

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA
ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN INDIA
A CASE STUDY ON THE DIGITAL DISCOURSE IN RELIGIOUS
CONFLICTS**

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TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	10
Approaches Towards Media and Religion	12
Design of the Study	18

CHAPTER ONE

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELIGION

Introduction	26
1. Defining Social Media	28
2. Convergence in Media Theories	31
2.1. Participatory Culture	34
3. Social Media Trends and Growth of Digital Media	38
4. Differences Between Social Media and Mass Media	40
5. Political Economy of Social Media	42
6. Impact of Social Media	43
7. Religion and Modernization	48
7.1. Religion and Media	52
7.2. Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space	53
7.3. Religion as Quest	55
8. Online Religious Communities	56
Conclusion	58

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Introduction	60
1. Areas of Approaches to Media and Religion	61

1.1. Historical Approaches to Media and Religion	61
1.2. Cultural Approaches to Media and Religion	63
1.3. Sociological Approaches to Media and Religion	64
1.4. Psychological Approaches to Media and Religion	66
1.5. Anthropological Approaches to Media and Religion	67
2. History of Communication Trend	68
3. Communication Methods of Three Major Religions	70
4. Racism, Religion and New Media	73
5. Secularism	75
5.1. Secular State	77
5.2. Religion and Secularization	78
6. New Paradigm in Communication	80
7. Encounter of Different Religious Groups in India	84
7.1. Christian Response to Hinduism	84
7.2. Hindu Response to Christian	86
7.3. Islamic Response to Others	87
Conclusion	89

CHAPTER THREE

THE FUNCTIONS OF TOLERANCE IN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN INDIA

Introduction	91
1. Defining Tolerance	92
2. Pluralism	94
3. Hindutva Movement	96
4. Inter-faith Relation in India: Brief Survey	102
4.1. Hinduism	102
4.2. Religious Traditions of Christianity	109
4.2.1. Interfaith Dialogue in Christianity	110
4.2.2. Movement of Christianity	113
4.3. Religious Tradition in Islam	117

5. Religion and Spirituality	121
6. Religious Freedom in India	123
7. Dialogue	124
8. Religious Conflict at International Scenario: Brief Survey	126
Conclusion	127

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMIC OF POWER

Introduction	130
1. Conceptual Clarification of Postmodernity	130
1.1. Development of Postmodernism	132
1.2. Power, Domination, and Resistance in Postmodernism	134
2. Michael Foucault's Readings on Postmodernism	136
2.1. Concept of Power in Foucault's Postmodern Analysis	136
2.2. Concept of Power/Knowledge in Foucault Postmodern Analysis	140
2.3. Concept of Discourse in Foucault Postmodern Analysis	141
2.4. Postmodern Ethics in Foucault Analyses	145
2.5. Foucault Analysis on Structuralism	147
2.6. Foucault Analysis on Post-Structuralism	149
2.7. Domination and Resistance Foucault Analyses	152
2.8. Critique on Foucault's Thinking	154
3. Habermas Discourse and Ethics	157
3.1. Habermas Approaches on Communicative Action	160
4. Postmodernism and Public Relations	165
5. Social Media, Representation and Resistance	169
Conclusion	170

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES

Introduction	172
1. Methodological Consideration	173
2. Area Selected for Case Study in India	176
3. Presentation of The Case	177
3.1. Case Study One: <i>The Murder of Sharif Khan</i>	177
3.2. Case Study Two: <i>Muslim Man Killed for Cow</i>	182
3.3. Case Study Three: <i>Muslim Assaulted by Hindu with Pork</i>	185
3.4. Case Study Four: <i>Christian Church Torched in Majuli</i>	189
3.5. Case Study Five: <i>Social Media Rumours Drives North East People Exodus from Bangalore</i>	192
Conclusion	195

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Introduction	197
1. Findings	197
2. Suggestions	203
3. Risk-Taking Journalism as a New Paradigm	205
3.1. Communication Power	209
3.2. The Importance of Habermas and Foucault Power, Discourse for Risk Taking Journalism	211
3.3. Power in Social Media	213
3.4. Tolerance in Dialogue	214
4. The Principles of Christian Communication by WACC	217
4.1. Communication Builds and Shapes Community	218
4.2. Communication Enhances Participation	219

4.3. Communication Supports and Develops Cultures	220
4.4. Communication Liberates	221
4.5. Communication is Prophetic	222
Conclusion	223
CONCLUSION	226
BIBLIOGRAPHY	234
ABBREVIATION	260
APPENDIX	262

Visual

Visual 1: Political Map of India Indicating Hindu, Muslim and Christian Majority States. Scale not to be used.

Visual 2: Sharif Khan Dragging from Dimapur Central Jail by Mob.

Visual 4: Cow as Holy Animal in India's

Visual 5: Shaukat Ali, Assaulted with Pork

Visual 6: Christian Church and Bible Burned in Majuli,

Visual 7: Northeast People Deporting from Bangalore

INTRODUCTION

The advancement in computer-mediated communication has ushered in an unprecedented shift in the way individuals and communities connect and interact with others. One significant consequence of this explosion is experiencing the arrival of a computer-mediated community. At the same time, one cannot visualize and grasp this 'computer-mediated communication' or its outcome 'computer-mediated community' without referring to Social Media use among the world community. In other words, people worldwide are using social media to promote their ideas, interests, values, and projects through social media like *Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, My Space, Instagram*, etc. In addition, many are communicating and transmitting texts, visuals, and audio by using self-generated and self-oriented messages on different social media sites. Hence, the impacts and implications, challenges, and threats of social media have become an unavoidable territory in academic discourses, particularly in the area of religious tolerance in Contemporary India.

The Supreme Court of India on 24th March 2015 announced the citizen's right to free speech under Indian Constitution Section 66A IT Act.¹ This is one of the vital steps the Supreme Court of India has taken to provide the right to communication for all. Communication rights aim to overcome the invisibility in the public sphere of poor, marginalized, and excluded people, their opinions, concerns, and interests, and to counter media representation that hinders the inclusion and participation of marginalized communities in relation to issues of citizenship governance and sustainable development. Moreover, the right guaranteed by the Indian Constitution in Articles 25 and 26 is the Right to Freedom of Religion. In India, as a secular nation, every citizen of India has the right to follow any religion, practice and has the liberty to follow any religion of their choice. However, with all the rights and freedom, India

¹ Amit Choudhary & Dhananjay Mahapatra, "Supreme Court Strikes Down Section 66a of It Act Which Allowed Arrests for Objectionable Content Online," *The Times of India*, 24 March 2015 2015.

is still witnessing an unprecedented growth of communal riots and discrimination in individual rights and religion. Many of the root causes of this violence are because of the growth of religious fundamentalism. Social media has been used as a tool to spread hatred towards others. Religion and its fundamentalist role have come to play a significant role in the socio-political sphere. The politicization of religion has now become the norm of the day. Due to this, religious violence and communal riots are frequent occurrences in modern India. Religiously-oriented political parties have tended to capture power in the states and at the Centre to subdue minorities and even to attack the worship places of the minority communities.

Given such a challenge, the research aims at a deeper analysis of the following questions for this research

- i. To understand the pattern, nature, and extent of social media's power
- ii. To examine how religious tolerance has been challenged among the three major religions, traditions, and cultures in India
- iii. To identify the new tools which are necessary to maintain religious tolerance in social media
- iv. To examine the changing role of social media in religion from the perspective of postmodernism
- v. To address the potential contribution and power effects of social media for religious tolerance
- vi. To show in what manner social media may realistically present a new paradigm for dialogical communication.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze and explore the nature of social media and religious networks with particular reference to India. There is no doubt that social media can be a powerful tool, but how it can build interreligious understanding is not clear. This must be examined critically to determine the best practices for using social media in the ongoing quest for peace. Therefore, the researcher proposes to present an urgent study of the place and presentation of religion in social media and new paradigms for inter-religious communication.

Approaches Towards Media and Religion

Technologies have always been of enormous importance in society, politics, and religion. Consequently, much research has been done to examine how social and technological dimensions influence the practices and values of the people. Therefore, the researcher has divided the approaches towards media and religion into four parts; social media and public relations, religion in social media, religious tolerance, and social media and Journalism.

Social media and public relation

According to R. L. Briones, many pieces of research have failed to demonstrate the capacity of social media to function beyond, yet another tool for information dissemination. For all the emphasis by scholars on the relational potential of social media, research has continued to confirm that organizations are primarily using social media to disseminate one-way messages rather than cultivate more two-way relationships.² Indeed, organizations may view social media as an opportunity to become a “news service”. Similarly, a clear definition of what is meant by “relationships” in social media research is lacking. The mere acquisition and delivery of information is often conflated with “conversation” and “dialogue.”³ Given the lack of a definition and no substantial indicators to assess relationships, M.L. Kent claimed there is a severe disconnect between “relationships” and what social media scholars have studied. Second, the scholarship may be hindered by its aspiration to demonstrate the relationship-building potential of social media.⁴ Smith emphasized how social media increases interactions with the publics through a “steady flow of inputs and outputs” that contribute to organizational stability through relationships.⁵

Given that systems-based approaches to social media are inherently tied up in ensuring organizational stability, the ability for organizations to build relationships or participate in dialogue via social media is questionable. As Leitch and Neilson stated,

² R. L. Briones, et. al., “Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships,” in *Public Relations Review* (2011). 37–43.

³ T. Kelleher & K. Sweetser, “Social media adoption among university communicators,” *Journal of Public Relations Research*, (2012), 105–122.

⁴ M. L. Kent, “Directions in social media for professionals and scholars,” in *The Sage handbook of public relations*, ed. R. L. Heath, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 643.

⁵ M. F. Smith, & D. Ferguson, “Activism 2.0,” in *The Sage handbook of public relations*, ed. R. L. Heath (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 330.

authentic dialogue is problematic for systems-based public relations because it has the potential to produce “unpredictable and dangerous outcomes, so organizations may attempt to determine in advance the terms of any public debate in which they engage undermining genuine dialogue.”⁶ This gives the authentication that social media provide the illusion of genuine dialogue and relational exchanges for public relations.

Sociologists and Religious studies are interested in information communication technologies, and processes are increasingly intersecting with religious practices which have been drawn into dialogue with Communication and Media scholars. Both sociologists and media scholars are interested in how media create and inform deep feelings of social belonging, identity, and community. Different areas of inquiry show how digital technology offers religious communities and practitioners unique opportunities to present and negotiate their beliefs and practices in new digital spaces. As Campbell asserted, attention has been paid to how the affordance of new technologies can be seen to both augment and challenge the values, goals, and ways of life of many religious groups. In the 1990s and 2000s, much of the documentary work on religion and the Internet focused on the simplistic questions:⁷ How is religion represented in new media environments? How do religious groups use new media to serve their causes and needs? What challenges do new media technologies pose to traditional religious communities and institutions? How does the Internet inform religious cultures in everyday life? And how the Internet is being shaped by offline religious traditions and communities. This spotlighted an increased recognition among scholars for the need to analyze the interactions and interdependency between religion in digital and physical settings to describe better and interpret the emerging relationship between religion and new media technology within contemporary society.

Religion in social media

Much has been made of media content and its putative cultural and moral values. However, critique of social media is lamenting the negative and anti-social

⁶ S. Leitch, & D. Neilson, “Bringing publics into public relations: New theoretical frameworks for practice,” in *Handbook of public relations*, ed. R. L. Heath (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2001), 135.

⁷ Heidi Campbell & M. Lovheim, “Rethinking the online–offline connection in the study of religion online,” in *Journal of Information Communication & Society*, vol. 14 no.8 (November, 2011), 1083–1096,

(even anti-religious) messages that are said to dominate. What are the prospects for religion and religious values if the dominant sector of public discourse in social media consistently carries contradictory and antagonistic views? Social media have been claimed to be a negative psychological force, deteriorating individual and social life, tantamount to an addiction. Birgit Mayer observed that “social media have been claimed to structure the flow of daily life, determining when we eat, sleep, socialize, even procreate.”⁸ These are clear and taken for granted roles and functions traditional religion is interested in, at least, and indeed a profound function for the media to assume is creating at least a condition or context within which religion must find its place.

Stout’s suggestion on the postmodern era requires a broader view of worship; denominations do not fully account for the expanding range of religious and numinous experiences. The social media of popular culture are also important; they orient one’s beliefs, elicit strong feelings, involve ritualized behaviours, and enable individuals to form communities. When this occurs through social media like the internet, films, and other media, users often describe their experiences in religious terms.⁹ Christian, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and members of other faiths all use social media to varying degrees. At the same time, many people are trying to find the religious meaning grounded in the social media of popular culture.

Therefore, it is important to see the review of religious tolerance in India to understand the religious approaches and tolerance in Indian religious traditions.

Religious Tolerance

In a thesis, “*A Study of Hindu Fundamentalism and its Impact of Secularism in India from 1947-1997*,”¹⁰ the author M.T Cherian, examined Hindu fundamentalism which is a threat to the pluralistic context of India. He stressed that the growth of

⁸ Birgit Mayer & Annelies Moors, "Religion Media, and the Public Sphere," in *Religion Media, and the Public Sphere*, ed. Birgit Mayer & Annelies Moors (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2006), 10.

⁹ Daniel A Stout, *Media and Religion: Foundation of an Emerging Field* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 47-50.

¹⁰ M.T. Cherian, “A Study of Hindu Fundamentalism and its Impact of Secularism in India from 1947-1997” (D.Th. dissertation, Senate of Serampore, University, 2003).

Hindu fundamentalism affects the secular fabric of India, its religious freedom, and the politicization of religion. He argued that India had proclaimed a secular fabric where different religions existed without conflicts from the very ancient days. But today, minority rights are violated by the growing fundamentalism in India. He calls on the Church in India to find a suitable answer to Hindu fundamentalism by initiating discussion and dialogue with various groups of people and proposed public theology for harmonious living in India.

In “*Hindu Response to Religious Pluralism According to Representative Thinkers*,”¹¹ the author P.S Daniel examines neo-Hindu thinkers on religious pluralism in India, their opinions, and philosophies. Some thinkers argued that return to the Vedic dharma is the solution. Still, people like Vivekananda and Gandhi were realistic that all people could not be brought under one monolithic religion. As long as humanity exists, there will live many different religions. Hence, recognizing the diversity of religions achieve religious harmony is important rather than claiming that all religions are equal or one or leading to the same goal. Every religion has something unique and so mutual respect should be maintained. Tensions and rivalries are due to misunderstanding of other religions, and therefore, interfaith dialogue for harmonious existing is important.

In research on “Religious Conversion and Indian Constitutional Rights: A Historical Analysis in the Light of the Opposition to Christian Conversion in India,” the author C.V Varghese discussed the idea that the history of religions all over the world, in general, is a history of religious conversions and reconversions. Conversion from one religion to another creates friction, bringing conflicts in families, groups, and communities. It also leads to the politicization of religions. The conversion issue in India creates fear in Hindu minds that Muslims and Christians are increasing and Hindus are decreasing they formed Sudhi (purification rite) and Ghar wapsi (homecoming) to reconvert to the Hindu fold. Conversion of Adivasis and Tribal brought strong opposition. The author examined the Indian constitution Article 25 to

¹¹ P.S. Daniel, “Hindu Response to Religious Pluralism According to Representative Thinkers” (D.Th. dissertation, Senate of Serampore, University, 1991).

rectify the misunderstanding of conversion, indicating freedom to believe and switch to other faiths. He also studied the anti-conversion movement in India from 1947-2007 and critiqued Hindu fundamentalism on conversion.

In a dissertation “*Interaction Between Christianity and Hindu Religion and Society in Tirunelveli 1820-1924; A Re-reading of Protestant Missionary Activities and their Repercussions on the Local Hindu Community from the Postcolonial Perspective*,”¹² the author P. Karunanidhi, stressed that a re-reading of the missionaries activities and their impact in the context of socio-religious and political history, both negative and positive, provides distinct insights to face contemporary realities to resolve our differences and thus pave the way for harmonious living. He examined critically the Protestant missionaries who arrived in the Tirunelveli district before the British company came to India in 1801. They evangelized the whole district, developed Tamil literature and upliftment of people and, established the churches, schools, etc. However, many staunch Hindus did not like what missionaries were doing in their land and so started a counter-movement by establishing schools and revolted against conversion. The author appreciated the missionary’s enterprise and their sacrifices, but at the same time, they undermined the native religions and cultures, which created tensions. Such conflicts would have been avoided had the missionaries also appreciated the native cultures and traditions.

Social Media and Journalism

In her research “*Creative digital expressions during the Iraq war: Lazy Ramadi as a case study in soldier-produced social media*,”¹³ the researcher Christiana M. Smith, observes that during the War in Iraq, social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, LiveLeak, iFilm, and YouTube served as cyber sites of connection, commemoration, and dissemination where soldiers filmed and uploaded a digital

¹² P. Karunanidhi, “Interaction Between Christianity and Hindu Religion and Society in Tirunelveli 1820-1924; A Re-reading of Protestant Missionary Activities and their Repercussions on the Local Hindu Community from the Postcolonial Perspective” (D.Th. dissertation, Senate of Serampore University, 2017).

¹³ Christina M. Smith, *Creative digital expressions during the Iraq war: Lazy Ramadi as a case study in soldier-produced social media*, (Ramapo College of New Jersey 2011)
http://www.cios.org/getfile/021123_EJC. (26/08/2018)

record of their experiences in combat. Many soldier-produced videos have become highly popular, as their circulation on the playback window of numerous video sites has been re-mediated and further disseminated through mainstream media coverage. Smith proposes that the studies of journalism and new media should explore how mainstream news organizations cover the challenges and critiques posted by non-institutional social media. Their response will impact both journalistic norms and practices and how scholars theorize and understand the news-making process.

In her research *“Become a fan” Maintaining news media hegemony through Facebook and brand equity*,¹⁴ the author Shawn Day, wrote that a content analysis and quantitative case study were conducted to analyze the Facebook pages of Cable News Network (CNN), National Population Register (NPR), and The New York Times (TNYT). She found that Social media platforms that empower consumers to publish and disseminate information threaten the dominance of traditional news organizations. The fragmentation of the traditional audience and the rise of social networks have threatened to reshape the news media landscape, shifting the power from legacy news organizations to the grassroots level. However, as this study showed, news organizations can retain their dominant position by staking a presence online and using a social network to meet consumers on their terms.

