RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

JOURNAL OF THE ASIAN RESEARCH CENTER FOR RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vol. 11 No. 1 2013

INFLUENCES OF RELIGIOUS TELECAST IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF HINDU AND NON-HINDU TELEVISION VIEWERS

Binod C. Agrawal

Religion and Television in Multi-religious India

The cultural contour of South Asia contains a legacy of the continuity of the Indian civilization, evolution of religious ideas and high degree of visual literacy. Time and space in the infinite universe has been perceived, examined and explained through philosophical perspective that provides moral dictums, vision and myth of human existence, its past, present and future. Such explanations relate to humans and humanlike Gods and Goddesses and their unending and continual conflict with self-proclaimed thoughts of right and wrong. Conflicts are mainly with those who carry different views of life, meaning of power and means of control of universe.

Over a period of several millennia, these continuing *dharma* or religious conflicts, confrontation and clashes have developed a strong and extremely sophisticated means of visual presentation, narratives and rational explanation within each cultural context of South Asia. It has led to multiple ideas to define, describe and dissect the differentiation between right and wrong, men and women, Gods, '*manav*' (humans) and '*rakshas*' (demons). And also multiple means of achieving *moksha* (salvation).

Dr. Binod C. Agrawal is the Director General of TALEEM Research Foundation in Ahmedabad, India. This paper was presented during the 5ᵗʰ International Roundtable of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication (ARC) in Ahmedabad, India.

Barring some religions, over century-old Indian cinema has improved visual literacy and added colourful extravaganza in which Gods and Goddesses manifested humanlike behaviour and character. Built on the foundation of cinema, digital media further added sophistication in representational domain and in expressing characters of multitude of Gods and Goddesses and their intimate relationship with humans. Digital media has further added means and methods to improve visual literacy to all those who share common collective memory and add new means to depict, explain and refine breaking literacy and language barriers.

Digital media have enormous reach both in time and space. Satellite communication has further helped reduce the size of the earth and information access. It is at this juncture that after the economic liberalization of India in the last two decades, television has lapped up anything and everything which has been defined in the Judeo-Christian tradition as "religion". One of the fallouts of the rapid expansion of religious television is commodification of religion and treatment of religion as a product for sale in the marketplace.

It is in this context that the brief presentation attempts to show that religious television is not able to scratch even the surface of religious beliefs, values and ethics of one of the world's oldest multi-religious cultures now came to be known as India.

At present, repeated observations in India give the impression of highly autonomous, self-centered, self-seeking culture, desiring material and social gains like prosperity, self and family happiness, elimination of enemies, quick upward social mobility and display of wealth. Cynicism, distrust and self-righteousness characterizes a large part of Indians. The major focus of discussion without suggesting means to overcome include quick character assassination, pointing out of other's folly, high degree of all pervasive corruption. They are expressed in everyday personal, professional and social lives. A degree of self defeatism, helplessness and high degree of sly further add to

general dissonance in the North cultural region of India. It is in this prevailing context, viewing of television for *moksha* (salvation) and material gain is being welcomed by young and old alike especially by women who feel most insecure, threatened and tensed in the prevailing social situation. The prevailing social environment has been further accentuated by wrangling of the democratic political processes prevailing in Hindi speaking Uttarakhand and elsewhere.

Hence, the aim of the presentation is to examine as to how far religious television telecast has helped reduce the prevailing socio-political tension and reinforce the ethical values and beliefs in *dharma* or religion and at the same time how far religious systems are getting commoditized by telecast.

Religious Television in India

In 2012, there are over two dozen non-stop dedicated "Satellite Religious Television Channels" for Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Muslim and Christian viewers.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Viewers by Religion and Gender

| Socio-Economic Characteristics | Religion | | Gender | | |
	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Age					
35 years and less	35.7	51.9	38.4	35.7	37.4
36-55 years	53.1	42.3	48.3	58.4	52.0
56+ years	11.2	5.8	13.3	5.9	10.6
Gender					
Male	61.4	76.9	100.0	0.0	63.0
Female	38.6	23.1	0.0	100.0	37.0
Education					
No formal education	1.8	5.8	0.6	4.9	2.2

Below high school	12.1	19.2	10.5	16.8	12.8
Below 12th Grade	13.8	13.5	15.2	11.4	13.8
Undergraduate	8.7	15.4	10.8	7.0	9.4
Graduate+	57.6	38.5	55.2	56.2	55.6
Tech-Professional degree	6.0	7.7	7.6	3.8	6.2
Marital Status					
Unmarried	15.8	19.2	20.6	8.6	16.2
Married	81.9	76.9	78.7	85.9	81.4
Widow-Widower-Divorced	2.2	3.8	0.6	5.4	2.4
Family Size					
1-3 Members	13.4	15.4	9.2	21.1	13.6
4-6 Members	72.5	65.4	75.9	64.9	71.8
7+ Members	14.1	19.2	14.9	14.1	14.6
Family Monthly Income					
Rs. 10000 and less	16.7	26.9	16.2	20.5	17.8
Rs. 10001-20000	37.7	30.8	35.6	39.5	37.0
Rs. 20001-30000	19.9	25.0	23.2	15.7	20.4
Rs. 30001+	25.7	17.3	25.1	24.3	24.8
Average Monthly Income	27883	26740	28027	27316	27764
Household Amenities					
air conditioner	18.5	17.3	21.0	14.1	18.4
cooler	65.2	59.6	65.7	62.7	64.6
car	44.0	46.2	47.0	39.5	44.2
motorcycle	83.5	78.8	84.4	80.5	83.0
family owned car and motorcycle	38.6	38.5	41.3	34.1	38.6
freezer	96.9	92.3	96.5	96.2	96.4
mobile	98.7	100.0	99.4	97.8	98.8
television	99.6	98.1	99.0	100.0	99.4
Total Sample	448	52	315	185	500

Television has replaced many modes of religious communication like recitals of oral and written words, ritual performance, observations of fasting, feasting and collective congregation for worship. Oral story recitals, dance performances and *Ramlila* (theatrical performances of epic *Ramayan)* recital of *Koran*, *roza* (fasting), *taravih* (special prayer during *Ramzan*) and visit to Macca are major means of philosophical and moral value transmission and continuity from generation to generation.

Several religious telecasts are viewed on a fairly regular basis as reported in a number of television studies (Agrawal *et al.* 2012, Agrawal 2011, 2010 and Anonymous 2009). In this respect, all pervasive religious television has added more than 100 million strong household viewers in India who have access to terrestrial, cable and direct-to-home television.

Aim

The paper aimed among other things, to analyze possible influences of religious telecast between Hindu and non-Hindu viewers living in an urban multi-religion cultural setting of Uttarakhand, India. More specifically the survey aimed (a) to study changes in the religious behavior among Hindu and non-Hindu viewers, (b) to assess degree of religious tolerance expressed by Hindu and non-Hindu viewers towards other religions, and (c) to what extent these influences have been internalized by Hindu and non-Hindu viewers as a result of religious television viewing. Non-Hindu included Muslim (5.2 percent), Sikh (4.0 percent) and Christian and others (1.2 percent). They have been clubbed together for analysis.

Study

Keeping in mind the objectives, a survey design was followed to conduct the study in June 2012. A stratified random sampling method was followed for the selection of 500 Hindi speaking DTH/Cable in the multi-religious viewers in Dehradun City, Uttarakhand, India. Out of

500 viewers, 89.6 percent or 448 were Hindu whereas the remaining 10.4 percent or 52 were non-Hindu.

Socio-Economic Chracteristics of the Viewers

On the whole, literacy rate among the viewers was much higher as compared to national average in which both Hindu male and non-Hindu male viewers seemed to be more educated than Hindu and non-Hindu female viewers, (Table 1). They owned items of comfort like automobiles, mobile phones and durables like refrigerators. As much as 72.5 percent Hindu viewers lived in a four to six member household whereas only 65.4 percent non-Hindu viewers were in this category. Almost one-fifth or 19.2 percent non-Hindu viewers lived in households having more than seven members whereas only 14.1 percent Hindu were in this category (Table 1). Out of ten, eight or 81.9 percent Hindu viewers were married having household monthly income ranging from less than Indian Rupee 10000 to above 30000 per month. On the other hand 75.9 percent non-Hindu viewers were in this category.

The profile of both Hindu and non-Hindu viewers is that of educated adults of both genders who lived in material comfort (Table 1). It is assumed that their knowledge of religion was very high and they were capable of discerning the content of the religious telecast against their strongly held religious beliefs.

Faith in God

The viewers were asked about their faith in God, daily ritual performance and appropriateness of Indian joint family. Only minor differences between Hindu and non-Hindu viewers were observed about faith in God (Hindu 97.3 percent and non-Hindu 92.3 percent) Table 2. Table 3 indicated that 83.3 percent Hindu viewers performed some ritual or prayer once a day or more than once day. The same holds true for 80.8 percent non-Hindu viewers. Relatively higher (91.4 percent) women performed prayer at least once a day or more than once

a day. Women regardless of their religious background seemed to be more religious than men (Table 3).

Table 2: Faith in God by Religion and Gender

| Faith in God | Religion | | Gender | | |
	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Yes	97.3	92.3	98.1	94.6	96.8
No	2.7	7.7	1.9	5.4	3.2
Total	448	52	315	185	500

Table 3: Prayer and Ritual Performance by Religion and Gender

| Performance | Religion | | Gender | | |
	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Once-more than once in a day	83.3	80.8	78.1	91.4	83.0
Occasional- special occasion	16.7	19.2	21.9	8.6	17.0
Total	448	52	315	185	500

Table 4 indicated that 80.4 percent Hindu viewers had followed religious customs 'very much to much' and another 19.6 percent had followed 'some what' thereby reflecting almost universal following of religion (Table 4). In case of non-Hindu viewers as much as 96.2 percent had followed religious customs 'very much to much' reflecting relatively higher proportion of non-Hindu being religious.

Table 4: Follow Religious Customs by Religion and Gender

| Follow Religious Customs | Religion | | Gender | | |
	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Very Much	35.3	40.4	33.7	39.5	35.8
Much	45.1	55.8	47.3	44.3	46.2

Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	19.6	3.8	19.0	16.2	18.0
Total	448	52	315	185	500

Appropriateness of Joint Family

On the question of appropriateness of joint family in the contemporary social setting, Hindu viewers (59.4 percent) compared to non-Hindu viewers (63.5 percent) have accepted its appropriateness (Table 5). Only 36.5 percent non-Hindu viewers compared to 40.6 percent Hindu viewers had rejected or did not subscribe to appropriateness of joint family which emerged in the agrarian society of India before industrialization.

Table 5: Opinion on Joint Family by Religion and Gender

	Religion		Gender		
Joint Family Appropriate	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Very Much	21.5	15.4	18.7	24.3	20.8
Much	37.9	48.1	40.6	36.2	39.0
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	40.6	36.5	40.6	39.5	40.2
Total	448	52	315	185	500

Religious Tolerance

A set of three questions were asked to Hindu and non-Hindu viewers relating to religious tolerance operationally defined as acceptance of other religious practices with positive feelings and appreciation. Since the viewers were by and large exposed to multi religious observance, fairs and festivals, it was thought that television exposure of diverse religious beliefs and practices would help enhance religious tolerance among Hindu and non-Hindu viewers.

Table 6 indicated that 86.6 percent Hindu viewers did not watch any telecast of other religions. Similarly 82.2 percent had not ever visited any mosque, church or Gurudwara (Sikh temple) and 83.7 percent had not celebrated or participated in rituals of other religions (Table 6). Similarly, 88.5 percent non-Hindu viewers did not watch any telecast of other religions; 82.7 percent had not ever visited any temple and 76.9 percent had not celebrated or participated in rituals of Hindu religion (Table 6). Very little difference was observed between men and women viewers on these questions. On the whole, there seems to be limited exposure of other religions, in spite of the multi-religious fabric of the Indian culture and society. It could also be because the Hindu and non-Hindu viewers preferred to confine within their religious domain in spite of unhindered exposure and continuous interaction with multiple religions.

The contribution of television seems to be negligible due to avoidance of viewing of other religious channels, though such a selective multiple religious viewing may help create religious tolerance and in breaking age-old religious animosity, indifference and intolerance between Hindu and non-Hindu viewers. The study tends to support the view that those who watched religious television showed little sympathy and tolerance for other religions.

Table 6: Religious Tolerance by Religion and Gender

	Religion		Gender		
	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Watch telecast of other religions					
Very Much	2.9	3.8	2.5	3.8	3.0
Much	10.5	7.7	10.2	10.3	10.2
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	86.6	88.5	87.3	85.9	86.8

Visit religious places of other religions					
Very Much	3.3	1.9	2.5	4.3	3.2
Much	14.1	15.4	13.7	15.1	14.2
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	82.6	82.7	83.8	80.5	82.6
Celebrate festivals and participate in the rituals of other religions					
Very Much	6.3	5.8	5.7	7.0	6.2
Much	10.0	17.3	11.4	9.7	10.8
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	83.7	76.9	82.9	83.2	83.0
Total	448	52	315	185	500

Anger, Fear, Sympathy and Worry among Hindu and Non-Hindu Viewers

The concept of transmigration of soul or rebirth in the Hindu religion seems to have helped in inculcating and internalizing the notion of temporariness of man and fear from death. According to Hindu belief, the life cycle of birth and death continues until one attains *nirvana* (liberation of soul from mortal constituents) in which human birth provides the best opportunity of attaining *nirvana*. The same can not be said about Islam and Christianity where after death one has to wait until the Day of Judgment. It is this reason that only 5.4 percent Hindu and 1.9 non-Hindu viewers had shown any fear from death (Table 7). While degree of 'humiliation' (28.6 percent Hindu and 25.0 percent non-Hindu viewers) is more or less similar among both the 'separation from loved ones' (37.1 percent Hindu and 48.1 percent non-Hindu viewers) is higher among non-Hindu viewers. These factors seemed to create most fear among the Hindu and non-Hindu viewers (Table 7). "A factor in social and psychical equilibrium is found in the notion of *dharma* with its rigorous justice and the 'truth' which implies

(the Indians insist on the attitude of truthfulness as others insist on an 'attitude of consciousness')" (Renou 1962:55). This could be one of the important reasons why Hindu and non-Hindu viewers showed anger when one lied (lie angers 38.4 percent Hindu viewers as compared to 28.8 percent non-Hindu viewers) (Table 7).

Given the nature of the Indian family and importance to familial relationships, it is not surprising that as much as 33.7 percent Hindu viewers and 46.2 percent non-Hindu reported get worried because of their family followed by loss of respect or locally referred to as *Izzat* (Hindu viewers 27.7 percent and non-Hindu viewers 13.5 percent) (Table 7). There is an appreciable difference between Hindu and non-Hindu viewers on these two issues.

Physically handicapped persons drew sympathy (Hindu viewers 40.0 percent and non-Hindu viewers 46.2 percent). Sick and helpless drew equal sympathy (21.9 percent Hindu viewers and 21.2 percent non-Hindu viewers) from both whereas poverty did not attract significant sympathy. (Table 7). Analysis indicated culture specificity coupled with religious beliefs that evoked fear, anger, worry and sympathy within the context of the Indian culture mediated by religious values.

