to illustrate [or: that I have illustrated]; valorising man in his spiritual dimension, hoping that the different expressions of it do not become an occasion for violent conflicts, but rather a loyal and constructive comparison, for reciprocal enrichment and a common search of truth.

Adv. Giuseppe Musumeci
President
Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation

Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation
Chair of Inter-religious and Inter-cultural Dialogue
St. Andrew's College, Bandra

Vision

To promote peace and harmony for a holistic development of society.

Mission

The Chair of Inter-Religious and International Dialogue at St. Andrew's College aims at promoting:

- The exchange of knowledge concerning religions and cultures in dialogue with one another
- Advanced studies and research in Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue
- A space for dialogue so as to foster social harmony and national integration
- The transformation of society by training people to live in peace and harmony.

Programmes Offered

Seminars: To promote study and research among the students with regard to the major religious and cultural traditions.

Certificate / Diploma Courses: University of Mumbai approved diploma course in the area of inter-religious dialogue, religious pluralism and cultures so as to enable the participants to get to know various religions and cultures.

Local, National and International Seminars and Conferences: On a variety of issues to foster Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue and to sensitize teachers / students on the significance of the same.

Lectures: Lectures by distinguished persons of various religious traditions and cultures. The lectures will aim at creating better understanding among the students and participants, and promote peace and harmony.

Research: Offers the possibility for scholars to work on research papers and publications.

Inter-Collegiate Programmes: Essay and Quiz competitions, Seminars, Debates and Exhibitions.

Index

The Role of Art and Poetry in Religion

Dr. Margit Köves

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The impact of media on religion and culture is an important theme because media with its technological conditions constantly expands as industry and technology. The new forms of media compared to art and poetry look to be in a win-win position, deterministic for the viewers.

This is also the reason why the subject of my paper is connected to relating to religion through art and poetry. An additional reason is that I grew up in socialist Hungary in the nineteen sixtees where our connection to religion was mainly through art and poetry.

In Hungary there is a rich tradition of poets searching for God independently from their Catholic, Calvinist or Lutheran background. However there is a particular group of poets and writers I would like to mention today. A number of Hungarian poets and writers of Jewish origin converted to the Catholic Church in the early twentieth century because of the attraction of the spiritual and cultural assets of the Catholic Church and wishing to assimilate with majority Hungarians. At the time of the Anti-Jew Laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941 before and during World War II some of the best Hungarian poets, artists and musicians Miklós Radnóti, György Sárközi, Gábor Hajnal[1], the musicians Sándor Vándor, György Justus, László Weiner[2] and others were singled out, sacked from their jobs and called up to forced labour camps.

One of them, Antal Szerb, the author of a history of Hungarian literature, the author of a history of world literature, the author of wonderful novels – - was removed from his job as Professor of world literature in Szeged University, his books were pulped in , as were books of all Jewish authors though he was baptized catholic at the age of six. [3] On the 27th January, 1945 Szerb was

beaten to death by Hungarian guards in the mine where he was ordered to work. Exactly 70 years ago.

Szerb did not write poetry but since he wrote about some of the poets and poems I take up I think it is appropriate to remember him on this day. Separating, isolating people on the basis of their origin, beliefs or community led to persecution and death of not only Antal Szerb but a group of smilarly brilliant people, the lost generation of Hungarian literature at the time when World War II was about to finish.

First, I would like to speak about media that was and is considered to be a very powerful tool. This is why in 1939, the sanction of the Second Anti-Jew Law that banned the employment of Jews in the media led to the mass unemployment of many people who like Antal Szerb had converted to Catholicism, but were still defined   as Jews.

Second, after that I would like to go into the details of the varieties of religious feelings, in metaphysical poetry and in some poems by twentieth century Hungarian poets in English translation.

Media

Since the general theme of the symposium is the "Impact of Media on Religion and Culture" I would like to speak very briefly about the relationship between media and religion.

Religion brings individuals together in many areas like education, political resistance, liberation struggle, consumption, but it can also be a powerful tool of discrimination.The   various actvities may mean that the self emerges from the mediated practice into global communities and practices. Religious messages along with other messages constantly reach us through the media and we can be active receivers of the media messages. According to David Morgan, author and editor of *Key words in Religion, Media and Culture* who along with other researchers looked for religious legacies in consumption and the marketplace we

are capable of choice and effort directed by ideals and reason even within a limited space. Those who have grown up in repressive societies can proove how in a repressive environment countercultural forms developed and people were ready to participate in them.

We are prone to see a divide between religion and media and this originates from our dematerialized and disembodied understanding of religion. There is a spectacular rise and circulation of religeous audovisual cultural forms that we constantly face for example here in Mumbai at the entrace of Dargah of Haji Ali.

Media is expansive with its technological conditions and it invades our culture as industry, text and technology. The question is how far media is a deterministic instrument, and how can human agency be involed in its use.[4]   Some scholars (Stewart Hoover) rate the influence of electronic media on religions as enormous, since media operates sites in which agents, communities and institutions interact. Martin Barbero, one of the experts claims that the use of the electronic media sets processes in motion which introduce the resacralization of the world, which bring people together. This can be considered as a point of departure. Religieous communication is possible because of the system of symbols, moods and motivations" which become stronger with the inviduals involvement and sensorium and the body are shown to be key sites for shaping religious subjectivities. The senses and bodies of believers are tuned and addressed by shared songs, images, styles of dressing.

An example of the power of the media is the attack on the office of the magazine Charlie Hebdo on the 7th January 2015. This attack shows how extreme reactions to satire on religion can be.

These are areas, which are crucial invoving the media and having a massive role on political processes.   As a result of this attack we may also think over ideas of public and private opinion formation, the ideas of censorship and self-sensorship, and the freedom of the press.

Religion and Privacy

William James[5] defines religion as „the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude". Both James and Julia Kristeva describe religious experience as a private feeling involving - melancholia, panic, guilt - overcome by a process in which the self becomes unified through „moments of sentimental and mystical experience —that carry an enormous sense of inner authority and illumination with them when they come."

This is what conversion signifies for James and Kristeva who interpreted autobiographies, novels and paintings in this context. David Morgan and his associates in *Key-words in Religion, Media and Culture* focus on emerging patterns of religion, spirituality and the range of new practices[6].William James's and Julia Kristeva's perspective is in contrast to David Morgan or Martin Barbero's views who see the media as a possible way of resacralization of the world and a key-site for shaping religious sensitivities.

Poetry, art and media are crucial in the manner in which images convey a sense of divine presence. Our total sensorial experience of the world and our sensuous knowledge give us the means to perceive images through our five senses texture, taste, smell, sound, visible shape and colour.

The poets who put us face to face with the sensuous knowledge of the world were the metaphysical poets. John Donne's,(1572-1631) poem *A Hymn to God the Father* on sin is built on confession , the sin he has committed, he wallowed in, he continues with and deplores. It is the drama of feeling and thought. Antal Szerb, the writer I mentioned in the beginning of my key-note address emphasizes the paradox of combination of feeling and thought, that creates drama in the poetry of metaphysical poets. Szerb also underlines the combination of devotion and contempt. In the poem Donne confesses about sin, committed by him and the poem accentuates the sense of original sin that continued in a postlapsarian world and his approach challenges the aesthetic sensibilities and the sense of guilt, and complexes. T.S. Eliot in his essay on the Metaphysical poets refers to the "massive music of Donne, which comes with looking into the heart". [7]

The poem[8] is built to a great extent on the linguistic pun, the participle form of the verb 'do' – 'done' and Donne's name. There is a connection between the first and the last stanza the sin that was forgiven, but the poet still runs. „When thou hast done thou hast not done, For I have more."The image of the shore and the reference to the speaker's death int he last stanza „I have spun my last thread" for the image of the Son, „But swear by thyself that at my death thy Son shall shine as he shines now , and heretofore , And having done that thou hast done/ i fear no more."

> Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
> Which was my sin, though it were done before?
> Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
> And do run still, though still I do deplore?
> When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
> For I have more.
>
> Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
> Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
> Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
> A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
> When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
> For I have more.
>
> I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
> My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
> But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
> Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
> And, having done that, thou hast done;
> I fear no more.

Around the time of Donne's birth in 1522 Hans Holbein, the Younger painted an unusual painting of the Dead Christ[9]. The bluish-greenish tone of the painting makes it clear that we deal with a dead body, a corpse. The hair and the beard show in a realistic way that death has taken place not long before the event.

Hans Holbein, the Younger The Body of Dead Christ in the Tomb, 1520-22 Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel

The painting shows the stigmata on the chest, on his right hand and right foot of Christ. The viewers perspective is from below upward and is limited by the roof of the tomb. In Holbein's painting we see Christ and identify with the aftermath of suffering and the dreadful beauty of the body. The roof of the tomb looks firmly fixed, without any hint of resurrection. This detail adds a different dimension to the painting.

In some other paintings for example in Andrea Mantegna's painting[10], the viewer can see the mourners: Virgin Mary and St. John and the sorrow is visible on their faces which we can identify with. Mary Magdalene is also present behind Virgin Mary (she is hardly visible, but her presence is signified by her vessel of ointment on the left).

Julia Kristeva[11] in her study on *Holbein's Dead Christ* brings in the question of faith and belief in the context of Holbein's painting and his depiction of the process of decomposition of the dead body. Kristeva starts her study of Holbein's painting with a quotation of Dostoevki's novel, The Idiot. Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of the novel after looking at a copy of the Holbein painting in Rogozhin's house remarks „Looking at this painting some people may even lose their faith". Kristeva underlines the contrast between Mantegna's and Holbein's painting and refers to Blaise Pascal. Pascal emphasized that Christ was dead and seen on the cross by his followers and his enemies, while when he was dead he was hidden in the sepulchre from his enemies.

Kristeva asks in the conclusion of her paper „Can painting become a substitute for prayer?" and answers it „Contemplating the painting may become a substitute of prayer, when death becomes the final aspect of life." and it also means that there is no afterlife.

In the rest of my paper I am going to deal with three Hungarian poems by three Hungarian poets written in the twentieth century.

„Confrontation with the essence of existence is poetry, and the main motivation force in Poetry" – says István Jelenits, a Professor of Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest a priest who is also a literary historian.[12] Much of Hungarian religious poetry shows the search for the hidden God, *deus absconditus* as Pascal formulated it in his *Pensees* [13] „It endeavours equally to establish these two things: that God has set up in the Church visible signs to make Himself known to those who should seek Him sincerely, and that He has nevertheless so disguised them that He will only be perceived by those who seek Him with all their heart."

Hungarian poets like Endre Ady, Mihály Babits, Béla Balázs represent the tradition of search for the "hidden God". Novalis and Rilke in German poetry can also be considered as part of this tradition.

Endre Ady's poem[14] *On Elijah's Chariot* is one of the three Hungarian poems I am going to take up in this context. Ady's work (1877-1919) ushered in modernism in Hungarian literature. He was a Calvinist by denomination but considered himself a freethinker. Yet in his poems belief is present in the paradox of relying on God, trusting God whose existence he is not certain of. His poetry derived much material from the Old Testament, especially the melody and the vocabulary of the psalms, the memory of the religious experiences of childhood and the Calvinist community in Transylvania where he was born. His belief is the best expressed by the title of one of his poems "I believe in God without believing". Ady longs for God as shelter, glorifies him, but he is concerned about his authonomy . Conversion and distance, arrival and departure could characterize Ady's relationship to God.

In 1910 Ady wrote in the literary journal, *Nyugat* in the context of Andre Gide's book *Strait is the Gate* „ I am a freethinker …, but I do not know any better way of free thinking than the restless and critical engagement with God. Either-or, finally somebody finds him or finally gets even with him that could lead to the beautiful, great relief and freedom in human life."

Giovanni Battista Piazetta *Elijah taken up in the Chariot*[15] is based on the *Book of Kings* depicting the moment when God takes Elijah away in his chariot and Elisha, his pupil falls on his knees in admiration of the miracle.

Ady's poem *On Elijah's Chariot* deals with the mission of poetry. In the poem the Lord selects the poets, artists, „His darlings, those with harshest lots" and he takes them away in his fiery chariot. Elijah's chariot reaches the Himalayas that is a no-man's land between Earth and Heaven. The fate of artists and poets is statelessness, they are „tossed and hurled" between Earth and Heaven they do not belong to either.In the last stanza the oppositions are emphasized „Their hearts burn bright", but „their brows are hung with icicles". Diamond dust „like ice" is scattered in their way by the Sun. In the poem „ice" and „icicles" express loneliness and individualism similarly to Ady's other poems.

Endre Ady

On Elijah's Chariot
The Lord, like Elijah, gathers up
His darlings, those with harshest lots:
Those gifted with quick hearts of flame
Become his fiery chariots.

Elijah's nation rush to heaven
And stop there in perpetual snow,
The ice-bound Himalayan peaks
Their ragged rattling chariots go.

Bleak statelessness, nor earth nor heaven,
By winds of fate they're tossed and hurled.
Elijah's car makes for the cool
And wicked beauties of the world.

Their hearts burn bright, their brows are hung
With icicles. And how Earth laughs.
The Sun meanwhile strew diamond dust
Like ice along their frozen paths.
Translation by George Szirtes

Attila József's poem (1905-1937)*Tumble out of the Flood* [16] was written a few month before the poets suicide after he went through a period of psychoanalysis. „The Flood" in the title of the poem epitomizes suffering, physical and psychological deprivation. Attila József was born in the slums of the capital, Budapest, and in the countryside where his mother was forced by her circumstances to send him to adoptive parents. It was in the threatening external surrounding suppressed labour movements, with a ban on the socialdemocratic parties, the preparation of anti-Jew laws that Attila József wrote about this search for God.