Bronwyn E Beatty in a research article *“Making democracy a living, breathing thing”: YouTube videos and democratic practice in the 2008 ONE News YouTube Election Debate*,¹⁵ examined the live televised debate, arguing that the commercial imperatives were of more interest to Television New Zealand (TVNZ) as it seeks to reorient itself as a digital media company alongside its public service broadcasting mandate. Interactivity has been described as an intrinsic property of digital media. The flexibility that digital media enables and is practiced within social media mashing, sharing, ripping, networking, downloading, and uploading, raises expectations about all media use. These expectations are reflected in the changing conception of the

¹⁴ Shawn Day, *“Become a fan” Maintaining news media hegemony through Facebook and brand equity*. (Old Dominion University Norfolk, Virginia, USA 2011) http://www.cios.org/getfile/021124_EJC. (12/09/2015)

¹⁵ Bronwyn E. Beatty *“Making democracy a living, breathing thing”: YouTube videos and democratic practice in the 2008 ONE News YouTube Election Debate*, (New Zealand Broadcasting School Christchurch, New Zealand 2011). http://www.cios.org/getfile/021127_EJC, (12/09/2015).

audience, from the “passive” viewer of traditional media such as television through the “user” or “consumer” who engages with media products which can be anything from video games to memorabilia to “the “producer-consumer.”

From the above analysis, it is found that several studies have been conducted on media and religion but not directly on the impact of social media on religious tolerance. Therefore, there is no research done so far on the effects of social media on religious tolerance. Therefore, the researcher for this thesis has focused on the impact of social media on religious tolerance in India: A case study on the digital discourse in religious conflict to help project the power of social media for religious tolerance.

Design of the Study

In *chapter one* the researcher analysis the social media, that each new medium of communication introduces changes in society. Their impact is not only on social and political issues but also influences every religious institution. The development of information communication and technology in social media has brought tremendous change in the way people think, act and live become a center for politics, economic, social, and religious life. This is because Social Media is not only about what each of us does or say, but about what we do and say together worldwide and to communicate in all directions at any time by possible (digital) means. The new and interesting ways in which people project their identities and interact are enabled by the ability of social media to allow users to create, edit, and share their content.¹⁶ Indeed, the social media sites like Facebook and Twitter were not created with a deep understanding of theories. However, Social media promote the participatory culture that can provide a way to facilitate awareness on issues on a much larger scale which may translate into further action. This has been the prerequisite of the World Association for Christian Communication that participatory communication is fundamentally inclusive. It is multi-directional, opens dialogue, and there is an exchange of ideas and flexibility of thought.

¹⁶ Aimee deNoyelles, "Analysis in Virtual Worlds: The Influence of Learner Characteristic on Instructional Design," *Using Social Media Effectively in the Classroom: Blogs, Wikis, Twitter and More*, ed. Kay Kyeong-JuSeo (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.

The potential of social media has been observed as a two-edged sword. Dependent upon how it is used, it can build bridges of understanding and respect between inter-religious groups and can encourage harmony, reconciliation, and liberation of the people, or it can redirect the established social fabric, encourage conflict, and undermine or destroy prevailing moral norms of both the individual and in corporate life. Social media was the primary agent in the revolutionary movement that arose in Occupy Wallstreet, the Arab Spring, and the Nirbhaya rape protest movement. Social media was also an agent in raising help during natural calamities.

The relationship between religion and media has recently been subjected to a more thorough reflection in academia and public debate because religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt, and influential forces in human society. New forms of mediation transform religious discourses and practices. Still, religion also features in films, videos, and TV programs in a framework of entertainment or “infotainment” in different social media sites. While these sites have become the deciding factors for conflict resolution, at the same time, they can also bring conflict and misunderstanding among the different religious communities, society, and State.

In *chapter two*, the researcher discusses the five different approaches to media and religion to understand the religious institution's participation in media. *Firstly*, the historical approaches to media and religion, *Secondly*, cultural approaches to media and religion, *Thirdly*, sociological approaches to religion and media, *Fourthly*, psychological approaches to media and religion; and *fifthly*, anthropological approaches to media and religion.

With the explosion in communication and information technologies, religion and the media have become more connected, interdependent, and interconnected. Therefore, media and religion have come together in fundamental ways. They occupy the same spaces, serve many of the same purposes, and invigorate the same practices in late modernity.¹⁷ Therefore, it is probably better to think of them as related than as separate.

¹⁷ Steward M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2006), 9.

Secularization in India promotes the fundamental rights for the citizen to his/her belief. India being a secular country, the term “religion” is not defined in the constitution. Still, the definitions given in the Supreme Court Judgments¹⁸ of the term are beyond any form of precise definition. The New paradigm in communication has brought the study relationship between the media and religion, and it is continually developing in media study. A promising area of research that provides a fresh perspective on both elements, and contributes to theory-building in the general discipline of mass communication and new media, is the debate on religion and Web 2.0. We take this rubric as intending to denote a qualitative jump to new levels of interactivity and individual expression and the emergence of the hybrid producer-consumer or “producer” as facilitated by a range of technological advances. This opens up another form of communication, sacred texting. Religious text can now be searched, hyper-linked, downloaded, spliced, copied, truncated, e-mailed, text-messaged, recited with video accompaniment, chanted on iPod, and piped from mobile devices into earplugs. Religious texts are available in as many digital forms as there are devices to access them. Because of the ability and availability of different religions in media, many people are participating on social media by sharing their religious, ethical, and moral values.

Chapter three discusses the tolerance of different religious traditions in India. It is vital to deal with India because of its religious tolerance due to its multi-religious, multi-social, and multi-cultural background. India has given a new concept of religious tolerance through its own experience as a multi-religious society where its religions and the western religions live together. The great message India has given through its history is the need for “Unity in Diversity”, a unity of diverse religions on the same soil.¹⁹ Therefore, tolerance being the core of the “unity and diversity”, India accepts all religions and permits their practices even when they are different from their beliefs. A few Indian philosophical views on the multi-religious context have been discussed: Raja Rammohun Roy a zealous Hindu, proud of India’s past and his race,

¹⁸ J.N. Pandey, *The Constitutional Law of India*, 47th ed. (Allahabad: Central Law Agency, 2010), 325.

¹⁹ Vincent Moolan Kurian, *Beyond Interreligious Tolerance: Mahatma Gandhi- Pioneer of Faith-Based Active No-Violence as a Response to Oppression and Communal Violence* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac GmbH, 2014), 23.

eager to conserve all that was good and great in his ancestral religion, greatly influenced by Islamic Unitarianism and deeply affected by Upanishad Vedanta's thoughts and was highly appreciative of Jesus' ethical teachings²⁰; Keshab Chandra Sen's interpretation of Christology is his consideration of Christ as a universal principle who is not confined to Jesus of Nazareth²¹; and Gandhi's philosophy of how religions should approach each other.

However, in the political history of India since India's independence, the involvement of political parties in religious ideology and the division of India and Pakistan brought religious violence and communal riot. This development of religious fundamentalism brought tension among the different religious institutions. Much historical evidence has shown where Christians have practiced forced conversion through various crusades and missionary movements. On the other hand, Hinduism is the majority religion that has propounded new laws through the central government, like Ghar Wapsi, meaning returning to original religion, and "Anti-beef law" (the Hindus consider cow as holy) whereby the Hindus enjoined to protect cows and to take actions against the slaughter of cows by Muslims and Christians.

There is every possibility that religious harmony can exist because all the religions stress the same spiritual values: the divine virtues of truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence, which provide physical, psychological, and social bonds among people on a national and international level of integration. This virtuous life is not a personal matter but involves social relations, and righteous and honest life is the backbone of the spiritual progress of human persons and society. This has brought about dialogue among the different religious groups. The concern for dialogue and cooperation has to go beyond any instrumentalization of religion because dialogue greatly resolves political and communal conflicts and restoring peace.

Chapter four discusses the theoretical framework with critical perspectives on the development of social media, and one such perspective is informed by

²⁰ D.S. Sarma, *Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Banaras: Benares Hindu University Benares, 1944), 72.

²¹ P.C. Mozoomdar, *The Life and Teaching of Keshup Chunder Sen* (Calcutta: L.W. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, 1887).

postmodernism. Considering the potentially far-reaching effects on society that organizations have via social media, the chapter critically re-examines research on social media through postmodern lenses and how religion has been displayed in the social media because postmodernism encourages different and plural discourses that allow scholars to perceive more possibilities than what is in the field of vision of a singular dominant discourse of modernity and objectivity. As B. Daniel asserted, it asks why and how we come to know things, primarily through discourse in Post-industrial and consumer society, a media society, an information society, an electronic society, a high-tech society, and the like.²²

Michel Foucault's reading on postmodernism has been considered because his work provides an innovative and comprehensive critique of modernity and humanism and the development of new perspectives on society, knowledge, discourse, and power. This has made him a significant source of postmodern thought. As Sara Mills observes, Foucault tries to see the power beyond understanding power as repression of the powerless by the powerful.²³ He argues that rather than simply negatively viewing the power as constraining and repressing, even at their most constraining and oppressive measures, they are in fact, productive, giving rise to new forms of behaviour. In other words, for him, power operates within everyday relations between people and institutions.

Discourse is one of the most frequently used terms in Foucault's work. By discourse, he refers to the public domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group statement and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for several statements. As P. Thomson observes, his work on discourse helps the theorist consider the way of question about the news and information; what, where, how, whose.²⁴ Turning this way of understanding the discourse into a method applied to textual analysis means asking the texts questions such as truth or a norm, evidence, the foreground and background, meaning and explanation, and alternative ways.

²² B. Daniel, "Postindustrial Society," www.standforsnaplopediaparlosiophy.com (accessed, 24/07/2015).

²³ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003), 33-34.

²⁴ Pat Thomson, "A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis" <https://patthomson.net/2011/07/10/a-foucauldian-approach-to-discourse-analysis/> (accessed, 02/10/2018)

Knowledge; For Foucault, knowledge is a ‘conjunction of power relations and information seeking which he terms as power/knowledge.’ Because power cannot be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to endanger power. He argues that rather than knowledge being a pure search after truth, in reality, power operates in processing information resulting in something as fact.²⁵

The ethical notions of postmodernism are critically analyzed as morality and ethics because Ethics involves a relationship to oneself, recognition, and self-constitution as a particular type of moral agent. Furthermore, postmodernists' power, domination, and resistance in postmodern philosophy encourage researchers and practitioners to ask who has power in relationships and why and how that power affects social media discourses and vice versa. How do religious institutes or organizations use social media to manufacture consent for hegemonic power structures? How do religious institutes, organizations, the public, and practitioners perpetuate power systems in relationships and social media? How can practitioners leverage that new knowledge and use social media to strategically and ethically foster the public's well-being who enable their organizations to stay in power?

Chapter five discusses the context of the case studies; India is selected because of its demographics. It is the second-largest country by population and is home to seventeen percent of the world's people. It is known to be the biggest multi-religious country in the world. Every world religion is represented and practiced in India, and it is the birthplace of four of the major religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. India is considered to be the most diverse country as regards the representation of religious faith communities. Such pluralism is enriching, but it can also lead to misunderstanding and conflict, especially if competing proselytizing missionaries are active and disdain the dominant religious heritage. This is attested to by India's history and the current substantial conflict between opposing religious communities in some regions.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish the Birth of Prison*, trans. by A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 216-217.

To collect the cases, the researcher used the national daily news and the internet as a tool. For the interviews, the researcher participated personally in the interview process. For the research area, the researcher has selected three states, Nagaland, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh, to understand the religious majorities and minorities in the state. Five cases have been presented altogether: (i) the murder case of Sharif Khan (Nagaland 2015)²⁶ (ii) Muslim man killed for Cow (Uttar Pradesh June 2018)²⁷ (iii) Muslim man Assaulted by Hindu with Pork (Assam, 2019)²⁸ (iv) Christian Church Torched in Majuli, (Assam, 2018)²⁹ (v) Social Media rumors drives North East people to the exodus (Bangalore, 2012).³⁰ The response from the interviewees supported by the response from the interviewees.

Chapter six documents the findings from the case presentation. In all the incidents, social media sites were used to show the causes and cover up the situation. Every society and individual is under the surveillance of social media; therefore, it is observed that the majority in politics and religion hold power in manipulating the discourse. The character and form of social media empower the minority and the common people to open up the platform for participation and opinions. However, due to the lack of education and awareness of the powers and function in social media, the debate and discussion in social media end with clashes where the minority becomes the victims of the majority's dominant power.

The researcher, therefore, proposes the new paradigm of "risk-taking journalism." It is crucial to note that risk-taking journalism is citizen journalism that, irrespective of religion, is the voice of common people towards the unjust society. To articulate how we can express our political understanding of a micro-power level by placing social knowledge of truth and digital democracy could transform our social, economic, and political networks. The change is possible with risk-taking journalism

²⁶ *The Indian Express*, 9 March 2015, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/dimapur-lynching-on-social-media-first-rape-then-bangladesh-man/>

²⁷ *Times of India* (New Delhi) 15th June 2018

²⁸ *India Today*, 9th April 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/assam-mob-thrashes-muslim-man-beef-force-feed-pork-1497292-2019-04-09> (accessed, 20/05/2019).

²⁹ *Sabrang India*, 17 October 2018, <https://sabrangindia.in/article/church-torched-majuli-assam>.

³⁰ *India Today*, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20120827-people-from-north-east-flee-bangalore-racial-attacks-759475-1999-11-30> (accessed, 12/01/2017).

because people rely increasingly on the internet to gain legitimate information and discussion. It is not about what one person says but about the opinion shared by different individuals. This is made possible by the internet and gives us the ability to hold highly informative campaigns without relying on personal wealth or special interests. This is the mandate of postmodern philosophy that challenges the dominant structured power through resistance and risk. The argumentation of Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas has been critically examined to understand the power and ethics in inter-religious dialogue through social media. As Anthony Giddens observes, Foucault argues that power is not only located in powerful bodies such as the state or companies but rather power is seen as an omnipresent field that is produced from one moment to the next, at every point or rather in every relation from one point to another and is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere.³¹ Habermas' social theory on discourse ethics is an approach that is founded upon rules of dialogue, which encourages participants to approach an ethical dilemma with both pure rational reason and experience firmly in hand. It is observed that intolerance, argumentation, and dialogue are the core principles that bring the truth from both parties. Therefore, tolerance in dialogue is significant for understanding the practices and beliefs of the citizen. The views of Foucault and Habermas have been incorporated into social media as "risk-taking journalism." The Five Principles of the World Association for Christian Communication backed risk-taking journalism because it challenged the secular ethos of the age by insisting that communication is a function of transcendence. The introduction to the Christian Principles observes that communication remains God's great gift to humanity, without which we cannot be truly human.

³¹ Anthony Giddens, *A contemporary critique of Historical Materialism. Vol. 1: Power, property and the state* (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), 49.

CHAPTER ONE

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELIGION

Introduction

For more than a decade now, social media has been the center of political, economic, social, and religious life. The development of information communication and technology in social media has brought tremendous changes in the way people think, act and live. Over the past forty-five years, the approach has guided the work of communication scholars in several centers around the world. Numerous article-length works have provided critical overviews and maps of the field. Communication scholar Marshall McLuhan, in his valuable book *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (1964) contributed a substantial overview of the power of electronic media, technology, and communication. By focusing on the impact of media independent of their content, McLuhan's pithy way of describing this approach through the use of his one-liner 'the medium is the message,' and the insightful phrase, 'Global Village' highlighted his observation that an electronic nervous system (the media) was rapidly spreading through the planet. Events in one part of the world could be experienced from other parts of the world in real-time, which is what human experience was like when we lived in a small village.³² Along with the McLuhan overview, the supreme court of India, on 24th March 2015 announced the right for the citizens to have free speech under the Indian Constitution Section 66A IT Act.³³ This

³² Marshall McLuhan, "Foresees the Global Village," <https://www.scribd.com/document/81927625/Marshall-McLuhan-Foresees-the-Global-Village> (accessed 20/09/2014); see also Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, 1964, Marshall McLuhan Introduction by Lewis H. Lapham (London: MIT Press, 1994).

³³ Amit Choudhary & Dhananjay Mahapatra, "Supreme Court Strikes Down Section 66A of It Act Which Allowed Arrests for Objectionable Content Online," *The Times of India*, 24 March 2015. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Supreme-Court-strikes-down-Section-66A-of-IT-Act-which-allowed-arrests-for-objectionable-content-online/articleshow/46672244.cms> (accessed, 15/04/2015).

is one of the vital steps the Supreme Court of India has taken to provide the right to communication for all. Communication rights aim to overcome the invisibility in the public sphere of poor, marginalized, and excluded people, their opinions, concerns, and interests, and counter media representation that hinders marginalized communities' inclusion and participation in relation to issues of citizenship, governance, and sustainable development. There is considerable evidence that addressing 'communication poverty' and providing access to affordable communications can help raise the voices of minority groups to influence decision-makers, share knowledge and enable participation. Recognizing and claiming communication rights can strengthen people's capacity to achieve development goals.³⁴ Yet social, economic, and legal inequalities restrict many vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged communities and groups who experience disparities in freedom of expression, in accessing and sharing information and knowledge, in making their opinions and needs to be known to the wider society, in helping to shape public agendas in their countries, and in responding to their life circumstances. Social media is the latest in a series of technologies whose availability, accessibility, and affordability might be the key to creating a more just society.

Over the past thirty years, there has been growing research literature on media and religion, and in a way, religion can be seen as a medium in itself. Media and religion also offer symbols, icons, and stories to make sense of the world. Such an understanding has been well voiced by Dutch philosopher Hent de Vries, who claims that without these mediating practices and discourses, religion would not be able to manifest itself at all.³⁵ Indeed, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter were not created with a deep understanding of theories. However, these sites become the deciding factors in many ways of our lives and mediate the message of different religions. Social media must analyze and understand how it connects to multi-religious communities. Therefore in this chapter, the researcher attempts to study the

³⁴ Lilian Ndangam & Philip Lee, "Media Ethics: Social Media for Peace," *The Global Ethics Forum 2011-2012*, eds. Philip Lee & Dafne Sabanes Plou (Geneva: WACC, 2012), 17.

³⁵ H de Vries, "In Media Res: Global Religion, Public Spheres, and the Task of Contemporary Comparative Religious Studies," *Religion and Media*, eds. H. de Vries & S. Weber (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 3-4.

analysis of social media and religion to identify foundational concepts for communication methods.