Table 7: Reasons for Anger, Fear, Sympathy and Worry by Religion and Gender

	Religion		Gender		
	Hindu	Non-Hindu	Male	Female	Total
Fears most					
Death	5.4	1.9	4.8	5.4	5.0
Separation from loved ones	37.1	48.1	35.9	42.2	38.2
Failure	16.7	21.2	20.0	12.4	17.2
Uncertainty	12.3	3.8	13.3	8.1	11.4
Humiliation	28.6	25.0	26.0	31.9	28.2

Angers most					
Lie	38.4	28.8	35.6	40.5	37.4
Too much work	4.7	3.8	4.8	4.3	4.6
Failure	13.2	13.5	15.6	9.2	13.2
Bad behavior	21.0	40.4	26.3	17.3	23.0
Bitter words	22.8	13.5	17.8	28.6	21.8
Worries most					
Family	33.7	46.2	30.2	43.2	35.0
Job	12.1	7.7	13.0	9.2	11.6
Money	10.3	17.3	12.7	8.1	11.0
Health	16.3	15.4	16.2	16.2	16.2
Respect	27.7	13.5	27.9	23.2	26.2
Feels pity and sympathetic to					
Sick	8.0	7.7	7.6	8.6	8.0
Poor	17.6	13.5	18.1	15.7	17.2
Handicapped	40.0	46.2	41.3	39.5	40.6
Helpless	21.9	21.2	21.0	23.2	21.8
Unhappy	12.5	11.5	12.1	13.0	12.4
Total	448	52	315	185	500

Influences of Religious Television

A question was raised as to what extent religious television viewing in multi-religious culture has strengthened adherents of Hindu and non-Hindu religions? The viewers were administered a battery of eight questions to gauge their views on the influences of religious television viewing. These questions were asked to assess as to how religious television might have influenced the viewers' attitude towards their belief, current life, love for humanity, capacity to take important decisions, ability to think rationally, able to learn about important things, understand environment and be able to assess perceptions of others.

Table 8 indicated that regardless of religious background not more than 9 to 15 percent viewers felt very strong influences of religious television in their deeds and action. At the same time, 35 to 60 percent viewers expressed that religious telecast had helped strengthen little their belief in religion (Table 8). About one third or 35.4 percent viewers learnt about important things from religious television viewing. Further, 53.6 percent felt that love for human kind has increased little after religious television viewing. In case of 'capacity to take important decision' was not at all influenced as indicated by 51.3 percent viewers. So was the case about 'ability to think rationally and prudently' (52.7 percent) and 'not able to learn important things' (53.3 percent). However, understanding of environment or what is referred to as 'nature' in Hinduism improved a little bit after watching religious television (46.2 percent). Almost the same number of viewers believed that their understanding of environment had not changed much (42.9 per cent). Religious television was believed to have helped little in assessing other's perception and approach (48.7 per cent) (Table 8). The variation between Hindu and non-Hindu viewers was marginal.

On the whole, it seems religious television viewing had moderate or no influence whatsoever at attitudinal level among Hindu and non-Hindu viewers. In the light of the analysis, it is argued that strongly held religious beliefs and cultural dictates would not get influenced by religious television viewing as it lacked religious and spiritual sanctity. At the same time, the changing attitude at the societal level may continue to bring about socio-cultural change with or without television viewing as ascertained by Mandelbaum (1970) earlier.

Lack of influence of religious television among Hindu and non-Hindu viewers provides a perspective in understanding of cultural nature of television. It is argued that television may not be able to influence strongly held beliefs. Also, in the multi-religious India, in

spite of living together in physical proximity, it did not help increase interaction, religious tolerance and social interaction which could be explained by a whole host of structural, historical and political factors. Hence, there is a need for deeper analysis to understand the influences of religious television in the multi-religious context of India.

Table 8: Influence of *dharma* Telecast by Religion and Gender

	Religion		Gender		Total
	Hindu	Non-HIndu	Male	Female	Total
Belief towards *dharma*					
Become very strong	15.0	13.5	12.4	18.9	14.8
Become little stronger	59.6	61.5	60.6	58.4	59.8
Become somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	25.4	25.0	27.0	22.7	25.4
Attitude towards life					
Increased very much	11.4	11.5	9.2	15.1	11.4
Increased a little bit	52.2	53.8	52.7	51.9	52.4
Increased somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	36.4	34.6	38.1	33.0	36.2
Love for humankind					
Increased very much	12.5	7.7	9.8	15.7	12.0
Increased a little	53.1	57.7	52.7	55.1	53.6
Increased somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	34.4	34.6	37.5	29.2	34.4
Capacity to take important decisions					
Increased very much	11.6	3.8	7.9	15.7	10.8
Increased a little	37.1	46.2	35.2	42.7	38.0
Increased somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	51.3	50.0	56.8	41.6	51.2
Ability to think rationally and prudently					
Increased very much	10.0	5.8	8.3	11.9	9.6
Increased little	37.3	34.6	33.7	42.7	37.0
Increased somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	52.7	59.6	58.1	45.4	53.4
Learnt about important things					
Very Much	10.9	7.7	8.6	14.1	10.6
Much	35.7	32.7	33.3	38.9	35.4
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	53.3	59.6	58.1	47.0	54.0
Understand Environment					
Very Much	11.2	5.8	8.3	14.6	10.6
Much	46.0	48.1	46.3	45.9	46.2
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	42.9	46.2	45.4	39.5	43.2
Easier to assess other's perception and approach					
Very Much	10.0	5.8	8.6	11.4	9.6
Much	48.7	46.2	48.9	47.6	48.4
Somewhat - Not at all - Cannot say	41.3	48.1	42.5	41.1	42.0
Total	448	52	315	185	500

REFERENCES

Agrawal, Binod C.

2011   Learning Hindu Dharma from Television Cartoons: An Analysis of school Children in the Indian Civilization. FABC-OSC Roundtable on "Religion and Social Communication: Relations and Challenges", Thailand.

2010   Transnational Television and Cultural Diversities in the Indian Sub-Continent: Will it Survive? *In* Socio-Cultural Diversities and Globalization-Issues and Perspectives, eds. S.R. Mehta, pp 261-272. Simla: Indian Institute of Advance Study.

Agrawal, Binod C. eds.

1982   Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Complex Societies, Lucknow: Ethographic & Folk Culture Society.

Agrawal, Binod C., Khan M I in association with Ajit Pandey; Amardeep Singh; Farida Ahmed and Niharika Chandola Kala

2012   Hindu *Dharma* Satellite Telecast in a Multi-religious South Asia: An Analysis
A paper to be presented in the International Conference on "Media Religion Culture 2012" to be held at Eskisehir, Turkey, July 8 – 12, 2012.

Anonymous

2009   Changing Viewers' Preferences of Channels and Programmes : A Comparative, Analysis of ZEE TV and Colors. Ahmedabad: TALEEM Research Foundation. (unpublished report).

Mandelbaum, David G.

1970   Society in India Volume 1 Continuity and Change. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Renou, Louis

1962   Hinduism. New York: George Braziller.

EXPLORING THE DIEGESIS[1] OF THE HARIDASI KIRTAN – A CRITICAL STUDY

Sanjay Ranade

This paper is part of an ongoing research on Indian communication theory being conducted by the researcher. It is argued that to identify an Indian theory of communication Rasa and Dhvani experience must be studied in multimedia and multicultural contexts of the contemporary media universe and that such a theory shall emerge better from an in depth study of Indian folk media. The study explores the world within which the Haridasi Kirtankar sees himself/herself performing because the media universe within which traditional folk artists are performing and presenting their art has changed dramatically over the past two decades.

Keywords – Diegesis, *Haridasi Kirtan*

Introduction

This paper follows up on three earlier papers submitted by the researcher at a national seminar and two international conferences.[2] The first paper argued that the terms *Sadharanikaran* and *Sahridaya,* often presented as central to an Indian system of communication, are inadequate to study communication in a multimedia and multicultural media universe. We find that *Sadharanikaran* is but a single tool used to tide over two obstacles in *Rasa* experience. *Sahridaya,* on the other hand, is but a condition of the *Rasik* without which the spiritual experience of

Dr. Sanjay Ranade *has a PhD in Politics from the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Contemporary Studies, University of Mumbai. He is also an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Mumbai and an Adjunct Researcher at the Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.*

Rasa is not possible. *Sadharanikaran* would translate into simplifying or democratizing to the point of making the content appear trivial. Democratisation of media leading to mediocrity of content has been a serious challenge in modern times.[3] On the other hand, *Sahridaya* is seriously under the scanner because of the multi cultural situations that receivers and senders are communicating in today.

In a migrating world, how is one to be *Sahridaya* with another when both come from distant and may be unknown (to each other) realities? Does the receiver of messages become *Sahridaya* with the content or with the sender? This last question is important in a multimedia and multicultural universe where the content has become king. In this context one can look at popular fashion, music, food, dance, the English language, films, game shows etc and argue that there is *Sadharanikaran* in the sense of generalization, on a global scale, due to mass television. There is also a degree of *Sahridayata* that has been achieved between peoples of varying cultures towards the content. However, clearly, there is no *Sahridayata* among the people. If Indians eat the *Falafal* in an Indian food court they do not become *Sahridaya* with the Lebanese but with the food. *Sahridaya* with the layers of meaning of the content and with the creator and sender of that content are two different things involving complex cognitive processes. A further danger of *Sadharanikaran* as process and *Sahridayata* as goal of communication is to bind receiver and sender into a hyper shared cultural context. To make common and to be of one heart the receiver, the sender and the content have to be very narrowly positioned in a media, knowledge, experience and information universe. The researcher argues that to identify an Indian theory of communication *Rasa* and *Dhvani* experience must be studied in multimedia and multicultural contexts of the contemporary media universe and that such a theory shall emerge better from an in depth study of Indian folk media.

In the second study the researcher observed that the contemporary folk performers were performing in a distinctly better economic and social situation than when they started their performance and that this

change was brought about by television and Internet, two media that had given their art form as well as their performance a wider audience. The study showed that performers were experimenting both with the form as well as the content of their performances and simultaneously the audience has changed and is driving performers to improvise and improve the presentation, form and content. The performance and content of *Haridasi Kirtan*, a form of folk media in Maharashtra, could be studied in this regard. It employs all the technical aspects of *Rasa* and *Dhvani* experience and employs contemporary content ranging from traditional to modern.[4]

The third study focused on exploring the media universe of the *Haridasi Kirtankar*, how effectively the *Kirtankar* sees himself/herself communicating his/her message in his/her multimedia universe, what are the subjects that can be communicated and what are the skill sets that are required to do so within the form.

The study strictly followed a positivist paradigm using a structured questionnaire and survey method. There are private institutions in Mumbai running informal academic programmes where those keen on learning Kirtan are taught. One such programme is run by the Akhil Bharatiya Kirtan Sanstha in the premises of the Vitthal Mandir on D L Vaidya Marg, Dadar, Mumbai. The institution is over four decades old. It has a three year course where classes are conducted every evening twice a week for each batch of students. There were 66 students from all three years in the institution at the time of the study.

The study showed that the *Haridasi Kirtankar* lived in a multimedia environment where written text (books, newspapers and mobile phones) was a dominant medium followed by television. Internet came second followed by radio. The *Kirtankar* sees the form as being capable of dealing with almost all the subjects that are dealt with by the media in his/her environment. However, an overwhelming number of respondents chose *Bhakti* as the choice subject for their performance. The *Kirtankars* saw training in music, storytelling, acting and use of

technology as important to their performance of the art. They were also aware of the theory of *Rasa* although they were not as aware of the theory of *Dhvani*.

The Key Terms

1.1 Diegesis is a term used traditionally to describe the total world of a narrative. Aristotle used it to describe how literature was a process of telling a story that did not involve showing it. The ideal was to tell a story so artfully that the art was not noticed by the audience; everything would appear to be diegetic, or inside the story, or a component of the story-telling. Diegesis recognises that codes and conventions give a film text its meaning, and that these codes and conventions are shared by filmmakers and their audiences. For example, if a character in a film turns on a radio and music is heard on the soundtrack we understand that the music is part of the character's world in the narrative – the music is diegetic. In contrast, if music is introduced in the film without prompting by the narrative or by the characters this is understood as a non-diegetic technique. Diegesis is understood to be central to realist representations, and like realism itself, there have been many sophisticated challenges to traditional conventions. The film theorist Christian Metz in his famous work Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema while developing the definition of diegesis referred to a grammar of cinema. The diegesis is as much a part of the narrator as it is of the audience. Thus the narrative emerges by the interaction of the semiotics of the narrator and the audience – something close to the idea of the Sahridaya. The Haridasi Kirtan is a stand up and talk performance that involves story telling – stories about the Lord Hari. Let us look at both the terms Haridasi and Kirtan now.

1.2 Haridasi comes from the word Haridas. Beginning in the 13th century, a group of disciples of Madhavacharya, a Vaishnava philosopher-saint from Karnataka, spread his word by organising

themselves as Haridas or the slaves of Hari. Hari is a name of Lord Vishnu. The Haridas would go about in groups and spread Bhakti by singing bhajans. This tradition challenged the existing caste hierarchies and social discrimination.

1.3 Kirtan is the second form of Bhakti mentioned in the Bhagavata. The Bhagavata is a Purana that is perhaps more popular than the Bhagwad Gita. Kirtan follows Shravan or listening and precedes Smaran or remembering (the Lord Hari). It includes dance, music and musical instruments. The atmosphere that is created by Kirtan automatically leads to a sense of exaltation. It is for this reason that this form of Bhakti has been held in high esteem by the Bhaktas.

Thus, Haridasi Kirtan also known as Harikatha, is a one-man show, a discourse in story and song whose basic motives and contents are oriented towards the necessity for devotion to Hari and the necessity for a simple method of communicating religious experiences and their social implications as a result of which it is 'adaptable to contemporary themes because it comments on ways of living and on self-improvement'.

2. What does the Haridasi Kirtan performance comprise?

2.1 Naman: The Haridasi Kirtan performance involves a naman. Literally this means saying the name of the deity or the gods and goddesses. It includes reciting Sanskrit shlokas that invoke the blessings of gods and goddesses, especially Ganesha, Saraswati, Shiva and Vishnu. In my experience, the Kirtankar invokes a wide variety of deities during the naman. Some Kirtankars ask for the permission of the audience and seek their blessings and empathy.

2.2 Purvaranga: This term can be found in the Abhinav Gupta's critique of the Natyashastra. Of the several ways of achieving Sadharanikaran, Abhinav Gupta suggests Purvaranga vidhan as an important tool. In the Purvaranga Vidhan an atmosphere

for the performance is created through rituals. In the Haridasi Kirtan, the Purvaranga is akin to a statement of purpose where the Kirtankar sings an abhanga. Sometimes, Kirtankars sing bhajans, recite an ovee or a shloka. All of these are poetic forms made popular by the poet-saints in Maharashtra between the ninth and the 18th century. It is this Purvaranga that is offered as a topic of discourse. In the Purvaranga the Kirtankar provides evidence, known as pramana, in support of his reading of the abhanga that is sung.

2.3 Bhajan: This is a slogan that invokes a deity. For instance, the slogan Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram invokes the deity Shri Ram. The slogan rendered to music and accompanied with clapping and beating of the cymbals, could be one of many that the Kirtankar prefers. The audience is encouraged to recite the slogan after the Kirtankar.