The poem shows a rich layering of consciousness of self-awareness, the forces within the mind and outside. The speaker implores God to be the ultimate authority in his life, measure of moderation, proportion and restraint. The limits of his forces and his sensitivity could be considered by God more than by him, the poet.

Child-like innocence is an issue in the poem and in each stanza we discover the child: he implores God to „sweep him asunder", he is knocked down by the horse and as a result he is „in dirt', „in cipher" and yet he „plays with knives of pain".

The speaker plays with fire, and he asks to be „rapped on the hand".Stanza after stanza he asks God to control him „hammer it into me" „that innocence could be my cage." The surrender and submission lead to defiance and disobedience. The last stanza of the poem is a stanza of rebellion that raises the question of non-believing belief with the poet „looking boldly into the eye" of God, or „the human-

faced unbeing." The admission goes with the sense of tempest and pain, that tosses the speaker from one position to the opposite.

The poem is built on this dichotomy of belief and non-belief, the existence and non-existence of God . Belief and lack of belief are both contained in the poem, which is written out of the wish to have God and defy him at the same time..

Attila József

Tumble out of the Flood
Terrify me, my hidden God,
I need your wrath, your scourge, your thunder;
quick, come tumble out of the flood,
lest nothingness sweep us asunder.

I am the one the horse knocks down,
up to my eyes in dirt, a cipher,
and yet I play with knives of pain
too monstrous for man's heart to suffer.

How easily I flame! the sun
is not more prone to burn - be frightening,
scream at me: leave the fire alone!
Rap my hands with your bolt of lightning.

 Hammer it into me with rage
or grace: it's innocence that's evil!
that innocence could be my cage
burns at me fiercer than a devil.

A fragment from a wreck I lie,
tossed by a cruel tempest frothing;
alone; I dare, and I defy:
all merely signifying nothing.

I'd choke my very breath, to die,
your rod and staff thus disobeying,
and look you boldly in the eye,
you empty, human-faced unbeing!

Translation by Frederick Turner and Ozsváth, Zsuzsanna

In the case of János Pilinszky (1921-1981) we can see the mystical trend in Hungarian poetry that has different sources and aesthetics from the search for God by the earlier two poets, the ambivalence of Endre Ady and Attila József. Pilinszky was called up to the Army in the last year of World War II. He was moving through Europe and on his way he saw the concentration camps of Dachau, Buchenwald and Ravensbrück. This was a life- changing experience for him.

Pilinszky's poetry runs in a similar tradition as what we see in Simone Weil's philosophy (1909-1943) or Jacob Boehme's (1575-1624) and Suso's (1290-1365) poetry. Simone Weil studied philosophy and her involvement as an anarchist, and a trade union worker took her to the Republicans side in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. In 1938 she had her mystical experiences[17], which made her convert to Catholicism. János Pilinszky wrote about Weil's work, *Gravity and Grace* and it was a point of reference for him. Pilinszky's poetry stands out with its affinity to mysticism, a reduction of expression and the acceptance of Platonism. The reduction concerns the relationship between people, their conditions, the order of the world that can also lead to their identity. In a lecture Pilinszky spoke about "unmoving commitment". The themes of Pilinszky's poetry are the presence of Man in the world and in God, "the bloody fabric" of history, love and the insult, man's subordination to nature and extasis, time and atemporality.

Pilinszky's poem[18] *Fish in the net*, uses the plural first person "like fish haueled on land/we gasp in the net" and this identifies fish with the species, man. The fish and human metonymy follows up to the end of the poem. There is an atemporal dimension in the poem, it is unclear, whether the "gasping", "cramming""struggle" and "tremble" go on for eternity, or the lenghth of human life. In the fifth line

middle we also get a hint : "The element we've left and lost/whispers in vain". identifies water and the state of the embryo, man before birth. There is a blind mechanism that is at work in the poem and it continues until the end "maybe we end at midnight" in a "cosmic fisherman's frying pan."

János Pilinszky

Fish in the net
Writhing in a star-net
like fish hauled on land
we gasp in the emptiness
our gills filled with sand
The element we've left and lost
whispers in vain
we pant on the shingle
were we've been thrown.
Crammed one against the other
fighting for breath
we struggle and tremble
in the face of death.
From the wriggling mass
come stifled cries
but the massacre continues
till one, then other, dies.
Atonement and repentance
are the language of the soul
but nothing can save us
from this hopeless hell –
We writhe in the net
of some cosmic fisherman
and maybe at midnight
will be in his frying pan.

Translation by Kenneth White

A quatrian[19] by Pilinszky translated by Ted Hughes and János Csokits takes up the motives of crucifiction the nails, the icecold sand and combines them with elements of modern urbanity: Poster-loneliness, the lights on the corridor, two images put next to each other which the reader can connect and give meaning to.

Quatrain
Nails asleep under frozen sand.
Nights soaked in poster-loneliness.
You left the light on in the corridor.
Today my blood is shed.
Translation by Ted Hughes and János Csokits

In conclusion let me briefly say that the engagement with religion may take many forms as it can be observed in various forms of media, the poetry of metaphysical poets, in the poems of search for God in Endre Ady and Attila József and in the religious poetry of János Pilinszky. The search for deus absconditus originates in the ambivalence of God's absence, the dichotomy of absence and presence and the desire for his presence. János Pilinszky, the mystical poet whose poems Fish in the net and Quatrain were discussed last perceives the world in the framework of eternity, crowded loneliness and undending space.

(Footnotes)

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15 Piazetta's painting

http://www.cgfaonlineartmuseum.com/piazzetta/p-piazzetta9.htm

16 Hungarian original and English translation by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, http://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/J%C3%B3zsef_Attila/ Bukj_f%C3%B6l_az_%C3%A1rb%C3%B3l/en/31087- Tumble_out_of_the_Flood?interfaceLang=hu

17 http://www.bodysoulandspirit.net/mystical_experiences/read/notables/weil.shtml

18 Hungarian original and English translation by Kenneth White http://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/Pilinszky_J%C3%A1nos-1921/ Halak_a_h%C3%A1l%C3%B3ban/en/3519-Fish_in_the_net

19 Hungarian original and translation http://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/Pilinszky_J%C3%A1nos-1921/N%C3%A 9gysoros/en/2107-Quatrain

India's Tryst with Democracy, Pluralism, Harmony

Ram Puniyani

The incidents of communal violence (Mumbai, Gujarat, Kandhamal) have shaken the country. The tragic loss of thousands of lives, the social wealth of over thousands of crores, and the attack on inter-communal amity, communal harmony has deeply affected our conscience. The life of violence victims is very tragic, life in refugee camps, failure of proper rehabilitation leaves them helpless and humiliated.

Communal Violence:

This type of violence which is plaguing our society since the partition times has been a major cause of increasing the divide between the two major communities of the sub continent. It is tragic to note that those dying in the communal violence are generally innocents, their only crime being that they have faith in one or the other religion. Also women and poor are the major victims of communal violence. One also painfully notes that followers of all religions have to suffer the violence in this that or the other country. We have noted that in Pakistan Hindus and Christians have been victimized, in India mainly Muslims and Christians have suffered due to violence, and in Bangla Desh Hindus are the major victims of these inhuman acts. The perpetrators of the crimes during the carnage go unpunished. Why some of our brethren and sisters become as inhuman as to target the innocents just because their religion is different?

As such moral values of religion don't clash with each other, they as a matter of fact can act as supplements in evolving better human values e.g. VasudhaivKutumbkam (Hinduism), Love thy neighbor (Christianity), take care of your community's needs (Islam) etc.

The hate ideology: Doctored Mass consciousness: Myths about minorities

This type of violence is possible against the minorities due to various factors. The starting point is that many a myths are spread against these sections of society. These are built upon some aspect of truth and then it is blown up by mixing it with falsehood to project that those belonging to other religions as, 'the other', 'the enemies' and so 'deserving' this brutality against them. These myths and stereotypes project as if the people belonging to one religion are all of the same type. As such there are different types of people in all the communities. Are all Hindus or Muslims having similar mode of worship, type of work-employment, income level, clothes, food, language, number of children? Do poor and rich Hindus and Muslims think alike about all the aspects of society and religion?

Myths against Minorities:

As in Pakistan and Bangla Desh myths prevail against Hindus and Christians, In India major myths prevail against Muslims and Christians. How many of us think slightly deeply into the ideas we hold about 'the other'? Many of us believe that Muslims marry four numbers of times, produce more children, and are more loyal to Pakistan, Islam spread on the point of sword and the Muslims Kings destroyed Hindu temples to humiliate Hindus! These misconceptions becomes the point of difference and keeping aloof from them and finally it becomes the point to hate them so much so that when the innocents from that community are killed, many of us silently approve it.

Temple Destructions:

Why did Kings destroy temples and mosques? Was it for religious purpose? Was it for humiliating other's religion or can there be some other reason? Kalhan, a 11th century poet, in his book Rajtarangini writes that King Harshdev appointed an officer called as *DevottapatanNayak*(An officer who uproots the idols of gods) during his regime. Aurangzeb got the mosque of Golconda dug up when the local NawabTanashah did not pay him tribute for three years. Maratha armies destroyed

the temple of Shrirangpatanam to humiliate Tipu, whom they could not defeat and Tipu got the temple repaired to respect the feelings of his Hindu subjects. Gazani plundered Somnath for the immense wealth which was there in that temple. If he had just to destroy idols he could very well have destroyed the Bamiyan Buddha and many a temples on way to Somnath. One third of his army was constituted by Hindu soldiers and 5 of his 12 Sipahsalars were Hindus. So what does all this mean?

Shivaji and Rana Pratap

Both these Kings fought bravely against some Muslim rulers. But these battles were not on the basis of religion. In Rana Pratap's army, there were Pathan soldiers (1/3rd) and his main associate was Hakim Khan Sur. This battle was for the status which Rana Pratap wanted and which Akbar did not give. Later Jehangir offered this higher status to Rana Pratap's son Amar Singh and they both became allies.

Shivaji had high regard for other religions. He respected a Muslim Sufi saint Hazarat Baba and a Christian saint Fr. Ambrose Pinto. He had instructed his armies that during their plunder campaigns if they come across holy books of others religion they should respectfully give it to followers of that religion. He got a mosque built alongside a temple in front of his fort. And when his army brought along the beautiful daughter in law of Nawab of Kalyan he became angry and asked his army not to indulge in such an dishonor of women to which so ever religion they belong.

Sycretic Traditions

The communal view of history totally sidetracks the syncretic, mixed traditions of Indian culture. There was a great development of Ganga Jamanitahjib (the culture and life style that emerged due to interaction of Hindus and Muslims). It has become part of all aspects of our life; food, language, music and architecture etc. The Hindu Bhakti and Muslim Sufi saints tried to bridge both the communities by their non-orthodox approach, which appealed to the hearts of the people to spread the message of love. Many a Sufi saints contributed a lot in the development of local languages, like Baba Farid to the Punjabi poetry. These saints worked a great deal for the unity of the people, especially the ordinary people and more so the poor. In most of the

cities we will find that the temples of Bhakti saints and Dargahs of Sufi saints are frequented by people of both the religions.

Saint Kabir had followers amongst both Hindus and Muslims, he emphasized on love between the people as the central aspect of religions. Similarly Guru Nanak appreciated the humanistic teachings of both the religions. Granth Sahib, the holy book draws heavily from Hindu traditions and also from the Koran. So he could appeal Hindus on one side and Muslims on the other that. Hindus and Muslims both regarded him as their own saint/pir. People of all religions visit the dargahas of Sufi saints. We have saints who are revered by hidus and Muslims both, Ramdeo baba Pir, Satya Pir and NizamuddinAuliya are some examples. People of all religions go to the Churches of Mother Mary of Velinkini and the Mahim Church in Mumbai for their faith in these places.

Islam and Sword:

Can we win people's hearts by force? Generally since religion is a matter of faith it has to appeal to the heart. Conversions were not the aim of Kings (except Ashoka) The main conversions came from the poor low caste untouchables, who despite being the formal part of Hindu fold were under the severe oppression and repression of upper caste. To quote Vivekanand "Why amongst the poor of India so many are Mohammedans? It is nonsense to say that they were converted by the sword. It was to gain liberty from Zamindars and Priests....."(Collected Works-Volume 8-Page330). Majority of conversions did not take place due to the swords of the kings but due to the humanistic approach of Sufi saints. Low caste shudras have converted to different religions, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism in the hope of getting social justice.

Conversions to Christianity

Currently it is being asserted that Christian missionaries are converting the people by force and fraud. We notice that the percentage of Christian population has been declining over a period of years, 1971-2.60, 1981-2.44, 1991-2.32 and 2001- 2.30 (census figures). The harassment of missionaries is taking place especially in Adivasi areas while in cities the Christian mission educational institutions are well respected.

Wadhwa Commission report which went into Pastor Stains burning concluded that there is no conversion activity in the areas where the Pastor was working and also that Pastor Stains was not involved in the act of conversions.

Four Wives, Twenty Children

In India there are 932 females for every 1000 Males (Census Figures). So is it possible to have four wives for the Muslims? The family structure amongst Muslims in different parts of the country and in different social economic layers is not similar. In Kerala the Muslim families are small. Amongst educated Muslims again the size of families is smaller. While amongst the poor, amongst Dalits the number of children per family is very large. Basically number of children per family depends on the socio-economic levels and the education levels not on religion. Polygamy was permitted on some grounds in Islam. The population of Indian Muslims was 12..4% at the time of partition today it is around 13.4% (2001 census). The major reason for the rise is poverty and lack of education amongst Muslim community. Similarly the population of Adivasis was 7.5% at the time of partition and today it is 8.5%. Poor people-uneducated people have more children, it has no relation to religion.