1. Defining Social Media

Social Media is not one thing. It is a continuum. Social Media is not about what each one of us does or says, but about what we do and say together, worldwide, to communicate in all directions at any time, by possible (digital) means. As asserted by Wilson Dizard, it is the result of a new kind of democratic communications environment that matches media guru Marshal McLuhan's vision of forty-eight years ago of advanced information machines that will make every man his publisher. McLuhan's concept is being realized in the rapid spread of electronic personal communication networks.³⁶ Social media applications have not only gained incredible popularity in the online sector but have also transformed the lives of those using them. Tools such as blogs and wikis are the products of a significant shift in online activity and agencies from developer to a user. The new and exciting ways in which people project their identities and interact are enabled by the ability of social media to allow users to create, edit, and share their content. This open-ended platform supports instant communication perpetually shaped by users in a public sphere, producing a sense of individual and collective agency and opportunities for identity projection.³⁷

It is possible to trace the emergence of social media to when Tim O'Reilly introduced the term 'Web 2.0' in 2005. While O'Reilly claims that 'Web 2.0' denotes actual changes whereby users' collective intelligence co-creates the value of platforms like Google, Amazon, Wikipedia, or Craigslist in a "community of connected users."³⁸ He admits that the term was mainly created to identify the need for new economic strategies of internet companies after the 'dot-com' crisis. The bursting of financial bubbles caused the collapse of many Internet companies. So he states in a paper published five years after the creation of the invention of the term 'Web 2.0' that this

³⁶ Jr Wilson Dizard, *Old Media New Media: Mass Communication in the Information Age*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2000), 17.

³⁷ Aimee deNoyelles, "Analysis in Virtual Worlds: The Influence of Learner Characteristic on Instructional Design," *Using Social Media Effectively in the Classroom: Blogs, Wikis, Twitter and More*, ed. Kay Kyeong-JuSeo (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.

³⁸ Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle, "What is web 2.0?" <https://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html> (accessed 20/07/2019).

category was a statement about the second coming of the web after the dotcom bust at a conference that was “designed to restore confidence in an industry that had lost its way after the dotcom bust.”³⁹

Michael Mandiberg argues that the notion of ‘social media’ has been associated with multiple concepts: the corporate media favorite ‘user-generated content,’ Henry Jenkins’ media-industries-focused ‘convergence culture,’ Jay Rosen’s ‘the people are formerly known as the audience,’ the politically infused ‘participatory media,’ Yochai Benkler’s process-oriented ‘peer-production,’ and Tim O’Reilly’s computer-programming-oriented ‘Web 2.0.’⁴⁰ The question of if and how social the web is or has become depends on a profoundly social theoretical question: what does it mean to be social? Are human beings always social or only if they interact with others? In sociological theory, there are different concepts of the social, such as Emile Durkheim’s social facts, Max Weber’s social action, Karl Marx’s notion of collaborative work, or Ferdinand Tönnies’ notion of community. Depending on which concept of sociality one employs, one gets different answers to whether the web is social and whether sociality is a new quality of the web. Community aspects of the web have certainly not started with Facebook, founded in 2004 but was already described as characteristic of 1980s bulletin board systems, like Rheingold observed “the WELL,”⁴¹ that he characterized as virtual communities.

The discussion shows that it is not a simple question to decide if and how social the WWW is. Therefore, a social theory approach of clarifying the notion of ‘social media’ can be advanced by identifying three social information processes that constitute three forms of sociality as noted by Trottier and Fuchs: Cognition, Communication, and Cooperation.⁴² According to this view, individuals have certain cognitive features that they use to interact with others so that shared spaces of interaction are created. In some cases, these spaces are used not just for

³⁹ Daniel Trottier & Christian Fuchs, "Theorising Social Media, Politics and the State," in *Social Media, Politics and the State*, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 4.

⁴⁰ Michael Mandiberg, *Social Media Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 2.

⁴¹ The WELL (Whole Earth Lectronic Link), A computer conference system that enables people around the world to carry on public conversation and exchange private electronic mail (email). Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 3-10.

⁴² Daniel Trottier & Christian Fuchs, "Theorising Social Media, Politics and the State," 4.

communication but also for the co-production of novel qualities of overall social systems and community building. The three notions relate to different forms of sociality: the notion of cognition is related to Emile Durkheim's concept of social facts, the communication concept to Max Weber's notions of social actions and social relations, the cooperation concept to the ideas of communities and collaborative work. According to this model, media and online platforms that primarily support cognition and those that primarily support communication (such as email) are social media. Those that primarily supports community building and collaborative work (such as Wikipedia, Facebook) are social media. This means that social media is a complex term and that there are different types of social media.⁴³ Different media studies show that the most recent development is a certain increase in the importance of social media on the Internet, which is mainly due to the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook, wikis like Wikipedia, and Microblogs such as Twitter and Weibo.

Boyd and Ellison define social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (i) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system (ii) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (iii) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."⁴⁴ In network analysis, a network is defined as a system of interconnected nodes. Therefore, based on a strict theoretical understanding, all networked tools establish connections between at least two humans have to be understood as social network platforms. This includes the platforms that Boyd and Ellison have in mind and chats, discussion boards, mailing lists, email, etc., all web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies. 'Social network sites' is, therefore, an imprecise term. David Beer argues that this definition is too broad and does not distinguish different sites such as wikis, folksonomies, mash-up, and social networking sites. We should be moving towards a more differentiated classification of the new online cultures, not away from them."⁴⁵ With the above observation on social media analysis, the researcher will discuss the convergence in media theories to understand how this new media is changing communication.

⁴³ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁴ D. Boyd & N. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," in *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, vol.13. no.1 (October, 2007), 210-230.

⁴⁵ David Beer, "Social Networking sites Revisiting the story: A Response to Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison," in *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, vol.13. no. 2 (January, 2008), 516-529.

2. Convergence in Media Theories

Today, we are surrounded by a multi-level convergent media world, where all modes of communication and information are continually reforming to adapt to the enduring demands of technologies. Karun Shetty, observed that today “New media is changing the way we create, consume, learn and interact with each other.”⁴⁶ Convergence, in this instance, is defined as the interlinking of computing and other information technologies, media content, and communication networks that have arisen as a result of the evolution and popularization of the internet as well as the activities, products, and services that have emerged in the digital media space. Many experts view this as simply being the tip of the iceberg, as all facets of institutional activity and social life such as business, government, art, journalism, health, and education are increasingly being carried out in these digital media spaces across a growing network of information and communication technology devices.

Scholars have attributed the changes that occurred from the beginning of human history to three phases that have seen transformations in communication. The first phase was seen over centuries with the enlargement of the ancient empires, was impacted upon specific transportation techniques, and climaxed in discovering new intellectual technologies, such as writing and arithmetic. It opened up major routes that connected the lands from East to West. Along the way, communicative energy developed that reduced time and space. The second phase, starting around 1400 A.D., integrated with the expansion in oceanic transport and developments due to printing, promoted the adventure of ‘discoveries’ and ‘new worlds.’⁴⁷ These transformations increased the cultural climate that created enormous critical actions in the West that brought forth the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. These two phases took several centuries in their development.

But the third phase, which became explosive, started only since World War II. It merges with the information explosion and the communications revolution. New languages and codes are emerging as new instruments for processing and spreading

⁴⁶ Karun Shetty, *New Media and Society* (Delhi: Pacific Publication, 2011), 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 2.

information, increasing mobility and flexibility in transport and the circulation of goods, people, and information. This process is known as the ‘digital revolution.’⁴⁸ This revolution has radically changed how humanity establishes relationships that are no longer confined to a community or nation, but it became global, changing the culture and civilization.

This development of communicative civilization altered the way human beings perceive and use time and space. It has also changed the understanding of our everyday life and our culture. It has generated a kind of multiple chain reaction that has effected our entire way of living. It is undergoing a constant process of change and adaptation, resulting in networking among the people across the land and ocean, which is called Social media or social networking. This development is revolutionizing the lifestyle of every individual and community, to a greater extent met by the new media of communication, which enables participatory communication.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has created the online community. As a result, the whole global community can come closer in interaction and experience a kind of relationship crossing natural and human-made boundaries. Peter Singh noted the six elements that indicate the evidence of the existence of virtual communities:⁴⁹

- i. Interactivity
- ii. Stability of membership
- iii. Stability of identity
- iv. Netizenship and Social Control
- v. Personal concern
- vi. Occurrence in a public space

It indicates that cyberspace changes the traditional understanding of and definition of neighborhood. In cyberspace a neighbour is the one who can be anyone but connected through the net from anywhere they live. If they are not connected with

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 49 M. Peter Singh, *Cybertheology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009), 264-265.

the person who lives next door they are no longer the neighbour. Cyberspace plays a vital role in bringing together diverse communities from all walks of life in creating an electronic neighbourhood. Thus, they are bound together by shared interests beyond all geographical boundaries, which may be seen as a network society. It brings together and holds together an increasingly accessible and diverse community. It is a physical location of information, knowledge service, and programmes.

In the past 30 years, we have heard and witnessed the emergence and development of the computer and the internet. For a long time, the primary concern, had been the lack of interaction and interactivity in mass media, though its reach was enormous and effective. The same concerns related to an uneven flow of communication were among the primary findings of the “MacBride commission in 1979.”⁵⁰ This commission was formed in 1970 under the initiative of UNESCO to investigate the social problems in modern society, particularly relating to mass media. One of the primary findings of this commission was that information was solely owned by the developed nations. For example, less developed countries had to buy their news from three global news agencies like Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, and Reuters for a long time. The information gap between the developed and the less developed countries will only become more comprehensive. Herein we see that information very much determined the status of a nation is either developed or less developed.

Stephanie Donal & Brian Shoesmith observed that media, social change, and globalization tend to be either optimistic or pessimistic about the future. Some theories see the global networks leading to greater interdependence and dependence on more powerful cultures. Others see the networks and links offering new possibilities for communication and global cooperation.⁵¹ However, there can be no doubt that there are now global media networks and links and that convergence characterizes media at national and international levels. This gives the new culture of democratic

⁵⁰ See, Mervyn Jones, *Many Voices One World: Towards a new more just and more efficient world information and communication order*, Report by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, trans. by John Crombie & Gilles Philibert (New York: The Anchor Press Ltd, 1981)

⁵¹ Stephanie Hemelryk Donal, Brian Shoesmith & Mark Balnaves, *Media Theories & Approaches: A Global Perspective*, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 9.

communication, in other words, participatory communication, which is a prerequisite for all.

2.1. Participatory Culture

In October 2010, Malcolm Gladwell published a provocative article in the “New Yorker,” arguing that social actions on social media sites are nowhere near ‘practical activism.’⁵² Many might agree that sending a tweet or changing a profile is not the same as a lunch counter sit-in or a bus boycott; however, what social media can provide is a way to facilitate awareness of issues at a much larger scale which may translate into further action. The goal is to promote a scientific agenda around technology-mediated social participation. Such plans include aligning this agenda with national and international priorities such as health, disaster relief, and climate change.

Henry Jenkins calls the process of cultural production and consumption within new media ‘participatory culture’. Individuals, not just the mass media created digital cultural artifacts shared and circulated throughout the internet. Instead of a passive audience, new media is populated by prosumers, as online individuals serve as both producers and consumers of images and text.⁵³ A World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) document on the Principles of Christian Communication brings out the fact that Mass communications tend to be organized along one-way lines: they flow from top to bottom, from the centre to the periphery, from the few to the many, and they trickle down from the ‘information-rich to the ‘information poor’. To some extent, and depending on the context, the mass media are exclusive in their choice of subjects and how they are treated. On the contrary, participatory communication is fundamentally inclusive. It is multi-directional, opens dialogue, exchange of ideas, flexibility of thought. Participation also leads to transparency and mutual accountability as people understand their responsibilities in the context of the welfare of their communities.

⁵² See Malcolm Gladwell, “Twitter and Facebook cannot change the real world,” <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/oct/03/malcolm-gladwell-twitter-doesnt-work> (accessed, 18/07/2019).

⁵³ Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009), 8.

Social media is best understood as a group of new online media, with the following features.

Social media is known as participatory media with the following characteristic:⁵⁴

- i. *Participation*: Social media encourages participation and feedback from everyone interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.
- ii. *Openness*: Most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments, and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to accessing and making use of content Password Protected-content is frowned on.
- iii. *Conversation*: Traditional media is about “broadcast” (content transmitted or distributed to an audience) whereas, social media is better seen as a two-way conversation.
- iv. *Community*: Social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities share common interests, such as love for photography, a political issue, or a favorite TV show.
- v. *Connectedness*: Most kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness, using links to other sites, resources, and people.

With the above characteristic, there are seven forms of social media:

- i. *Social Networking*: The most popular social networking sites after Orkut are *Facebook, Myspace, Bebo, and LinkedIn*. All these are similar networking sites where users can create their accounts and expand their network by connecting with friends worldwide.⁵⁵ The name of these sites may differ, yet they usually operate in similar conditions. Users can either opt for the site they prefer or can even take the liberty to become members of all the sites of their interest.

⁵⁴ Butesen Ozukum, "New Media in Theological Education and the Church or the Vice Versa," in *Creative Communication: The Potential of New Media in Theological Education*, eds. A. Temjen Jamir, C. Temjen Longkumer & L.Imsutoshi Jamir (Kohima: CTC & CCCRC, 2014), 48.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

ii. *Blogs*: Perhaps the best-known forms of social media, “blogs are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first. A blog is a personal website or an online log.”⁵⁶ An individual usually maintains them with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or videos. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to have comments and even message each other via widgets on the blog. It is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites. Blogs usually facilitate communication between the reader and the owner of the site. The author(s) can write about whatever is interesting to them in any writing style that suits them. There are usually comment sections for all readers or for the selected readers to leave comments and start up a discussion thread similar to a forum. All comments and discussions are usually instantly made accessible to the public for all visitors to read through the internet. Blogs, therefore, can be used as personal journals for entertainment, news and information, and business purposes.

iii. *Wikis*: This website allows people to add content to or edit their information, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wikis is Wikipedia, known as ‘the online encyclopedia’,⁵⁷ which has over 2 million English languages articles. Wikis are websites where users can upload different articles of their interest in any language, edit and contribute to the articles of others. Depending upon the user’s interest, wikis can be personal or open for all.

iv. *Podcasts*: Podcasts are audios and videos uploaded and published on the internet where interested users can subscribe. Uploading audio and video files on the internet is not a new phenomenon.⁵⁸ However, the subscription feature enables users to listen to or view the uploaded materials to create a regular audience. This is possible because whenever a new podcast is posted, the subscribers are automatically notified for downloading. Private individuals and companies

⁵⁶ Anya Skrba, “What is a Blog? The Definition of Blog, Blogging, and Blogger” <https://firstsiteguide.com/what-is-blog/> (accessed, 18/07/2019).

⁵⁷ “Definition, What does Wikibedia means,” <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/31822/wikipedia> (accessed, 18/07/2019).

⁵⁸ Yaro Starak, “What is a Podcast?” <https://yaro.blog/230/what-is-a-podcast/> (accessed, 18/07/2019).

popularly use this media to get people's attention to their products. Audio and Video files are available by subscription through a service like Apple iTunes.

- v. *Forums*: Areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests.⁵⁹ Platforms came about before the term 'social media' and are powerful and popular elements of online communities.
- vi. *Content Communities*: Communities that organize and share particular kinds of content.⁶⁰ The most popular content communities tend to form around photos (Flickr), bookmarked links (del.icio.us), and videos (YouTube)
- vii. *Microblogging*: Social Networking combined with bite-sized blogging, where small amounts of content (updates) are distributed online and through the mobile phone network.⁶¹ Twitter is the clear leader in this field.

Social media sites are known as the fastest development sites in the information and technology world due to their fast change in content. Although every social media site has its differences in its content, there are few features common to every site.⁶²

- i. *Core features*: Newsfeed, inbox messages, upcoming events, and friends lists and requests.
- ii. *Publisher*: Post a status update, photo, link, or video to be published to your profile and your friends' news feeds.
- iii. *Events*: Promote an event and view birthday reminders and event invitations.
- iv. *Account Settings*: Privacy settings, logout, Help Center, and more important features to manage your account.
- v. *Groups*: View the groups you are a member of or make a new group.

⁵⁹ Mychelle Blake, "Forms and Types of Social Media"

https://socialnetworking.lovetoknow.com/Forms_and_Types_of_Social_Media (accessed, 18/07/2019).

⁶⁰ Ibid,

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Butesen Ozukum, "New Media in Theological Education and the Church or the Vice Versa," 53.

- vi. *Requests*: View your pending friend requests, group invitations, page suggestions, and other requests.
- vii. *Secondary Features*: View your and friends' photos, browse through marketplace listings, add new applications, and more.
- viii. *News Feed*: Your friends most recent activities (posts, photos, etc.) throughout Facebook.
- ix. *Chat*: Set your status and chat with your friends via instant message.
- x. Upload and share the videos
- xi. Download the videos
- xii. Send comments on the videos and Receive comments from friends and others.

3. Social Media Trends and Growth of Digital Media

The new digital platforms like social media, in which technology is empowering people to participate, and share content on the Web, is enabling them to have meaningful conversations around events, places, people, news, brands, and products through blogs, micro-blogging sites like Twitter, Social bookmarking, and sharing sites like Digg, social networking sites, social forums and review sites. Virtual worlds like YouTube, Second Life, and podcasts are a few new-age tools to name.⁶³ What is important to note is that the growth of the social Web is changing people's behavior and inducing them to become digital activists. While technology is evolving with new tools to simplify our online social interactions, social media benefits are also increasing for individuals, businesses, and collectively for our society at the same pace. Many consumers are moving from being passive consumers of products and services into the active market participation age. They are able and eager to voice their feedback, be part of product-related discussions, and look for a dialogue about brands or products they currently use or expect to need in the future.

Moreover, digital media does not have an entry barrier. Any individual can become a news creator, subject expert, journalist, initiator, and digital activist using blogs, micro-blogs, social sharing, and networking sites. It provides an equal opportunity for anybody to voice their thoughts, opinions and share information at

⁶³ Vijay Rajapat, "Social Media Trends & Growth of Digital Media"
http://www.siliconindia.com/guestcontributor/guestarticle/164/Social_Media_Trends__Growth_of_Digital_Media_Vijay_Rajapat_.html (accessed 10/11/2015.).

their disposal. What drives people to engage online is the peer-influence factor and an instant re-colonization for their digital activities in the form of comments, video clips, re-tweets, sharing, and online polls. These visible feedback channels encourage people to be more participative in the social Web.

Before the electronic age, people relied on gathering information in the traditional ways of reading magazines, newspapers, and books, sending written letters, and engaging in face-to-face or telephone conversations. Nowadays, people around the world have switched to internet for information sharing. People can now find any information directly through the internet within seconds. In addition, the increase in popularity of the internet and the advent of social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have given a new horizon to information sharing.

As the world is changing, so is the way of communication. While people used to rely on reading hard-copy print newspapers, now many have switched to reading e-papers. Jolyon Mitchell observes that earlier, people used to search for a magazine to read. Now many are interested in pressing a button to read blogs. Thus, when social media is used to spread a message, it may reach a greater number of people in a target audience looking for any information sharing.⁶⁴ Participants can directly connect to people worldwide when they link their profile or post in social media. They can also keep all people updated about their posts and drive massive traffic through social media. Social media helps to share all kinds of information with lightning speed, and it plays an important role when the purpose of a message is to generate awareness among people around the world. Therefore, social media has great potential for information sharing, including sharing the good news to the people if used in the right way. From the above-mentioned social media trend and growth, the researcher will look into the difference between social media and mass media.