2.4 Uttararanga: This involves story-telling and drama where the Kirtankar, to the accompaniment of poetry, music, dance and drama narrates a story that illustrates the important highlights of the Purvaranga.

Research method of the present study

The present study aimed at finding out what the *Haridasi Kartankar* is communicating, why and to whom; what is the media universe in which the *Haridasi Kirtan* is taking place and who are the performers of *Haridasi Kirtans* and who make up the audience.

The researcher chose to interview *Kirtankars* who have been performing *Kirtans* as an ancestral profession. *Kirtan* is a lot about *parampara* or tradition as a result of which the concepts, constructs, ideas and forms etc are handed down from generation to generation. This means that most contemporary Kirtan performers and the audience that listens to the Kirtan performance share a diegesic handed down

from generations. At the same time, we have observed that the media universe of both *Kirtankars* as well as their audience is changing rapidly.

The researcher asked the following questions of the five respondents of which three are male and two female:

> Where are *Haridasi Kirtans* taking place?
> Why are *Haridasi Kirtans* taking place?
> Who are performing the *Kirtans* and why?
> Who are listening to the *Kirtans* and why?
> What are the significant themes of *Haridasi Kirtans*?
> What are the elements of storytelling, drama, poetry
> and music that are used in a *Haridasi Kirtan*?
> What is the media technology being used by the performer?

Observations and Analysis

Traditionally the *Haridasi Kirtan* takes place in temples and community halls on designated days such as festivals, the birth celebrations of deities like *Rama, Krishna, Ganapati* or the wedding of *Shiva-Parvati.* As one of the respondents, Anand Joshi says, *Haridasi Kirtan* is a service offered by the *Kirtankar* before the deity. However, the *Haridasi Kirtan* is also now being performed at homes to mark important events in a family, like the death anniversaries of people for instance. It is being performed in open grounds and in special *Haridasi Kirtan* festivals. The researcher himself performed *Haridasi Kirtan* before teachers and students in a school, before a small family in a suburban Mumbai apartment with no music instruments except a small pair of traditional cymbals called the *zhanja* to set the rhythm. Thus, it can be found that the *Haridasi Kirtan* is being performed at varied occasions and very different circumstances and for different purposes.

The *Haridasi Kirtan* challenged the existing caste hierarchies and social discrimination and it is understood that it can be performed by anybody and before anybody. This tradition continues to this day.

However, it has been my observation that the insistence on Sanskrit references during the performance, especially the *Purvaranga,* can make the *Haridasi Kirtan* form very demanding for those who are not used to the classical pronunciation and diction giving the Brahmin and forward caste communities a cultural advantage. Bad diction and pronunciation is looked down upon in a *Haridasi Kirtan* performance. However, this can be offset by an excellent command over the literature of the Marathi poet saints which is a cultural advantage that backward castes have over the Brahmins and the forward castes. This has been made possible by the strong *Bhakti* movement that has germinated in various backward communities in Maharashtra.

The performers of *Haridasi Kirtan* see themselves as devotees of *Hari/Krishna/Vishnu* and other such deities. They also see themselves as people spreading awareness about a 'good life'. This good life is as prescribed in Hindu scriptures and philosophy. The *Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Shastras, Bhagwad Gita, Bhagwat Purana* etc are the scriptures that provide the basis for the definition of the 'good life'. There is a strong sense of social responsibility that is shared by all the *Kirtankars.* In some cases, there is also a feeling of national pride and even extreme sympathy for right wing nationalist ideology. This extremeness is not, however, without contestation. As Gangadhar Vyas pointed out if some *Kirtankars* call themselves nationalists are the rest to be called anti-national.

A key word that comes often in the interviews is *prabodhan.* The word means awakening, enlightenment, and renaissance. This is the goal of *Haridasi Kirtan.* It underlines the spiritual and religious nature of the performance and significantly defines the diegesis both of the performer as well as the audience. As Mandar Vyas asserts, the *Haridasi Kirtan* has sanctity to it. The nature and extent of music, drama, the talking, and the story telling is bound by this sanctity. All the five respondents were very assertive of the tradition of *Haridasi Kirtan* and this one goal of *prabodhan.*

The *Kirtankars* also admit to a role of being entertainers. They see themselves relieving their audience of the stress of life and providing the audience with alternatives ways of thinking and living.

The audience of the *Kirtankar* is a far more complex reality. On the one hand there are those who still have only the *Haridasi Kirtan* as a form of entertainment and on the other extreme are those who have *Haridasi Kirtan* as one of many forms of entertainment. There is also a very clear idea that the performer has to be one with the audience and to do this music, dance, drama, storytelling etc has to be used in good measure. One dominant factor in favour of *Haridasi Kirtan* is the low cost of the performance. As Anand Joshi pointed out, even a newspaper costs five rupees that not everybody can afford. A *Kirtankar* asks for nothing in exchange. However, all the respondents were aware of the competition from other media and claimed that *Haridasi Kirtan* would still have its audience because of its appeal of *Bhakti*. All the respondents rued the fact that some *Kirtankars* were resorting to very low quality of jokes and music that were often obscene or vulgar. However, they felt that the audience was discerning enough what made a good *Haridasi Kirtan*.

Conclusion

There is a strong sense of values to be upheld, values that have been compromised and the hope that the sense and sensibility of the *Kirtankars* as well as the audience would finally tilt in favour of the values to be upheld. The religious and spiritual nature of the performance and hence the need for sanctity to be maintained is underscored. The values are those emerging out of the Hindu scriptures.

The *Haridasi Kirtan* employs drama, poetry, music, storytelling and public speaking are tools to achieve oneness with the audience that is akin to becoming *Sahridaya*. The *Kirtankars* have made changes to adapt to the changing environment and needs of the audience.

Scope for future research

The one missing factor now is the audience of the *Haridasi Kirtan*. We know that this audience has changed. However, there is not much information on how this changed audience perceives the *Haridasi Kirtan*. Such a research, however, will require more resources in terms of time and money. For an understanding of the diegesis of the *Haridasi Kirtan* it is important to study the social, economic, religious, spiritual environment of the audience.

ENDNOTES

1 Diegesis is a key concept in narrative and genre analysis. It is a term used in Greek drama. It is the fictional time place, characters and events that constitute the universe of the narrative. Understanding diegesis is an important aid to genre analysis.

2 *Locating Indian Communication Theory Through An Interrogation of Sadharanikaran and Sahridaya,* paper accepted and presented at the International Conference on Diversity and Plurality, December 27-28, 2011 at the Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication, Bhopal, *Exploration of the Mediascape of the Contemporary Folk Media Performer in India* accepted and presented at the International Conference on Canadian Studies – Demystifying the Urban: Borderlands of Canada and India, Feb 1-3, 2012 at the Centre for Canadian Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata and *Exploring the Media Universe of Contemporary Haridasi Kirtan and the Kirtankar,* paper accepted and presented at the National Seminar on Technology, Communication and Culture, March 8-10, 2012 at the Department of

Communication Studies, University of Pune.

3 Theorists from the Frankfurt School have discussed this in detail.

4 I have studied the *Haridasi Kirtan* at the Akhil Bharatiya Kirtan Sanstha, Vitthal Mandir, Dadar and have been practicing the form for the past eight years.

5 *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, The Key Concepts,* Third Edition, John Hartley, Routledge, 2002

6 http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/spn/s02/SPN395-01/RAF/RAF03/RAF0309.pdf

7 *Bharatiya Sanskruti Kosha,* ed Pandit Mahadevshastri Joshi, vol 10, page 284

8 *Bharatiya Sanskruti Kosha,* ed Pandit Mahadevshastri Joshi, vol 6, page 348

9 *Grassroots Renaissance: the Increasing Importance of Folk Media in Third World Nations,* John A Lent, Temple University, paper presented at International Seminar on Folk Culture, Institute of Oriental and Orissan Studies, Cuttack, Orissa, India, December 19-23□1978.

JAINISM: ITS PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION AND THE RE-ADAPTATION THROUGH MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Komal Shah

The Jain in Contemporary World

"The Jain population in India according to 2001 census was 4,225,053 out of the total population of India 1,028,610,328 which is approximately 0.4% of the total population." (See Table 1)[1]

The growth of population is estimated to be 20% between 2001 to 2011, though the census data are not available. The Jain population outside India is small but spread all over the world. The world Jainism population stands at 4.2 million. Jain live primarily in India. Some Jain has immigrated to other countries, such as the United States and Canada. There are more Jain temples and groups in the United States than in any

Table 1
Census Data 2001 >> India at a glance >> Religious Composition

Religious Composition	Population *	(%)
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5
Muslims	138,188,240	13.4
Christians	24,080,016	2.3
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8
Jains	4,225,053	0.4
Other Religions & Persuasions	6,639,626	0.6
Religion not stated	727,588	0.1
Total *	1,028,610,328	100.0

Note : * Excludes figures of Paomata, Mao Maram and Purul sub-districts of Senapati district of Manipur state.
by Religion Table 2001 – CD

Ms. Komal Shah is a faculty member of the National Institute of Mass Communication and Journalism in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

other country outside India. [2]"The Jain has the highest literacy rate, 94.1% compared with the national average of 65.38%. They have the highest female literacy rate, 90.6% compared with the national average of 54.16%. It is believed that the Jain also have the highest per capita income in India."

History and Essence of Jainism

Jainism is a non-theistic religion that split away from Hinduism in the Indian sub-continent at about the same time as Buddhism. This ancient religion was passed on through the high spiritual genius of one of the greatest religious teachers of all time, *Mahavira*. "*Mahavira* was not some imaginary being. He was a real man and we know, with reasonable certainty, that his life on earth ended just over 2500 years ago, in 527 B.C. Though many dates have been speculated over the evolution of Jainism. However, in this paper it is estimated that the religion developed 2500 years ago. Mahavira was born in 599 B.C. into a family of the *ksatriya*, or knightly, caste. His father, Siddhartha, was a prince or lord, and his mother, Trisala, also came from a noble family. His birthplace is believed to have been near the modern city of Patna, in Bihar in north-eastern India. Although generally referred to as *Mahavira* (which means 'great hero'), his original name was *Vardhamana*. Until his late twenties he doubtless led a life not very different from that of any other young man in his level of society."[3]

It is believed *Mahavira* was a contemporary of the Buddha as described in the Buddhist works, however, the Jain works have never mentioned about the Buddha. *Mahavira* lived for 72 years of which for the last 30 years he was a teacher. The Jain works give some details for the first 42 years of *Mahavir's* life, but discuss little about his life as a teacher. Though Buddhist works give few details of Mahavira's life after he became a teacher. It is not well documented as to how the Jain broke into two sects, the *Digambaras* and the *Svetambaras*. "According to the account of the eighth schism, known as the great schism, which is corroborated by historical evidence, the process of the split continued

from the third century B.C. upto the first century of the Christian Era. In the third century B.C. famous Jain saint Srutakevali Bhadrabahu had predicted a long and severe famine in the kingdom of Magadha (in modern Bihar) and Bhadrabahu, along with a body of 12,000 monks, migrated from Pataliputra, the capital of Magadha, to Shravanabelagola (in modern Karnataka State) in South India."[4]

"When the ascetics of Bhadrabahu returned to Pataliputra after the end of twelve-year period of, they noticed two significant changes that had taken place during their absence, in Magadha under the leadership of Acharya Sthulabhadra. In the first place, the rule of nudity was relaxed and the ascetics were allowed to wear a piece of white cloth (known as *Ardhaphalaka*). Secondly, the sacred books were collected and edited at the council of Pataliputra specially convened for the purpose. This relaxation of rule was unacceptable to the ascetics of Bhadrabahu, eventually, the Jain religion was split up into two distinct sects, viz., the Digambara (sky-clad or stark naked) and the Svetambara (white-clad)."[4]

"The Jain of Gujarat and the neighboring areas emerging as the *Svetambaras* sometime in the 5th century AD. By perhaps the 4th century AD Jainism had spread to South India as well."[5]

British Colonialism and Jainism

British Colonial rule ushered in a period of general prosperity for merchant class. The traditionally affluent Jain merchants benefited from this prosperity. In spite of growing prosperity of Jain in 19th century & in the beginning of 20th century, Jain population continued to decline in India. It could be Jain merchants, in order to enlarge their business and kin alliance, frequently exchanged their sisters and daughters with Hindu merchants and became part and partial of caste system in India. It was also because of basic Hindu influence and the lay followers.

Many of the views, rituals and festivals of the Hindus were appropriated by the lay Jain. With that the boundaries between the two religions tended to become blurred. "According to the 1921 census there were only 1.18 million Jain."[6]

Officially, the category '*Jain*' was used for the first time in the Census of India of 1881. The Census still remains the only government

institution which classifies the Jain as a separate religious group. To raise the communal self-awareness amongst Jain, British educated Jain reformers campaigned from the mid 19th century onwards for the public self-identification of the Jain as 'Jain', particularly at the time of the Census when many Jain, for one reason or another, still identify themselves as 'Hindu'. The incentive of gaining separate representations and other privileges that were granted by the colonial and post-colonial governments to recognized religious communities promised new avenues for the advancement of the political and economical interests of the educated Jain elites and for the preservation of the Jain religion.

"In 1926, the reformer Hem Chandra Rai noted in the *Jaina Gazette* that a "dark gloom of ignorance is stunting the growth of our community to a fearful extent all around. ... As matters stand the large majority of Jains are content with rudimentary teaching of vernacular *Pathsalas* and schools, dotted all over the country. Higher education is distinctly unpopular."[7] "According to the mentality of the average Jain, college education is either unnecessary or positively harmful. Some of our mentors try to frighten us into the belief that the spread of [secular Western] education would lead to the decay of religion." Rai argued instead that "College education should not at all imply the elimination of religion from the life of the youth, as some people imagine. On the contrary, religious training would be a profitable adjunct of college careers."

In the light of this brief historical perspective the objective of the paper is:

To discuss Jainism in a historical perspective and methods of communication for transmission and spread of Jainism starting from its inception (approx 2500 years ago) to its modern re-adaptation including digital media and analyze how media and communication are being utilized for the spread of Jainism?

Essence and Meaning of Jainism

"Jainism believes in a cyclical nature of the universe, a universe without a beginning, without an end and without a creator." [8]Literally *Jina* means

a conqueror, that is, one who has conquered the worldly passions like desire, hatred, anger, greed, pride, etc. by one's own strenuous efforts and has been liberated himself/ herself from the bonds of worldly existence, the cycle of births and deaths. *Jina*, therefore, is a human being and not a supernatural being or an incarnation of an all mighty God. Hence the term *Jina* is applied to a person who is a spiritual victor.

Jainism is founded upon the tradition of Ahimsa (non-violence) to all living creatures. According to the *Karma* of an individual, the person may live in any of the four states (heaven, human, animal, and hell). Release the soul or at least elevate it to a higher home in the next reincarnation.

By means of the three jewels (right faith, knowledge, and conduct) one can reach salvation, sin on the other hand, leads to a lower home for the soul in the next reincarnation. Achieving *Moksha* (salvation) or a liberated soul is the ultimate aim of any living being commonly referred to as the *Siddh Lok* (free from the cycle of birth and rebirth)."Jainism teaches a way to spiritual purity and enlightenment through a disciplined mode of life and is founded upon the tradition of Ahimsa, non-violence to all living creatures.