India-Nation in the Making

British came here to plunder the raw materials and to set up the markets for their industrial goods. The industrialization began here during 19th century and along with that new section of Industrialists, Educated Intelligentsia and Workers came into being. The process of social reform saw the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (abolishing *Sati*), JotibaPhule (education for low caste *shudras*, untouchables), SavitribaiPhule (education for women), Dr.BabasahebAmbedkar (demand for social justice), Bhagat Singh (demand for (rights of workers, Peasants).

The National movement aimed at curtailing the rights of Landlords, providing facilities for industrial development and equal citizenship for all. This freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi was the biggest mass movement of twentieth century. It was an anti-colonial struggle, the inner dynamics of which was formation of India into a Modern Nation, based on the principles of Liberty Equality and

Fraternity (community). It aimed at Secular Democracy. All these principles were the democratic aspirations of the pole of India and got enshrined in Indian constitution. These represented the values of India: A Nation in the making.

British Policy of Divide and Rule

In contrast to the majority of the people of India, the old time Rajas and Nawabs, Jamindars and Jagirdars opposed the process of national movement. They resorted to the religion based politics. They pointed out that the struggle against British is against our Religion which teaches us Raj Bhakti, loyalty to the King, i.e. loyalty to the Queen Victoria. Both Hindu and Muslim kings were together on this point. In due course British sowed the seeds of division amongst this group and this led to the formation of Muslim League (Islam Based Nation state) and Hindu Mahasabha (Hindu Rashtra, Hinduism based Nation state). Communal riots also began from this time on. These communal riots were manifestation of communal politics, which in turn was opposed to the process of social change in the condition of women and Dalits. The British policy of divide-and-rule assisted by the pulls of Muslim Communalism, Hindu Communalism resulted in the partition tragedy.

Terrorism

Terrorism is due to many factors like the international politics to have control over the resources of oil, the issue of Kashmir and the rising communalism. Terrorists have nothing to do with religion. They have come from all the religions, LTTE, ULFA (Hindus) Irish Republican Army, Timothy McVeigh (Christians), Groups from Thailand (Buddhists) Khalistanis (Sikhs). Al Qaeda was promoted by US to throw away the USSR army from Russia. US had given Osama 8000 million dollars and 7000 tons of armaments for this purpose. After defeating USSR armies some of them came and joined the terrorists in Kashmir. After severe atrocities on some communities some young people of those community do resort to the path of terror. Dhanu was a LTTE member who strapped herself as a live bomb. Leila Khalid was a Palestine girl who resorted to path of terror when 14 Lakh Palestinians had to leave their home and hearth. Today we see on one hand terrorists like Osama bin

Laden and on the other SadhviPragya Singh Thakur but some people cleverly try to link terrorism with Religion, which is wrong.

Threats to Indian Constitution, Democracy

The communal violence is a violation of constitutional norms. The real issue is not between Hindus and Muslims or Hindus and Christians. It is a battle between democracy and the concept of realign based nation. Pakistan which was formed on the ground of religion broke in to Pakistan and Bangla Desh. Religion cannot be the basis of state. Politics in the name of religion wants to abolish the democratic rights, which affects the poorer and weaker sections of society. Our constitution drafted by Dr.Ambedkar emphasizes on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The countries where religion (Pakistan) or race based politics (Germany) has come generally break down.

Need for Unity on the basis of democracy

The efforts of communal organizations are a threat to democratic values and freedom of the country. We need to recall the syncretic tradition, the ones of Bhakti and Sufi, the ones of Christian mystics. We need to give emphasis to the rights of dalits (Mahatma JotibaPhule, Dr.Ambedkar) for women (SavitribaiPhule, Periyar), to economic justice (Bhagat Singh), to truth and non violence (Gandhi). We need to celebrate our diversity and work for empowerment of weaker sections of society so that we can march towards peace and harmony. The principles of Indian Constitution, the one's of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity should be the basis of social and political life.

Say No to Communal Hatred and Communal Violence
Eradicate the cause due to which terrorism comes up
Reiterate Democracy and Pluralism
Stand for Peace, Non Violence and Harmony
Lets believe in Democracy, Dialogue and Diversity.

Religion and Media
in the Era of Information Technology

Sr. Dr. Teresa Joseph fma

In the last few decades we have witnessed a growing close knit working among scholars of Religion and Media personnel and media of one kind or another. From sacred books and archaic languages to cassette-sermons, video clippings and the internet, humanity is marching from progress to progress. Thanks to media we are in a better position to make our lessons and sessions more appealing to today's information savvy generation. In India a country suffused with religions and media there is an urgency to promote various studies on media and religion.

Today, the whole world is changing rapidly. In the name of religion even war and killing too is carried out. Terror and tension are created in an increasing measure and therefore a more conscious dialogue among believers and journalists and everyone connected with media has to take place. How can media and religion together promote tolerance, peace, harmony and compassion?

Dignity and respect for the human person

Will Media succeed in taking full care of the people aspects? Religion touches upon the finer issues of human aspects. It is worth recalling that it was only during 1932-1936 while conducting of the Hawthorne experiment at Western Electric Company, Chicago that those management thinkers for the first time got a feel of the human aspect. They were mystified with findings of the experiment. The purpose of the experiment was to study the effect of changes in light intensity and noise level on productivity of workers. The electrical assembly shop had been divided into two parts, one reference group and the other an experimental group. It was observed that whether they increased or decreased the variable parameters, productivity always went up. It was confirmed without any doubt that "treating workers as meaningful human beings instead of a cog in the production system was the reason behind continuous increase in productivity."

A short journey into Japan will reveal another interesting fact. During the World War II (1939-1945) the economy of Japan was totally shattered and atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought a deadly blow to the economy. Will Japan revive its economy? Japan stunned the whole world with the spectacular rise of Japanese industry in 1960s and 1970s. What was the secret behind such astounding progress? To the amazement of researchers from all over the world and particularly from the US who went to Japan to study the top secret of such amazing progress, it was evident that the humble "quality circle" was doing "miracles at ground root level." What is a quality circle? A quality circle is a group of 8 to 10 workers from the same work area, who meet periodically on voluntary basis to discuss, analyze and solve problems and issues related to their work area. They make use of seven tools of quality circles: brainstorming, histogram, charts etc. to formalize ideas and thoughts of group members. The Japanese people believe that Human Resource is their best Resource. At the core of the quality circles in Japan there was the firm belief of managements in Japan. The Managements in Japan were well aware that their employees to be intelligent and capable human beings, who know their jobs and work areas the best. What made the people to do wonders in their work areas? They enjoyed respect and their human dignity was upheld. This was the secret of their success mantra.

Factual, fair and balanced reporting

In the context of rapid increase in media report on religion, it is necessary that journalists focus on factual fair and balanced reporting. At times more harm than good is achieved through some reporting. Instead of reproducing stereotypes, prejudices and hate speech media can assert its role in informing and forming its audience. The focus has to be on getting the facts right. It is journalists and editors responsibility to shun stirring up tensions, stimulating confrontation and intolerance. To arrive at a factual, fair and balanced writing and reporting one has to have an objective knowledge of religion and thorough information on journalistic skills. What makes a religion really a religion? What is the core belief of the followers of a particular religion? What are the main religious practices? What news gathering tools are most commonly used? What professional norms guide editors and journalists

when reporting on religion? What makes exceptional coverage? Journalists need to pay extra attention to what type of journalistic work fuels intolerance.

Most people engaged in Media are aware that they have the responsibility to represent different social groups accurately and fairly in order to establish good relationships with people with wide range of identities. Training and Formation of journalists is a must. Pope emeritus Benedict XVI had reminded the means of communication the need to respect the common good and human dignity and to commit themselves to let the walls of hostility that still divides humanity."[1]

Can media take up the challenge of letting religions to lead the way to wise solution of problems? "The religions in reality are not the problem but part of the solution" is what Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for interreligious Dialogue, has affirmed. Media personnel can communicate to the world the increased interest in dialogue between believers of various religions.

Focus on real audience

The best service media can offer to the public is informing the public about the issues and events as they occur and interpreting reality in such a way that provides a platform for a constructive public dialogue about matters of public concern. Journalisticpractice contributes to the way media represents religion. Impediments to good reporting on religion are: lack of sufficient knowledge - reinforcement stereotypes in media comes from inadequate knowledge of religion. Shortage of in-house training, pitiable financial state of the media, over-loading of reporters, not having sufficient time to prepare reports are other factors that lower the quality of reporting.The Spiritual manipulation of mass media[2] is a very thought **provoking** write upand in a humoristic way the facts are highlighted in the article. Religion and medi**a**[3], an impossible pair **was another** interesting title of an article in Italian which I read with added curiosity. It began with: **'**in my Journal there is no God**'**. The journalists and workers of information gathered together at Losanna for a Convention. They had also an interesting round table conference around the theme the presence or better the absence of religious questions from the "normal" or "general" sources of information.

Ethical and Value based reporting

When reporting on religion, journalists should be encouraged to apply universal ideas of truth, goodness, beauty, accurateness, responsibility, trustworthiness and fairness. Worthy, responsible, reliable and ethical media contributes to promoting dialogue, peace and harmony in the world. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church in no. 164 affirms: "The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people. According to its primary and broadly accepted sense, *the common good* indicates 'the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily'".[4]   The well prepared media presentationscan offer better space for people of different religions to understand each other and to move ahead with dialogue, peace and harmony.

Communication strategies for Religion

A delicate and committing task for the leaders of religions is to determine what communication strategies will turn out to be fruitful to offer an objective and awe-inspiring presentation of religions? It is indeed a very delicate and committing task to find the languages to speak to the society and to facilitate web communication.

Today we need to promote a constructive critical approach to media-related assumptions bearing in mind that media and religion are two distinctive fields in their subject matter and approach. Richard Fox in his book *Critical Reflections on Religion and Media in Contemporary Bali* affirms that "more nuanced attention to problems of media will have serious implications for how we think about the study of religions, past and present."[5]

Courses on Media and Religion are becoming more and more part of University syllabus. Media uses time and again religion to build the image of a leader. We need to be alert to when and how religious messages are created, produced and disseminated through the media. Media plays a significant role in the construction of a religious leader's image. We are living in a world of obvious media omnipresence

text messages and tweets, daily discussion points, movie trailers, and 24 hour talking heads transmissions of our speedily receding present seem to be all around us. Precisely for this reason, we need to be awake and alert to understand how our media present, represent, produce, shape and remake what we comprehend "religion" to be.

A careful study of different cultures, social groups and individuals is a must to explore how each of these understand, mediate and revise what "religion" is. Internet blogs, websites, radio shows, the printing press and book publications can all be studied from this perspective. The fundamental question is how religion is plotted, imagined and reshaped in and through various historical and contemporary settings and persons.

Media and Religion in an active dialogue

Media personnel can use a dialogue –oriented approach to religion, strengthen network of relationships, contextualize facts, study and explore documents, learn national and international codes of ethic, interview believers of different religions, sieve facts from opinions and consider opinion as relevant. Editors and others experts in media can play a significant role to enhance media performance.

RAI is Italy's public national broadcaster. "Rai Italia is the international television service of Rai Internazionale, a subsidiary of RAI Italy's public national broadcaster. Rai Italia operates a television network that broadcasts around the world via 3 localized feeds. Programming features a mix of news, discussion-based programmes, drama and documentaries as well as sports coverage."[6] RAI has the good habit of inviting members of religious and ethnic groups and experts on various topics to come to the newsroom. Another praiseworthy initiative of RAI is how it boosts the morale of the public in moments of public stress and pain by broadcasting of Films and presenting the lives of great personalities.

Towards a more responsible presentation of Religion

Religious leaders can offer professional advice and supply information to media personnel. A more responsible presentation of religion demands that the media

personnel take pains to understand religions well. It requires not only a theoretical knowledge but also constant contacts with believers of different religions. Why do we have so many stereotypes presented in media? Where do they come from? Studies have confirmed that these stereotypes appeal to common mass media values that are not necessarily compatible with a responsible portrayal of religion.Edward Caudill, professor of journalism, writes about how stories are presented under the guise of adhering to core journalistic values of fairness and 'presenting both sides'[7]. How can media rouse the interest of its viewers? How can newspapers collect a larger readership? The viewership of Television shows and the readership of Newspapers can be increased with stories with a high potential for conflict and drama. Such stories help to generate profit and to retain readership but fail to present a realistic understanding of religion.

Some Journalists have affirmed that they understand Christianity because of its popularity. [8] "Michael Wakelin, former head of Religion and Ethics for the BBC, describes how journalists often assume that they understand Christianity simply because of its popularity. As a result, reporters are often more willing to 'take swipes' at Christianity in newspaper and television reports, while other religions are treated with more caution[9]."

Conclusion

The finer human aspects are an expression of a nurtured spirituality.A responsible media representation of religion will certainly arouse awe and wonder the genuine attitudes that a believer assumes in his/her encounter with the divine. Media and religion can inform, enrich and enhance each other. **Many Universities around the world are already offering courses on media and religion. Some are developing inclusive journalism curricula that better prepare students to face the challenges in the present world. A few are organizing more post graduate training for media and religious personnel.**Each and every person and educational institutions in particular have to work with commitment to foster a lively and lovely dialogue between media and religion.