⁶⁴ Jolyon Mitchell, "Emerging Conversation in the Study of Media, Religion and Culture," in *Mediating Religion: Conversation in Media, Religion and Culture*, eds. Jolyon Mitchell & Sophia Marriage (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 347-348.

4. Differences Between Social Media and Mass Media

According to Sraampi, Media is the plural form of the word “medium,” which means a channel, an intervening instrument, or doing something.⁶⁵ Radio, press, film, and television can each be used to communicate to many people simultaneously and are therefore referred to as mass communication media. These mass media are all of recent origin. Although the printing press was invented in 1456, newspapers were still almost unknown one hundred years after that invention. Since most people could not read, printing news items did not make any sense. Besides, there was no democracy, and the local king or ruler controlled the flow of information.⁶⁶ Sraampi further noted that the mass media could serve the purposes of peace and confidence, or they can spread the poison of discord between countries and people worldwide.⁶⁷ The ideal use of mass media is to provide information, education, and entertainment, but the dissemination of advertising material is also one of its legitimate capacities. However, the goals of the few rich people in control of the major mass media are to influence and persuade the public in matters of their choosing and make money. Therefore, the mass media are costly businesses to operate. The return from cover pieces or fees to access service is now relatively minor, and as a consequence media operations are financed through advertising. This means that the interest of proprietors and advertisers together are the wheels that make the media run.

The pertinent question is, who owns and controls the media? Since the mass media are powerful means of communication, those who own and control the media control the people and society; they also control society's economic and political power. According to Karl Marx, as quoted by Denis Mcquail, society has two classes: the exploited or working class and the exploiters or owners of the means of production.⁶⁸ Communication media are being owned by the ruling capitalist class and operate in the interest of that class. The question of power is fundamental to Marxism and Marxist interpretation of mass media that media is ultimately instruments of control by the ruling capitalist class.

⁶⁵ Jacob J. Sraampi, *Understanding Communication Media* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1981), 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 16

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Denis Mcquail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications), 82-83.

Social media is interactive since the tools that enable social media did not exist until recently; it is, therefore, a subset of new media. Social media is, by definition interactive. You can blog, podcast, crank out videos on YouTube, host Blog Talk Radio shows, and more. All can be done by yourself, and no one else has to produce useful media. Social media is the opposite of mass media in one way because it requires the participation of others. Facebook, Twitter, for example, would never have existed without other users in the network. PodCamp is a conference that would never have existed if it was only one person who showed up. Take any social networks, remove the people, and you have something not useful at all.⁶⁹

In popular conception and lingo, social media is typically referred to using the term 'Web 2.0', which represents a paradigm shift from Web 1.0. A more traditional approach characterizes the latter. The internet is seen as an online library or repository of information with static HTML websites, email with read-only content, and large data directories. In contrast, according to Pauline Hope, the social media and participatory nature of Web 2.0 is connected with more dynamic, user-generated content circulated among social networks found on the blogosphere, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter Flickr and Digg, and other systems. Given the potential of social media that support interactive communication, the same people who consume what is on the Web increasingly produce it. As a result, the traditional delineation between producers and consumers, authors and audience are blurred.⁷⁰ Social networks allow the exchange of textual, visual, and video information among participants, known as 'users' and as hybrid producers and consumers or pro-consumers. However, the political economy of social media will show the commodification of social media.

⁶⁹ See Christopher S. Peen, "Awaken Your Superhero" <http://www.christopherspenn.com/2008/09/social-media-and-new-media-are-not-the-same/> (accessed 02/09/2011).

⁷⁰ Pauline Hope Cheong, "Religion and Social Media: Got Web?," in *Media Development*, ed. Philip Lee (Toronto: WACC, 2011), 23.

5. Political Economy of Social Media

Meshack distinguished that “at the heart of the political economy of social media there are two contradictory trends.”⁷¹ On the one hand, social media represents the unprecedented socialization of communication. On the other hand, the means of communication are democratized. Every internet user can communicate, tweet, create a blog, be a citizen journalist, and join a custom-made social network. Socialization here refers not only to the decentralization of expression to each member of the audience, but also the ability of users to cooperate among themselves on a wide scale communal, national, or transnational and create a media which is radically social of the people, by the people, for the people.

Meshack further observes that, on the other hand, social media also represent a trend towards the unprecedented commodification of communication. The audience’s social communication is increasingly commodified and sold on the market, becoming a primary force of production in the political economy of social media. Social media sites are predominantly commercial spaces structured and run according to the rationale of capital accumulation rather than social communication. As immaterial products of data and information, communication and sociability become increasingly important forces of production in contemporary capitalism. As their production is increasingly taking place within digital media, the commodification of communication succeeds.

These two trends are dialectical; they are contradictory and complementary, and above all, tenuous communication, in turn, boosts the commodification of communication. At the same time, the socialization of communication, the ability of the audience to communicate among itself, may also undermine and disrupt commodification as is the case with Wikipedia where the socialization of the media leads to the creation of common knowledge, rather than commodification.

⁷¹ Samuel W. Meshack, “Conceptualizing New Media Power”, in *Regional Conference, on New Media Challenge and Alternatives: Towards Peace Journalism*, 16th -18th January 2019 Clark Theological College, Mokokchung.

The trend towards the commodification of data and communication and the exploitation of audience labour enhanced opportunities for the audience to express themselves, collaborate and participate in the reproduction of society through fairly accessible media. Indeed, the political economy of social media is founded on social media being a juxtaposition of a means of communication and a means of production, an arena for sociability, and a site of labour.⁷² These trends are dialectical: they feed into each other, but can also disrupt one another, leaving the field of the political, social dynamic and open for change.

6. Impact of Social Media

Social media is like a two-edged sword. Dependent upon how it is used, it can build bridges of understanding and respect between inter-religious groups and can encourage harmony, reconciliation, and liberation of the people, or it can redirect the established social fabric, encourage conflict, and undermine or destroy prevailing moral norms of both the individual and corporate life.

Arjen Nauta, in his article “Radical Islam, Globalisation and Social Media: Martyrdom Videos on the Internet”⁷³ argues that the martyrdom videos promote suicide bombers and radical Islam such as fundamentalism, Salafism, Jihadism, and Islamism. The use of high-tech devices and instruments such as social media might also be a means of propaganda for releasing prisoners or the ousting of a London-based Imam who has not followed the Islamic creed strictly enough, according to the appeal. During the Second Chechen War (1999-2009), this trend developed towards producing videos of Martyrs, killed either by Russian forces or in suicide attacks. The radical Muslims who took many hostages in the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow in 2002 had also made a video in advance, which was broadcast inside the theatre during the crisis. They proclaimed themselves martyrs for Allah. Another vital source of martyrdom videos was the Second Intifadah, during which many radical Muslim committed suicide attacks against Israeli targets. The Iraq war was also the cause of a considerable increase in the production of martyrdom videos, although these were

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Arjen Nauta, "Radical Islam, Globalisation and Social Media: Martyrdom Videos on the Internet," in *Social Media and Religious Change*, eds. David Eric, John Herbert, Marie Gillespie, Anita Greenhill (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 121-138.

often of poor quality. Research has indicated that many of those videos were homemade and filmed from cars. However, social media has been used as a tool for religious propaganda.

These new media and ways of networking also have important implications for society, culture, and politics. Besides offering alternative means of presenting news, information, and entertainment, social media sites present opportunities for establishing and building virtual networks both within countries and across national borders. Moreover, the network capacity of social media has been significant in empowering both individuals and communities and in driving collective action. Such examples prompt further reflection on the role of social media in promoting social transformation and a culture of peace. Respond to the survey of WACC, *Global Ethics Forum 2011-2012*, broadly acknowledge the potential for social media to facilitate dialogue, promote the ready exchange of information and ideas, and mobilize collective action.⁷⁴ In particular, although with reservations, they highlighted innovative applications of social media used to promote peace and social justice in their country:

- i. Social Media and Post-Election Crisis in Kenya; On February 28th 2008, Kenya's president Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga signed a power-sharing agreement after two months of violence that followed the controversial presidential election results. The clashes left over 1000 people dead and 500,000 displaced. Both presidential parties claimed they had won the polls, which brought tension; therefore, the Kenyan internal security minister John Michuki announced a ban on live broadcasts. However, Social media tools like wikis, blogs, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, and mashups were increasingly used to organize and share information about the crisis, violence and raise funds.⁷⁵ In addition, social media have embraced peace awareness campaigns that have greatly impacted reconciling Kenyans after the post-election violence in 2007/08.

⁷⁴ Philip Lee, "Introduction", *Media Development, Journal*, vol. LVIII, ed. (Toronto: WACC, 2011), 4-5.

⁷⁵ See Maarit Makinen & Mary Wangu Kuira, "Social Media and Post-Election Crisis in Kenya", <https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=ictafrica> (accessed, 18/07/2019).

- ii. Typhoon Morakot passed through the Asia-Pacific region in August 2009. The typhoon caused damage in Japan, China, and the Philippines, but the most severe damage was seen in Taiwan. In the aftermath of Typhoon Morakot, Taiwan would experience significant flooding, which would displace 24,950 people. In the end, over 600 Taiwanese would die as a result of Typhoon Morakot.⁷⁶

During Typhoon Morakot, The Association of Digital Culture Taiwan established an unofficial Morakot Online Disaster Report Center. They then asked people in the areas affected by the typhoon to monitor Twitter and other Social Media sites and post information on damage and people in need of assistance to the Online Disaster Report Center. The day after this report center was established, it was integrated into the Taiwanese government's official communication systems.⁷⁷ Through the social media site, people in Taiwan were able to get the assistance they needed, such as requests for volunteers and donations after Typhoon Morakot. Thus, in Taiwan, social media has been effective in rallying help for relief efforts after Typhoon Morakot.

- iii. Occupy Wall Street was born in September 2011 as a response to a call of action made by the anti-consumerist Canadian magazine Ad-busters on July 13 with a blog post to set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. When the first occupiers originally came to protest, their game plan was not entirely clear. However, despite this lack of clarity and paradoxically because of it, occupy rapidly began to spread throughout the United States and abroad. From major cities to small towns in rural America, people seemed drawn to the explosion of outrage aimed broadly against all that was wrong with American society.

⁷⁶ See Cheng-Min Huang & Edward Chan, Adnan A Hyder, "Web 2.0 and Internet Social Networking: A New tool for Disaster Management? - Lessons from Taiwan" https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47356786_Web_20_and_Internet_Social_Networking_A_New_tool_for_Disaster_Management_-_Lessons_from_Taiwan (accessed, 18/07/2019).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Though the movement did not issue clear-cut demands, it became evident that this was a movement of the 99% of the broad masses of people robbed of their due share of society's wealth and opportunities by millionaires and billionaires that is the 1%. When the call for action towards OWS went on the internet, it was unpredictable how many people would react. Whether new communication technologies can change the mobilization process depends on how we consider active participation in the movement; do we only count the physical presence as participation, or do we even count clicking 'like' as participation? The park did not receive 20,000 protestors on its first day, which was the proposed call for action. But the protest, however, went 'viral', and it had far more supporters than the initial anticipation of 20,000, even if people who 'supported from home' are not taken into account.⁷⁸ New media once again proved worthy as a powerful medium for effective mobilization.

A movement that started with no specific objectives slowly evolved into a movement that aimed to reverse the trend from preceding decades by which neoliberal agenda of U.S and global capitalism has tremendously increased social and economic inequality. Suddenly a progressive movement was headlining news and could not be ignored. In an era where many have come to believe the neoliberal credo that 'there is no alternative,' suddenly there came an opening reminiscent of what the movement against neoliberal globalization had previously claimed, that 'another world is possible.'

- iv. The Arab Spring began in Tunisia in 2011 when a fruit vendor set himself on fire in protest in front of a government building. The term is used in reference to a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East.

Social media in the Arab world before the revolution in 2011 had been described as marginal, alternative, and elitist, and their impact minimal because of the low

⁷⁸ See Ethan Earle, "A Brief History of Occupy Wall Street", <http://www.rosalux-nyc.org> (accessed 07/01/2019). See also Jonathan Massey, "Occupying Wall Street: Places and spaces of Political Actions" <https://placesjournal.org/article/occupying-wall-street-places-and-spaces-of-political-action/> (accessed 06/01/2019).

penetration rates of the internet. However, the 2011 events across the Arab world have brought social media to the forefront, with many crediting Facebook, weblogs, and Twitter as facilitating the revolutions that have taken place.

On February 25, 2011, Vice-President Omar Suleiman announced the resignation of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. However, this outcome was unthinkable only three months back when Mubarak gained power through widespread vote-rigging and repression. This resulted from remarkable mobilization, as first tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and eventually over a million Egyptians took to the streets to demand his removal. Through the use of technology and social media, in particular, ample reasons to expose his tyranny and updates about the event were brought into people's living rooms across the world, enabling them to participate and witness the event in unprecedented detail.⁷⁹

Some may argue that internet activism played little part in affecting Mubarak's ousting. The protests continued throughout the blackout between January 28 and February 2, where the government hoped that the activist would flounder with their means of communication deprived, but the exact opposite happened. However, many activists managed to find proxies to get back online and reach the critical Mass despite the blackout. Nevertheless, the damage had already been done.

A survey by Dubai School of Government found that nearly 85 percent of Facebook usage throughout the demonstrations was to promote and organize activism, raise awareness, and spread information about events. Twitter cannot be said to have had the same mass impact as Facebook. It had only around 130,000 members in Egypt, against Facebook 7 million users.⁸⁰ Media played a significant role in enabling mediated mobilization and participatory journalism through the facilitation of perpetual connectivity.

⁷⁹ See Tim Eaton "Internet Activism and the Egyptian Uprising: Transforming Online Dissent into the Offline World" <https://www.westminsterpapers.org/articles/abstract/10.16997/wpcc.163/> (accessed 05/07/2018).

⁸⁰ Ibid

- v. The Nirbhaya Rape Protest Movement: In December 2012, a young physiotherapy intern, Nirbhaya, was brutally gang-raped and critically injured in a moving bus in Delhi. She died a few days later due to a serious internal injury. The entire nation came together and expressed its outrage in the public domain through different social media. Ordinary citizens led demonstrations and candlelight vigils all across the country to demand strong action against the central government's culprits and for strong measures in the existing rape law to be taken.

For the first time in the history of India, many citizens came forward to report the events. Journalists were posting photographs and videos online, thus generating the young technology savvy Indians to spread their outrage across the country and voicing their opinions against the flaws in our legal system. Within days it became a place for social change.⁸¹

The massive protest led the government to set up Justice Verma Committee⁸² to change the rape law. Social media played a pivotal role in mobilizing people for this mass social movement. Mass media, no doubt, played its part in telecasting all developments of the movement, but it was the smartphone that helped carry the updates to all masses in the streets via Facebook, Twitter, etc.

From the analysis on social media it is found that social media plays an important role in all spheres of life. Therefore, the following discussion will be on religion and media to understand how religion is represented in social media.

7. Religion and Modernization

The debate on religion and development is not new. A convenient and telling entrance point into the debate is Max Weber's sociology of religion. For decades, scholars have argued about his explanation without concluding how religion and development are intertwined and explain the different developments in East and West.

⁸¹ K.D. Mishra & S. Krishnaswami, "Citizen Journal in India: A Case Study of Delhi" in *Journal of Education and Social Policy*, vol. I (June, 2014), 24-36.

⁸² "Justice Verma Committee" was constituted to recommend amendments to the Criminal Law so as to provide for quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminals accused of committing sexual assault against women.

The debate was concluded with the observation that, over the last decades, Japan, South Korea, India, and China have developed capitalist economies and have become highly modernized, with and not against their religions and the attitudes promoted by them. The solution to these riddles lies partly in the chosen approach: attempting to define the ‘spirit’ or ethos of religion and explore how this is applied to the economic activities of believers focused on normative teaching. According to Weber’s explanation of the world, religion thus serves as a map of the world: on this map ‘West’ is distinguished from ‘East’ and religion is the variable to explain why the ‘West’ is like it is and, and at the same time, why it is different from ‘East’.⁸³ To Weber and many other sociologists or scholars of religion, it is quite obvious that the development of the terminology of ‘religion(s)’ is a Western construct: a theoretical concept under which Western scholars grouped very different worlds and phenomena (Hinduism in India, Confucianism, and Taoism in China). On this basis, one can explain why Hindus, Buddhists etc., did not develop like the observers who mostly hailed from a Christian background.

Therefore, it is important to note why religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt, and influential in human society. It has shaped people’s relationships with each other, influencing family, community, economic, and political life. Religious beliefs and values motivate human action, and religious groups organize their collective religious expressions. Thus, religion is a significant aspect of social life, and the social dimension is an important part of religion. However, there are many scholarly approaches like the Marxist approach to religion as a semiautonomous instance of human practice that has not commended itself. Instead, religion has customarily been defined as an autonomous sphere of personal experience and belief determined by extra-social and superhuman attractions.⁸⁴ In a similar fashion, a traditional view is that religion harms society because it sanctifies tyrants and justifies the exploitation of the masses. According to Marx and Engels, “religion is a great retarding force, it is the *visionaries* of history” and “the person has ever gone hand

⁸³ Michael Biehl, "Religion, Development and Mission," in *Religion: Help or Hindrance to Development?*, ed. Kenneth Mtata (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 100-102; see Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. by Ephraim Fischoff & Talcott Parsons (London: Methuen, 1971).

⁸⁴ Burton L. Mack, "Social Formation," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun & Russel T. McCutcheon (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 285.

and hand with the landlord.”⁸⁵ Joshua Thurow noted that the term ‘religion’ is divided into two categories: substantive definition aiming to identify an essence of religion, whereas functional definition seeks to delineate what religion does. In other words, substantive definitions define religion in terms of some belief or activity, whereas functional purposes define religion in terms of the role it plays in individual or group life.⁸⁶

According to the *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of English language*, ‘religion’ means, “A belief binding the spiritual nature of man to supernatural beings, as involving a feeling of dependence and responsibility, together with the feeling and practices which naturally flow from such a belief”.⁸⁷ Etymologically the word “religion” comes from ancient Cicero “relegere” which denotes from ‘religiosum’ means ‘Religious institution’. Modern etymologists suggest religion as Reverence for God (the gods), the fear of God, connected with a careful pondering of divine things; piety, religion, both pure, piety and that which is manifested in religious rites and ceremonies; hence the rites and ceremonies, as well as the entire system of religion and worship were frequently called the “religio or religiones”.⁸⁸

The *dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* distinguished that considerable controversy surrounds the definition of ‘religion.’ A definition that explicitly identifies the belief in a God as an essential feature of religion seems too narrow, as that would exclude some forms of Buddhism. A popular definition of ‘religion’ today is through giving examples; a religion is a tradition such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or those traditions like them. An alternative definition which aims at giving greater guidance is as follows: “A religion is a body of teachings and prescribed practices about an ultimate, sacred reality or state of being that calls

⁸⁵ Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. by Institut Marksa & Engelsa Linena (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1955), 15-18

⁸⁶ Joshua C. Thurow, "Religion, "Religion," and Tolerance," in *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict*, eds. Russel Powel & Julian Savulescu Steve Clarke (London: Oxford, 2013), 146-161.