The five ethics of Jainism are:

Ahimsa (non-violence),

Satya (pursuit of truth),

Asteya (non-stealing and honesty),

Aparigraha (non-possession and non-attachment) and

Brahmacharya (celibacy).

These are also called the five *Vratas* (vows) and have to be realized by mind, speech and body.

A distinction is drawn between these ethics or *Vratas* for the ascetic (saints, monks & nuns) and for the layman (*sravak*). The saints have to practice the *Vratas* rigorously. But the *sravakas* have to and can practice with lesser degree according to their worldly life."[9]

Jain Philosophy

[10]"The nine *tattvas* or principles are the single most important subjects of Jain philosophy. They deal with the theory of karma, which provides the basis for the path of liberation. Without proper knowledge of these *tattvas*, a person cannot progress spiritually.

The Nine Tattvas (Principles) are as follows:

	Name	Meaning
1	*Jiv*	Soul or living being (Consciousness)
2	*Ajiv*	Non living substances
3	*Äsrava*	Influx of karma

4	*Bandha*	Bondage of karma
5	*Punya**	Virtue
6	*Päp**	Sin
7	*Samvar*	Stoppage of the influx of karma
8	*Nirjarä*	Partial exhaustion of the accumulated karma
9	*Moksha*	Total liberation from karma

Some scriptures define Punya (virtue) and Päp (sin) not as separate tattvas. They include them in Äsrava and Bandha. In reality Punya and Papa are the result of Äsrava and Bandha. Hence truly there exist only seven tattvas.

Samyaktva or *Samyag-Darshan* (Right Faith) is attained when one fully understands the six universal substances and nine fundamentals."[9]

"Jainism has contributed to the philosophy of life in its insistence that the pathway to perfection is threefold:

- *Samyak-Darshana* (right faith/right understanding)

- *Samyak-Jnana* (Right knowledge) and

- *Samyak-Charitra* (right conduct).

Jiyo Aur Jine Do (live and let live) is the main slogan of Jainism which was given by *Bhagwan Mahaveer* about two thousand six hundred years ago."

"Jainism has two principal quite different branches, the *Digambara* (Sanskrit 'Sky-clad', naked) and the *Svetambara* (Sanskrit 'White robed') Jains. The male *Digambara* ascetics wear no clothes, the *Svetambara* wear white robes.

Digambara worship idols in temples, whereas *Svetambara* in general are not practicing idolatry and do not have temples."[9]

The essence of Jainism discussed and described so far can be represented and explained by one of the prominent symbols of Jainism known as *Parosparopgraho Jivanam* (Mutual assistance of all beings) as indicated in Figure 1.

Prominent Symbol in Jainism
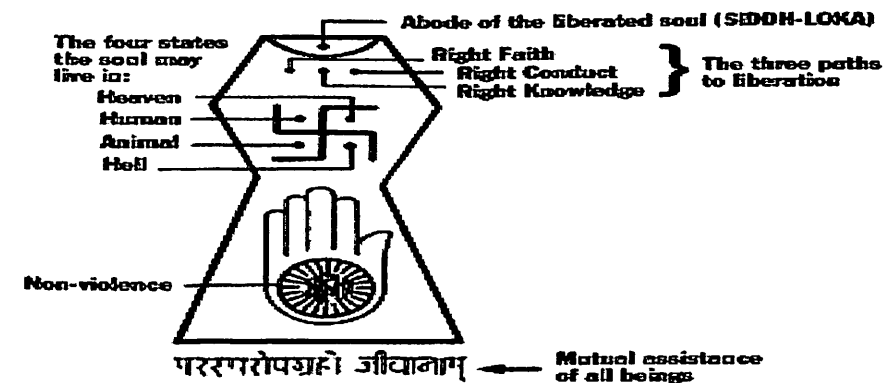
Contributions of Jainism to the Indian Culture

"There are three distinctive contributions of Jainism to the Indian Culture - Equality (*Sama*), Self-control (*samyamana*) and Dignity of labor (*Srama*). Equality or *Samayika* is said to be the heart of Jainism. In the *Jaina* religious scripture, *Dvadasang* or in the *14th Purva*, the place of *Samayika* is the first and foremost among the six daily duties. Without the practice of *Samayika* or equality, there is no hope for any religious or spiritual realization. When a householder accepts the *Jaina* religion, he solemnly pledges to abide by the principle of equality. The three jewels of Jainism, i.e. Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct depend upon the principle of equality as indicated in Figure 1. The *Gita* calls it the inner poise or the evenness of mind (*Samatvam*), or equal mindedness (*Sama Cittatvam or Samata*) and such a man who attains this is called seer with an equal eye (*Samadarsinah or Sarvatra-sama-darsana*). This principle of equality must be reflected both in thought and action. In thought it is the principle of *Anekanta*, in action it is the principle of *Ahimsa*." [11]

Modes of Communication in Jainism

It is often said that Jain are very enthusiastic about erecting temples, shrines or *upāśrayas* but not much interested in promoting religious philosophy. Jain are especially interested in not the modern academic study of Jainism.

Gradually this trend is changing due to the demands of the information based economies of the future, and because of the vast improvements in the formal educational standards of the Jain in India. "In 1891, the Census of India recorded a literacy rate of only 1.4% amongst Jain women and of 53.4% amongst Jain men. In 2001, the female literacy rate has risen to 90.6% and for the Jain altogether to 94.1%. Statistically, the Jain are now the best educated community in India, apart from the Parsees." [7] Amongst young Jain of the global Jain Diaspora, University degrees are already the rule and perceived to be a key ingredient of a successful Jain. However, the combined impact of the increasing education and of the growing materialism amongst the Jain on traditional Jain way of life is widely felt and often lamented. Daily sermons dominated traditional Jain religious education for the spread and sustenance of the religious beliefs which were responsibility of the mendicants. For centuries, and the few remaining Jain *Pandits*, face an uphill struggle to adapt to the rapidly changing social and cultural environment, and sometimes choose to combine monastic and academic training to keep up with the rising expectations of their followers.

Media and Jainism

The Jain religion never spread beyond India though it was once patronised by the princes of the Deccan dynasties, today there are only four to five million Jain left, and these are largely limited to the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. The major reason for its limited spread has been no use of modern means of communication for centuries together. As this religion is based on the principle of Non Violence, the practice of writing as well was avoided due to the pain incurred to the microcosms.

After *Mahavira,* Jain religion was propagated through oral communication and through performance art and repetition. Only in the last five hundred years, with the advent of writing and printing has there been a major push to record and write the stories of Jain religion, songs and poetry. This technology made available many Jain books to its followers all over the world in early 20th century.

Spread through Print medium

One important development in recent decades has been the publication of good modern editions, often with translations into modern languages, of the sacred books of Jainism, thus making the scriptures, formerly restricted to monks, available to

a wider public. The L.D. Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad, is building up an important Jain manuscript collection in original and microfilm. Jain courses and research facilities are available to further the value and importance of this religion world over. There are many modified and translated versions of religious scriptures on Jainism available in the print format, which the Jain youth can read and inculcated the Jainism philosophy in his/her modern lifestyle.

Spread through Radio and Television medium

Jain orthodoxy of restrained movements overseas for the monks as well as the lay Jain had already taken its toll in the expansion of the Jain population a few years back. Though the doctrines of Jain philosophy have been very well documented in the print media but this religion has much more to offer than intellectual debates. Jainism as a religion is meant to guide people to lead a moral and ethical life. Thus it's a religion of philosophy and practice both. In this fast paced life of the modern world it is unlikely to expect from a person to go through the detailed philosophy of any religion. The Jain youths too have faced a similar experience of confusion and frustration as they would want to know more about the religion but have nowhere to turn to. Jain studies have already been introduced in various universities and courses but it does not full fill aspirations of a lifelong course of conduct for a Jain youth. 'Satsangs' (Study circles) have been there for the solution of the same since many years but the youthwas not able to relate to this Jain way of life.

Religious reforms in the Digambara sect brought about a revolution in the Jain community. They were the first to allow religious scriptures to be printed and published as well. Many monks and nuns have travelled abroad in the recent past to propagate the true essence of Jainism to the dispersed Jain population. Further these religious gurus have even given their consent to appear on television and radio to spread the messages of Jain Tirthankaras.

There are many exclusive Jain religious channels like Paras TV, Jinvani, Mangalam Jain TV being launched to focus on issues like religion, spirituality, moral values, health, art of living and principles of Jainism in simplest form, and ensure that people, especially the youth, easily understand the preachings and their importance. These channels telecast 2D and 3D movies and serials based on Jain epics and historical and religious events to portray the teachings and beliefs of Jainism. The Audio and Visual presentations of the philosophy of Jainism have helped to reach out to a larger section of the society (Jain and Non Jain) with practical applications of the same.

Jain Radio, Radio Podcast, internet radio is there already in existence to deliver religious discourses live as well as differed live. This has cut down on the time and energy to travel down to various religious places and has given full accessibility to the Jain community for their self enlightment.' Jinvani' was the first ever 24X7 internet radio carrying various programs such as Abhishek, Pooja, Lecture (Pravachan), Bhakti, Aarti, Samayik, Pratikraman, etc. throughout the day. These programs are broadcast as per Jain religious practices followed in India. Any lay person who has had no exposure towards Jainism can even follow these preaching's with ease as they are all developed keeping the listener in view with effective communication skills, though the essence of Jainism is not disturbed in these modifications.

Spread through New Media

"Jainism made its appearance on the web around the end of 1994."[12]

The use of this new media was the next major transition. This came in as a boon for the Jain who are a very small minority in the world. Jain's the world over have no Jain neighborhoods to support them; the Internet forms a new form of neighborhood. A few years back Jainism was not so renowned in the world (indeed even in India), but today, anyone, in any part of the world, can access Jainism articles, texts, pictures, even music at the touch of a button. The Jain too has adopted and embraced this enthusiastically.

"It is too early to assess the social impact of the new culturally thinned-out globalized versions of Jainism and of one trans-sectarian global Jain community, which are significant primarily as regulative ideas. It can be expected that traditional sectarian divisions will reemerge in the Jain diaspora as soon as a critical mass of migrants is locally present. Conversions to Jainism will probably remain exceptions. Yet the new global reverberations of Jain ideals and practices of nonviolence as a paradigm for alternative lifestyles are potentially immense."[13]

Summarizing Jainism and Media

With the growth of modern communications there has been a notable development of all Jain federations of various sorts. Jain scholarship, education and writing have been introduced at all levels, simple aids for children, learned editions of the sacred texts and university theses on Jain topics are being created world over. Jain have become more conscious of the wider public sphere. Jain sects are more concerned towards spread of knowledge of the Jain religion and to encourage adherence to its principles. Parallel to this there is a growing development of interest by scholars and others in the West and by non-Jain in India. At present we find for the very first time, Jainism been propagated to Africa, Europe and North America, where Jain communities have migrated due to economic activities.

The foregoing analysis of Jain religion in contemporary India reflects a discontinuous change from oral communication for two millennia. Jain monks and lay Jain both have adopted modern means of communication to reach both Jain and Non Jain believers. Starting with print medium to the age of Internet, given the economic, political and social power that they exert in India. Jain today has gone all out for the spirit of Jainism and keeping the lay Jain well informed to follow the fundamentals of Jainism. It has contributed in self realization of Jain identity as a minority community within India and abroad without creating religious animosity and imposition of religious believes on others. The growing influence of media & communication hopefully will influence lay Jain to be well informed.

REFERENCES

1. Religious Composition: Census India, Government of India. Retrieved October 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/religion.aspx

2. Jain, A. K (2009), Demographic Propagation: Demographics, *Indian Religious Series: Faith and Philosophy of Jainism* (pp. 200). Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

3. Marett, Paul: *Jainism Explained: Mahavira's Teachings*. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainworld.com/book/jainismexplained/ch1.asp

4. Sangave, Dr.V.A., *Aspects of Jaina Religion: Divisions in Jainism-The Great Schism of Jainism*. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainworld.com/book/aspect_of_jaina_religion/ch12.asp

5. History of Jainism: Introduction. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainworld.com/book/historyofjainism/chp1.asp

6. A Brief History of Jainism: The Sthanakavasi. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainsamaj.org/rpg_site/literature2.php?id=243&cat=42

7. Flugel, Peter: *International Journal of Jain Studies Vol. 1, No.1 (2005) 1-14, The invention of Jainism, A Short History of Jaina Studies*. Hem Chandra Rai 1926:44. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World WideWeb: http://www.the_invention_of_jainism_%28without_photo%29.pdf

8. Jainism: Jainism, one of the oldest religions in the world. Retrieved August 15, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.imgh.org/ifaithpsa/109

9. Jainism. Retrieved August 22, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=cd103

10. Jain Philosophy. Retrieved August 22, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainuniversity.org/Jain-Philosophy.aspx

11. Singh, Prof. Ramjee. Jaina Agamas and Indian Culture- The

Contribution of the Agamas, *A Perspective in Jaina Philosophy and Religion*. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainworld.com/book/jainaphilosophy/jaina4.asp

12. Jainism on the internet. Compiled by: Mr. Pravin K. Shah. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.jainsamaj.org/rpg_site/literature2.php?id=460&cat=42

13. Flugel, Peter. Jainism- Global Organizations, 2012. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from the World Wide Web: http://www.eprints.soas.ac.uk/13657/3/jaina_law_Shramana.pdf

MEDIA AND *SIKH* RELIGION: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

B.S. Bhatia

Introduction

The *Sikh* religion is among the recently founded (about 544 years ago) religions in India .The religion was founded by Guru Nanak who was born in 1469 near Lahore City of the Punjab province (now in Pakistan) and evolved over a period of about 150 years under the leadership of Ten *Gurus*.

The period and place of the birth of Sikhism had a very important role in the shaping of the *Sikh* philosophy. The period of the birth of Sikhism coincides with the arrival, of the *Mughals* in India. The place of birth that is the Punjab Province was on the route of the *Mughal* invaders, who would loot the province on their way to and from India. This situation led to an intense interaction of the *Sikhs* with the Islam.

The founder Guru Nanak gave the basic tenets which remained unchanged, but each Guru took steps for consolidating and spreading the Sikh thought and way of life. The second Guru invented a distinct (*Gurumukhi*) script for writing and established schools for education. The third guru established religious Centres all over Punjab for spreading the message by preaching and acting as liason Centers of the religion. The fifth Guru compiled all the writings of the earlier *Gurus* and other *Bhakts* (saints of other faiths) into a *Granth* (Sacred book) to make it available at all religious Centres. The *Gurus* also dedicated themselves to the welfare of all sections of society. They undertook activities like

Mr. Bhupendra Singh Bhatia *holds a Master degree in Business Administration and a fellow at East West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. Currently, he is the Project director if the Gandhi Heritage Portal in Ahmedabad, and Advisory Council member of the Commenwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).*

building of water tanks and carrying out relief works during drought and famine and helping the farmers and the poor.

The message of universal brotherhood along with the welfare works led to the increasing popularity and acceptance of the *Sikh* philosophy.