28

It only takes a spark to get a fire going and quickly all those around can warm up in its glowing. That's how it has to be with religion and media, once they both enter into a dynamic dialogue and engage in a responsible representation they can offer to the Human Family a taste for what is the real essence and beauty of religion and media.

(Footnotes)

1 Zenit.org 21 maggio 2005 (accessed on 16/11/2015)

2 http://it.paperblog.com/la-manipolazione-spirituale-dei-mass-media-1272278/ (accessed on 17/10/2015).

3 http://riforma.it/it/articolo/2015/04/10/religioni-e-media-una-coppia-impossibile

4 http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html (accessed on 13/1/2016).

5 http://www.brill.com/critical-reflections-religion-and-media-contemporary-bali

6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rai_Italia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rai_Italia (accessed on 10/12/2015).

7 [3] Caudill, E. (2010). Intelligently designed: creationism's news appeal. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87(1), 84-99.

8 Cf.Media Portrayals of Religion: Christianity, http://mediasmarts.ca/diversity media/religion/media-portrayals-religion-christianity (accessed on -6 December 2015).

9 Bailey, M. (2010). Media, religion and culture: an interview with Michael Wakelin. *Journal of Media Practice*, 11(2), 185-189.

Harmony in Popular Hindi Cinema

Dr. Shefali Balsari-Shah

With the spread of globalization during the last twenty-five years, there has been a corresponding emergence of identity politics in several countries around the world. In India, the process of economic liberalization and the disparate rates of development in different parts of the country have been additional factors in the wide-spread questioning of traditional identities and social formations. Consequently there have been increasing factions, fractures and fissions in the national consciousness and many of these are reflected in literature and cinema as varying notes of dissonance.

Popular Indian cinema is an entertainment juggernaut whose chief function is to cater to the fantasies and desires of its audience and, in the process, to "manufacture consent' and create a homogenous pan-Indian mass. Murmurs of dissidence have admittedly appeared, though to a relatively small extent, in mainstream cinema. But these are more recent trends. If we examine popular Hindi cinema of the 60s and 70s, and even part of the 80s, we find for the most part the depiction of religious harmony.

Traditionally, religion has been a non-issue in Hindi cinema. During the nationalist movement, the British enforced censorship, so it's easy to see why controversial issues could not be explored. After independence, the goal was nation-building; Nehru and the other leaders had a secular vision and urged all Indians to think of themselves as proud Indians above all other considerations and identities. Hence the drama in films arises out of social and economic problems, whether caste and untouchability, the feudal system in the villages, or urban issues such as the scarcity of jobs and housing. Surprisingly, the traumas of Partition are not even touched upon. There are few stories addressing inter-religious love stories; however, a popular and frequently-used plot device is that of the lost child who is brought up by a follower of another religion and grows up to respect both – a device which may have its source in the apocryphal story of the saint Kabir. Religious hostility is practically non-existent or where it is hinted at, is very quickly contained (perhaps

enforced by the Central Board of Film Censors). There is a tendency towards monolithic cultures, mostly majoritarian, but a popular offshoot is the Muslim social drama which projects an Islamicate culture as a backdrop rather than as a set of religious beliefs. Hence the overall emphasis remains on syncretism and communal harmony.

As for the depiction of religious identity in Hindi cinema, it is immediately apparent that this is almost entirely in the form of genial stereotypes. Communities are lumped together through distinctive speech, gestures and easily recognizable symbols which serve both to identify them and to mark their difference from the majority Hindu community, but not as targets of discrimination or intolerance. Thus Muslims are shown with beards, bowing as they say 'Adab' or 'Khuda Hafiz'; Christians wear a cross rather prominently, the women have names like Rosie and Maria, and the men wave around bottles to signify varying stages of jovial drunkenness; Sikhs are loud and jolly figures, and Parsis even more comical because of their lovable idiosyncrasies. The patently absurd world of the film serves to mute the likelihood of resentment or protest at such characterizations.

The idealization of religious harmony in mainstream cinema is powerfully expressed through its music. These songs use simple ideas and symbols that have wide recognition and instant identification. In this respect they are fairly representative of the genre of popular Hindi film songs; they become ear-worms, enter one's consciousness, and exert a long-lasting subliminal power. Let us look at three song sequences from films made in what is still a time of relative innocence and secular beliefs.

Allah teronaam (**Hum Dono**, 1961) invokes God by different names from both Hinduism and Islam. The film is set during the Indo-Chinese conflict, and as the song progresses we see how the honour of the nation is insistently conflated with the honour and security of its women. The visuals emphasize what is essentially a prayer for the happy married status of all women in the land, as signified by the symbols of marriage, such as sindoor in the parting of the hair. Muslim women are

shown alongside Hindu women as the song makes a fervent plea that the honour of all mothers and sisters be preserved.

Jaisesurajkigarmi se (**Parinay**, 1974) initially establishesa distinctly Hindu setting by showing several pictures of Ram. The occasion is a wedding; the mixed bag of guests features a Muslim rather prominently seated in front. This intermingling of guests from different religious backgrounds is deliberately presented as a social practice. However the lyrics are universal and generalized: they speak of the seeker who ultimately finds sanctuary and shelter from the heat of the sun and the troubles of the world. The haven of the song is thus inclusive.

Itnishaktihamedena (**Ankush**, 1986) has now become a popular universal prayer thattranscends specific religious references. The film depicts a group of young delinquents of different religious backgrounds. A girl from the neighbourhood appoints herself as their unofficial big sister and tries to reform them. Ultimately, they come to recognize that truth,   compassion and service to others constitute humanism, the only religion that matters.

A good question to ask at this point would be, did all these songs and films capture the realities of Indian society accurately? And while they express a warm, cosy and pleasing sentiment of harmony, did the minority communities share this feeling? Mainstream cinema seldom poses such inconvenient questions, for its very raison d'etre is a construct of consensus. However, by the 1970s, the anxieties and conflicts that were increasingly apparent in reality could no longer be entirely glossed over. Hence the phenomenon of the Angry Young Man appears in Hindi films, drawing on the disillusionment and cynicism which now begin to appear in society at large, fuelled by political uncertainty, corruption, and a host of social problems.

By the 1980s, identity politics start to play an increasingly important role in national life as Hindu and Muslim hardliners become increasingly more shrill and strident, and this shift becomes more apparent in the cinema of the 90s. **Hum Aapke Hain Kaun** is only one among many films to use the family as a thinly-disguised symbol

of the country; just as it behoves all members of a family to live together harmoniously, all religious communities in a country ought to submerge their egos and live together in peace. The unambiguous message is that the pater familias and therefore the centre of power is the Hindu. The Muslim must set aside every other consideration and learn to be the good Muslim, and thus the good Indian. This good Muslim/ bad Muslim dichotomy linked to the notion of patriotism is the subject of several other films of the 1990s, especially *Roja* which explores the issue of militancy in Kashmir. However the very nature of Hindi cinema as a mass entertainment machine largely catering to as well as controlled by majoritarian interests seems to preclude the likelihood of any deep or significant questioning of the status quo.

A space for dissent has now opened in the form of independent low-budget films, mostly in the regional languages. The documentaries of AnandPatwardhan have sparked considerable controversy, especially *In the Name of God / Ram keNaam*(1991) which conflates Hindutva and aggressive masculinity. But these, like the hard-hitting Hindi film*Parzania* (2007) which was set in the 2002 Gujarat riots, are typically viewed by small niche audiences on film festival circuits rather than mainstream cinema houses, so there is limited scope for any extended debate.

As we all know, there are no winners once we get into the identity hostilities. I do believe that God can't be very happy with this state of affairs. So call it escapism or idealism, I'd like to go back to the essence of all faith that is expressed so beautifully in this song:

Ganga aayekahan se (*Kabuliwala*, 1961) is an ode to Ganga, the river that symbolizes the very soul of India:

Where do you come from, where do you flow, rippling like sunlight and shadow …

As the shades of black night and radiant day merge at dusk, see how all hues become indistinguishable …

Those multi-coloured cups, some made of glass, others of clay, both serve alike to bear water for the thirsty …

O Ganga …

Hauntingly rendered by Hemant Kumar, and shot on the banks of the Ganga, the song is a paean to our syncretic culture. The song celebrates the concept of diversity, duality and multiplicity.

This idea of the motherland is not a fluttering flag or a rousing national anthem, not armies and borders and Republic Day parades, but a way of life; a quality, a texture, an essence that is all-embracing, all-forgiving, accepting diversity as a matter of fact by naturalizing it. Origins and destinations, past and future, do not matter; the present is a synthesis of light and dark and the many hues in between. Nature shows the way: the darkness of night and the brightest light of day can co-exist, as evening obliterates the differences by merging them so harmoniously that the boundaries and margins disappear. The ideal of plurality now finds another metaphor: the homely array of cups and glasses, whose material ceases to matter as long as they can slake one's thirst. And finally, the manifold faces of the ideal – whether God or country – teach us that we must love one another.

Examining Christian Themes in Drama and Film

Dr. Marie Fernandes

The question that needs to be asked is - Does media impact religion and culture or does religion and culture influence media?The answer is that it operates both ways.Theorigins of the drama have always been deeply rooted in the religious institute of mankind. This is true of the Greek, Indian, Chinese, Egyptian and also of the modern Christian drama. The ancient Greek drama never lost its kinship with the religious ceremonies of the people. Dionysus, God of Life and Death, the god of Wine and of the fertile Earth was the father of Greek Comedy and Tragedy. The production of a play was a sacred function that every citizen had a right to attend. The Roman drama was an offshoot of the Greek, but in that in the days of the late Empire it fell into a degraded and corrupt State.

So, when Christianity became the state religion the theatre was heartily frowned upon. But it wasas futile to suppress drama, as to suppress laughter and tears and before long the Church was found utilising the very tendencies she had endeavoured to crush, so that it is true to say, the "cradle of the drama" in Europe, and more particularly in England, "rested on the altar". The clergy were obliged to find some method of teaching and explaining to the ignorant masses the truths of religion. The service of the Church were in Latin, and even the Bible had been accessible to the laity, few could read it hence, in very early times, the Gospel stories were illustrated by a series of living pictures in which the performers acted the story in dumb show.

In the next stage the actors spoke as well as acted the parts. Special plays were written by the clerics, at first in Latin and later in the vernacular French. These early plays were known as *Mysteries* or *Miracles*. The very word "mystery" recalls its ecclesiastical origin, since the word comes from the French.*Mystére* their derived from*ministére*because the clergy, the *ministerium* or *ministri ecclesiae* themselves took part in these plays.

In England the term *Miracle*is used indiscriminately for any kind of religious play, but strictly speaking the term *Mystery* is applied to the stories taken from the Scripture

narratives, while *Miracles* are plays dealing with incidents in the lives of Saints and Martyrs.

The play of *Noah* gives us some insight into the nature of this piece, and shows the blending of rough English humour, with didactic purpose. For though the drama had its *source* in sacred story, in the *method* of telling, we can trace the influence of the old English amusements – the pageants and May games, the horse-play of the juggler, and quips of the jester.

Noah having finished the Ark, informs his wife of the fact, and begs her to enter. Dame Noah, however, having determined to go on a jaunt with a crony, declined the invitation with some finality of manner. After an altercation, in which the services of the son Japhet are enlisted, she is compelled to enter. But no sooner in, than in a true shrewish spirit she boxes her husband ears! And he finds, poor man, that although sheltered from one storm he has exposed himself to another.

One of the earliest examples of the *Miracle* play has been preserved in an Orleans MS and concerns St Nicholas. It is written in Latin, with old French refrains. The play of *St Nicholas* affords a good illustration of what in the first place was merely an acted sermon. On the Saint's Day, the image of the Saint was removed from a shrine and a priest dressed as the image took its place. The service commences but a pause is made; another priest, dressed as a rich heathen, comes in at the church door, approaches the shrine where he deposits his treasure and asks the Saint to guard it for him, while he is on his journey.

As soon as the heathen has departed, robbers enter the church, creep up to the shrine and steal the treasure. Soon the heathen returns, and finding his treasure stolen flies into a rage, beats and upbraids the Saint who has failed to protect his property. Then the image moves, steps down from the pedestrian, goes out and reasons with the robbers and compels them to restore their ill-gotten goods. Terrified, the thieves return to the church, and again place the treasure at the feet of the Saint. The image returns to its place. The heathen rejoices, and adores the image. Another priest now appears representing the Saint himself, and bids the heathen to worship God alone. The play ends with the conversion of the heathen to the true faith. The service then proceeds to a conclusion.

The great festivals of the Church afforded opportunities for these performances which gradually became more elaborate, singing and music being introduced; and eventually it became no longer mere ritualistic ceremonies but real dramas – as in the *Easter Office of the Shepherds*

At an interval in the Easter service three priests, representing three Maries, slowly and sadly advance of the Church very grave has been prepared. On the way they sing a lamentation; arriving at the church they see an angel arrayed in an alb, a mitre on its head, a palm in his left hand and a branch of candlesticks in his right. He asks them whom they seek, and the women reply 'Jesus of Nazareth'. The Gospel narrative is followed and finally a priest, impersonating the Saviour, appears, announcing his Resurrection. The choir then burst in joyous Allelulias and the play ends of the singing of the *Te Deum.*

The Office of the Shepherds was performed on Christmas Eve. A candle was placed on the altar and beside an image of the Virgin Mary. A number of the clergy representing the shepherds entered the church carrying crooks and having with them real sheep and dogs. Some of the shepherds pretend to sleep, while others watched their flocks. Suddenly a choir boy, dressed as an angel, mounts the pulpit and heralded by a blast from the trumpeters, announce of the birth of Christ. Immediately a choir of singers in the clerestory sing"Glory to God in the highest". The shepherds proceed up the church to the altar where other priests show them the child and bid them announcehis birth to the people. The shepherds adore the Child and the Mother and march through the church singing a hymn of praise.[1]

In film too there have been very popular films that have been based on the Bible.