⁸⁷ Albert H. Marckwardt, et al., *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 2 eds (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1966), 1064.

⁸⁸ Charlton T. Lewis & Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, eds. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1962), 1556.

for reverence or awe, that guides its practitioners into what it describes as a saving, illuminating, or emancipatory relationship to this reality through a personally transformative life of prayer, ritualized mediations, and or moral practices like repentance and oral and personal regeneration.”⁸⁹

During the late 19th century, a scholar of religion Ninian Smart argued for a ‘dynamic phenomenology’ distinct from the ‘synchronic and static’ forms of earlier phenomenology, which notes the relationship “between the different dimension of religion and world view.”⁹⁰ By dimensions, Smart is referring to seven components of human religious experience. He prefers to give each a double name, which helps to elucidate them. The dimensions are⁹¹ the ritual or practical; the doctrinal or philosophical; the mythic or narrative; the experiential or emotional; the ethical or legal; the organizational or social; the material or artistic. In effect, Smart’s dimensions are typologies for understanding how common religious characteristics interrelate within various settings.

Lyotard begins his Phenomenology of sociology by claiming that any form of experimental science aims “to establish constant relations between phenomena.”⁹² Lyotard cites Durkheim as an example of this process in sociology. In his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim argues that the sacred, defined as that which is set apart from the profane, has its origin in totemism, which, in Lyotard’s word, ‘is a sublimation of the social.’ Already, in Durkheim, we can see that prior notions are assumed the nature of the social institution and the character of the sacred. These thought essences constantly correct observation, lest the observational result of the blind.⁹³ In sociology, as in all the human sciences, the human defines the meaning inherent in the phenomena. This involves the researcher engaging with the other, an engagement that affects and directs the meaning obtained. The comprehension of the

⁸⁹ Charles Taliaferro and Elsa J. Marty, *A dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, eds. (New York: Continuum, 2010), 196-197.

⁹⁰ Ninian Smart, *Dimension of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World Beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 7-11.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, trans. by Brian Beakley (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 95.

⁹³ Ibid, 97

phenomena, of the things themselves, is a human comprehension undertaken in a dialogue between humans.

8.1. Religion and Media

The relationship between religion and media has recently been subject to more thorough reflection in academia and a public debate. Mayer & Moors asserted that in the 1980s religion and electronic media were by and large seen as belonging to different spheres, with the notable exception of American televangelists, who were dismissed as conservative. Only the spread of the televangelical format in Pentecostal-charismatic movements in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, but also the deliberate and skillful adoption of various electronic and digital media; cassettes, radio, video, television, and the Internet, and the formats and styles associated with these media, by Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, or indigenous movements.⁹⁴ It seems that, as a *New York Times* article of May 16, 2002, aptly expressed it, in the wake of the third millennium, we cannot help but realize that “religion finds technology.”⁹⁵ At the same time as we are reminded, for instance, by the prominence of Mel Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ* and the rise of religious theme parks worldwide, religion also features prominently in cinematographic and other forms of entertainment.

Mayer & Moors, argued that the new forms of mediation not only transform religious discourses and practices but religion also features in films, videos, and TV programs in a framework of entertainment or ‘infotainment.’ Addressing the link between religion and the ‘culture industry,’ it is vital to analyze the implication of the commodification and proliferation of media and religion as part and parcel of mass culture while avoiding three pitfalls. The first is to devalue the ‘culture industry’ because it is held to be watering down authentic culture and to be re-feudalizing the public sphere; the second danger is to overemphasize the capacity of audiences to appropriate and even subvert the message. The third pitfall adopts the perspective of neoliberal capitalism and asserts that ‘this is what the people want’ thereby becoming apologetic for commercialization and liberalization of the media.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Birgit Mayer & Annelies Moors, "Religion Media, and the Public Sphere," in *Religion Media, and the Public Sphere*, eds. Birgit Mayer & Annelies Moors (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2006), 1.

⁹⁵ J.D. Biersdorfer, "Religion Finds Technology." 16th May, *New York Times*, 2002.

⁹⁶ Birgit Mayer & Annelies Moors, "Religion Media, and the Public Sphere," 2.

Nevertheless, Modern Technology, from cyber-rituals to popularized televised religious serials, is called upon to facilitate the resurgence of Hindu nationalism, both in India itself and in the Indian diaspora. On the other hand, the Indian film industry seems overly involved in multi-ethnic cosmopolitan circuits to afford a narrow identity politics. The politics of making public or visible what remains unsaid in verbal discourse is also evident in situations of strong political contests. In Palestine, documentary films inadvertently reveal what remains concealed in academic writing: the politics of embodied presence. In Indonesia, journalists, otherwise protagonists of transparency, refuse to identify the religious belongings of particular groups involved in violence to avoid engendering more violence, a move that may turn out to be counterproductive. Where mediated visual representations of indigenous culture have been highly contested, such as in the case of the Aboriginals in Australia, the identity politics involved in media production is crucial.⁹⁷

8.2. Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space

Steward Hoover observed that the media is today the most credible sources of social and cultural information, setting the plan and the context for much of what we think and know about reality. Religion, which addresses itself to such questions, must be expressed and experienced differently today as a result. Several studies have suggested a central role of media in the community and social solidarity. This has been claimed particularly for youth and young adults. Religion and religious organizations have traditionally been thought to fill this role.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, much has been made of media content and its cultural and moral values. Much of this is a critique of media, lamenting the negative and anti-social messages that dominate there. What are the prospects for religion and religious values if the dominant sector of public discourse, the media, constantly carries contradictory and antagonistic views?⁹⁹ Media have been claimed to be a negative psychological

⁹⁷ Ibid, 16.

⁹⁸ Steward M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 10.

force, deteriorating the quality of individual and social life, equivalent to addiction even to the extent of determining when we eat, sleep, or socialize.

However, the postmodern era requires a broader view of media for the expanding range of religious experiences. The ability to create, obtain, and publish a variety of media is expanding exponentially. In social media cases, forms are readily accessible, user-friendly, and cheap, which creates a culture of sharing.¹⁰⁰ This gives the idea to orient one's beliefs, elicit strong feelings, involve ritualized behaviours, and enable individuals to form communities. Religious institutions like Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and members of other faiths all use media to varying degrees.

Some eighteen years ago, the respected historian of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith, delivered an influential paper entitled 'the Devil in Mr. Jones.' The subject of Smith's report was the profoundly disturbing mass suicide of some 914 members of the Peoples Temple, led by the Reverend James Warren Jones, in Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978. For his entree into this troubling and perplexing phenomenon, Smith reminds us that the academic study of religions was born mainly during the era of the European Enlightenment. As a product of the Enlightenment quest for rational understanding and humanistic tolerance, the study of religion has a fundamental duty to try to make coherent sense of even the most seemingly senseless religious events.¹⁰¹

Indeed, Smith even suggests that the Jonestown incident poses the ultimate challenge to the historian of religions: precisely because of its seeming irrationality, incomprehensibility, and shocking enigma, it poses the greatest threat to an academic discipline that claims to make rational sense out of all religious phenomena: one might argue that Jonestown was the most important single event in the history of religions, for if we continue to leave it un-understandable, we will have surrendered our rights to the academic world. Therefore, in the process of examination about the religious

¹⁰⁰ Daniel A Stout, *Media and Religion: Foundation of an Emerging Field* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 47-50.

¹⁰¹ See Hugh B. Urba, "The Devil at the Heaven's Gate: Rethinking the Study of Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space," in *The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, vol. 3 no. 2, (April, 2000), 268-302.

phenomena, it is vital to critically analyze the nature of religion as a quest to understand the possibility of tolerance in religions.

8.3. Religion as Quest

‘Religion as quest’ examined the degree to which a person finds doubt a critical characteristic of their religion. It also sought to gauge a person’s willingness to express the full complexity of the essential questions of life. People with quest-oriented religion are unwilling to accept the ‘past answers’ provided by established religion. Finally, religion as a quest looked at a person’s readiness to review their own beliefs. Batson further explained that Quest consists of a critical, questioning attitude that construes doubt as positive and truth claims as invariable tentative rather than absolute. In addition, unlike other forms of religiosity, individuals high in quest can face existential questions without reducing their complexity.¹⁰² Quest correlates strongly and inversely with prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance and is associated with reflective moral deliberation, increased helping behavior, and cognitive complexity.¹⁰³ This makes intuitive sense, given that those high in quest are comfortable in the face of moral and metaphysical uncertainty, making them better able to tolerate dissenting views or deviant lifestyles.

The most straightforward way of justifying toleration is pragmatic, as Thurow rightly noted that those who endorse a pragmatic justification of tolerance are in the good philosophical company of David Hume (1778).¹⁰⁴ Our community may not approve the practices of some or other religion, and, collectively, we may be able to prevent these from taking place. However, if we act to suppress such practices, we may provoke civil unrest, which may lead to violent confrontation or perhaps even war between rival religious groups.

Whether religion causes tolerance/intolerance, in the same sense that we use ‘cause,’ Thurow’s observation on when we say that smoking causes lung cancer must

¹⁰² See C.D. Batson, & P.A. Schoenrade, “Measuring religion as a quest,” in *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 30 (1991), 430-447.

¹⁰³ Steve Clarke & Russel Powell, "Religion, Tolerance, and Intolerance: View from across the Disciplines," in *Religion Intolerance, and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*, eds. Russel Powel & Julian Savulescu Steve Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 13.

¹⁰⁴ Joshua C. Thurow, "Religion, "Religion," and Tolerance," 148.

be considered. Smoking does not always cause lung cancer in every smoker. Similarly, talking on a cell phone while driving causes a car accident, but it is not very likely that any person talking on a cell phone while driving will get into an accident. This is worth noting because it is tempting to consider whether religion causes intolerance to assume a certain model of causation; for example, one thinks of religion causing intolerance by inciting it. But of course, inciting is not the only possible way of causing intolerance. With the notion of 'tolerance', the first and most obvious thing to note is that tolerance is an attitude a person or group has towards another person or group.¹⁰⁵ According to Willard Oxtoby, the numerous experience has, in addition to being serious, the tendency to invoke fear and trembling, a quality of fascination, the tendency to attract, fascinate and compel. As such, it offers a window to view religion as a sense of power beyond the human that can be approached both rationally and emotionally, individually or corporately. This power is celebrated through words, rituals, and symbols and passed on to generations as doctrines or traditions in a set of forms, creeds, and theological explications of the experience. It further offers a view of one's existence and provides a direction for how one must live one's life in this world.¹⁰⁶ It would be quite challenging to see the standards by which a secular society would judge which kind of tolerance and intolerance are good and bad.¹⁰⁷ Whether religion causes good and bad types of intolerance and tolerance, where religious and non-religious folk, each using their standards, would agree about the goodness or badness of the action of tolerance or intolerance, must be examined. Religious practices are experienced not only in individuals and communities but also online as virtual communities.

9. Online Religious Communities

For many decades sociologists and cultural anthropologists engaged in community studies in trying to find out the displacement of spatial communities such as neighbourhoods by networks of people drawn together by affinities and choices and not mere physical proximity.¹⁰⁸ In this connection, Benedict Anderson, a cultural

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 150.

¹⁰⁶ Willard Oxtoby, "World Religion: Eastern Traditions," in *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, ed. (Toronto: Oxford, 2002), 454.

¹⁰⁷ Joshua C. Thurow, "Religion, "Religion," and Tolerance," 150.

¹⁰⁸ Dawson Lorne L. & Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 81.

theorist, wrote on Imagined Communities, highlighting that people perceive themselves as a community with total strangers who just so happen to be citizens of the same nation. According to him, a nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the images of their communion. An imagined community is different from a virtual community because it is not based on familiar face-to-face interaction between its members.”¹⁰⁹ At this point, the concepts of imagined communities can be applicable and relevant to this new age of new media and communication in terms of bringing people close to one another in interaction without physical contact, creating online communities.

In recent years, several scholars have similarly argued for the ability of virtual reality in the form of computerized spaces. As Jennifer Cobb puts it, virtual reality is “a place that feels removed from the physical world.” One enters a virtual world. One leaves a virtual world. One shifts one’s “appearance” when one enacts one’s avatar in a given virtual world. Furthermore, within such virtual worlds, there is no eating, no sleeping, and no aging. Some have even considered the experience of inhabiting virtual space as a sort of digital heaven, or perhaps, as Cobb describes it, “the Platonic realm incarnate.”¹¹⁰ Such a realm naturally invites our wish to inhabit it. Wagner says that “the experience of interacting with virtual reality is characterized by intense desire, we make the screen a fetish; we desire it, not only do we want to watch the screen but also to be seen on it.”¹¹¹

Glenn Young brings out the continuity of religion online and online religion in Internet Christianity. Religion online provides the interested web traveler with information about religion: doctrine, policy, organization, an opportunity for service, religious books and articles etc.¹¹² Further, Heidi Campbell notes that new

¹⁰⁹ Benedict R O’G Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 224.

¹¹⁰ Jennifer Cobb, *Cybergrace: The Search for God in the Digital World* (New York: Crown Publication, 1998), 186-199.

¹¹¹ Rachel Wagner, *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality* (London: Routledge, 2012), 81.

¹¹² Glenn Young, “Reading and Praying online: The Continuity of Religion online and Online Religion in the Internet Christianity”, in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, eds. Dawson Lorne L & Douglas E Cowan (New York: Routledge, 2004), 93-94.

communication media supports networked forms of community, encourage experimentation with religious identity-construction and self-presentation, and promote drawing from multiple and divergent religious sources and encounters simultaneously. Paul Harvey proposed that digital media and blogs are becoming something like a combination of spiritual journals and diaries together with personalized newsletters, allowing for people to publicly express their daily thoughts and spiritual practices.¹¹³

Social networking sites have become the primary venues of online activity in recent years, particularly for teens and young adults. Boyd and Ellison have pointed to social networking sites as loci for identity construction for persons in this age group. Facebook has been explored specifically as a locus for identity construction online.¹¹⁴ In addition, religious groups on Facebook have been noted as features growing in popularity. Further, Mark D. Johns stated that religiosity had been identified as a factor in predicting how users participate in Facebook.¹¹⁵

In the view of Stuckrad, such a communicative turn is much needed. There simply is no escaping the fact that the only thing scholars of religion have as a basis for scrutiny is visible and expressed religion, i.e., religious propositions that are communicated in sentences, signs, and symbolic action. Nevertheless, many scholars have long concerned themselves with “spiritual being” or the “belief” in them. They have disregarded the fact that academic scrutiny can analyze only the communication of these beliefs.¹¹⁶ Although communication is not limited to language, the basic principle of communication follows the logical notion that we are concerned exclusively with belief sentences.

¹¹³ Heidi Campbell, “Approaches to Religious Research in Computer-Mediated Communication”, in *Mediating Religion: Conversation in Media Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell & Sophia Marriage (London: T&T Clark A Continuum Imprint, 2003).

¹¹⁴ D. Boyd & N. Ellison, “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship,” 210.

¹¹⁵ Mark D. Johns, “Voting Present: Religious Organizational Groups on Facebook,” in *Digital Religion Social Media and Culture*, eds. Peter Fischer-Nielson, Stefan Gelfgren, Charles Ess & Pauline Hope Cheong (Frankfurt Peter Lang, 2012), 153.

¹¹⁶ Kocku Von Stuckrad, “Discursive Study of Religion: From States of the Mind to Communication and Action,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, vol.15, no.3 (2003), 255-271.

The doctrine that all the major religions explicitly preached in their texts is peace and condemnation of violence and war. Yet, whether they are Christian, Muslim, or Hindu, the religious institutions find themselves in information and media-saturated society. The exchange of messages through mediated communication is becoming more and more powerful and complex. At the same time, social media have become more and more unavoidable as a determining factor for all matters. Social media platforms are among the best channels that enhance citizens' rights to information and freedom to speak, write, and share information.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the implication of the body of research in religious tolerance in social media with an examination of some of the social influences that propelled the development of this new media. With the development of social media the social and economic environment has changed due to fast growth in information and communication technologies coupled with the influential nature of social media. The powerful impact of social media has been felt in our social, cultural, and religious lives. This highlights the main concerns involved in social media, its nature, characteristics, and role in society. Social media is interactive since the tools that enable social media did not exist until recently; it is, therefore, a subset of new media. Social media is, by definition, interactive. You can blog, podcast, crank out videos on YouTube, host Blog Talk Radio shows, and more, all by yourself, and no one else has to be involved for you to be producing useful media.

Like social media, religion is held as intensely personal even though it is both social and individual. Social media and religion's relation to humanity is so intense that it can bring harmony if understood and used properly or be a barrier for our society. From the very beginning, religion plays a vital role in individuals and societies. Religion can still be the core of peace missions. Every religious perspective on human life often produces a very different picture of culture and tradition, which is difficult to understand from one corner to the other. However, the development of communication information and technology has made possibilities to access, share and learn from each other. The second chapter will discuss the approaches to religion and media to understand the role of the religious institute in social media.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Introduction

The interaction between media and religion was studied to some extent through the twentieth century. This interest has been stimulated by two current phenomena: the global spread and rapid take-up of new media on the one hand and the re-emergence of religion into the public domain as a significant international and cultural force on the other. The concurrence of these two phenomena has prompted people to wonder whether and how the two are connected. From the first chapter, it has been found that more recent studies of media and religion have taken a different approach. Working from a more cultural perspective, they view media not as an individual instrument of communication but as part of the conglomerate of technological and non-technological social mediation. People access and contribute to processes of making meaning in their lives. This approach also sees religion in broader terms. Rather than focusing on religious institutions, this views religion as something that occurs as people work with symbolic resources provided by their culture to create meaning for their daily lives, to share experiences of awe and mystery, to explore new alternative realities, and to manage the anxieties and unfilled possibilities of life.¹¹⁷ Therefore this chapter will talk about the approaches to media and religion and the outcome these will bring to the implication for the communication method in religion to understand the function and working of human communication. We need to know how people think, their worldview, human relationships, and societies.