This increasing popularity became a cause of envy for the ruling class and its preachers, who started oppression of the *Sikh Gurus* to prevent them from preaching and developing a following. The fifth guru was thus tortured and killed on flimsy and false pretexts. It became obvious to the *Sikh Gurus* that friction and clash with the ruling classes would be an unavoidable factor in times to follow. The sixth guru thus started to raise an army. To distinctly separate the religious teachings from the temporal/political issues, he built the *Akal Takht* (Throne of the Eternal) in front of the *Harmandir Sahib*. (Temple of God – more popularly called the Golden Temple). *Harmandir Sahib* was dedicated to religious activity and prayer. *Akal Takht* was a centre for deliberating on political and social issues.

The *Sikh Gurus* continued their welfare activities by building hospitals, providing relief in epidemics etc. and the discomfort of the ruling class kept growing. This resulted in the ninth guru again being accused on some false grounds and being beheaded at *Chandani Chownk* in Delhi, along with three other *Sikhs*. The purpose of such oppression was to spread fear amongst the other followers and the general population.

The tenth Guru responded to this oppression by deciding to create *a community of fearless followers* who would be ready to sacrifice *their lives for justice for the community.* He raised this community of followers on April 14, 1699 at *Anandpur saheb* (in Punjab) by asking for five followers to offer their heads to the *Guru.* He called this group of followers as "*Khalsa*" which means "under the control of the Supreme authority" (it also means Pure). He gave a distinctive identity to this group. The individuals would grow unshorn long hair

and beard, would wear a turban, carry a sword etc. This personality was called the *Sant-Sipahi* (Saint - Soldier). A saint who followed the path to Almighty while living the life of a normal house holder and a soldier who was ready to sacrifice himself for justice, Truth, Equality and betterment of society. Thus came into being a very distinct and visible *Sikh* personality of a *Sikh*. The tenth Guru defined a code of conduct for the *Khalsa* called the *Rahat Maryada* (code of living)

The tenth *Guru* also ordained, before his passing away, that the *Sikhs* would regard the *Granth* as their *Guru* for all times to come and consider the *Granth* as *Guru* incarnate.

Basic Tenets:

The basic Tenets of the *Sikh* religion are as follows:

- There is one and only one God, who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of everything in the universe. He is the only Truth, Doer of everything, eternal, omnipresent, epitome of all virtues, without fear, without birth. He is the source of all knowledge, and is Kindness personified. He can be reached through the teachings and blessings of the Guru.
- The aim of human life is to attain a state of union with God.
- This union can be attained by "*Simran*" and *Sewa*" i.e. continuously remembering /uttering the Name of God, and performing acts of service to Humanity with all Humility.
- The above can be done while leading a normal family life. There is no need to give up family or do severe physical penance, fasting or rituals. The status of women and men is equal in all respects and they can attain unison with the Almighty by living a normal life as per the principles defined by the Guru.
- All human beings are children of one God. There is therefore a universal brotherhood. Consider all Humanity as one.
- The Almighty will judge the performance of a human being according to his deeds only. No other factor of caste, status,

religion etc, will be of any consequence in the court of the Almighty.

Religious Practices

The *Sikh* follows a set of guidelines for individual behavior and community living. The aim is to develop virtues like, kindness, contentment, disciplined living, patience, fear of God, love for all and complete dissolution of ego and total subjugation to the will of God.

To develop these qualities, the *Sikh* is expected to engage in prayers every morning and evening. He remembers and feels the presence of God every moment of his life. Prayer, remembrance, (*Naam-Simran*) is the most important tenet. He undergoes baptism and vows to believe in one God only and be ready to sacrifice himself striving for truth and justice.

He visits the *Gurudwara* (place of community worship) to attend the congregation. Besides listening to the singing of the glory of the Lord (*Kirtan*) he joins in community service (*Sewa*) by helping in looking after the shoes of the visitors, by preparing food in the *Langar* (Common Kitchen) to be served to all visitors, cleaning the utensils, sweeping the floor, and doing any other labor oriented activity that the occasion demands. This *Sewa* is an important process to dissolve your ego and develop humility and the rich and poor jointly and equally participate in it.

Having developed the best of virtues and living a life with love for humanity and in service of humanity a *Sikh* has to be ever ready to stand up against injustice and in defense of truth. His stand is firm and clear against oppression of any section of society and he is prepared to fight for truth and justice and lay down his life for it if required. This was demonstrated by the *Gurus* themselves in the sacrifice of the fifth and the ninth *Guru* and the sacrifice of four sons of the tenth *Guru*. This was followed by the selfless sacrifice of many a *Sikh* who stood

up against injustice. This spirit of sacrifice for the community/religion/ nation has been a very distinctive feature of the *Sikhs*.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Adoption of new technology has been a very natural and integral part of the evolution of the *Sikh* religion. *Kirtan* (singing the prayer of the lord) and *Paath* (recitation of the scriptures) are important elements of the religious practice of the *Sikhs*. The *Sikhs* adopted the audio technologies at a very early stage. Live broadcasting of *Kirtan* on radio was undertaken as soon as it became available. Audio cassettes of recitation and *Kirtan* were very popular, and have now been replaced with Audio and Video CDs which are sold by the millions.

The Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and the web are widely used both at the global and local level. At the global level, a large number of websites make a huge amount of freely downloadable text and audio/video material. This material is widely used by *Sikhs* all over the world for recitation and listening to the *Gurus* word. They also provide translations into other languages, and large amount of support material to understand the *Gurus* teaching. This support material includes, dictionaries, interpretation by scholars etc.

A new search engine *Ishermicromedia* has became available. This can be used for searching any word or line from the *Granth*. This is now used in several *Gurudwaras* to display the verse which is being sung during live *Kirtan*. The congregation can thus listen to the *Kirtan*, read each line on the large screen and also read the meaning of the verse being sung. This greatly facilitates the understanding and comprehension of the religious verses. At the local level, groups of *Sikh* youth use internet to send mail messages about schedules of congregations. Even recordings of local singing are made available on pen drives. Finally there are sites that assist the youth in looking for jobs, and provide information on training programs etc.

The *Sikh* religion while spreading the message of universal brotherhood, leading a life of high virtue, serving the society standing up for Truth and Justice has encouraged the use of the latest ICT for the preservation and spread of its message and culture.

HINDUISM AND INTERNET IN 2010-12
An Essay on Websites, Blogs, Social Media, Censorship and 'Internet Hindu'

Kiran Thakur
Achyut Vaze

Introduction

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, next to Christianity and Islam. The word *Hindu* is derived from the Sanskrit word *Sindhu*, (Indus) river in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. (Oxford English Dictionary) The word finds first mention the Rig Veda, believed to have been composed between 1700 and 1100 BCE. (HYMN LXXV. **The Rivers)**

The word *Hindu* was borrowed into European languages from the Arabic term *al-Hind*, referring to the land of the people who live across the River Indus. In this instance, Hindu refers to all Indians. By the 13th century, *Hindustān* emerged as the name for the 'land of *Hindus*' that, for the rest of the world, came to be known as India. [1]

Travellers, monks, and scholars spread awareness about the philosophy, traditions, and culture of Hindus particularly during the last two centuries, outside India through books, articles, and speeches. Debates over superiority of Hinduism over other religions, especially Christianity and Islam, have continued over the period through books and other publications. The Internet offered a new, inexpensive, fast,

Prof. Dr. Kiran Thakur *is an adjunct faculty and research coordinator of the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Pune, India.* **Prof. Achyut Vaze** *is the Dean of FLAME School of Communication, Pune, India.*

and effective platform for dissemination of information and discussion about Hinduism since 1995 when the World Wide Web was available to anyone with a computer and net connectivity. Web 2.0, the second generation of the World Wide Web, which brought in blogs, wikis, social networking, and a broad range of new web applications, has further reinforced the platform in cyber space for explosion of information and engagement of debates on religious matters. The information about a *topic of the Hinduism* over the net may seem to be unending, or it could be brief and to-the-point as can be seen in this passage:

> *Hinduism, also known as Sanatana Dharma, is the religious tradition indigenous to the Indian subcontinent with about 950 million followers worldwide, making it the third largest religious system in the world. Hinduism differs from most religions in that there is no particular theological belief or set of doctrines that unites all its adherents. The goal of the Hindu path is moksha (literally, 'release'), understood to be liberation from samsara (repeated cycle of birth and death), and this is achieved by piercing the veil of maya (illusion). Some widespread Hindu philosophical concepts and practices are karma (cycle of cause and effect), dharma (religious duty or obligation), reincarnation and yoga. There is no one book that is considered sacred by all Hindus, but the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita are revered by most Hindus.* (Humanitiesmch/ Unit-4-asia)

The Hindus have been described in different ways: orthodox, fundamentalist, chauvinist, extremist, militant, die-hard, radical, leftist, right-wing, rational, secular, liberal, conservative, progressive, tolerant, believer, non-believer, atheist, agnostic and so on. Added to these descriptions is a new one: 'Internet Hindu.'

This essay briefly documents Hinduism on Internet, censorship of social media in India, and the new term 'Internet Hindu during the first two years of this decade of 21st century.

Hinduism and Internet

The cyber world has a substantial presence of Hinduism for the religious activity. Such presence should not be a surprise because Hinduism has, as stated above, an estimated 950 million adherents worldwide. This is about 14 per cent of the world population. (Religion by adherents) (Hinduism5) The Hindu population is, thus, third largest, after Christianity and Islam.

Websites on Hindus, Hinduism, and related topics were hosted since mid-1990s. Several attempts appear to have been made to compile directories of such websites. One such exercise was undertaken by a team of Vedic students of an institute on the foothills of the Himalayas who worked for few weeks to compile the sites hosted by institutions, organization and individuals. The list has 651 entries. (Hindu websites around the world)

Text and audio-visual contents of the majority websites include information about Hinduism, its sects of the creators of the sites, spiritual masters, their preaching, temples, rituals, festivals, online *poojas* (procedure for the worship of deities), songs, prayers, Yoga, philanthropic activities of the organisations, and so on.

These authors carried out a quick survey of the Hinduism-related blogs and social media sites in October 2012. Following is the summary of their findings:

- Hindu and Hinduism find mention in blogs numbering from 6,900,000 to 56,700,000, and more, depending how on chooses search words.

- Search for 'Hinduism' on October 5, 2012 returned 315,000,000 (as compared to 29,800,000 for Christianity, and 104,000,000 for 'Islam.'

- A search on 'Hinduism Twitter,' on October 5, 2012 gave us 14,700,000 results. This included http://twitter.com/Hinduism.

Today part of a website of an 'international journal affirming the Sanatana Dharma and recording the history of a billion strong global religion in renaissance.' It displayed 3217 tweets, 12 following, and 5847followers

- The website of Huffington Post (www.huffingtonpost.com) has a section on Hinduism-on-twitter that promises 'As part of our ongoing series featuring some of the great religious voices on Twitter, here is a list of some of the most interesting Hindu organizations and individuals who are using the micro-blogging platform to take their message online.' (Hinduism on twitter)

YouTube offered 14,800,000 clips on Hinduism. Similarly, Google search on 'Hinduism and Facebook' returned 16,600,000 results. These statistics are obviously not exhaustive and complete. Besides, the results for the searches will vary depending on search words. Yet, the figures are presented above to indicate how Hinduism has occupied the cyber space.

'Internet Hindus'

Al Jazeera English, the Doha-headquartered news channel, was launched across India on November 17, 2011. Among its early programmes was a panel discussion on 'Who are the Internet Hindus? Why do they oppose a secular India?' on July 9, 2012. The three-member panel had Sagarika Ghose, the Deputy Editor and a prime time anchor of India's leading news network CNN-IBN. She was there on the panel probably because she is credited with coining the term, Internet Hindus. She has been using the term through her tweets and has generated heated debate on the attitude of Hindu netizens to express themselves. The other panelist was Dr Subramanian Swamy, National President, Janata Party (People's Party) and former Central Minister, who has affinity towards the cause of Hinduism.

Mr. Sadanand Dhume, the third panelist, is an Indian writer, journalist, and broadcaster based in New York and Delhi.

Ms. Sagarika has critics among the television news channel viewers. She was among those who derided the Internet users who prided themselves for being Hindus. The left-of-centre journalists describe them as 'loonies', 'fanatics', 'irrational', and 'Hindu Taliban.' It appears that Ms Sagarika was so enraged by the arguments of the netizens that she would call them 'gutter snipes' (Children who spend most of their time in the streets, especially in a slum area, or persons regarded as having the behavior, morals, etc., of one brought up in squalor.)

Senior scribe Kanchan Gupta says much of the criticism came from left-of-centre journalists who believe they have unfettered monopoly over media as their inalienable birthright. "These journalists .. are given to contemptuously brushing aside 'Internet Hindus' as being irrelevant and describing their views as inconsequential" (Don't Block Internet Hindus). Gupta and likes of him came out in defence of the Internet Hindus in their blogs and macro-blogging sites. Gupta in particular hit back saying these netizens are bright, well-educated, and not burdened with regional and caste biases. They are well-informed on national issues and world affairs and are rooted in Indian culture. They hold the Congress,[2] the Left and regional parties in contempt, as they do journalists who cravenly ingratiate themselves with the establishment.

They are cornering public opinion online. They argue that the Left-liberal intelligentsia monopolise opinion on television and newspapers, no TV anchor calls people who speak up for Hindus or Hinduism. (Meet the Internet Hindus) Jaideep Prabhu says, like most political phenomena, Internet Hinduism (IH) contains the entire spectrum, from elitists to the lumpen saffronists. While we are led to believe that the IH refers only to abusive, Right-wing netizens, no one has explicitly said so. For all purposes, we may assume that anyone who speaks in favour of Hinduism online is an IH. (The Making of an Internet Hindu) He ridicules the belief among some critics that the Internet Hindus are all organised in a global secret conspiracy against 'secularism', Islam, and socialism.

Kanchan Gupta quotes findings of an ongoing, online survey in 2010 in an attempt to present a generic profile of 'Internet Hindus'.[3] Of those who have responded, 89 per cent have identified themselves as 'Internet Hindus', indicating they attach no shame to the term though their critics would want them to feel ashamed. Of the respondents, four per cent are aged 20 years and below; 55 per cent are aged 30 and below; 31 per cent are 40 and below; and, only 10 per cent are aged above 40. In brief, 90 per cent of them are young Indians.

The educational profile of the respondents was as follows: 43 per cent are graduates (most of them from engineering, science, and medical colleges); 46 per cent are post-graduates (a large number of them have MBA degrees from the best Business schools); and, 11 per cent have PhDs. Of the 83 per cent who are employed, 3 per cent earn up to Rs 2 lakh a year; 18.4 per cent earn up to Rs 6 lakh a year; 34.7 per cent earn up to Rs 12 lakh a year; and, 26.5 per cent earn more than Rs 24 lakh a year. (Lakh is Indian Rupees 100,000= USD 1,893.32 at the exchange rate as on October 13, 2012)

Nearly 60 per cent of them frequently travel abroad on work and holiday. Some 11 per cent have travelled abroad at least once. (Dont Block Internet Hindus)

Censorship on Social Media

The Indian Union government in August and September 2012 took certain decisions that invited a barrage of criticism from Net users, print and electronic media, and freedom of expression activists, social media companies, and Internet service providers. It blocked certain Twitter, Facebook, Internet sites, and SMS.

The government was anxious to deal with the law and order problems in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Assam and in cities like Mumbai and Pune. It blocked 309 specific items including URLs, Twitter accounts, IMG tags, blog posts, blogs, some websites and Twitter accounts, some belonging to journalists.