"*The Bible*" produced by Mark Burnett and released in March 2013 comes to life in History's epic new series. From <u>Genesis</u> to <u>Revelation</u>, these unforgettable stories unfold through live action and cutting-edge computer-generated imagery, offering new insight into famous scenes and iconic characters. The movie explores the sacred text's most significant episodes, including Noah's journey in the ark, the Exodus and the life of Jesus.It is interesting to note that while the stories in the Bible are interesting in themselves, it also points to a revival of religious sentiment among

the people. The use of modern technology to highlight the various episodes leaves a permanent and lasting impression on the minds of the viewer. The power and majesty of God is the focus in the Old Testament. We see the wrath of God as He sends the flood to destroy the earth, but saves Noah. Abraham reaches the Promised Land but his faith in God is tested as he is asked to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Through the power of God, Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt. The parting of the Red Sea is a defining moment as the Israelites escape Pharaoh and his chariots. Moses receives the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai and delivers it to his people.

The *Bible* is action packed and there is never a dull moment. The glory and power of God is manifested in a hundred different ways. God comes to the aid of all those who are faithful and call on to him. The story of Samson and Delilah is wonderful. It is the universal story of love and betrayal. Delilah betrays Samson as the Israelites battle the Philistines. The story of David is also fascinating. As a young shepherd boy unarmed, he goes to fight with the giant, Goliath with a slingshot and a few pebbles and lots of faith in God. He kills him but Saul is consumed with jealously. Samuel anoints him King and he ushers in a golden age for Israel. He is soon seduced by power and lust for Bathsheba. He gets her husband, Uriah killed in battle; God forgives David, and his son, Solomon, builds God's temple in Jerusalem. The other very memorable episode is when Daniel is thrown into the lion's den. The New Testament is dedicated to Jesus and significant incidents in his life are depicted.

Reportedly the production consulted 47 theological advisers, including Rick Warren pastor of Los Angeles' Saddleback Church, and one rabbi."[2]

Many of the episodes in the *Bible*are so spectacular and engaging that directors have made them into separate films. These include:*Samson and Delilah* (1949), *David and Bathsheba* (1951), *The Robe* (1953), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Peter and Paul* (1981),King David (1985), *The Prince of Egypt* (1998), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) portrays the last twelve hours in the life of Christ – leading up to his crucifixion. After a quote from Isaiah 53, "The Passion" opens with Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane while Peter,

James and John have drifted off to sleep. After waking His disciples (who have never seen Him in such torment) and speaking with them, He returns to His place of prayer, and it appears that His face is peppered with sweat like drops of blood (Luke 22:44). The film takes us through his suffering like the *Stations of the Cross:* After Gethsemane, Jesus is betrayed. Jesus is arrested and brought before Caiaphas. Judas hangs himself. Jesus is brought before Pilate and Herod. Jesus is returned to Pilate. Then Pilate has Jesus flogged with a lead tipped whip and Barabbas is released. Pilate sentences Jesus to die as the crowd demands.

Some of the governor's soldiers take Jesus into their head-quarters and call out the entire battalion. They strip him and put a scarlet robe on him. They make a crown of long sharp thorns and put it on his head, and they place a stick in his right hand as a sceptre. Then they kneel before him in mockery yelling, "Hail! King of the Jews". They then spit on him and grab the stick and beat him on the head with it. When they are finally tired of mocking him, they take off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they lead him away to be crucified.[3]

The violence is extreme. The special effects of Jesus being beaten with rods, scourged, and nailed to the Cross leave nothing to the imagination. Not only that, but both the Jewish Temple Guard and the Roman Soldiers take pleasure in torturing Jesus constantly. From the time of His arrest on, whenever they are walking Him anywhere, they cannot take two steps without striking Him. This content is there from the beginning, broken only by flashback scenes to somewhat happier times. In the second hour of the film, beginning with the Scourging, it becomes overwhelming.

Mel Gibson is giving us a look at what that blood sacrifice actually was. In Romans 5:6-10 we are taught that it is a rare thing for one man to die for another, even if the other man is "righteous" and deserving of the sacrifice. But in the case of the Cross, Jesus died for us while we were sinners, in order to make a way for us to become His friends and to be converted from unrighteousness to righteousness. Of all the violent acts that have occurred in the history of the world, the Cross was by far the most important.

The most important point, as Gibson has said, is that **we are all guilty**. And that no one took Jesus' life from Him, but He laid it down of Himself. God will be the judge

of all unbelief. Until Jesus returns, our message centres on God's offer of mercy and forgiveness.[4]

In conclusion I would like to say, "A picture is worth a thousand words" and the impact of a moving picture on the minds of the audience is much more compelling and enduring.

End Notes

1 Arthur Compton-Rickett, *A History of English Literature. (*New Delhi: UBS Pub. Dist., 1998)90-93

2 *The Bible. http://christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2013/bible2013.html*

3 Mel Gibson, *The Passion.* (California : Icon Distribution, 2004)

4 *The Passion Of The Christ.* Review by Brett Willis.http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2004/thepassionofthechrist.html

Digitization of Religion

Prof.Sharmila Dhote,

Introduction

In the last few decades there have been significant changes in the way, communication technology, is influencing how people practice religion. With the rise of the virtual world, many groups are embracing technologies to create an online interactive worship experience.

It has also provided people with Freedom of faith, which means that all are free to believe what they choose to believe and that all are free to organize their personal and private lives according to these religious beliefs.

Thus, rather than being an alternative social space for a few, digital technology becomes an important platform extending and altering religious practice for many.

Digitization of Religion

Over the years, there have been radical changes in communication technology, which have resulted as a game-changer to conceive religion within digital culture slowly, as religious leaders found it convenient to spread their teachings. The term "digital religion" depicts evolution of religious practice online, as seen in the most recent manifestations of programs which are aired online and also found in offline contexts simultaneously.

"Digital religion" not only refers to religion as it is performed and articulated online, but points to how digital media and spaces are evolving and shaping up by religious practices. Being a strong medium, it allows to maintain the current state of different religions in relation to digital context and the culture in which they are situated. However, given different contexts and performances of digital religion in

current times, a review can be taken of how religious practice has been described, approached,and changed in the last few decades usingInternet, online, cinema, audio-video instruments such as smart phones, tablets and televisions etc.

Evolution of digital religion concept

When developments started taking place in the mid- tolate 1990s, "cyber-religion" was considered as a way to describe the religion to the new regimes of cyberspace whereby religious practice was not bound by traditional constraints and pattern. Rather a new relationship begansurfacingbetween computer technology and religion as experiments carried out to showcase spiritual views into cyberspace (Bauwens 1996).

Religious organizationsor groups of likeminded people were formed and existed in cyberspace communicating and carrying out activities with each other using cyber-religion as a broad concept with gradual emergence ofnew, electronically inspired religious practices and ideas.

Thus the concept of cyber-religion provided a way to exploreand question traditional assumptions and understanding of religions, asit engaged with new cultural and technological contexts. However, it often evoked assumptions that itwas based on an incomplete or somehow false form of religiosity, having limits to its usefulness.Moreover, different forms of religion started emerging online.

Religion online was appreciated for providing empowerment to its members to re-formrituals and bypass traditional systems of legitimation or recognized gatekeepers,and the opportunities it provided to go beyond normal limits of time, space, andgeography. Online religion allowed flexibility for new forms of religiosity and lived religious practices online anddemonstrated how the Internet offered a new dimension tospiritual contemporary society.

"Digital religion" has been the subject title for manyconferences, books, research studies, symposiums and meetings held in recent years.Stewart Hoover(2006), suggests that the study of religion andnew media has moved on from simply exploring

the "digitalisation of religion" –which considers how digital media force religious groups and practitioners toadapt, to altering notions of religious tradition, authority, or authenticity.

Christopher Helland(2004) outlines how religious practices have been transported online and discusses the implications of ritualized behaviors in online religious environments. Ritual, he suggests, is part of the cultural meaning-making system, such that it can be both a religious and secular act. This means that ritual plays an important role in the human experience. He argues that the study of online ritual has challenged scholars to carefully consider what it means to "do" religion and even to "be" religious in a digital realm. Looking at how and why various religious groups practice religious rituals online can help point towards a broader understanding of what constitutes religion in a digital world.

Heinz Scheifinger(2013), explores in "Hindu Worship Online and Offline," how puja, the ritualistic worship of a Hindu deity, has been performed online, and compares this with traditional puja rituals that necessitate fully embodied interaction. He carefully considers the extent to which a puja conducted online can constitute a valid form of religious expression and the debates that such online ritual can raise for offline Hindu communities.

Louise Connelly(2013),investigates Buddhist rituals in virtual worlds in her case study, "Virtual Buddhism: Buddhist ritual in Second Life." Specifically, she focuses on Buddhist meditation as a ritual which incorporates material objects and the use of both voice and text, and the negotiation process between offline and online ritual.

VitSisler(2013), in "Playing Muslim hero: Construction of identity in video games," analyses how contemporary Islamic video games can offer players a new virtual representation of Muslim identity, as hero rather than victim or villain, as is often seen in popular digital game narratives. Through an analysis of recent games produced in the Arab world he explores how religious identity can be understood, defined, and performed via new media.

After discussing the unique aspects of digital media, Gregory Price Grieve (2013), argues that digital religion, offers a workaround, providing religious Internet users with dynamic opportunities to navigate the problems created by the fluid nature of "liquid modern life," which challenges previous definitions of religion and traditional patterns of religiosity.

The case study, "Formation of a religious technorati: Negotiations of authority among Australian emerging church blogs,"Paul Teusner(2013) provides a discursive analysis of Australian religious bloggers, showing how religious authority is enacted in the online blogosphere. He suggests that, rather than challenge traditional religious authorities, religious bloggers that emerge as recognized religious authorities may simply mirror the attributes and pattern of traditional religious leaders, thereby highlighting the paradox of the Internet as a platform that simultaneously affirms and undermines religious authority.

Pauline Cheong(2013) provides an analysis of recent studies examining the implications of the Internet for religious authority. Her review highlights early framings of the Internet as a decentralized space lacking hierarchical control, suggesting that traditional religious authority would be disrupted or undermined by digital technologies.

Rachel Wagner(2013), reflects on how religious mobile applications offer individuals new opportunities to engage in religious bricolage, as the personalization of one's mobile devices becomes an act of religious identity construction and presentation. Yet such acts raise questions of authenticity. In other words, to what extent does one's selection of religious apps represent an actual and cohesive religious identity, or does app selection more accurately reflect an individualized religious identity that works against a fixed notion of religious identity or authority?

Tim Hutchings(2013), explores two online Christian churches, St Pixels and Life Church that use digital media platforms for worship, conversation, and proselytization. He shows the different understandings and patterns of "community"

fostered in each group, and how these strategies have implications for local offline churches within this tradition.

Thus in the author's view, digital religion could be described as a religion that is constitutedin new ways through digital media and cultures, which may lead to a new understanding of religion and experiences of mediation of meaning through digital technology.Also the author opines that, the reformation of existing religious practices haveimplications online as well as offline, leading to new experiences,authenticity, and spiritual reflexivity.

Impact of Digital media

Digital religion can offer a critical and systematic religious engagement with a wide range of new media forms for all major world religions, Buddhism, Christianity,Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism and other new religious movements and also can provide detailed review of issues related to religious authority, authenticity,community, identity, and rituals onlineincluding a series of case studies or experiences to illustrate and elucidate thematicexplorations. Also, theoretical, ethical, and theological issues can be raised and discussed.

Audio-visual: Prior to Internet dominance, audio-visual media was, though still is,a very important interpersonal communication medium to deliver or convey message or video footage to masses and their digital storage and reproduction for repetition. Increased social mobility and geography gave rise to conglomerates of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. It caused peopleto reach a certain point of autonomy which affected the religious sphere.Thus, its relationship with the religious and spiritual necessity became more critical, less submissive and more individualistic. The Religious establishments, apparently, began to losetheir central roleand the individual could decide what to believe.

However, it does have a limitation because commercial privatization of media could affect originally intended truthful religious expressions.In public service, the basic criterion is the presence of society and its institutions and respect for religious and

cultural traditions. However, in private service, the objective is to reach the largest audience in order to obtain the greatest profit.

Cinema, television, radio etc. invade our privacy, and we still do not know the effects that the fragmentation of the image, of information and the manipulation creates a kind of partial 'truth', which prevents authentic communication. The most detestable sort of dependence is not material but spiritual. Once people lose the power to think critically for themselves, they are not able to communicate.

Social media: In present times, people wish to connect and are wanting to find ways of connecting and getting together and social media is enabling that.

The proliferation of digital media technologies in the twenty first century has its impact on mediated communication in the public sphere. In 'global religions' such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, digitization has opened up new spaces for the mediation of religious information. The Internet, for instance,has enabled particular religious communities to circulate and publicize their message. The proliferation of religious websites, forums and blogs, e-books and DVDs of religious material came to be known as e-religion.

According to Heidi Campbell(2013), social media is changing the face of religion, as it has become an important way to connect and make your religious experience a 24/7 experience rather than rituals to be on the weekends.It is not uncommon for religious leaders to use Twitter, Facebook and any other social media environment. In fact, it's the latest trend, according to a Twiplomacy Study. Pope Francis is now ranked as the most influential Twitter user based on the average number of retweets he receives from his six accounts in different languages.Pope Francis is listed as having the second-highest number of followers overall among world leaders, right behind President Barack Obama.Herb Scribner (2013).