¹¹⁷ Peter Horsfield, *From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media* (Melbourne: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 2-3.

1. Areas of Approaches to Media and Religion

With the explosion in communication and information technologies, religion and the media seem to be more connected, interdependent, and interconnected. Today people experience their dependency and mediated events and messages for their religious experiences, and that people's religious meaning is shaped by mediated messages. In recent years alone, we have seen several mediated events that directly and seriously touch upon the essence of religion. The mediated event such as 25 April 2015, the Earthquake in Nepal, 13 November 2015, the Paris Attack, and 22 March 2016, Brussels attack; or the public struggles within religious groups over social values such as homosexuality rights; or the resurgence of religious fundamentalism in all nooks and corners and its instantaneous coverage given by media, all these suggests that the realms of religion and media can no longer be easily separated.

1.1. Historical Approaches to Media and Religion

One of the key understandings of situations of conflict is to develop a historical perspective. As Jolyon Mitchel noted, news that tells the immediate story, such as that there has been a suicide bombing in Jerusalem, a wave of killings in Nigeria, or an explosion in Bali without contextualizing them in their religious and historical context, fail to provide adequate coverage. Likewise, discussion of the religious implications of the uses of specific media without reference to their historical background will only be the description.¹¹⁸ In short, a historical approach to the interaction between media and religion will inevitably lead to shallow insights. In the last century, the initial response to many religious leaders and commentators to the advent and use of radio, cinema, and television was one of suspicious caution or avoidance. Malcolm Muggeridge's argument, quoted by Jolyon Mitchel, that television is inevitably a medium of fantasy and illusion is an example of one such iconoclastic response.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Jolyon Mitchell, "Emerging Conversation in the Study of Media, Religion and Culture," in *Mediating Religion: Conversation in Media, Religion and Culture*, eds. Jolyon Mitchell & Sophia Marriage (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 340-346.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

While this negative response has not entirely abated, many religious leaders have embraced communication technologies over the past eighty years, believing they can effectively communicate faith messages.¹²⁰ It is helpful to analyze the historical roots of these iconoclastic and iconographic responses to demonstrate how these approaches are problematic and offer an alternative audience-centered model for interacting with the media. David Morgan argues that a historical approach can inform understanding of how audiences interpret and appropriate images. These images have served as powerful symbols because believers have learned from childhood to regard them as illustrations, as untrammelled visualizations of what they profess. Understanding why this is so is part of visual piety, by which he means the visual formation and practice of religious belief. In doing so, David Morgan asserted that “we must attend not only to those religions that actively employ imagery but also to the largely unwritten cultural history and aesthetic of popular religious art. Only then can we begin to understand how images articulate the social structures of a believers' world.”¹²¹ There has also been growing attention paid to the relationship between religion and the media, such as the use of new media and communication technologies by religious groups, the representation and exploration of religion and spirituality in the media, the religious significance and content of media texts and rituals, and the widespread consumption of religious and spiritual media.

Nick Couldry, a media cultural and social theorist, discusses the overview of religion with the consequences of what media institutions do for the organization of social space and everyday life. Contemporary media is somehow like religion. This development was based on the concept and its special relationship to Durkheim's classic account of the social origins of religion.¹²² This is essential to understand how the media sociologist perhaps understands contemporary religion. Some aspects of contemporary media are rituals because they carry feelings that we associate with religious rituals.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theology of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1-2.

¹²² Nick Couldry, "Media Rituals: From Durkheim on Religion to Jade Goody on Religious Toleration," in *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age*, eds. Christopher Deacy & Elisabeth Arweck (Cornwall: ASHGATE, 2009), 43.

The historical method deals with the study of the past that requires relying on documents and other materials. Studying historical methods of religion and media is a factual descriptive endeavour of religious and communication research in relation to their origin and historical development based on reliable materials and texts. Ursula King says that the historical approach strongly insists on the structure and development of various religious traditions and emphasizes factual-descriptive expositions.¹²³ To trace out the historical origin and evolution of both religion and media, Barrie Gunter observed that the “historical method often uses the quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis, together with survey method to collect data in which group interviews and questionnaires are being applied.”¹²⁴

1.2. Cultural Approaches to Media and Religion

According to McQuail, a cultural studies approach is mainly concerned with the questions of meaning and language regarding a particular social context and cultural experience. It has its roots in the humanities, anthropology, and linguistics.¹²⁵ The core dimension of culture, such as ‘culture is shared by all members of a given society’, needs to be considered seriously in a given context. In other words, if ‘culture is shared,’ then the question of ‘by whom’, in ‘what ways’ and under ‘what condition’ it is shared becomes pertinent to explore. This new direction in studying culture demands how culture is related to power, history, resistance, politics, text, and media power.¹²⁶

A triad theory of communication is necessary for Heidegger to be taken seriously when articulating the relation among media, religion, and culture. Stimulus-response models and information systems theories are not stitched deeply enough into actual human experience to be relevant.¹²⁷ Heidegger’s radical contextualism requires

¹²³ Ursula King, "Historical and Phenomenological Approaches," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Frank Whaling (Berlin: Mouton Publisher, 1984), 36.

¹²⁴ Denis McQuail, *Mcquail S Mass Communication Theory*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publication, 2000), 13.

¹²⁵ Denis McQuail, *Mcquail S Mass Communication Theory*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publication, 2000), 13.

¹²⁶ L. Imsutoshi Jamir, "Methodological Issues in Communication Research," in *Issues in the Theological Research A Methodological Exploration*, ed. Wati Longchar (Bangalore: BTESC/SATHRI, 2010), 277-291.

¹²⁷ Clifford G. Christians, "Technology and Triadic Theories of Mediation," in *Rethinking Media Religion and Culture*, eds. Steward M. Hoove & Knut Lundby (New Delhi: SAGE Publication,

the social construction of a Berger and Luckmann or cultural approaches in which J. W. Carey noted that “we first produce the world by symbolic work and then take up residence in the world we have produced.”¹²⁸ According to the phenomenological view, human is said to produce and inhabit anchors the symbolization process without which social relations are impossible.

Rooting our understanding of religion and the media in culture is a significant advance, but it begs whether our cultural approaches account for technology adequately. If our theories of mediation do not reflect Heidegger’s complexity, they reproduce an instrumental approach to technology rather than an ontological one. Within cultural studies, traditions are dialogic constructions that are explicitly triadic. G.H. Mead, for example, “situates human symbolic practices within the structures and constraints of the bio-physical environment in which these practices occur”. He does not resort to different terminologies to analyze multiple levels of practices and constraints-mind, self, society, and biophysical environment.¹²⁹ Thus, a cultural studies method opens possibilities and awareness about the importance of depending upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context in doing research.

1.3. Sociological Approaches to Media and Religion

The sociological approach to religion and communication research has a common factor that maintains a certain degree of dialectical relationship with the society and thereby impacts it. However, the impact upon society on religion may differ from that of communication, as communication concerns itself with media and their effects on the social structure and institutions alone.¹³⁰ However, Michael Hill observes that religion is a source of social and psychological integration and can bring social changes, stability, and cohesion to human societies.¹³¹ The sociological

1997), 65-75; citing, see M.C. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. by W. Lovitt (New York: Harber & Row, 1977).

¹²⁸ J.W. Carey, *Communication as Culture* (Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 30.

¹²⁹ See also G.H Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

¹³⁰ Melvin L. DeFleur & Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication* (New York: Longman, 1989), 30.

¹³¹ Michael Hill, "Sociological Approach," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Frank Whaling (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985), 116.

approach to religion and communication often uses the qualitative focus group and ‘unobtrusive observation.’¹³² The objective of this method is to collect data by getting direct interaction with people, as in the case of focus groups, and observing ethical issues and people’s normal behaviour.¹³³

Durkheim insisted on the need to grasp the dimension of social life that transcends the everyday. He called this the serious life and saw religion as its primary, although not its only manifestation. Durkheim, however, understood the term religion in a rather special sense, for him

*“Religion is first and foremost a system of ideas by means of which individuals imagine the society of which they are members and the obscure yet intimate relations they have with it.”*¹³⁴

Religion, then for Durkheim, is not about cosmic order but the way social beings imagine the social bond that they share as members of a group. Thus, instead of analysing contemporary religion, Durkheim offered a speculative account of the ‘origins’ of religious practice in aboriginal societies. Durkheim further argued that our experiences being connected as members of a social world are at the root of our most important categorizations of that world.

There are at least two variants, one explicitly and the other less emphatically Durkheimian. The first is based on the analysis of media events as special times when it is argued, members of contemporary societies come together through media. They become aware of each other as a social whole. Second is television’s role in the organization of social life as a whole rather than just those exceptional media events whose rhetorical form is always, perhaps, resisted by some of the population.¹³⁵ The two versions are sides of the same coin: the exceptional sense of togetherness we may

¹³² Susanna Homig Priest, *Doing Media Research: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication 2000), 65.

¹³³ 133 Ravi Tiwari, "Approaches to the Study of Religion," in *Methodological Issues in Theological Discipline*, ed. Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: SATHRI, 2002), 78.

¹³⁴ Emile Durkheim, *Elementary for of Religious life*, trans. by Karen E fields (Oxford: Free Press, 1995), 227.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

feel in media events is just a more explicit concentration of the togetherness, which routinely, we act out when we switch on the television or radio or, check a news Website, to find out what is going on. Unlike many other approaches to the media, they take seriously our sense that much more is at stake in our relationship to the media than just distracted forms of image consumption.

1.4. Psychological Approaches to Media and Religion

The psychological approach to religion and media uses a common method that observes attitudes, psychological-emotional experiences, and human behaviour in relation to their choosing, processing, and responding to communication messages. D. Wimmer & R. Dominick stated that “here, the people’s attitudes and behaviour is to be closely observed.”¹³⁶ In such investigative observation, David M. Wulff observes that both religion and communication can use the ‘experimental method’ of ‘quantitative approach’ where human ‘religious behaviour’ people’s attitudes or any other human behaviour such as purchasing behaviour are systematically and scientifically observed and measured under laboratory conditions.¹³⁷ This is done in order to study how mass media messages stimulate responses in individuals and how much stimulus helps to form a particular response.¹³⁸

The psychological method of religion investigates people's psychological and emotional experiences, which are the basis of the outward expressions of religions. It also applies ‘self-observation’ and ‘questionnaires’¹³⁹ to observe and collect data concerning people's religious experience and behaviour. It deploys many different subfields of psychology to comprehend religion, including personality theory, social psychology, human development, interpersonal relationships, cognitive neuroscience, and affective processes. As Lewis R. Rambo and Mathew Haar Farris observe in the *Psychology of Religion: Towards a Multidisciplinary Paradigm*, Religion has been an important concern for psychology since its inception in the late nineteenth century in

¹³⁶ Roger D. Wimmer & Joseph R. Dominick, "Mass Media Research: An Introduction," in *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*, eds. Roger D. Wimmer & Joseph R. Dominick (Baltimore: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000), 212.

¹³⁷ David M. Wulff, "Psychological Approach," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Frank Whaling (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985), 48.

¹³⁸ Melvin L. DeFleur & Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication* 38.

¹³⁹ David M. Wulff, "Psychological Approach," 48.

Europe and the United States. Hence, psychologists' diversity of theoretical and methodological strategies deployed even though the psychology of religion has its original historical context-focused upon Christianity and Judaism. The field has gradually included other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and the new religious movements.¹⁴⁰

1.5. Anthropological Approaches to Media and Religion

Anthropology studies language and culture in the human phenomenon where religion is part of that culture. The anthropological method of religion and communication is to observe people's way of life or symbolic way of life such as the way of speaking, expressing, singing, dancing, celebrations of different festivals, food habits, work culture, religious behaviour and gestures such as bowing, kneeling, clapping, etc. In this connection, Susanna Priest states that it attempts to explain the extensive variation in human ways of life, their cultural differences, and cultural relativism, and linguistic differences.¹⁴¹

Tony Jackson noted that the common method that brings together religion and media is the significance of communication and symbols, and symbolic gestures.¹⁴² To observe and analyse such people's behaviour and ways of life, anthropological research uses two qualitative methods of 'participant observation and in-depth interview, which are commonly applicable to religion and media studies.¹⁴³ They are often applied to groups within a particular culture to investigate various communicative symbols and meaning and people's participation in such a communication process. In addition, the anthropological method of religion also often uses empirical studies to collect data.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Lewis R. Rambo & Mathew Haar Farris, "Psychology of Religion: Towards a Multidisciplinary Paradigm," in *Pastoral Psychology*, (December, 2012), 1-11.

¹⁴¹ Susanna Homig Priest, *Doing Media Research: An Introduction*, 16-18.

¹⁴² Tony Jackson, "Social Anthropological Approaches," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Frank Whaling (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985), 221-222.

¹⁴³ Arthur Asa Berger, *Media and Communication Research Method: An Introduction to Qualitative & Quantitative Methods* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication, 2000), 161.

¹⁴⁴ Frank Whaling, "Introduction," in *Contemporary Approaches to Religion*, ed. (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), 25.

From the discussion of different approaches to media and religion, it is found that religion and the media seem to be more connected, interdependent, and interconnected. Therefore, it is pertinent to inquire what communication method would be relevant for religious understanding.

2. History of Communication Trend

Unlike other research areas, communication scholarship developed as a discipline in Social Sciences only in the 20th Century. According to John C. Reinard, communication research is “studies message-related behaviour.” This is so because communication scholarship centred around what we call “the process by which participants transact and assign meaning to messages.”¹⁴⁵ At the same time, in doing communication research, one must also remember that communication is classified into various types such as intra-personal communication, inter-personal communication, group communication, organizational communication, mass communication and interactive communication using new information and communication technologies. Therefore, the methodology of communication research naturally varies according to the types of communication. In other words, choosing the right area/areas of research itself is part of communication research.

- i. Early communication research stressed the impact of messages moving from a single source to a receiver, with the possibility that the message received was not necessarily the same one that was sent due to variation of perception, a sort of static that interferes with the message content.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, the early communication research stressed generating and assigning commonality of meaning to the message among the participants.
- ii. Other communication research dealt with the power of mass media is altering our consciousness and informing our choices of the propaganda or advertising aspects of media messages. This type of analysis is very much part of current concerns about how media manipulate, for example, encouraging us to become more active

¹⁴⁵ John C. Reinard, *Foundation of Argument: Effective Communication for Critical Thinking* (Bubuge, IA: Brown U Benchmark, 1991), 4.

¹⁴⁶ See Shannon & Weaver model of communication 1949 in John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London: Routledge, 1982), 6.

consumers, become more and more materialistic in our nature, or create unrealistic perceptions of a more violent world.¹⁴⁷

On the other hand, looking at mass communication in terms of its technologies and technological arrangements alone proved unsatisfying. The invention of the Internet and the World Wide Web opened up several new avenues for mass communication, including e-mail, websites, podcasts, e-books, blogging, social networking sites, Internet Protocol Television, Internet radio, and the like. These online and digital means of producing, transmitting, and receiving messages are called new media. Social networking is a major facility available in new media formats. Social networking is defined as a social structure connecting relationships between individuals or organizations. A social networking site is an online platform where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects them to other users worldwide. This approach opens a new direction in terms of how audiences, individuals, or communities are controlled by media and become pro-consumer.

- iii. More serious and scholarly consideration of the emerging media came in several, different though related forms. A significant school of thought was rooted in what is now identified in intellectual circles as ‘the Frankfurt School’. It focused on the role of media in developing what came to be known as ‘mass society’. Ferdinand Tonnies most influentially put this that pre-industrial society was defined by a set of social relations closely connected to place, family, and worldview. With the increasing rationalization of society under industrialization, social dislocation came undermining their original and ideal situation. In such a mass society, factors of difference such as language, culture, religion, etc., for individuals would become less and less effective.¹⁴⁸ This is where mass media is thought to come in, replacing those lost ties with new ones that would link individuals to their new location.

¹⁴⁷ L. Imsutoshi Jamir, "Methodological Issues in Communication Research," 277-291.

¹⁴⁸ Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Society*, trans. by Charles P. Loomis (New York: Dover Publication Inc., 2002), 6.

- iv. Other scholars have dealt with the agenda-setting role of media, especially news media. Our media define what “news” is, and we allow them to do it when we focus our discussions on the news content as media players have defined it. However, we all know that these so-called news experts have real limitations. For example, they work within an industry that represents most news stories in terms of conflict narratives.¹⁴⁹
- v. Another exciting string of communication scholarship has incorporated advances in anthropology; this research focuses on communication culture. Such scholars speak of myth, ritual, and symbols found by audiences within the stories of our cultures. As noted by Jamir, most of our stories are told today through media channels, fictional stories, news stories, and advertising stories. Such scholars observe that global audiences interact with these stories as they view them and therefore need to keep in mind that humanity now gathers around the TV and movie screen for the magical stories.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, people absorb information and principles of socialization from these stories.
- vi. Everett Rogers, one of the foremost scholars of the communication field, has claimed that interactive, two-way technologies represent an epistemological turning point in communication research. We are moving from linear, point-to-point communication patterns to a web of networked interactions, where individual two-way dialogues are linked with wider groups.¹⁵¹

3. Communication Methods of Three Major Religions

Communication, verbal and nonverbal, is a primary means for individuals in any culture to interact with one another and members of other cultures. Hoover noted that guiding one’s communication is one or more belief systems that influence behavioural choices. Moreover, Media and religion have come together in fundamental ways. They occupy the same spaces, serve many of the same purposes,

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Asa Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life* (London: Sage Publication, 1997), 41-47

¹⁵⁰ L. Imsutoshi Jamir, "Methodological Issues in Communication Research," 280.

¹⁵¹ For detail discussion see, the nature of new communication technology, Everett Rogers, *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 2-6.

and invigorate the same practices in late modernity.¹⁵² Today, it is probably better to think of them as related rather than as separate.

Yet anthropology has a long-standing intellectual tradition of studying media. The seminal works of Jack Goody and others explore how the introduction of literacy, as new media technology, changed existing modes of oral communication and instigated social change. While Goody asserted, that the message cannot be reduced to the medium, he emphasized the need to investigate the changes stemming from the adaption of new technologies in the system of human communication because these technologies have great implications for the content as well as the social relations through which communication is organized.¹⁵³ Although the mass media influence on communication in the era of the ‘information age’ is important, as argued above, Goody’s work reminds us that the question should be addressed from a historical perspective. This is because a discussion of the historical development provides the backdrop for understanding every religion and for proposing how each contributes to value preference.