The resort to ban bulk SMS and MMS from August 17 to August 30 2012 to prevent spread of rumours that created panic among students of northeastern states studying in cities of western and southern parts of the country. According to the rumours, some groups belonging to Muslim community had allegedly threatened North East people to leave cities or else they would face dire consequences. Panic-stricken college and university students in Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, and Mysore began leaving these cities en masse, as the rumours were circulated through SMS, and social media sites earlier that month.

The Prime Minister, Dr Man Mohan Singh, expressed concern over the misuse of the Internet by unscrupulous elements. He said India's vulnerability to cyber crime was escalating as economy and critical infrastructure became increasingly reliant on interdependent computer networks and the Internet. Sandeep Joshi of the daily *The Hindu* quoted the Prime Minister as saying "Large-scale computer attacks on our critical infrastructure and economy can have potentially devastating results. The government is working on a robust cyber security structure that addresses threat management and mitigation, assurance and certification, specially building capacity and enhancing research. (Use of social media to aggravate communal situation). Shalini Singh of the same newspaper reported that eventually, "the government thought of involving all the stakeholders, such as the Telecom Ministry, ISPs, social media companies and the print and electronic media, to combat all forms of abuse. ... This unprecedented move in the spirit of collaboration is an attempt at the highest levels of government to review the existing policies, procedures and even legislation involving censorship of the Internet and social media, according to a senior official of the Telecom Department. A key outcome of this dialogue was the suggestion that the government should use the Internet and social media to counter hate speech." (PM's call triggers policy review)

Gupta posed a question in his blog, 'Why do they infuriate pseudo-secularists[4] in media?', and offered three possible explanations. First, the Net is beyond the control of those who control newspapers and

news channels. While the print and audiovisual media have for long excluded contrarian opinion and denied space to those who disagree with absurd notions of 'secularism' or question the quality of reportage, the Net has provided space to the 'other' voice. Real time blog posts now record the 'other side' of the day's story. ..Twitter affords instant micro-blogging even as prime time news is being telecast, and YouTube allows unedited amateur videos of events to be uploaded, giving the lie to edited and doctored versions shown by news channels,

Second, unlike carefully selected 'Letters to the Editor' in newspapers and 'Feedback' posted on news channel websites, the reactions of 'Internet Hindus' cannot be thrown into the dustbin or deleted with a click of the mouse. English language media journalists, long used to fawning praise from readers and viewers, are horrified that someone can actually call them 'dumb' in public space and there's nothing they can do about it.

Third, the established elite, most of them middle-aged, are beginning to feel threatened. Here's a new breed of Indians who have used merit and not 'connections' to make a mark in professional excellence, young men and women who are educated and articulate, and are willing to challenge conventional wisdom as preached by media 'stars' who have rarely, if ever, been questioned. The elite who dominate newspapers and news channels are seen by 'Internet Hindus' as part of India's past, not future. (Don't Block Internet Hindus)There are arguments and counter arguments in favour of and against Internet Hindus.

A newspaper headline to Daipayan Halder's story, for example, says: A fast-growing tribe of fanatics who tweet, are e-friends of the BJP, or scuppies on a self-awareness drive. They are out to own the web. (Internet Hindus online anonimity) This one, as the title suggests, has an anti-Hindu bias.

Another article at http://centreright.in/2012/07/the-making-of-an-internet-hindu/#.UHvYrm_A9uI by Jaideep Prabhu justifies the stance of the Internet Hindus. So does the piece on http://www.mediacrooks.com/2012/07/al-jazeera-internet-hindus.html that attacked Sagarika Ghose for her stance on the panel discussion on Al Jazeera referred to in this essay above.

A blog post title, 'Beware, Internet Hindus are multipling like Virus on Social Media' http://atrocitynews.com/2012/07/03/beware-internet-hindus-are-multipling-like-virus-on-social-media/ accessed on October 15, 2012) indicates the vehemence of both the sides of the debate. This post says "Today there are perhaps as many as 20,000 so-called "Internet Hindus," many tweeting as often as 300 times a day, according to a rough estimate by one of the community's most active members. "You will find thousands with similar sounding IDs [to mine]," a Twitter user who goes by the handle @internet_hindus said in an anonymous chat interview. "Some [others] prefer to openly do it with their own personal IDs." This blogger's claim could not be verified. It, however, does make a point that the Internet Hindus are multiplying like virus on Social Media.

REFERENCES

Hinduism on twitter. (n.d.). Retrieved October 6, 2012, from Huffingtonpost: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/13/hinduism-on-twitter_n_875221.html#s290559&title=Radhanath_Swami

Hinduism5. (n.d.). Retrieved October 7, 2012, from Religious Tolerance: http://www.religioustolerance.org/hinduism5.htm)

Humanitiesmch/Unit-4-asia. (n.d.). Retrieved October 7, 2012, from Sites.goog;e.com: https://sites.google.com/site/humanitiesmchs/unit-4-asia

HYMN LXXV. The Rivers. (n.d.). Retrieved September 2, 2012, from sacred texts.com: http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/rv10075.htm

Internet Hindus online anonimity. (n.d.). Retrieved October 27, 2012, from Mid-Day: http://www.mid-day.com/specials/2010/apr/250410-internet-hindus-online-anonimity-bloggers-anti-muslims-sanjay-kaul.htm

Meet the Internet Hindus. (n.d.). Retrieved September 16, 2012, from Mid-Day: http://www.mid-day.com/specials/2010/apr/250410-internet-hindus-online-anonimity

Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition ed.). Oxford University Press.

PM's call triggers policy review . (n.d.). Retrieved October 2012, 2012, from The Hindu: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3878559.ece

Religion by adherents. (n.d.). Retrieved October 11, 2012, from adherents.com: http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html

The Making of an Internet Hindu. (n.d.). Retrieved September 16, 2012, from Centreright.in: http://centreright.in/2012/07/the-making-of-an-internet-hindu/#.UG69W5jA9uI)*Use of social media to aggravate communal situation.* (n.d.). Retrieved October 25, 2012, from The Hindu: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3874014.ece, September 8, 2012

ENDNOTES

1   Veteran Indian theologian Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan states that Hinduism cannot be defined, but 2   The Indian National Congress, currently heading the United Progressive Alliance of center-3   Kanchan Gupta has not provided sample size of the survey. However, the link to the online 4   ongoing on October 11, 2012. He did not respond till writing of this essay). Veteran Indian

REPORT -> ✗   ʃ spce

INTER MIRIFICA:
VATICAN II DECREE ON SOCIAL COMMUNICATION
50 YEARS
ORIGIN – RECEPTION - CHALLENGES

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Some 50 years ago the Roman Catholic Church celebrated an Ecumenical Council, a general Church assembly with some 2,600 bishops and Church leaders from all over the world. It was at this occasion that for the first time in history a document on Social Communication was published with directions and proposals for the future. The present article traces the origin and history as well as the challenges of this document.

The Origins

Nobody expected "Social Communication" to be part of the upcoming council when Pope John XXIII announced for the first time his plan to convoke an Ecumenical Council on January 25, 1959 at Basilica St Paul Outside-The -Walls in Rome. When in the course of preparations in the following year, bishops, general superiors of religious congregations and Catholic institutions of higher learning like universities were asked for themes to be proposed for discussion of the Church assembly. Out of some 2,150 replies only 18 mentioned the "mass media" (cf. Baragli 1969, 94).

Despite this, however, there was already with the pre-preparatory internal commissions organized by the Vatican in November 1959, a proposal for a commission (3a) on the "Modern Means of the Apostolate," which referred especially to "new audio-visual techniques" like cinema, radio/TV, where also the press was added.

This pre-preparatory commission on the "Modern Means of the Apostolate" met for the first time already on November 25, 1959 with the following main points of the agenda:

1. To determine how far can these means contribute to the spreading of the Christian message.
2. To examine the negative effects and wrong uses and practices of these means by and for the faithful.
3. To determine the actual presence of the Church in this field.
4. To identify doctrinal principles and practical applications.

The second and last meeting of this pre-preparatory group took place on March 3, 1960. Already two months later followed the Apostolic Letter *Supremo Dei Nutu* dated May 30, 1960, by which Pope John XXIII created nine preparatory commissions for the upcoming Council. Although communication was not yet there, it followed a few days later when on June 5, 1960 the Pope created a secretariat to handle "all questions related to the modern means of social communication – press, radio, television and film. Soon Msgr. Martin J. O'Connor, Rector of the North American College in Rome was appointed president and Msgr. (later Cardinal) Andreas M. Deskur as secretary (Baragli 1969, 99). Furthermore, 15 members and 18 consultors were added on August 30.

This secretariat was called the "Secretariat of the Press and Film" – different from the name "modern means of (diffusion) distribution and social communication," which was proposed earlier. With 17 bishops and 29 priests all members were from the clergy and there were no lay experts at all (Baragli 1969, 100). The composition was quite international with members coming from 21 different countries, 14 of them residing in Rome and 32 from outside of Rome (Baragli, 1969, Footnote 11,102). Similar to the other Council commissions, it was their duty, to work out a relevant proposal of the Roman Curia on Social Communication for the upcoming Council.

The Secretariat met four times between November 1960 and October 1961. During the last of the four Secretariat sessions, Pope John XXIII

showed his personal interest on October 19, 1961 in making a visit to this Secretariat in Palazzo San Carlo within the Vatican where the meetings were took place. He stayed with the participants for one and a half hours and discussed, beside others, the relation between art and morals. He also shared with them that he personally would appreciate more the language of the heart than the spoken words (Baragli 1969, 114).

The group eventually prepared a text for presentation in the Council, which was ready on February 23, 1962 and presented to the Central Commission for the Council by the end of March the same year. The title of the document was *De Instrumentis Diffusionis, seu Comunicationis Socialis* and it was approved by the Central Commission chapter by chapter on April 2 and 3, 1962. It was also at this occasion that Pope John XXIII, while visiting the Central Commission on April 3, referred in his allocutio extensively to this document on the means of communication as a challenge but also an opportunity for the Church (Baragli 1969, 116). He also pointed to the Encyclical Letters on communication of his two predecessors (Pius XI, Vigilanti Cura (1936) and Pius XII, Miranda Prorsus (1957) and his own messages to journalists and communication people.

The proposed document for the Council had 114 paragraphs. After the introduction, followed four sections: (1) The doctrine of the Church (with three sub-divisions), (2) Action and apostolate of the Church (with two sub-divisions), (3) Ecclesiastical discipline and structure (with two sub-divisions), and (4) Single instruments of communication (with chapters on the Press, Cinema, Radio/TV, and other "instruments" like comics, discs, announcement boards, audio-tapes, etc.).

The Reception

The first session of the Second Vatican Council started on October 11 and lasted till December 8, 1962. The very first concern of the Council Fathers was the composition of the ten different commissions

for the preparation and final proposal of the upcoming documents, which would go beyond the texts originally proposed by the Vatican Curia. The bishops from different countries tried to bring in their own theologians and experts. Thus, for example, the German and Austrian bishops together with the French, Dutch, Belgian and Swiss bishops prepared a joint list which was considered as the European or International group to somehow counteract the influence of the Roman Curia. Thus making the "Rhine flowing into the Tiber" as Ralph M. Wiltgen, svd titled his book on the Second Vatican Council. It was because of this that leading European theologians of the time were directly involved in the formulation and re-formulation of the different documents proposed for the Council. This, however, did not influence the document on communication anymore, which was presented for discussion the way it was written by the Secretariat. The discussion by the Plenary was scheduled on very short notice for November 25, 1962. After a long discussion on *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the document on Liturgy, and a following discussion on Revelation from October 22 to November 13, the direction of the Council decided to first place *Inter Mirifica* for discussion.

The text was introduced by Archbishop Stourm of Sens (France) as the relator, who admitted that the announcement for the discussion of *Inter Mirifica* astonished the members of the secretariat who felt not yet fully prepared for the presentation. *Inter Mirifica* was discussed only in three sessions of the Council on November 23 with 2,153 participants present, and 17 interventions. On November 24, 2,136 participants were present with 24 interventions. On November 26 (half-day), 2,133 members followed with interventions from 17 participants (Baragli 1969, 123 ff.; Composta 1967, 35 ff.).

The majority of those interventions were favorable to the document. Beside others, the pastoral character of the proposal was underlined and the fact that for the first time ever, a Council would handle this field. Critics, however, pointed to the more technical character of the document (Composta 37) and the fact that no lay people were involved

in the preparation (Baragli 1969, 125). The assembly further felt that the text with 114 paragraphs was too long. Other interventions pointed out that the situation of communication is quite different in different parts of the world (Baragli 1969, 126).

During the 28th General Session of the Council on November 27, 1962, the document was subjected to a vote before the 2,160 fathers present, and 2,138 voted in favor of it. It was confirmed to be proper for the Council to treat such important field, though it was proposed that it should be shortened to the essentials and revised for presentation in the second period of the Council (Composta 39). This led to the final recommendations in three points (cf. Eilers, 138):

1. To approve the text in substance and to affirm that the Council should treat a subject of such importance for pastoral ministry.
2. Considering the comments of the different Council Fathers, however, it was proposed to trim the text to the essentials of doctrine and general pastoral directives without losing the essential parts.
3. Everything that referred to the praxis and execution of the teachings should be worked out with a special mandate of the Council by groups of experts from various nations.

These corrections and a new editing were done by the same Secretariat which created the document, though now in cooperation with the Council commission no. 10 on the Lay Apostolate, to which it was related. Thus the former secretariat continued to meet in the name of the Commission at the Palazzo San Carlo in five different sessions (1962, 1963). The group reduced the text which included also the removal of the section on the individual media which was almost half of the original document. In addition, the 54 interventions from the Council discussion as well as the 42 additional comments, submitted in writing had to be incorporated (Composta 1967, 39 f.). The role of the laity, youth and support of the Catholic faithful for the Catholic Press were included as well as theater which was not done before. In

the final version, *Inter Mirifica* had only 24 paragraphs. It was included for the second session of the Council lasting from September 29, 1963 to December 4. With this, the shortened and finally submitted text was not anymore an extensive presentation of the field, but rather a pastoral orientation (Composta 1967, 40).

Because of this an opposition against the revised document built up with the conviction that the quality of the proposed text was not sufficient and especially not of a standard for a Council. Some American journalists criticized especially no. 12 of the text on the power of civil authorities which could in their opinion lead to dictatorial approaches. Other Council members were uneasy about the text for other reasons. This led to an attempt to postpone the voting of the Plenary in the last minute. A group of some 97 bishops and priests tried to distribute leaflets at the footsteps of St. Peter's Basilica, to ask the council fathers to postpone the voting on the document. The president of the Council, however, personally intervened and hindered the action. Thus, the reception of the document was anything else than smooth!

Some people criticizing the document argued that the revised text would be so different from the original version that it should be re-submitted to the Council again as a new text (Baragli 1969, 157). Furthermore, the shortened edition was also called "moralistic, ecclesiastic" and without any respect for the work of lay people in this field (Composta 1967, 144). This resulted in one of the partial voting to the highest number of No-Votes on any document of the Second Vatican Council.