In recent years, to influence believers, online religious community leaders have started building social media brands to help differentiate themselves from others and try to step out of religious democracy.By posting spiritual thoughts instead of

just scripture, leaders make themselves a part of the conversation and not just a leader. This creates an easier environment for those who aren't usually involved with religion and increases the interest level.

Effects of Digitization of religion

There is freedom for anyone to create their own websites withoutthe need for discussion and 'legitimization.Consequently, freedom of opinion, as practiced on the Internet,functions as the sovereign freedom of privatecommitment.

The world is experiencing heinous crimes related to religious terrorism, due to wrong interpretations created by digitalized religion. Terrorist organisations through private networks can be, for example, religious, which create a group identity. Lack of trust leads to narrowness; and the external world provokes suspicion. In this context, polarising religious messages can become strangely attractive because they seem to match people's mind-sets and give practical solutions.

Meanwhile, loss of trust in public institutions and the emergence of separate groups carry that loss to the public sphere where people used to experience religious diversity without fear. "Public discourse disappears and negative rumours spread easily", such as a distorted interpretation of religion. In the end, the collapse of a "meaningful intergroup communication" brings society fragmentation.

Conclusion

Digital religion could be described, as a religion that is constituted in new ways through digital media and cultures, which may lead to a new understanding of religion and experiences of mediation of meaning through digital technology. Thus, reformation of existing religious practices haveimplications online as well as offline leading to new experiences, authenticity, and spiritual reflexivity.

The survival and dissemination of opinions on the global information market is regulated by a law formulated by Charles Darwin, namely, the survival of the fittest.

Ritual, repetition, and reproduction were hitherto matters of religion; they were practiced in isolated, sacred places. In the modern age, however, they have become the fate of the entire culture. Even progress is reproductive; it consists in a constantly repeated destruction of everything that cannot be reproduced quickly and effectively. Thus according to the author, under such conditions, it should come as no surprise that, digitization of religion—in all its various manifestations, seems especially relevant to the survival and success of religions in the contemporary world.

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Media and Religion

Fr. Joaquim Fernandes, SDB

Introduction

We live in a new age, one variously described as 'the age of information,' 'the age of interaction,' 'the network age,' 'the media age,' and even 'the second media age.' It is, we are told, the age of post-modernity,' 'globalization,' 'late capitalism,' 'multiculturalism,' 'hyper-reality,' and so on. The style of commentary associated with these terms may often seem bombastic or simply confused, when not outright obfuscatory. But, beneath the verbal effluence, lie two related ideas: everything has changed, and media havesomething to do with it. It is with a critical eye to these ideas that I would like to consider why—and precisely how—attention to media might prove important foran account of religion in the contemporary world.[1]

We live in an era of what I choose to call intense globalization. Events as they happen are beamed into our living rooms at breathtaking speed. We, all of us, have become spectators and participants at once in events happening in the far reaches of the globe, across time zones and beyond our own immediate concerns. The pace of reporting of these events and the seeming urgency in the way they are brought to us make us more than spectators; we become perhaps, involved spectators. The attack on the twin towers was viewed in horrified disbelief from within the comfort of our living rooms; the war on terror and the hunt for Bin Laden played out in high definition clarity over the following years as did the attacks on the Indian Parliament, the Gujarat riots, the Mumbai attacks, the London bombings, the recent Paris attack and other defining moments of the 21[st]century. Our access to the world and the events that affect us directly or indirectly has increased manifold until quite literally, the world is just a click away. The events that define us as a nation are no longer just the events that define us as a nation but the events that define each of us as humans and the way we relate to one another. The media, in its many forms, is perhaps playing a role in this redefinition and in very real ways informing our opinions of the world as is presented to us.[2]

However, there are some basic questions that one needs to ask when tackling the issue of understanding the role or the interplay of media and religion:

- Why do the Media matter to Religion?

- How does one merge Media technologies and determinism?

- Can mediation and communication be understood together?

- Do 'Traditional' Media – orality, image, text and performance (ritual, theatre) have a place today?

- Can the new forms of media encourage dialogue?

- DoReligion, Media and Politics in the contemporary world culture give rise to hegemony?

- Do the theories of Religion, particularly anthropological approaches examining religion in the public sphere?

- How do different media shape religious practices; issues of embodiment, ritual, performance, sensory and aesthetic disciplines?

- What is the impact of trans-national and global faith communities and the internet?

- Does the representation of religion in the news media, both in the East and West ensure a particular emphasis on the representations of religious revivalism and violence?

The Role of the Media

The changing nature of religion in contemporary life has received more and more attention in the years since the September 11 attacks. In all this talk, however, the critical role of the media has been overlooked. While media are ubiquitous throughout the world, they tend to be taken for granted rather than noticed. This neglect is true in many sectors of modern life, but no more so than in religion, even though religions

have always been mediated and many religious movements have had prominent involvement in modern media since at least the late 19th century.[3]

The fact is that the major religious issues and trends that are so important today cannot be fully addressed or understood without attention to the media. Indeed, these trends are rooted in the media in important ways. The media are a source of information about religions, religious trends, and religious ideas. In the wake of the September 11, the July 2005 London and the Bali attacks, journalism has paid increasing attention to religion both as a local and domestic story and as an international or global one. Sectarian interests are increasingly at the centre of situations of political tension, social strife and even bloodshed. Religion is thus more and more in the news.[4]

Religion has also appeared more and more in entertainment and popular culture. Where prime-time television once carried few programs with religious or spiritual themes, religion has become a staple of commercial television in the U.S., the West and even in India. But the media don't just cover and represent religion. They actually interact with religion in ways that are changing both the media and religion. The events surrounding September 11 give some examples of such interactions. It is important to remember that the September 11 attacks were and continue to be presented and understood as at least partly rooted in religion, in religious truth claims and in a claimed "clash of civilizations." The media were the primary sources of the experience of the September 11 events for most people across the globe. The fact that these events were about both politics and religion did not escape those viewers in those presentations.[5]

There was much coverage and commentary on the religious bases and implications of the attacks. But the media were even more deeply involved. It soon became obvious that much of what most people in the West knew about "others" elsewhere in the world was the result of the way Western media portrayed those regions and their religions. Questions about the reasons for the attacks could be answered only with well-known assumptions about the global situation derived from the media. The fact that there were more questions than answers revealed that the media coverage of global religious politics has lagged behind evolving realities.[6]

The media played a further role in the motivation of the Islamist interests behind these attacks. For decades, conservative movements in the Muslim world have been developing a powerful critique of Western immorality, decadence and irreligion. Some of those involved in the September 11 attacks and in the broader anti-Western Islamist movement based their ideas about the West on impressions derived from Western media. Anyone who has travelled extensively outside the West has seen the plethora of second- and third-rate American films and television programs available there. Violence, sex, and immorality make for cheap, accessible and translatable content in film and television, and the result is a portrayal of the West and Western values that few who live in the West would recognize. The media are thus involved in creating, not just portraying, the moral confrontation that some see taking place between Islam and the West.[7]

Finally, the media were also involved in the commemoration of the events of September 11 and their aftermath in more than just journalistic ways. We might say, then, that media can at the same time be a source of religion and spirituality, an indicator of religious and spiritual change, and articulated into religious and spiritual trends—changing religion through those interactions and also being changed by that relationship.[8]

Religious and Media Change

The interaction between media and religion is being made more obvious as both media and religion have undergone significant changes in recent years. In media, there have been trends in technology and in economics which have resulted in an increasingly diverse, decentralized and multi-channel environment. As more and more channels have emerged in the traditional media and in the digital, online and social-media realms, a growing market for a wider range of content has developed, significantly lowering what had been barriers to entry by religion. The media increasingly operate like a marketplace, and as there is more and more demand for religion and spirituality, media supply has increased. Among other things, this increased supply of mediated religion means that religion and spirituality are increasingly available outside the boundaries of the formal "religions," a situation that has world-changing implications for those institutions.[9]

Their presence and persistence in recent years has been accompanied by important changes in many religions. Foremost among these has been a decline in the authority of religious leaders, institutions and doctrines. For a variety of reasons, people today are taking more responsibility for their own faiths, spiritualities and religious identities. Along with the decline in public confidence in institutions in general, religious institutions have also lost their prominence and their clerical authority is less

important in determining what people believe and the way they live their lives. Religion and spirituality today are thus more determined by individuals and processes of individual choice. This trend in religion can be seen to be consistent with secularization. Feelings of individual autonomy are direct effects of modernity, education and media.[10]

The term "spirituality" is prominent in these trends. People are increasingly uncomfortable identifying with "religion," which they define as a package combining institutional and clerical authority, and more at home with "spirituality," which for them represents pure meaning and practice undiluted by its association with received and determinative ideas and histories. These emerging "spiritualities" look for symbols and other resources outside the boundaries of specific religious traditions, seeking to create something new, synthetic and meaningful that works for them. While some of these resources necessarily come from the historic religions, it is the acquisition and combination of them (the "quest," as it is often described) in unique and uniquely meaningful ways that is the task of the autonomous individual self. Most important to our purposes here, access to these resources involves the media. As people seek individual (and collective) spiritualities that make sense, they turn to the expanding marketplace of religious symbols that has emerged in local and global media.[11]

Media, Religion and the Indian Scenario

Religion and politics have been mixed together in Indian society for so long it's senseless to talk about them separately today, said Indian journalist [Vishal Arora](#) in a presentation to the Oxford Centre's course on Religion & Politics in Washington,

D.C.With 1.1 billion people, India is the second most populous nation and the largest democracy in the world. The population is divided among a Hindu majority of 80.4%, a Muslim minority of 13.4%, a Christian minority of 2.3%, and the remainder composed of various religions. This makes for a very volatile political environment, though it was not always this way.[12]

"The use of religion in Indian politics can be linked to the country's pre-independence era," argued Arora. "It is believed that the British, who ruled India for more than 100 years around the 19th century, pitched one community against the other to weaken the freedom struggle."The religious divisions affect both party organization and voting habits. For Arora's study, the key political players are the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is the party most closely tied to the Hindu-nationalist agenda.Arora maintains that the Hindu nationalist agenda is not theocratic. It is more like civil religion, with an understanding that the nation-state ""belongs"to Hindus. The political problems arise out of the Hindu nationalist's violent fringe, which rejects "encroachment" by non-Hindus.[13]

The BJP's primary political opponent is the Indian National Congress (also called "the Congress"), which advocates for "secularism" or the notion that all religions should be treated equally before the law. The Congress advocates a public square that functions more like the religiously "neutral" public square of Western, industrialized democracies.Of course the most important window into the religious-political tensions ought to be the news media, but Arora argues that Indian media do not always serve the public well in these matters. One issue is that Indian media do not have a religion beat, per se, and thus lack reporters with expertise. But the media often fail their public with poor reporting and by mislabelling violent events in a way that protects the perpetrators. The media consistently label communal violence as spontaneous "riots" even when the evidence implies they were premeditated.[14]

Arora's presentation laid out many causes for concern, but he insists that the remedy is not to remove religion from public life. He claims that the remedy is simply to ensure that religion's virtues come out in public life."After all," Arora noted,

"Mahatma Gandhi, known as the Father of the Nation, led India to win independence from the British rule through a struggle that was founded on religious beliefs."[15]

In many parts of urban India, a new interface between media and religion is observed which is on par with the West. A.S. Byatt, an English novelist, sheds more light on this matter. She claims that Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites represent newer ways of understanding ourselves and how we construct a sense of self. "I'm sure it's a religious matter," she says. "You only exist if you tell people you're there." As "the new god," Facebook, she thinks, operates as a mirror to reflect back to us who we think we are. While these words may not really have been spoken in the context of religion and social media in India, it definitely can be applied to the same, making just as much sense.[16]

On the other hand, it can also be argued that the social media can be just as popular with religious groups too. There are blog awards for Jewish and Israeli blogs, Catholic blogs and even for the best writing on the Muslim web. There are religious communities on social media (especially on Orkut, which was the most preferred social media site in India until recently), which are quite popular, having a number of fans and followers too. There are You-Tube clones dedicated to particular religious views and quite a few podcasts too, and these are amongst the most active in virtual world, such as Second Life.[17]

In one way, social media can be said to have a negative effect on the Indian youth when it comes to religion. Yet, in another way, it can be opined that controversial topics draw a lot more attention online – and this could possibly be one of the reasons for the popularity of the social media when it comes to religious groups. Moreover, using religion as a factor to be considered when drawing up an ad for business purposes may also get you more business with the people belonging to the religious group. Either way, one thing is quite evident from all this – social media is indeed a powerful means for people from one community to stick together and keep in touch with their beliefs regardless of where they are settled.[18]

Conclusion

The trends in the way religion and religion-related issues are reported in the world and in India give us at least three inferences:

1. The media give substantial coverage to religion andreligion-related issues, by highlighting mainly the negative anddivisive aspects.For instance, many religious communities are doing commendable socialwork, but their work rarely gets the attention it deserves. This isperhaps a result of most media being market-driven, rather than havingan agenda, which compels them to use only stories that are potentiallysensational and can sell.

2. There is a decline in seriousness in the various religioncolumns in newspapers. Maybe this only reflects popular religiosity, which seems to lack spiritual substance.

3. Third, generally speaking, the media promotes falsespirituality or a spirituality that promotes an emotional and an individual quest. Perhaps they, who seem to be veryshallow in the spirituality they preach and practice, are good inpublic relations skills and are aggressive evangelists.