Religions are interconnected with people’s worldviews and beliefs. Some religions provide norms, including guidelines for human communication, whereas Eastern philosophies and religions provide guidelines for communication behaviour. Don Fortner observes that religions that are part of the Western worldview are represented by Christianity and Judaism, which have monotheism in common with Islam, believing in one Almighty God. The Christian God communicates with human beings through His Word (the Bible) and the Holy Spirit. A function of the Holy Spirit is to guide into truth. This aspect of Christianity distinguishes it from Eastern worldviews. As Fortner observes, “it demands recognition of a single truth, a transcendent truth that overarches all other quests for certainty.”¹⁵⁴ The Christian Bible provides all sorts of prescriptive utterances that guide moral behaviour, some related to inter-human relationships (e.g., the prohibition against murder) and others related to the relationship with God. On this De Mooij stated that “One should treat

¹⁵² Steward M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2006), 9.

¹⁵³ See Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁵⁴ Don Fortner, *Discovering Christ in All the Scripture* (Danville: Grace Books, 2007), 173.

others as one would like others to treat oneself,”¹⁵⁵ an idea that is common in most world religions or beliefs.

Further, Mooij asserted that the ‘Hindus’ gradual but increasing acceptance of the idea of ‘Hinduism’, a concept incorporating the notion that Hindus had their own distinctive and unified Hindu religion was, because of the monotheistic idea of communication, by the foreign religious system (Islamic and Christian) and mostly by debates with Christian missionaries. Moreover, the sense of being Hindu and having a distinctive religious and ethnic identity was not only an idea. It was also a feeling, and missionary attitudes and aggressive activity greatly intensified being Hindu in a socio-religious communal sense.¹⁵⁶ Exceptionally provocative were what Hindus perceived as insults and also the reality and increasing fear of conversion.¹⁵⁷

Moreover, the missionary preaching style, at least in the first half of the nineteenth century, was often aggressive and sometimes even inflammatory. Its tone is reflected in Henry Martyn’s comments on the Baptist Joshua Marshman’s preaching when he remarked that “I feel the pain that he should so frequently speak with contempt of the Brahmins, many of whom were listening with great respect and attention.” Commenting on the preaching of the Rev. Richard, a Church Mission Society (CMS) missionary at Meerut in the 1830s, one of his colleagues wrote, “Mr. Richards’ mode of proceeding was, to attack them (the Hindu audience) on the ground of their land, continually illustrating the truth of his opinions by Sanskrit quotations, denouncing Idolatry to be folly and sin” before referring to “the one true God.” In his address to Villagers near Ahmednagar in Western India, the Rev. C. P. Farrar of the same society “dwelt briefly and pointedly on the folly of idolatry, and enormities ascribed to the Hindu gods, and the sin of worshipping them.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Marieke De Mooij, *Human and Mediated Communication around the World* (New York: Springer, 2014), 71.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 165.

¹⁵⁷ Missionaries with the British military attacks on Hindu deities, and contempt Hindu customs, and cultures, and converted to Christianity.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 166.

The idea of religious boundaries, of comparison, and of discussing the comparative merits of the different religions give a brief foray through the history of communication. They illustrate that changes in human communication from the earliest stage of expressive language and through the origins of spoken language to the development of written language (including handwritten books, the development of printing, and the industrial revolution), and to current and rapid changes in the era of digital language have made possible the infusion of one culture's values into another culture.¹⁵⁹ For example, the introduction of television programming originated in the United States and spread to other cultures. It has been discussed as one reason why individuals in Japan accept more individualist value orientations than would ordinarily be expected of a traditionally collectivist culture. In addition to media influence, the exchange of business practices between the United States and modern Japan, primarily through new media like the World Wide Web, shrink the distance between the two countries and, perhaps concomitantly, the distance between their traditional value orientation.¹⁶⁰ Overall, media research gives us a powerful example of how cultural values are taught apart from the family context and religious expression.

From the discussion of the communication method of three major religions in India, it has been observed that the idea of the proclamation of every religion was based on the dominant paradigm and aggressive way of preaching, which give way to racism and discrimination. Therefore, how racism and religion are portrayed in new media will be examined critically.

4. Racism, Religion and New Media

Racism has existed throughout human history based on the belief that a particular race or person is less human because of a different outlook, skin colour, language, culture, tradition, place of birth, etc. According to Yasmin Jiwani, ethnic minorities or marginalized people, or people of colour tend to be absent from the media in general. However, they are present in stories and incidents with crime, stealing, and anti-social problems. Racism in the early 20th century was mainly

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion see Roger Fidler, *Mediamorphosis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1997), 57.

¹⁶⁰ Catherine Konsky, et al., "Religion and Communication A Study of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity", in *Intercultural Communication Studies*, vol. 2 (2000), 235-254.

between the blacks and whites in America, but today it has evolved and expanded among many different cultures in countries throughout the world.¹⁶¹ Racism is defined as the prejudice or discrimination directed against someone of another race based on such a belief.

The Constitution of India is a document of high endowment that bequeath civil liberties and human freedoms to all Indians to lead their lives in peace and harmony. The Constitution of India under the Right to Equality addresses discrimination and provides equal protection of the law in India. Articles 14 and 15 prohibit discrimination on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. However, the biggest irony against the menace of racism is the growth of Hindu Nationalism which held back the minority rights and foiled the minority attempts to affirm their guaranteed rights.

Today as we live in the age of Information Communication Technology, and along with the improvement in the quality of life, access to different types of media is no longer limited to the rich and powerful. Mass media now serves as an important platform for people to gain knowledge and share information with the world. However, this convenience also has its disadvantages. People have grown to rely heavily on media to gain new understanding and information, so much to an extent, it shapes their mentalities and perceptions. Francis Njubi rightly asserted that Information technology has traditionally been the instrument of the powerful. Newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet are used worldwide to incite racial and ethnic hatred and justify denying human rights to millions of poor people. Internet Web sites, for instance, have been used to disseminate racist propaganda, incite racial hatred and reorganize the white supremacist movement in Europe and the United States. Yet, these information technologies are not value-specific. Though controlled by the powerful, these technologies can be turned into instruments of liberation.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Yasmin Jiwani, *Discourses of Denial Mediations of Race, Gender, and Violence* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), 30.

¹⁶² Francis Njubi, "New Media, Old Struggles: Pan Africanism, Anti-racism and Information Technology," in *Critical Art*, (August, 2007), 117-134.

As such, accessibility to media content, especially that information with a racial slur or racial discourse, can influence people to a large extent. In this connection, social media can be seen as computer-mediated tools. WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. are the networking sites where users can create their accounts and expand their network by connecting with friends worldwide. Social media platforms are online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration. Social media can be used for both good and bad purposes depending upon the users.

Communication rights are the fundamental rights for humans that have been facilitated by the Supreme Court of India and in the Constitutions of India. The citizens are protected by the law as described in secular India; therefore, a brief discussion on how secularism protects the citizen from racism and discrimination will examine to understand the law function of democratic India.

5. Secularism

The word secularism seems to have been used for the first time in English by George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), like a put of ideas set forward by him as an alternative to the existing religious philosophies in 19th century Europe. It was an anti-religious, especially an anti-Christian reaction to provide a philosophy of life without any reference to the transcendent reality or Godhead. However, it was aimed at the well-being of society. Hence, James Hasting described it as a movement “intentionally ethical, negatively religious with political and philosophical antecedents.”¹⁶³

Therefore, Secularism and religion are mutually exclusive rather than hostile to each other. It means religious influence should be restricted, particularly that education, morality, and the state should be independent of religion. As Blacksheild points out secularism, is not “opposed to religion as such; it is opposed rather to the use of religious institutions, and religious motivations, in the legal-political and educative processes.”¹⁶⁴ India being a multi-religious nation, secularism is one of the

¹⁶³ James Hasting, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 11, eds. (New York: T&T Clark Publishing, 1920), 347-348.

¹⁶⁴ A.R. Blacksheild, *Secularism its Implications for Law and Life in India*, ed. G.S. Sharma (Bombay: M.N. Tripathi Private Ltd., 1966), 13.

most discussed and debated ideologies or philosophies ever since the inception of independent India. When the founding fathers of democratic India proposed secularism as a directive principle of our Constitution and nation, they considered restricting absolutism, religious fundamentalism, fanaticism, and bigotry. Apart from this, deterring majoritarianism, assuring minority rights, equality of all regardless of religion or faith, equal respect of all religions, regulation of the role of religion in political matters and much more was expected of secularism in India.

The term secularism is commonly used in present-day India to describe the relationship which exists or which ought to exist between the state and religion. However, the word secularism is not defined in the Constitution. The prevailing definitions are vague and based upon the Supreme Court judgments on various matters related to freedom of religion. The concept of secularism and freedom of religion is implicit in the Preamble and other provisions of the Constitution, even before the word 'secular' was inserted in the preamble by the 42nd Amendment Act in 1976.¹⁶⁵ The amendment is intended merely to spell out the principle of 'secularism' in the Constitution.

Nevertheless, Secularism in India means respect for all religions, and it does not mean irreligion.¹⁶⁶ It is not indifference to religion and does not mean hatred of any religion. Secularism conceptualizes the peaceful co-existence of different faiths and considers each citizen a free normal person in his/her own right.¹⁶⁷ The essence of secularism is non-discrimination based on religious differences.

Therefore, secularism can be practiced by adopting a completely neutral approach towards religions or positively making one section of religious people understand and respect the religion. The Supreme Court has held that study of religion in school education is not against the secular philosophy of the Constitution. It can help avoid mutual distrust and intolerance. This approach is called positive

¹⁶⁵ J.N. Pandey, *The Constitutional Law of India*, 47th ed. (Allahabad: Central Law Agency, 2010), 323.

¹⁶⁶ M.P. Jain, *Indian Constitutional Law*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: N.M. Tripathi Private LTD, 1983), 526.

¹⁶⁷ Charles Prabakar & Paul Mohan Raj, "Rights and Responsibilities of the Minorities " in *Rights and Responsibilities of the Minorities*, eds. (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1999), 55-58.

secularism.¹⁶⁸ It is positive in its meaning as it is an active instrument to prevent followers of different religions from perpetrating violent acts and atrocities against each other.¹⁶⁹

5.1. Secular State

The concept of a secular state is derived from the liberal democratic tradition of the West. A secular state, according to Donal Smith is as follows,

*“The Secular state is a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion.”*¹⁷⁰

Further, it was examined with three sets of relations as follows:¹⁷¹

i. Religion and the individual (freedom of religion)

Freedom of religion means that the individual is free to consider and discuss with others the relative claims of differing religions and come to his decision without any interference from the state. He is free to reject them all. If he decides to embrace religion, he has the freedom to follow its teaching, participate in its worship and other activities, propagate its doctrines, and hold office in its organization. If the individual later decides to renounce his religion or embrace another, he is at liberty.

ii. The state and the individual (citizenship)

The secular state views the individual as a citizen and not a particular religious group member. Thus, religion becomes entirely irrelevant in defining the terms of citizenship; its rights and duties are not affected by the individual religious beliefs.

iii. The state and religion (Separation of the state and religion)

¹⁶⁸ J.N. Pandey, *The Constitutional Law of India*, 323-324.

¹⁶⁹ Charles Prabakar & Paul Mohan Raj, "Rights and Responsibilities of the Minorities," 55.

¹⁷⁰ Donal Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 2.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 3-8.

Separation of state and religion is the constitutional arrangement that attempts to give effect to these convictions. Both religion and the state have the freedom to develop without interfering with each other. Religious groups can organize, frame their creeds and regulations, choose their ecclesiastical officers, found their educational institutions, and finance their own activities, all without interference from the state.

India under the Constitution is a Secular State which means, the State observes an attitude of neutrality and impartiality towards all religions. There shall be no “State religion.” The State will neither establish a religion nor confer any special patronage upon any particular religion. Every person is guaranteed the freedom of conscience and profess, practice, and propagate their religion.¹⁷² However, the religion of the individual or denomination has nothing to do with socio-economic change.¹⁷³

Further, under the secular Constitution, the State will protect all religions but interfere with none, and no person is to be discriminated against on the grounds of religion. Also, it treats all religions equally.¹⁷⁴ It is not an atheistic State, but it is neutral in matters of religion. In a secular State, the State does not identify itself with any religion. It is opposed to intolerance, but it regulates the secular activities connected with religion by enacting laws without interfering with essentially religious things. It can interfere if a particular religious practice offends public order, morality, health and contravenes any social, economic or political regulation law.¹⁷⁵

5.2. Religion and Secularization

India is a country where religion is very central to the life of people. India’s age-old philosophy expounded that the Hindu beliefs in many gods give equal respect for all religions. From the very beginning, it was also a belief that India has never been a mono-religious country. However, the term ‘religion’ is not defined in the

¹⁷² Durga Das Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, 19th ed. (Nagpur: Wadhwa and Company, 2003), 114-115.

¹⁷³ P.K. Majumdar & R.P. Kataria, *Commentary on the Constitution of India*, 11th ed. (New Delhi: Orient Publishing Company, 2014), 481.

¹⁷⁴ V.D. Mahajan, *Constitutional Law of India*, 7th ed. (Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 1991), 274.

¹⁷⁵ Durga Das Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, 116.

Constitution, and therefore one has to rely upon the definitions given in the Supreme Court Judgments.¹⁷⁶

It is also true that the term religion is beyond any form of a convincing definition. At the same time, The Supreme Court has held that religion is a matter of faith with individuals or communities, and it is not necessarily theistic. A religion may lay down a Code of ethical rules for its followers to accept, and it may prescribe rituals and observances, ceremonies, and modes of worship that are regarded as an integral part of religion. Those forms and observances might extend even to matters of food and dress.¹⁷⁷ Further, religion is not merely an opinion, doctrine, or belief; it also expresses itself in acts. Hence, religious practices or performances that show religious belief are as much of religion as faith or belief in particular doctrines.¹⁷⁸

The idea that religious commitment weakens through exposure to the media is a controversial concept in the study of the media and religion.¹⁷⁹ Peter Berger argues that in a secularized culture, religion is deemphasized in the arts, philosophy, and literature. The secularization hypothesis assumes that devotion is eroded by competing information systems, cultures, and technologies. This is a heated debate in the sociology of religion.¹⁸⁰ Berger contends that explaining the history and origins of secularization is crucial to understanding any argument about it. Originally, “secularization” referred to the removal of land from religious authority.¹⁸¹ Of course, this canon definition is not necessarily a complete view of the implications of the word today, as it has taken on radically different and emotionally charged connotations for different groups of people. For example, to Christians, secularization is sometimes equitable with de-Christianization, heresy, “paganization”, and other negative terms.

¹⁷⁶ J.N. Pandey, *The Constitutional Law of India*, 325.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ The Madras Law Journal Office, "The Constitution of India," (Madras: The Madras Law Journal Office, 1970), 259.

¹⁷⁹ Daniel A Stout, *Media and Religion: Foundation of an Emerging Field* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 12.

¹⁸⁰ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 106.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

In contrast, secularization is often associated with progress, freedom from religion, and liberation of mind for modern atheist and agnostic groups. Berger himself defines secularization as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”¹⁸² Thus, all forms are encompassed, whether that be the original meaning involving the loss of land, the more modern cultural shift away from sacred control, or the resulting shift in consciousness from this societal change.

6. New Paradigm in Communication

After a comprehensive review of research on internet news consumption, Mitchelstein and Boczkowski noted that ‘continuity,’ rather than change, has characterized the dominant modes of inquiry, with a reliance on ‘traditional conceptual and methodological preferences.’ This ‘stability or more closely ‘inertia’ is especially noteworthy, as it underscores a lack of sensitivity to the very features that have differentiated digital communication from mass communication.¹⁸³ The three systematic limitations cited above have made typical examples of such lack of sensitivity, a division between print, broadcast, and online media when convergence is the trend; a separation of media features from social practices when users are part of the media; and a focus on either the ordinary or the extraordinary when a full picture of mediated communication takes both. We are, therefore, faced with a paradox to investigate these changes, which tend to remain in a state of inertia.

According to Georgette Wang, the new paradigm offers a sense of direction for inquiry and provides a framework for analyses. Yet as flashlights and camera lenses, their guidance led us to focus on specific issues rather than others, and from a certain angle rather than others. Once accustomed to a paradigm, we are no longer aware of its existence. To grasp the essence of rapid changes, we are often encouraged to “think outside the box,” but the question is, are we aware of the existence of “the box” and what it looks like?¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ibid, 107.

¹⁸³ E. Mitchelstein, & P. J Boczkowski, *Online news consumption research: An assessment of past work and agenda for the future*, in *New Media and Society*, vol.12, no. 7 (2010), 1085–1102.

¹⁸⁴ E. Mitchelstein, & P. J Boczkowski, *Online news consumption research: An assessment of past work and agenda for the future*, in *New Media and Society*, vol.12, no. 7 (2010), 1085–1102.

The new paradigm in communication also discussed a vital concern on how religions are depicted in the media. Daniel A. Stout asserted that religion, which has been controversial and not well understood by media researchers in the past, is becoming a useful analytical concept. Moreover, it is problematic to assume that the media and religion are distinct phenomena. Instead, it is more advantageous to understand how they interface in a cultural context of expanding forms of worship. Religion is increasingly found in many different media like spiritual websites, radio sermons, church magazines, etc.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, the elements of religion like a ritual, belief, and community are experienced through popular culture media. In other words, broadly defined religion helps us better understand the overall media landscape.

i. Globalization and Communication

According to Robertson, “globalization” became a common term in intellectual, business, media, and other circles with many meanings and with varying degrees of precision. Globalization in the broadest sense is best defined as “the concrete structuration of the world as a whole.”¹⁸⁶ Mooij noted that it refers to the structuring of the world as a whole and covers the global flow of capital, technology, media, and changes in human behaviour are expected to result from globalization forces. Critics of globalization tend to protest against the dominance of capitalism, Western imperialism, and an emerging global monoculture of American television, Coca-Cola, and McDonald’s. This criticism suggests a homogenizing force inherent to globalization, which can only be proved with respect to technology, not human behaviour.¹⁸⁷ According to Giddens, the most straightforward meaning of globalization is interdependence. We have started to be much more dependent on other people than ever before, and part of the reason is that we are constantly in communication with them all.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Daniel A Stout, *Media and Religion: Foundation of an Emerging Field*, 2.

¹⁸⁶ R. Robertson, “Mapping the global condition”, In *Global culture: Nationalism, globalization, and modernity*, ed. M. Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), 15-30.