It was agreed, however, again that the subject and the text deserved to be treated at the Council. Some felt that one should be grateful that the document "made it" considering the fact that originally some 70 themes were proposed by the different commissions but only 13 of these prepared texts arrived at the final approval stage of the assembly (Composta 1967, 44). Other comments on the reception of the document referred also to the lack of theological input which can be partly explained by the fact that the preparatory secretariat was composed mainly of people

responsible or working in the media but not theologians. This was only later somehow remedied by the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) which was demanded by *Inter Mirifica* (23). This document opens with a theological reflection on Social Communication.

The Challenges

Despite all these there are several points to be made for a positive direction and challenges through the existing document of *Inter Mirifica*, which still have to be developed further today.

1. It is for the first time in history of the Church that an Ecumenical Council has discussed and approved a document on Social Communication: *Inter Mirifica*. The field and concern of Social Communication is this way given a special weight and challenge for the ministry of the Church.

2. In the discussion of *Inter Mirifica* the bishops felt right from the beginning that such considerations would need much more expertise and details for a proper pastoral application as the Council could give. They therefore decreed in the reduced version of the Council document that a more extensive Pastoral Instruction (No.23) must be developed by experts in the field. This was given as an "assignment" to the proposed Pontifical Commission on Social Communication which Pope Paul VI created in April 1964 following a request of *Inter Mirifica* (No.19). This demand was fulfilled with the publication of the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* by the Pontifical Commission for Social Communication which was approved in a handwritten note by Pope Paul VI (cf. Eilers 2011, 143) The document with 187 paragraphs is considered as the most positive document on Social Communication not only of the Catholic Church but also by other Christian bodies. It was 20 years later extended with a second Pastoral Instruction: Aetatis Novae (1992).

3. The introduction of World Communication Day is one of the accepted proposals of *Inter Mirifica* (No 18). It is the only day instituted by the Second Vatican Council and celebrated since 1967. Every year has a certain theme where the Pope delivers a message on the subject. This creates over the years a very rich body of teaching on different perspectives and concerns of Social communication.

4. Another important point of the document *Inter Mirifica*, is the introduction of a permanent structure for the communication (No. 21) of the Church starting with the Pontifical Council for Social Communications of the Roman Curia, followed by the National Offices of the bishops' conferences, to be directed by a respective episcopal Commission or bishop, international offices on continental and the same on the diocesan level. This request originates somehow already with the National Film Offices which Pope Pius XI proposed in his *Vigilanti Cura* (1936)! Unfortunately this *Inter Mirifica* proposal is not yet fulfilled in every country yet - even today.

5. The training of professionals and formation of Church personnel for social communication is demanded in the document (no. 15). Already in a reflection on 20 years after Vatican II, Fr. Enrico Baragli (1983) one of the main authors of the document stated that this was the least fulfilled request of the Council which is still the case today. After 50 years, this demand ("should be trained at once," no. 15!) still remains the least accepted and least fulfilled request of the bishops of the Second Vatican Council.

6. Of special importance far beyond the Church is the fact that the document introduces the expression **Social Communication**. In the early days it was first understood as a common name for all the Mass Media (Press Radio/TV, Film). This way it has often been used in all other documents on Communication for the Catholic Church. Only slowly it became clear that the expression refers

in fact to a much broader reality of communication which must be understood especially in these days as the communication of and in human society. This includes all means and ways of human communication starting from interpersonal and cultural communication over the (Mass) Media to Social Networks. This new understanding can be illustrated in the following graphic:
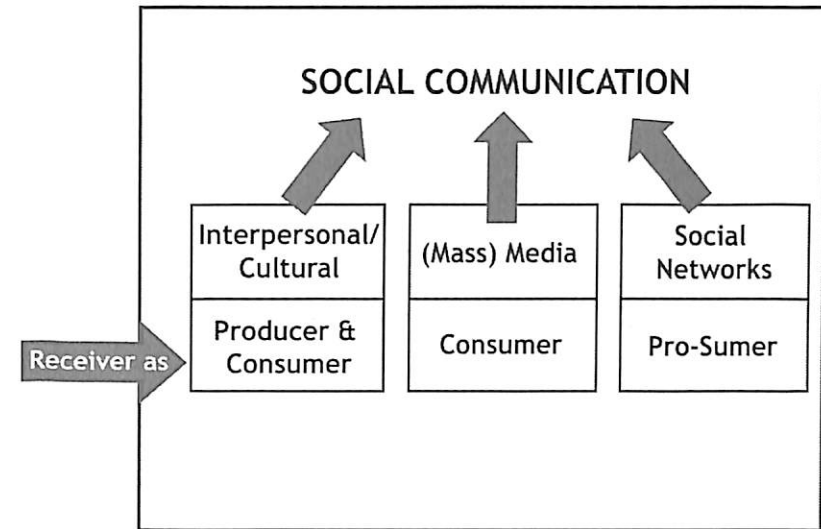
Thus, social communication is considered as a broad field with the following three main "streams":

I. Interpersonal and cultural ('traditional') communication, which takes place since the beginning of humankind, where people and societies communicate with each other directly but also in the different forms of culture. Their communications are expressed either through music, dance, theater (drama), communicative customs, and the like.

II. Media communication includes the so-called mass media but also all ways of communication using technology to reach a bigger number of people. This includes especially the press (newspapers, periodicals, books) but also film, radio and television.

III. In "social networks," the roles of the editor and receivers are flexible and interchangeable. The same roles also shift freely from personal to technical, and the other way around.

As to the participants in this process, they are distinctly producers and consumers on the Interpersonal/Cultural level. They are basically only consumers on the Media level where there is no or very little interaction between them and the origin/s of the mediated messages.

In "social networks," however, the participants are both producers and consumers at the same time so much so that the German Bishops' Conference Communication Commission has coined the word "Pro-Sumer" to describe their roles in online interactions (June 2011).

Pro-Sumer is a combination of the words producer and consumer. This means that a social network participant's position in exchanges easily shifts from one to the other.

SELECTED LITERATURE

fnt em sller

Baragli, Enrico
1969   **L'Inter Mirifica. Introduzione, Storia, Discussione, Commento, Documentazione**. Roma (La Civilta Cattolica)
1983   **L' 'Inter Mirifica' vent' anni dopo**. In: Ecclesia Mater, Revista Quadrimestrale. Roma, pp. 51-55

Composta, Dario sdb
1967   **Genesi storica del decreto (IM)**. In: Favale, Agustino. **Il Decreto Sugli Strumenti della Communicazione Sociale. Genesi storica, Testo latino e traduzione Italiana, Esposizione e commento**. Leumann-Torino (Elle Di Ci) pp. 9-46

Eilers, Franz-Josef svd
2011   **Communicating Church: Social Communication Documents**. Manila (Logos)

NOTES

CALL FOR PAPERS:

ARC ROUND TABLE 2013

*"Religion and Social Communication in
Changing Cultures of Asia"*

Mahachula Buddhist University, Chiang Mai, Thailand
October 21 to 26, 2013

Asian Cultures are changing because of economic, political and technological developments. The economics in a global world are affecting many of our Asian countries: China, India and Singapore are becoming main players in world economics. Former communist or dictatorial countries like China, Myanmar, Vietnam are slowly changing their political systems to be more accessible and part of global developments. Information technology changes the life of millions through cell phones, handheld devices (computers) and other gadgets which also influence and change vast rural and urban areas and the relations between rural and urban populations. Further young people from the country side move to cities and centers of production leading to a growing change in the composition of communities an d people especially in rural areas.

What does all this mean for the experience, communication and practice of Religion?

1. How are traditional ways of communication of and in Religion changed through such developments?
2. How do Religions respond to these developments?
3. Is the internal communication *within* Religions but also their communication to the *outside* influenced and changes: How?
4. Does such a situation also have an effect on religious practices (e.g. pilgrimages) and rituals (e.g. devotions) of members? How? When? Where?
5. Do developments in IT enter into religious practices? When, Where, How? With what effect?
6. What do these developments mean for intercultural communication within and between Religions? "Interreligious Dialogue"?

Submission of abstracts till June 30, 2013

Email: asianresearchcenter@gmail.com or arceilers@gmail.com

Participation in the Conference is by invitation only. The number of participants is limited to 25 to provide sufficient possibilities for in depth discussion. Selected papers will be published in RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, Journal of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication at St. John's University, Bangkok, Thailand.

(for information only)

CALL FOR PAPERS:

"MEDIA, RELIGION AND IN/VULNERABILITY"

Proposed Panel at CRESC Annual Conference
(SOAS, London, September 4-6, 2013)

Deadline for Proposals: April 8th 2013

CRESC's Mediating Religion Network Panel in collaboration with the Religion and Media Working Group of the European Communication Research and Educational Association (ECREA) and the Nordic Network for Media and Religion.

The Mediating Religion Network invites proposals for papers on the topic of "Media, Religion and In/vulnerability". The Network aims to contribute several panel sessions at the 2013 Annual Conference of the Centre for Research into Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC). This year's CRESC conference title is In/vulnerabilities and Social Change: Precarious Lives and Experimental Knowledge, and we are convinced that scholars of religion and media can make a valuable contribution to academic discussion of this important theme. The Mediating Religion Network hopes to publish these presentations as a special issue of peer-reviewed academic journal.

The CRESC Annual Conference Call for Papers can be found here:http://www.cresc.ac.uk/events/cresc-annual-conference.The conference focuses on "the relationship between vulnerability and invulnerability", including the precarious lives of the majority and the precarious knowledge and status of elites—including the relationship between religious, political and media elites.

Religion and media constitute intertwined sites and occasions for the formation of social relations and connectivities marked by persistent and novel vulnerabilities and invulnerabilities. But what are the conditions that make such relations and connectivities on the one hand durable, strong and powerful or on the other, vulnerable, precarious and risky?

Vulnerability is always associated with construct6ions of risk, and the twin structures of blame and trust. Taking a leading note from one of the keynote speakers at this year's conference, T.H. Eriksen who will revisit the work of Mary Douglas on Risk and Blame, the panel will examine the in/vulnerabilities of religious groups, institutions and practices, and their knowledge, values and beliefs in different parts of the world. We will examine structures of blame and trust propagated by media and/or religious groups, and their role in exacerbating conflict or promoting peaceful resolution. We invite analyses of projects and initiatives aimed at building trust and/or that explore forms of social resilience, organization and experimentation (including via uses of media) in the face of the multiple vulnerabilities associated with faith-based exclusions, persecution, abuse and conflict.

Contributions may take historical and/or ethnographic perspectives and may approach the concept of media broadly to include either a direct focus on specific media (e.g. print or digital) and religion (e.g. religious broadcasting) or a wider theoretical focus on mediation as a problematic of social theory in which religion and its (jn)vulnerability to processes of rapid social change is a recurring question.

Specific topics could include:

Migration, Diaspora and Identities: what kinds of vulnerabilities are religious groups exposed to as a result of migration and living in diaspora? How are media used to strengthen or to weaken diasporic religious identities, network and practices? How are narratives of blame or trust, prejudice or persecution directed at religious and non-religious groups represented, promoted or contested?

Transitions across media and public spaces: What kind of in/ vulnerabilities do religious groups experience as they embark on transitions from occupying (often marginalized) diasporic public spheres? How do religious ideas and organisations make the transition into the public spotlight following blameworthy allegations of fundamentalism, corruption, sexual abuse and how does this alter understandings or involve risks. Are some religious groups more invulnerable than others in these transitions, and if so, what kind of social and cultural capital is involved in tackling blame and establishing trust?

Authority and Power: How do print, electronic and digital media strengthen or undermine religious structures of control? How are threats, risks and dangers associated with religion represented and mediated? Who/what is represented as blameworthy or trustworthy?

Knowledge and Memory: How do religious communities use media to (re)constructtheirpastandfutureandaddressissuesofrisk,blameandtrust? How are media used religiously in times of conflict, death and disaster? Howdoreligiousandnon-religiousmediareinforceorcontest"orthodox" religious knowledge? What forms of experimental knowledge are mobilized by religious groups?

Proposals for papers should include a title, a 200-word abstract and a very brief statement of the applicant's affiliation and research interests. The panel does not require contributions to draw on either Mary Douglas or T.H. Eriksens's ideas but we would like to keep a foci around issues of blame and trust in our explorations of in/vulnerabilities.

Submissions should be sent to Dr. Tim Hutchings (CRESC Research Fellow) at tim.hutchings@open.ac.uk. Feel free to contact Tim or marie.gillespie@open.ac.uk to discuss paper proposals. Deadline for proposals is on April 8th 2013.

MEDIA AND RELIGION CONFERENCE

BOULDER 2014

An international conference on "Media and Religion: the Global View" will be held at the University of Colorado in Boulder from January 9 to 12, 2014. The conference is organized by the Media, Religion and Culture Group at the same university. The meeting is the fifth in a series of international conferences which are devoted to emerging issues in media and religion especially under sociological perspective.

Proposed papers and/or panels for the upcoming conference could be on:

- Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of global religion.

- "Global Religion" as a distinct religious consciousness

- Religion, globalization and cosmopolitanism

- Role of the media in the emergence of global religious movements.

- Diasporic media and transnational discourses of religion.

- The emergence of global networked religious communities.

- The cultivation of authority and legitimacy in transnational religious spaces.

- Religion and the 'global public sphere'

- Media, religion and global politics

- Technological mediation, innovation, and global religion

- The 'religious' in contemporary globalized modernity

- Intersections of religion, media and the global market

- Mediation and Mediatization in and across different religious traditions

- Media, global religion and comparative religious studies

- Media, religion and global youth cultures

- Religious aesthetics and sensations in global religion

- Media and global religion as forms of social protest and activism

For more information see: cmrc.colorado.edu

ARC PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES

The Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication will participate in this year's IAMCR Conference in Dublin from June 25 to 29 with the theme: "Crises, 'creative destruction' and the global Power and communication orders". IAMCR has a strong "Religion Interest Group which will present some 50 papers in their panel sessions this year.

The annual AMIC conference with the theme "Tranformational Communication and the New Asia" will be held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia from July 4 to 7.

Network members participating in these or other additional academic conferences are invited to share their experiences, insights and reflections either by email for other Research Network members or also as contributions to our *Journal*.

BOOK REVIEWS - ₩

Stig Hjarvard and Mia Loevheim (eds.). **"Mediatization and Religion: Nordic Perspectives."** Goeteburg, Sweden: Nordicom (2012). pp. 212. ISBN 978-91-86523-44-2.

Mediatization has been described as "penetration of mass media and their logic into other social systems". It has been applied to organizations, cultures, politics and society and has in some way influenced agenda setting, spectacularization and personalization (Verhoeven,Mazzoleni). The volume edited by Stig Hjarvard and Mia Loevheim brings in a special way religion into these studies with a collection of ten contributions to the field from North European (Nordic) countries.

Editor Hjarvard opens the book with basic considerations, which are partly reflected, verified but also questioned in the contributions which follow. He is convinced that "media have acquired an important role not only in the transmission of religious imagery, but also in the very production and framing of religious issues" (21). Hjarvard states that "the processes of mediatization are changing the nature of public representations of religion in highly secularized cities like in the Nordic countries" (24). His study is concerned with the "public face of religion".

Media today signify "a new social and cultural condition in which the media in general come to serve a different role in culture and society." In the past, the media were "predominantly in the service of other social institutions" (25). This is not the case anymore. Since the de-regulation of media industries in the 80's and "the arrival of new media technologies and a general climate of neo-liberal policies, the media gradually became more commercial but also more independent of other social institutions" (25), which includes also Religion. They became more governed, by their own 'modus operandi' and acquired a "relative autonomy vis-à-vis other social institutions like politics and religion" (25).