It would be naïve to expect that the media leadership will take any

initiative to deal with these predicaments, but it is possible forindividual reporters and editors to do their bit in bridging the gapsin reporting religion as news.

End Notes

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3 Stewart M. Hoover, "Media and Religion" http//www.cmrc.colorado.edu, (accessed on 14/01/2016)

56

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12 Richard Potts, "India's religion and politics: a troubled present"   http//www.ocrpl.org/2008/arora_religion_politics/, (accessed on 13/01/2016)

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16 "Religion and Social Media in India" http/www.blog.alivenow.in, (accessed on 13/01/2016)

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The Impact of Movies on Religion

Siddhant Sinha. SY.B.Com
Rochelle D'Souza S.Y.B.Com

Introduction

Movies are the mainstream of entertainment and almost like a religion of the nation. In fact, the movie industry has influenced daily life, culture, religious views for decades. Such an influence can either improve modern society or it can deteriorate it. Religious views of people are highly influenced by movies. Religion is an important aspect of everyone's life.

Review of Literature

Like media, religion also offers symbols, icons and stories to make sense of the world. Such an understanding has been well voiced by Dutch philosopher Hent de Vries, who claims that without these mediating practices and discourses, religion would not be able to manifest itself at all (De Vries, 2001).

Academics, journalists and fans alike have, for instance, identified football stadiums as 'holy grounds'. Gaffney (2008) has called stadium 'Temples of the Earthbound Gods', Trumpbour (2007) writes about stadiums as 'the new cathedrals' and more generally football has been interpreted as 'Ersatz religion' or 'substitute religion' (Sutter, 2006).

"Television is the most powerful tool of communication ever devised by man. Each of my prime time 'specials' is now carried by nearly 300 stations across the U.S. and Canada, so that in a single telecast I preach to millions more than Christ did in his lifetime." (Billy Graham, Postman, 118)

Aim of the Study

The present study specifically focuses on the impact of movies on religious views of people of different age groups.

Objectives of the Study

1. To measure the impact of movies on religion.
2. To analyze the essence of religion in today's world.

Problem

   1. Do movies influence people's religiosity?
   2. Is religion commercialized?

Variables

1. Dependent variable -Survey Responses
2. Independent variable - Movies

Hypothesis

 1. Religiosity is easily influenced by movies.
 2. Religiosity has become commercialized to a great extent.

Sample

 Participants of the present study by random sampling include 60 people in Mumbai, 20 people each, from the age group 15-20 years, 21-40 years and 41 years onwards.

Tools Used

Following was the questionnaire used

**Name:**   **Age:**   **Sex:**

1. Have you watched any movies which depict religious views?
    A.YES   B.NO

2. After watching these movies, do you think religion is commercialized?
    A.YES   B.NO

3. Based on these movies, do you think rituals hold any importance in today's world?
   A.YES   B.NO

4. Do you believe one's belief/ faith in their religion exceeds practicality after watching these movies?
   A.YES   B.NO

5. After watching these movies, you worship God, because you

   A. Love God   B. Fear God   C. None

6 After watching these movies are you judgmental or rather show disparities on the basis of religion, caste and status?
   A.YES   B.NO

7. Have your thoughts changed on religion after watching these movies?
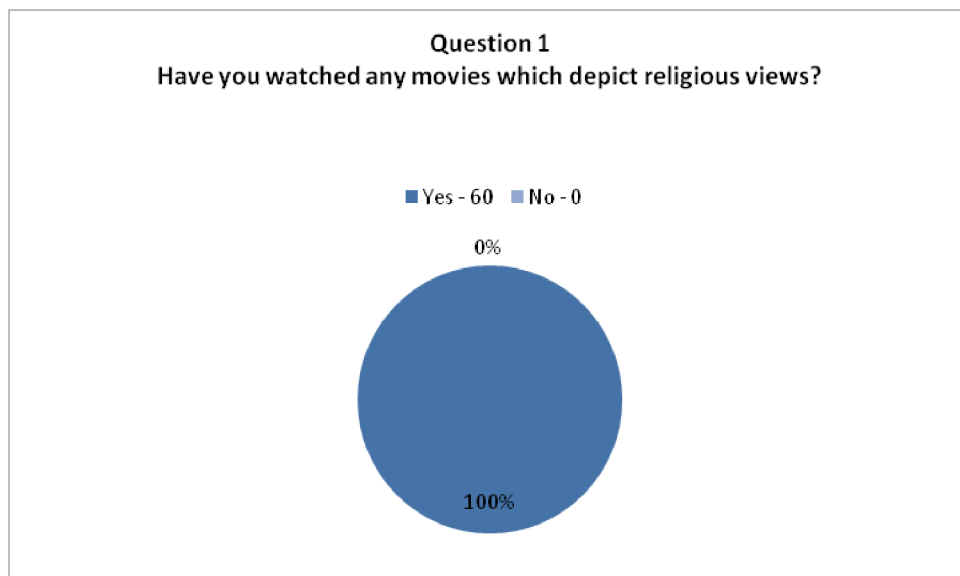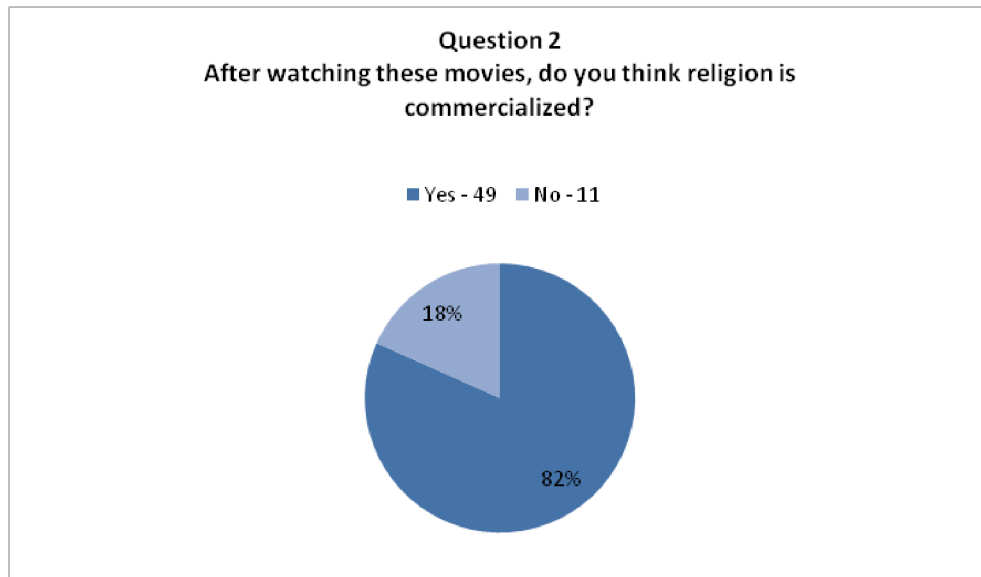
   A.YES   B.NO

Results

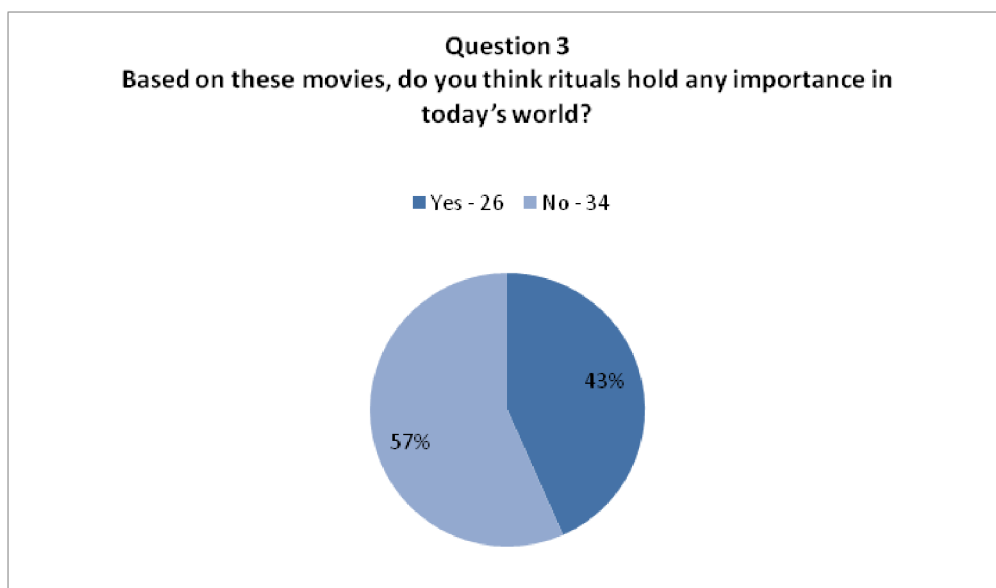Pie Charts showing the age and gender ratio of the sample.

60
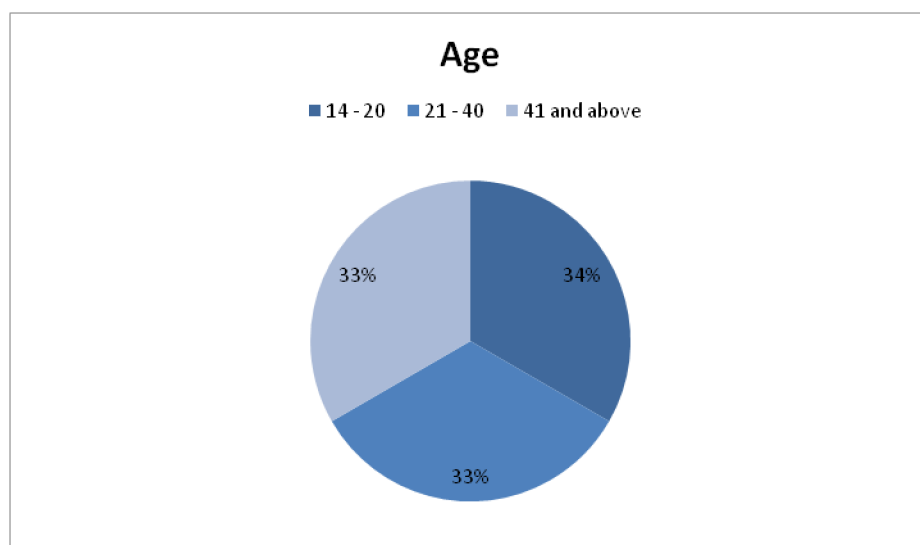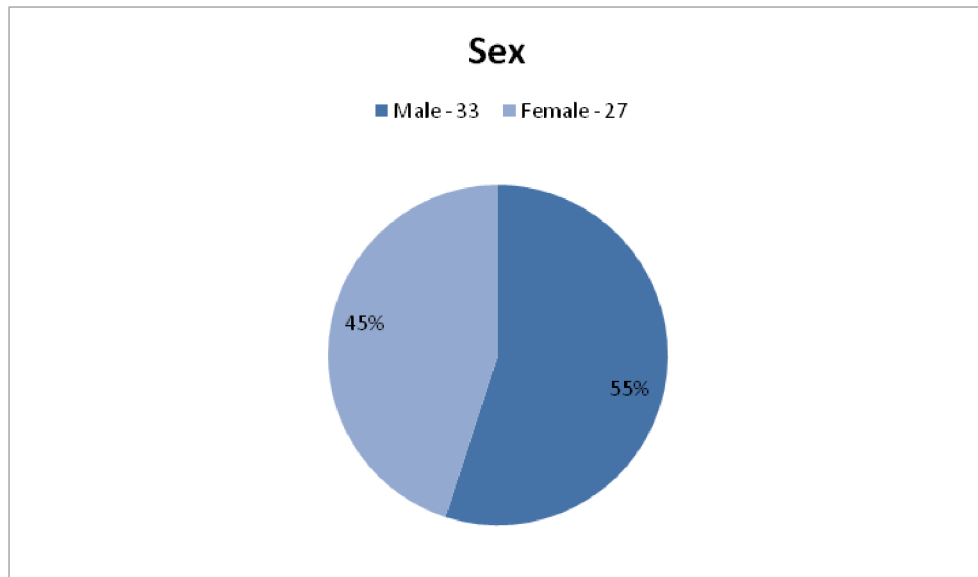
Question-wise depiction of the Pie Chart

Question 2
After watching these movies, do you think religion is commercialized?
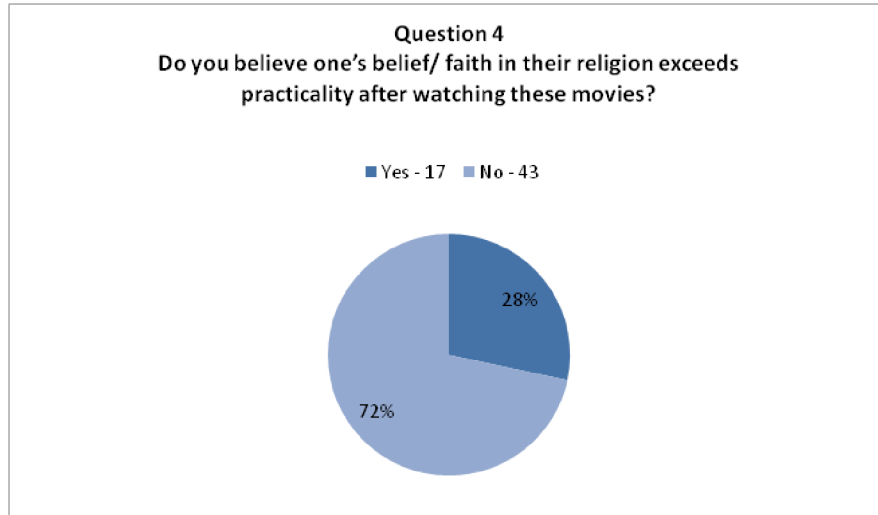
■ Yes - 49 ■ No - 11

18%

82%

The data in question 2 shows that 82% people think religion is commercialized after watching movies. Whereas 18% of the people think religion is not commercialized. It can be thus concluded that religion has become commercialized to great extent.
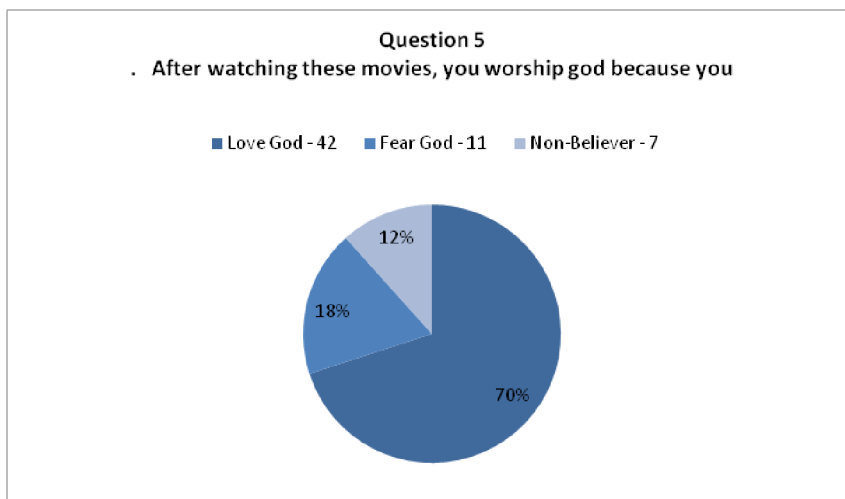
Therefore the hypothesis is supported.

Question 3
Based on these movies, do you think rituals hold any importance in today's world?
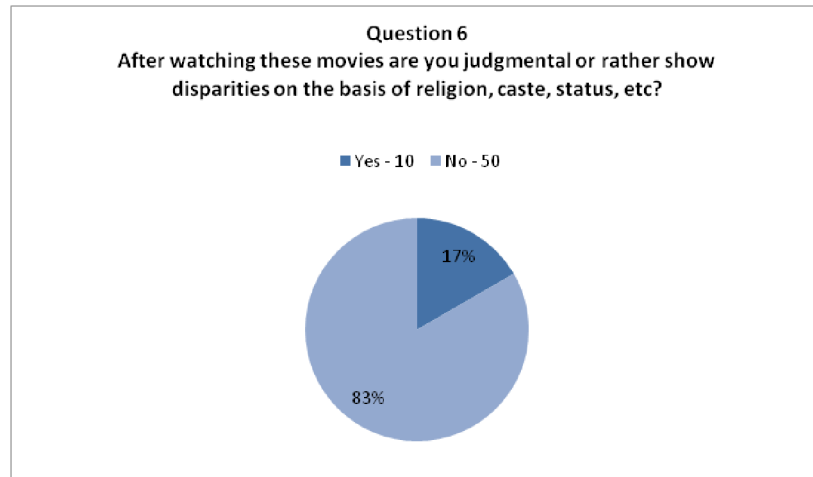
■ Yes - 26 ■ No - 34

43%

57%

62

The data in question 3 shows that 43% people think rituals hold importance in today's world while 57% do not. It can be concluded that rituals do not hold importance in today's world. Thus we can conclude the essence of religiosity is fading.
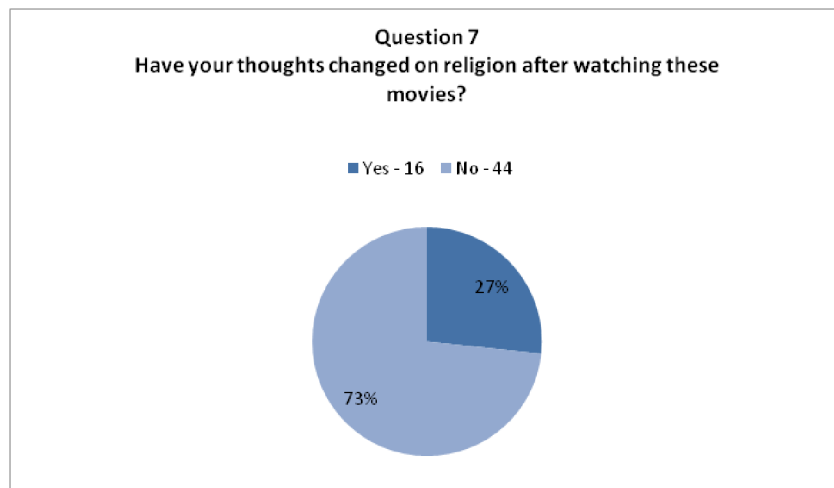
Question 4
Do you believe one's belief/ faith in their religion exceeds practicality after watching these movies?

■ Yes - 17   ■ No - 43

28%

72%

The data in question 4 shows that 28% peoplebelieve that one's belief/ faith in their religion exceeds practicality after watching these movies. Whereas 72% believe being practical is more essential. This shows that media is leading us towards practicality. It can be concluded that being practical is more essential than being religious.

Question 5
. After watching these movies, you worship god because you

■ Love God - 42   ■ Fear God - 11   ■ Non-Believer - 7

12%

18%

70%

The data in question 5 shows that 70% of people worship God because they love him, while 12% because they fear them. The remaining 12% are non-believers. This shows that the views of the very existence of God are now changing.

Question 6
After watching these movies are you judgmental or rather show disparities on the basis of religion, caste, status, etc?

■ Yes - 10   ■ No - 50

17%

83%

The data from question 6 shows that 83% people are not judgmental or don't show disparities on the basis of religion, caste, status after watching these movies whereas17% people do judge people based on the same. This shows that movies have helped people gain perspective. The days of judgment based on religious stereotypes are fading.

Question 7
Have your thoughts changed on religion after watching these movies?

■ Yes - 16   ■ No - 44

27%

73%

The data in question 7 shows that 73% of the people have not changed their religious views after watching movies, while 27% of the people have changed their views. Thus it can be concluded that the religiosity of people is not easily influenced by movies.

Therefore the hypothesis is partially supported.

Discussion

Results of the present study are consistent with other similar studies. Stockman(2005) examined the relationship between religion and commercialization. He observed that The Irish rock band U2 has often been framed in religious and spiritual terms, not only because the Irish catholic backgrounds of its members, but also because of the band's political and social agenda, its iconography and relation to its fan base. Moreover Starker (1989) examined the relationship between impact of particular media and religion. He states that a list of conflicts between religion and particular media is very long and suggests an inherent opposition between the two parties.

The research also shows that a percentage of people are still skeptical about about religious backgrounds and beliefs and shown by Abanes. In current times, orthodox Christians have called for the Harry Potter books to be banned from schools libraries because of their alleged occult and paranormal content (Abanes, 2001).

The results also bring it the the differences in media and religion and how how people view them as stated by Starker. The list of such conflicts between religion and particular media is very long and suggests an inherent opposition between the two parties (Starker, 1989).

Conclusion

Results of the present study and the consistent studies show that Religiosity is not easily influenced by movies and that Religion is become commercialized to great extent. In other words religion does not influence people to a great extent and religion today is a business. Results also suggest that the essence of religion is fading in today's world.

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About the Editors

Archbishop Felix Machado: He has a Licentiate in Catholic Theology from the Catholic Theological Faculty, Lyon, France (1974-76). He has an M.A. in Theology (with specialization in Catholic Missiology) from the Maryknoll School of Theology, New York, USA (1980). He holds a Doctorate (Ph.D.) in Catholic Dogmatic Theology from the Fordham University, New York, USA. He has been Professor of Catholic Dogmatic Theology, Missiology and formator of future priests at St. Pius X College, Mumbai from 1984 to 1993. From April 1993, he had been called to Rome in order to work in the Roman Curia (Holy See, Vatican) at the Asia Desk of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. On 1 October 1999, he was nominated Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican, by Pope John Paul II and confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI.

He has been visiting Professor of Catholic Dogmatic Theology and Missiology at: Pontifical Institute, 'Regina Mundi' in Rome; Pontifical Institute of the Sciences of Education, 'Auxilium ' in Rome; Rome Centre of the Loyola University in Chicago, USA., and at the Pontifical Urban University, Rome.

He has published three books: *Jnaneshvari, Path to Liberation*; *Journeying Together* (in English, French and Italian), a Marathi translation and short commentary on the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium.* He has also published over a hundred articles in various international academic journals of theology. On 16 Jan. 2008, Pope Benedict XVI has appointed as Bishop of Nashik with personal title Archbishop. He is now Archbishop of Vasai Diocese.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Fernandes is resident Professor of Ethics and Moral Theology at St. Pius X College, Mumbai. He has a Doctorate in Moral Theology from the Academia Alfonsiana, Rome, Italy. He also holds a Master of Commerce (M.Com.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree from the University of Bombay. For two terms he was the Secretary of the Bombay Priests Council. From the year 2008, he is the Executive Director of the F.I.A.M.C. Bio-Medical Ethics Centre, Mumbai.

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In May 2006, he received the Pope John XXI International Award "Premium Deontologiae" for research on the occasion of the XXII World Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC) in Barcelona, Spain. In January 2008, he received "The Iustitia et Pax Medallion" from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the promotion of Justice and Peace.

Note on the Contributors

1. **Dr. Margit Köves**Margit Köves came to India in 1983 to teach Hungarian in Delhi University. She was a fellow of ICHR, ICPR and ICSSR doing research on comparative literature in the context of Hungary and India, Hungarian responses to India in literature and journalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She published articles and edited books *Contributions on Lukács*(1989), *Resistible Rise, A Fascism Reader* (2005) both edited jointly with S. Mazumdar and collections of Hungarian prose in Hindi, *Abhinetakimrityu*(2001), *Das aadhunikhungarikavi* (2008) and *Gezababua* by JánosHáy (2008) translated jointly with GirdharRathi. In 2OO9 she published *Buddhism among the Turks of Central Asia.* Currently she is teaching Hungarian in the Department of Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian Studies.

2. **Prof.Ram Puniyani** is a Professor in Biomedical Engineering at the **Indian Institute of Technology**, Powai. Apart from his teaching and research activities, he pursues a parallel track concerned with issues related to social problems, particularly the ones related to preservation of democratic and secular ethos in our life. He is a member of **EKTA, Committee for Communal Amity, Mumbai** and has been associated with different secular initiatives for many years. He is particularly concerned with the adverse effects of globalisation and the rise of fundamentalism, particularly in India. Dr.Puniyani has contributed articles to various magazines and journals on these themes. He has authored three books around these subjects: **Fascism of SanghParivar, The Other Cheek and Communal Politics: An Illustrated Primer**.

3. **Sr. Dr. Teresa Joseph, fma** belongs to the Bombay Province of the Salesian Sisters. She holds a Master's in Science of Education with specialization in Catechetics from Auxilium Rome and a PhD in Missiology with specialization in Inter-religious Studies from the Gregorian University Rome. She is on the Executive Committee of St. Andrew's College for the Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair of Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue. Teresa has been

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She is a freelance writer and contributes articles for various journals in India and abroad. Her published works include *Dream Big Dream True* (BYB Mumbai 2004), *Family of Truth: The Liminal Context of Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Rome 2005), *Teachers are Like Stars* (BYB Mumbai 2009) and *Family of Truth: The Liminal Context of Inter-Religious Dialogue an Anthropological and Pedagogical Enquiry* (ISPCK Delhi 2009). She has launched and co-edited an animation book for the family titled *Stay Connected in the Circle of Love* (Media House, 2007) and another one titled: *Teen Q'S* (Media House, 2009) *John Paul II A Pilgrim on the Roads of the World Celebrating 25 Years of the Paradigm of Assisi(*ISPCK Delhi 2011)

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She studied at Elphinstone College, University of Bombay, and the University of Pennsylvania, where she specialized in Shakespeare and Renaissance Studies for her Ph.D. Her wide-ranging interests are reflected in her diverse paper presentations at several regional, national and international conferences.

5. **Dr. Marie Fernandes** is Principal of St. Andrew's College, Mumbai. She was also a member of the Board of Studies in English at the University of Mumbai and is a recognised Research Guide. The title of her PhD thesis was "*The Animal Fable in Modern Literature*". This was subsequently published in 1996. She has to her credit a number of research articles published in journals both in India and abroad. She was awarded the prestigious – 'International Visitor's Leadership Award', funded by the US. State Department.

6. **Prof.SharmilaDhote**is asenior Professor in the Department of Psychology at St. Andrew's College and has completed 21 years of teaching in college. Currently she is in charge of the Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation for Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue which she actively co-ordinates. She has organized International seminars and symposiums on inter-religious and inter-cultural issues and various other activities and programmes to make the organization vibrant and meaningful. She has also presented a paper at Milan, Italy titled "Eat, Pray and Love". She is also a private practising Counsellor.

7. **Fr. Joaquim Fernandes** SDB is Regional Delegate, Boscom South Asia and Director of Tej-Prasarini, Don Bosco Communications.

8. **Siddhant Sinha,** SYB.Com student is an active member of the Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair of Inter Religious and Inter Cultural Dialogue. He represented St. Andrew's College at the St. Pius X Symposium. He won 2nd prize in the Presentation Competition 2014-15. He was on the student committee that helped organize the National Symposium 2014-15.

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