From this and additional considerations, the author comes to a three-fold typology of studying Mediatization and Religion: (1) *Religious Media*, (2) *Journalism and Religion*, and (3) *'Banal' Religion*. In the category of *Religious Media*, Hjavard lists the following activities: religious services, preaching, confessions, discussions. Under *Journalism and Religion* are the following: news, current affairs, and moderated debate. Under 'Banal' Religion, the author lists: narrative fiction, entertainment, self-help services, consumer advice (cf. 40). He illustrates the different categories with examples and experiences from Scandinavian countries. For religious media, he reminds the respective actors that "religious media come to be judged by the same standards as other media, including their ability to use technology and genres in an appropriate and interesting way" (31). For *Journalism in Religion*, he reminds us that in the 19th and 20th centuries, "journalists gradually acquired professional legitimacy" which also affects their ways of "controlling the possible misuse of power by other social institutions, including the Church" (31). Because of this "Journalism and Religion" "brings Religion into the political public sphere and subjects it to journalism's dominant paradigm of facticity and public accountability" (31). Under the expression of *"'banal' religion"* the author includes symbols and connotations but also religious references in advertising, film, storytelling, often even indicating the sub- or unconscious in people. The expression 'banal' he takes from Michael Billig's (1995) study of nationalism and culture where the expression refers to religious elements which "come to produce the presence of Religion in a secular world, but without promoting a particular religious belief."(36)

Hjavard's presentation gives a new perspective and category in assessing Religion and Communication which can be applied far beyond Scandinavia. The study could be a basis for a more general approach and perspective on communication of religious institutions, media presentations of Religion and also somehow "religious" elements in modern life, including popular piety as well a 'spiritistic' views and presentations up to modern wellness approaches. With the new technical developments in Communication, however, one might add another category beyond Religious institutions and Journalistic

presentations with the "Social Networks" which are nor Church nor Media institutions. How do they reflect or even 'practice' Religion in their networks?

The following contributions actually extend to some extent the considerations of Hjavard like the study of Peter Fisher-Nielsen on the Internet use by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark where he beside others studies Religion as distributed in non-religious websites but also interviews pastors about their Internet use for their ministry under the perspective of mediatization.

The article of Henrik Reintoft Christensen on "Coverage of Religion and Homosexuality in the Scandinavian Mainstream Press" (63-78) introduces the concept of "vicarious religion" as "the notion of religion performed by an active minority…" (64), under which he analyzes 215 articles on homosexuality and Christianity.
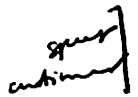
With Marcus Moberg and Sofie Sjoe's contribution on "The Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Media in Post-Secular Finland," finishes the first section of the book on "Mediatization, Public Media and the National Church" (1-91). This is followed by sections on "The Mediatization of Social Conflicts" (93-125), and "Religious Identity and a Changing Media Environment" (129-160), including two articles related to Islam – on "Young Muslim Women, Blogs and Religion" (Mia Loevheim) and "Becoming Muslim Through Islamic Programming" (Ehab Galal).

The book concludes with a section on "Religion and Popular Media Culture" (163-201), which studies a special Fan-Group in Denmark ("Transformative Processes of Religion") and includes a contribution on "Religious Change and Popular Culture."

For studies on Religion and Communication, this is a very basic book which goes far beyond the Nordic countries. The considerations of editor Stig Hjarvard and some of his companions are important considerations also for scholars and religious studies even beyond

Europe. Similar developments like in Nordic countries can also be observed in other parts of the world including the growing economic power, mobility and also secularization in Asia. There is much "food for thought" offered in this publication for those working in the field. This book can only be highly recommended!

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Gordon Lynch, Jolyon Mitchell, Anna Strhan (ed): "**Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader**". London/New York (Routledge) 2012. pp 282. ISBN 978-0-415-54955-4

Gordon Lynch, a Modern Theology professor at the University of Kent and Jolyon Mitchell, professor of Communications, Arts and Religion at the University of Edinburgh are the main editors of this enriching book. The 22 contributions of the Reader are grouped into four sections with Media only in the second part ("Media and the transformation of Religion"). This indicates that the collection of this book covers a broader field of Communication than just media. Already the first part deals with "Religion, Spirituality and Consumer Culture" (contributions 1 to 6); the third one deals with " The sacred senses" (Contributions 12 to 17) and the fourth with "Religion and the Ethics of media and culture" (contributions 18-22). The Reader intends to give "an overview of some of the main debates and intellectual developments within this field as well as some of the new areas of discussion that are beginning to open up" (Introduction p.2). All the four parts of the Reader start with a summary and overview of texts taken from " important' work that has been previously published elsewhere as well   as commissioning new material to complement this." The book avoids focusing on specific media and takes a refreshing broader approach beyond sociology into other related fields. It wants to provide "useful orientation" for those who want "to explore some of the key issues within this field."

The introductory summary and overview of every part presents the single contributions and places them into broader perspective. The book is not just 'reporting' but rather thought provoking far beyond technologies as is often the case in media studies. Thus for example spirituality is studied as one way of re-branding of religion where spirituality ends up to be "big business." Here "for many people spirituality has replaced religion as old allegiances and social identities are transformed by modernity"(p. 59). This seems to be a silent takeover of 'the religions' by contemporary capitalist ideologies... where attention is given to the "fruits not the roots" as Jeremy Carrette

and Richard King state in their "Spirituality and the re-branding of religion" (p.59 ff). "What is being sold to us as radical, trendy and transformative spirituality produces little in the way of a significant change in one's lifestyle or fundamental behavior patterns" (62). Here the authors see two phases in the privatization of religion: 1. Religion as relegated to the private sphere ("Individualization of religion"), and then 2. The "wholesale commodification of religion" as selling off "religious buildings, ideas and claims to authenticity in service to the individual/corporate profits" as reflected in "corporate capitalism" (p.64).

For the second part of the collection the introduction concludes that here the contributions "illustrate the value of paying careful attention to which images are promoted, how symbols are mediated and interacted with..." which goes far beyond any single Medium.

The third section of the book starts with a text from a 1995 book on "Material Christianity" which considers the ways in which the material is conceived in relation to Christianity as being shaped by wider cultural assumptions which challenge normative assumptions about 'authentic' religion and culture (p. 132). Another text in this section "asks the question of how the sacred becomes a material reality in people's life" (Robert Osi). Anthropologist Birgit Meyer argues that religious experience is only "made possible through physical media.. like images, sound, texts or the body itself" (p.133). Here and in similar sections of the Reader one is tempted again to question the expression of "Media" because this seems to imply basically 'modern' technologies one way or the other. Maybe an expression like the 'means of communication' would be a much better and broader term for the whole discussion.

The final section of the book is titled "Religion and the Ethics of Media and Culture." Here beside others the question is raised how far a reporter can or should be 'involved' in reporting but also how religion is responsibly reported in general. Also the role and responsibility of the 'audience' has to be considered. The introduction to this section refers to the "lack of critical and ethical reflection upon mediated religion"

and the way religion is covered. The contributors of this part also attempt "to reflect normatively on contemporary media and culture from different disciplinary perspectives"(p.204). One also should consider how "habits and routines shape journalists' characters, which in turn contribute to certain decisions being taken" (p.206).

The book is enriched by an extensive bibliography (pp.251-278) and an Index. It would be helpful to also have the origin of the different contributions indicated either at the beginning of each text or in an overall listing to clearly indicate – beyond the introduction to the sections – which texts are taken from earlier publications and which ones are commissioned and why.

All in all this Reader is a challenging and thought-provoking book. One might propose, however, in the light of the much broader content and concerns of this Reader to rethink the expression "Media". In fact most of the contributions of this book, if not all are related to communication as a process and a fact of human societies. Such understanding goes far beyond means and media. Maybe it is time to change from 'means' and 'instruments' of communication to communication as a process of and in human society. This was already proposed 50 years ago by a Vatican II document ("Inter Mirifica") as "*Social* Communication".

The book originates in Britain, is basically confined to Christianity, and reflects especially the considerations of European authors. For Asian scholars, the question will be how far these European experiences are also applicable or to be expected in Asia with the emerging "Tigers" and the commercialization of countries as reflected for example in the growing number of shopping malls and societies' growing middle class. Religion is an essential element in all Asian cultures. Which developments are to be expected to affect or change century-old traditions and life styles? How far can or should the experiences with Christianity and Europe also be considered for Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and other Asian religions?

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

BOOK NOTES

Pradip Ninan Thomas and Philip Lee (eds.) **"Global and Local Televangelism."** Palgrave Macmillan (2012). ISBN 978-0-230-34810-3. pp. 264.

"Global and Local Televangelism " is a collection of 12 analytical essays, including those written by the editors themselves, on televangelism from the point of view of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The 264-page book is divided into four-parts:

Part I entitled "Islamic Televangelism: On Preachers and Prophets" features three articles on "Storytelling, Sincerity, and Islamic Televangelism in Egypt" by Yasmin Moll, "Islamic Televangelism in Changing Indonesia: Transmission, Authority, and the Politics of Ideas" by Akh Muzakki, and "Islamic Televangelism: The Salafi Window to their Paradise" by Ibrahim Saleh.

Part II on "Christian Televangelism: Branding the Global and the Local" contains an article by Philip Luke Sinitiere on "Preaching the Good News Glad: Joel Osteen's Tel-e-vangelism," "The Global in the Local: The Ambivalence and Ambition of Christian Televangelism in India" by Jonathan D. James, and "Hearing, Viewing and Touched by the Spirit: Televangelism in Contemporary African Christianity" by J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu.

Part III features one article on Hindu televangelism as an emerging phenomenon in India. The article entitled "The Avatars of Baba Ramdev: The Politics, Economics and Conradictiosn of an Indian Televangelist" is written by Santanu Chakrabarti.

Part IV features four articles under the theme "Televangelism, Politics and Popular Culture," namely: "From Televisuality to Social Activism: Nigerian Televangelists and Their Socio-Political Agenda" by Walter C. Ihehirika, "God's Politicians: Pentecostals, Media, and Politics in Guatemala and Brazil" by Dennis A. Smith and Leonildo

Silveira Campos, "Urban Logic and Mass Mediation in Contemporary Thailand" by Apinya Feungfusakul, and "Whither Televangelism: Opportunities, Trends, Challenges" by Pradip Ninan Thomas.

Overall the book describes the dynamics, struggles and effects of using the television screen, both globally and locally, in "multiple intra- and inter-religious battles over souls and purses" (from the back cover). Exploring the "nature and scope of globalized experiences of televangelism and their impact on religious belief and practice" (from the Foreword by Nabil Echchaibi) makes the book a very good resource material for students and scholars of religion and/in the media.

Pradip Ninan Thomas is co-director at the Centre for Communication and Social Change, University of Queensland, Australia. Philip Lee is deputy director of programs at the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and editor of the international journal *Media Development*.

← Anthony G. Roman

n.b. -x authm ; Italics, nt bnd

Thomas Tufte, Norbert Wildermuth, Anne Sofie Hansen-Skovmoes, Winnie Mitullah (eds.) **"Speaking Up and Talking Back? Media, Empowerment, and Civic Engagement among East and South African Youth."** Nordicom (2013). ISBN 978-91-86523-55-3. pp. 301.

"Speaking Up and Talking Back? Media, Empowerment, and Civic Engagement among East and South African Youth" is the year book of The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) for the year 2012-2013. It focuses on how the media and the technology of communications are used to empower the youth of East and South Africa and make them active citizens, lifelong learners and agents for social change in their respective countries. It acknowledges the immense benefits of making information and knowledge accessible to all as the youth of today are increasingly demanding to be involved and included in their countries' development.

Composed of 18 essays, the book is divided into four sections dealing with the following themes: conceptual framing, information and communication technology, the role of media in health and social change, and lastly, media and culture and social change.

The first part introduces the reader to the nature of communication and concepts associated therein. Entitled "Introduction and Conceptual Framing", it features three articles: "African Youth, Media and Civic Engagement" by Thomas Tufte and Norbert Wildermuth, "Towards a Renaissance in Communication for Social Change. Redefining the Discipline and Practice in the Post-'Arab-Spring' Era" by Thomas Tufte and "Communication for Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. From Orientalism to NGOficiation" by Linje Manyozo.

The second part of the book speaks of "ICT, Empowerment and Policies". On this parts, the following articles are included: "Information and Communication Technology-facilitated E-citizenship, E-democracy

and Digital Empowerment in Kenya. The Opportunities and Constraints of Community-based Initiatives" by Nobert Wildermuth, "Institutional Context of ICT and Women's Participation in Kanya" by Winnie V. Mitullah, "Social Media and Digital Democracy. An Exploration of Online Forums for Civic Engagement and the Involvement of Kenyan Youth in Participatory Development" written by Wanjiru Mbure, "Prospects for Civil Society Empowerment through the Use of the New Media" by Karen Kisakeni Sørensen and Viktorija Petuchaite, and lastly "Young Women and ICT: A Need to Devise New Strategies?" by Grace Githaiga.

The third part entitled "Health and Social Change" is composed of five articles: "Conflicting Paradigms. Challenges to HIV and AIDS Communication: A South African Perspective" by Eliza Govender, "Involving Youth in Peer Educators: Message Deliverers or Agents of Change?" by Line Friberg Nielsen and Mille Schütten, "HIV/AIDS Campaigns as Signifying Processes: Group Dynamics, Meaning-formation and Sexual Practice" by Abraham Kiprop Mulwo and Keyan Tomaselli. "Examining Civil Society Approaches to Adolescent Sexual Empowerment in Tanzania" by Datius K. Rweyemamu and "Moving Sexual Minority Health Rights Forward in Uganda. A Study of Opportunities and Challenges Using Domestic Media" by Cecilia Strand.

The fourth and final part of the book goes with the title "Culture and Social Change" under which five articles are placed: "Makamba Culture Cubs. Towards Communication for Reconciliation" by Nikita Junagade, "Communicating Crime Prevention. Participation and Building Trust in Kibera" by Ricky Storm Braskov, "Community Radio as Promoters of Youth Culture" by Jessica Gustafsson, "Film for Social Change. A Study of the Zanzibar International Film Festival's Initiatives for Bringing about Social Change for the Local Youth" by Anne Sofie Hansen-Skovemoes and Line Røijen and "Hidden Voices on Air. Empowering Tanzanian Youth through Participatory Radio" by Rosalind Yarde.

Kenneth E. Rayco

RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION invites contributors of studies and abstracts that provide scholarly insights into the fields of Religion and Social Communication in Asia. The journal serves as a discussion forum board for religion and interreligious dialogue in Asia.

The ARC reserves the right to accept or decline submitted contributions in order to meet the standards of the publication. We gratefully acknowledge all contributions.

Journal Subscription Rates
(includes shipping and handling)

Within Asia: US$ 25 two issues/year
Outside Asia: US$ 40 two issues/year

Payments by check, MasterCard, Visa or US$ cash preferred. Kindly send full account number, expiration date, account name and signature for credit cards.

Checks and/or money order transfers should be payable to the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication and sent to the ARC Director at the stated ARC address.

Wire Transfer to:

Savings Account No. 175-2-02119-4
Thai Military Bank Co., Ltd.
Ladprao Branch
Bangkok 1900, Thailand