¹⁸⁷ Marieike De Mooij, *Human and Mediated Communication around the World*, 27.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 28; citing A. Giddens, *Runaway world* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Taussig's approach to new media and national identity proves that new media allows global communication to have facilitated diasporas to contact the people and culture of their origin, which allows them to form multiple identities. Many members of diaspora communities can now combine new opportunities in the country of immigration with the maintenance of family and friendship ties in their country of birth.¹⁸⁹ This resonates with Giddens' view of globalization as increased interdependence. The internet is viewed as the ultimate globalization tool, and the impact of the internet on global communication has been tremendous.

ii. *Religion and Web 2.0*

The internet revolution has brought a total change in global news agencies and global connectivity that everyone can access and share their own culture and language. There is no doubt that earlier, most webs were in English, but the fast growth in technology has made every language possible and understandable to everyone. As noted in the new paradigm, communication religion was depicted in media from the very beginning. Moreover, web 2.0 is the site that opens another level of interactivity and individual expression and the emergence of the hybrid producer-consumer or producer.

Cheong & Charles observed web 2.0 is facilitated by a range of technological advances such as ever-increasing and ever more widely available bandwidth and mobility of computational devices, most notably internet-enabled mobile phones and tablets. The ongoing development is in new/digital media, including the convergence of digital photo and video-cameras in said mobile phones and computer-mediated communication itself. The latter typically include sites that feature, and ostensibly foster, user-generated content in diverse forms, such as YouTube; social networking sites (SNS); blogs and micro-blogs, such as Twitter, that invite ongoing, potentially instantaneous interaction between posters; new arrays of virtual worlds such as Second Life and Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) such as World of Warcraft; and a bewildering and ever-growing array of variations on these, ranging

¹⁸⁹ A. Taussig, "New media and national identity", in *Media Asia*, vol. 36, no.3 (April, 2009), 140–145.

from “citizen Journalism” as interwoven with more traditional news formats, to the use of social media in so-called ‘soft revolution.’¹⁹⁰

Further, with the development of soft revolution, the interactivity with sacred text is taking on new hues, as we are given the immediate and easy power to treat sacred text as streaming bits of information rather than a physical object endowed with a singular meaning. Wagner noted that the fluidity of digital texts creates a cascade of possible uses, interpretations, and alterations that frustrate the assumption that the text can be used as a sort of singular portal into divine will. The exploration of wired textuality invites us to consider texts as texts, and thus also as material objects transformed into information streams, with profound impacts on how they are used and treated.¹⁹¹

iii. *Sacred Texting*

David Morgan defines textuality as “practices of reading, writing, and performing texts that are grounded in print. A text is something written, published, stored, read silently or aloud, purchased and shared, traded, displayed, cited, edited, rewritten, and compared with other texts, as taught.”¹⁹² Today, we would need to also include as forms of textuality a host of new wired modes of interaction that people use as they engage with a sacred writ. Simply transferring writing text into virtual forms brings with it some surprising consequences. As Wagner asserted, religious text can now be searched, hyper-linked, downloaded, spliced, copied, truncated, e-mailed, text-messaged, recited with video accompaniment, chanted on iPod, and piped from mobile devices into earplugs. They can be streamed, tweeted, mashed-up and muddled.¹⁹³ Religious texts are available in as many digital forms as there are devices to access them.

¹⁹⁰ Pauline Hope Cheong & Charles Ess, "Religion 2.0? Relational and Hybridizing Pathways in Religion, Social Media, and Culture," in *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture*, eds. (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 8.

¹⁹¹ Rachel Wagner, *Godwired Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality* (London: Routledge, 2012), 16.

¹⁹² David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 89.

¹⁹³ Rachel Wagner, *Godwired Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*, 17.

Nevertheless, many religious institutions have found that it is much easier to connect to the members through social media sites. Likewise, the sacred text is being shared and discussed personally with the congregation. Digital textbooks are streaming readers; they can be multiplied endlessly and thus become nearly impossible for religious authorities to control. As fluid as any digital text, they become astonishingly easy to copy and manipulate, creating new challenges for those who wish to control their distribution or interpretation.

7. An encounter of Different Religious Groups in India

India is the birthplace of many major religions of the world. However, the question as to the origins of Indian religion and culture is still a hotly debated topic on the subcontinent. Fred Clothey argued that if part of the European fascination with India had to do with a rationale for its own superiority, the concern for origin in India had to do with self-definition and the affirmation of a certain superiority based on antiquity. So Hindu nationalists speak of *Sanatana dharma*, or 'eternal past'. The same ideology argues for the indigenous antiquity of the 'Aryan' or 'Vedic' culture, that period in Indian history from which all else is descended. Their cultural roots precede Brahmanic culture and are therefore more ancient and superior to those "later" developments.¹⁹⁴

7.1. Christian Response to Hinduism

Historically Christians have interacted with Hindus from the earliest advent of Christianity in India. According to local mythology, original converts of St. Thomas included some from the Brahmin community in Kerala. Claiming descent from Namboodiri Brahmin converts has conferred high caste status upon the Thomas Christians. As Anand Amaladass asserted, this respectable social status enabled them to harmonize with their predominantly Hindu neighbours for many years. However, the tension between the Hindu caste system and the Christian value of equality becomes evident in the modern period, but must be understood historically.¹⁹⁵ Visvanathan, observed that caste-related practices, customs regarding food and

¹⁹⁴ Fred W. Clothey, *Religion in India* (London: Routledge, 2010), 14.

¹⁹⁵ Anand Amaladass, "Dialogue between Hindus and the St. Thomas Christians," in *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspective and Encounters*, ed. H. Coward (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 1993), 16-19.

occupation, modes of dress, faith in horoscopes, ceremonial bathing, rituals, and festivals developed in predominantly Hindu categories. Moreover, church architecture borrows simultaneously from the Jewish synagogue and the Hindu temple. "The cultural elements of Hinduism, Christianity and Syrian tradition are clearly in juxtaposition."¹⁹⁶

Anyhow, Caste practices were condemned by modern Christian missionaries as incompatible with Christianity. Some progress was made, but many caste practices continued. Nevertheless, something new had begun. Harper noted, "in attempting to build a new community with a new identity that replaced and transcended old caste identities, the church almost inadvertently created new social structure."¹⁹⁷ The first Anglican bishop in India, Azariah devised new indigenous Christian liturgies, festivals, and art construction of the Dornakal Cathedral, which incorporated aspects of Hindu temple and Muslim Mosque architecture. In the varied architecture of the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian cathedral, Harper noted that "This Cathedral, entirely hand-carved and hand-built by local people, was the bishop's most dramatic statement of Christianity's potential as the fulfilment of Indian faith and culture."¹⁹⁸

Oppressed and backward people sought relief from the discrimination and stigma of untouchability and improved their status in society. In view of conversion, Azariah argued that "change of heart from sin to God is brought about by Christ alone."¹⁹⁹ In the light of deep spiritual hunger, Azariah defended the legitimacy of evangelization among the restless repressed classes. It is noted that the evidence from the Dornakal Diocese, therefore, supports the view that the conversion movements to Christianity were less a means of rejecting Hinduism and the prevailing caste system than a means by which subordinate groups tried to elevate their rank in the social

¹⁹⁶ Susan Visvanathan, *The Christians of Kerala: History, Brief and Ritual among the Yakoba* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102.

¹⁹⁷ Susan Billington Harper, "The Dornakal Church on the Cultural Frontier," in *Christians, Cultural Interactions, and India's Religious Traditions*, ed. J.M Brown & R.E. Frykenberg (Cambridge William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 193.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 185, (V.S Azariah, is known as evangelist, apostles of India and the first Anglican Bishops in India.)

hierarchy by accommodating and sometimes, transforming the values of dominant non-Christian groups.

Reflecting on the impact on Christian participants, Stanley Jones wrote, “The East now knows what it means to be a Christian and is demanding that we be Christian.”²⁰⁰ Jones found the Indian Ashram an appropriate indigenous forum for reflection and utilized Hindu philosophy and culture for presenting the gospel. For years Jones’ disciple and successor, Acharya Daya Prakash, has continued to present Christ and the Christian message in the form of a modified Vedanta fulfilment theology through Satsang’s in various religious settings.

7.2. Hindu Response to Christian

As a result of India’s encounter with the West, various Hindu revitalization movements emerged to help identify Indians with Hinduism.²⁰¹ Some such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sang (RSS), and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) became overtly political. Others associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, the World Council of Hindu) have remained distinctly religious and include gurus with large followings, popular festivals, shrines, and pilgrimage movements Neo-Hindu organizations.

Other Hindu reform movements tried to accommodate and adapt Christian concepts, particularly to oppose idolatry and caste practices. The Hindu response to Christianity is exemplified in the Hindu Renaissance of the nineteenth century. The Brahmo Samaj was the most influential new movement, founded in 1828 at Calcutta by Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), pioneer of Hindu social reformer, as atheistic society intended to precipitate a renewal movement in Bengal. Inspired by Christianity, yet derived from the Upanishads and the Gita, theistic and hostile to the Vedanta of Sankaracharya, the Brahmo Samaj may be considered a Hindu revival movement. The precept of Jesus, compiled by Roy, reveals an atheistic, rational interpretation of the New Testament. Roy had considerable interaction with the

²⁰⁰ E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of Every Road* (New York: Abingdon, 1930), 267.

²⁰¹ Paul G. Hiebert, "The Christian Response to Hinduism " in *Missiology for the 21st Century: South Asian Perspectives*, eds. R.E. Hedlund & Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj (Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 331.

Serampore Missionaries with whom he initially collaborated, then entered into controversy over the issue of Christology.²⁰²

The 'Brahmo' movements were strongly theistic, cordial to Christianity, and stand in contrast to movements marked by hostility such as Arya Samaj founded by Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) as a missionary movement for the propagation of the Aryan religion and the reconversion of converts to Islam and Christianity back to the Vedic faith. The stance of the Arya Samaj is decidedly anti-Christian. Christians are considered deluded, all non-Vedic religions false. The Vedas alone have inspired, the Vedic religion true. Despite its apologetic and polemical tone, the Arya Samaj expressed belief in a personal God and concern for justice and compassion, ideas possibly derived from the Bible and the missionaries' teaching.²⁰³

7.3. Islamic Response to Others

From its very inception in the seventh century AD, Islam was an integrated religiopolitical community. There was no distinction between the spiritual and temporal authority. As Muhammad was both a messenger of God and a statesman (divinely appointed governor and commander), religious devotion and political allegiance had merged in his teaching and work.

The religious policies of Indian Muslim rulers ranged from tolerance and syncretism of Akbar the Great to the bigotry and fanaticism of Aurangzeb. Even some Muslim sects were subjected to severe punishments. Some rulers like Aurangzeb were very hard on Hindus. Smith observes that public worship of Hindu idols was generally forbidden at times, and Hindus were not allowed to build new temples or repair old ones.²⁰⁴

Akbar the Great, however, stands as the champion of tolerance and acceptance of other religions in the Muslim world. After Akbar, Jehangir also followed Akbar's ideals and policies of co-existence of all religious communities. However, Aurangzeb

²⁰² M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: SCM, 1969), 9.

²⁰³ Ronald Neufeldt, "The Response of the Hindu Renaissance to Christianity," in *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*, ed. H. Coward (Kolkata: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993) 28-46.

²⁰⁴ Donal Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State*, 83.

is an emperor whom no Hindu would like to remember. This is so, since 1699, Aurangzeb issued an order for the destruction of all Hindu Temples and schools. In addition, there was a forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam, and officials were appointed to supervise these conversions. Further, the converts were granted daily allowances upon embracing Islam.²⁰⁵

Kennedy asserted that Akbar followed a policy of broad religious tolerance and equal treatment of all subjects. While he forbade forcible conversion to Islam, he permitted Hindus, Christians, and different Muslim sects to make converts. He even removed all restrictions on building temples. Jizya was removed in 1564, and equal status was given to non-Muslims. It is said that public offices were open to Hindus, and most of his prominent officers were Hindus.²⁰⁶ According to Srivastava, Akbar attempted to synthesize various religions known to him and styled it Tawahid-I Ilahi or Divine monotheism. It was not a religion but a socio-religious order or brotherhood designed to cement diverse communities in the land.²⁰⁷ This was based on the principle of 'Universal tolerance' and good values from all religions by which he accepted responsibility for all sections of the population, irrespective of their religion.²⁰⁸ As mentioned, many Muslim rulers did not desecrate the Hindu worship places but sometimes permitted their construction and helped it with generous financial help. Akbar removed restrictions on public religious worship and the building of worship places of non-Muslims. Even Christian churches were built during his period. Jehangir also followed the policy of his father, Akbar. During his reign, several Hindu temples and Christian churches were constructed.

From the above observation of three religions' responses towards others, it is important to note that scholars who have studied religious groups' engagement with media technology have often focused on the utilization strategies that different groups employ related to these media choices. Hoover, for example, in his study of Anabaptist response towards televangelism, argued that Christian churches typically use media

²⁰⁵ For detailed discussion see P. Kennedy, *History of the Great Mughals* (New Delhi: Anmol, 1987); see also the discussion of the relationship of Akbar to his Hindu officers, C.M Agarwal, *Akbar and His Hindu Officers: A Critical Study* (Jalandhar: Asian Book Service, 1986), 131-150.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ A.L. Srivastava, *The Mughal Empire* (Agra: Shivalal Agarwal & Co, 1983), 168.

²⁰⁸ S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 148.

in one of five ways: (a) evangelism and proselytization, (b) celebration or corporate worship, (c) public or secular validation (d) social transformation or “civil religion,” (e) the sacralization of civil society.²⁰⁹ This range demonstrates that religious groups’ engagement is informed by motivations grounded in their belief about media and the nature of their community and core values.

Campbell presented a helpful range of religious groups’ common beliefs about media that can consider both of these issues simultaneously. She suggested that most groups see media either as a conduit mode of knowing or a social institution. Groups that conceive of the media as a conduit perceive media as a neutral instrument that can be good or evil, dependent on how it is used. Technology is seen as simply an avenue for delivering a message, so religious users can view media as a gift from God to do the work of the community.²¹⁰ Communication brings people together for interaction and fellowship with one another. It aims to build community and unity with one another instead of creating divisions among the human community, enhances participation, affirms justice, and challenges injustice. Our efforts to assist different religious communities to live in unity and peace would be with no other means than discussing and sharing our opinions through social media.

Conclusion

The development of information communication and technology and their mediated messages can influence society, religion, and politics. Different approaches to media and religion approved that the understanding between media and religion is strongly interconnected because religion is the source of social and psychological integration. Media is the centre of discussion; therefore, media and religion serves together fundamentally for the same purposes.

With the development of information communication and technology, people from everywhere are connected, however, the issues of racism hinder for the last few decades where media portrays people of colours present in stories and incidents with

²⁰⁹ Steward M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age*, 17.

²¹⁰ Heidi Campbell, "How Religious Communities Negotiate New Media Religiously," in *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture*, eds. Peter Fischer-Nielson, Stefan Gelfgren, Charles Ess & Pauline Hope Cheong (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 82-83.

crime, stealing, and anti-social problems. In the context of India, the Constitution of India addresses the issues of discrimination and provides equal protection of the law in India. As a Secular State, India gives the freedom and liberty for the right to information and respect for all religions.

Communication is classified into various types; therefore, in communication research, it naturally varies according to the kind of communication or choosing the right areas of research. The new paradigm of communication has been shown, which discussed a vital concern on how religions are depicted in the media. The researcher in the next chapter will discuss tolerance in three major religious traditions in India.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FUNCTIONS OF TOLERANCE IN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN INDIA

Introduction

The question of religious tolerance and violence are treated and studied at present in many parts of the world. While dealing with these questions, it is crucial to deal with India, given her religious tolerance due to her multi-religious, multi-social, and multi-cultural background. India has given a new concept of religious tolerance through her own experience being a multi-religious society where her religions and the “Indianised” western religions live together. Vincent Kurian asserts that India's great message through her history is the need for “Unity in Diversity,”; a unity of diverse religions on the same soil.²¹¹ All religions in India can trace back their history of origin and certain notions about their founders. With their traditional way of life and belief, these religions have become part of the people and culture of India. Though there are many dark spots in the history of Indian religious tolerance, there has always been an atmosphere, especially at the national level from the very beginning of democratic India, to create a world where the life, religiosity, and culture of each one is respected and valued. Basically, religious tolerance is based on each religion's understanding of tolerance and its members' implementation. India was trying in the past to keep religious tolerance as an essential part of her identity through her respect towards each religion. However, riots between Hindus and Muslims and attacks of Hindu fundamentalists on other religious minorities in different parts of India continue to destroy communal harmony. Instead, hatred is increasingly creating insecurity

²¹¹ Vincent Moolan Kurian, *Beyond Interreligious Tolerance: Mahatma Gandhi- Pioneer of Faith-Based Active No-Violence as a Response to Oppression and Communal Violence* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac GmbH, 2014), 23.

among people of all religions.²¹² This chapter will establish the feasibility and applicability of religious tolerance by discussing the three major religious traditions to understand the principle teachings of each religion and their contribution towards inter-faith relations in India.

1. Defining Tolerance

According to the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, the term “toleration” comes from the Latin “Tolerare”, which means to put up with, countenance, or suffer. Generally, it refers to the conditional acceptance of or non-interference with beliefs, actions, or practices that one considers wrong but still “tolerable,” such that they should not be prohibited or constrained.²¹³ Tolerance thus involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and direct opposition. As noted by Erlewine, tolerance involves a hierarchy in beliefs. One considers one’s own conceptions or practices to be more accurate, ethical, or valuable in some sense than those held or performed by the other.²¹⁴ However, as historian Perez Zagorin points out, philosophical definitions of tolerance such as these neglect the historical evolution of the word and its most common usage, which not only pertains to religion but is essentially equivalent to the condition of religious freedom.²¹⁵

Nevertheless, the attitude of tolerance is only possible when some action or practice is objectionable to us. Still, we have overriding reasons to allow that action or practice to take place. Therefore, it is valid to consider Clarke & Powell’s observation that concerns a secondary sense of the term “tolerance.” We are said to develop a tolerance of aspirin or caffeine when, typically through heavy use, we become less affected by aspirin or caffeine. In this usage, “tolerance” is synonymous with “insensitivity,” and no negative normative judgment concerning the heavy use of caffeine or aspirin need be implied.²¹⁶ In a way, the meaning of tolerance can be best

²¹² Ibid. 23-24.

²¹³ Rainer Forst, “Toleration,” *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/toleration/>. (accessed 30/07/2019).

²¹⁴ Robert Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 7-8.

²¹⁵ For detail discussion see, Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Tolerance Came to the West* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²¹⁶ Steve Clarke & Russell Powell, “Religion Tolerance, and Intolerance: Views from across the Disciplines,” in *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict*, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

understood from the respect conception. The *respect conception* is one in which the tolerating parties respect one another in a more reciprocal sense. Thomas Scanlon explains, “tolerance requires us to accept people and permit their practices even when we strongly disapproved them.”²¹⁷ Even though they differ fundamentally in their ethical beliefs about the good and true way of life and their cultural practices, Rainer Forst asserted that citizens recognize one another as moral, political equals. This is because their common framework of social life should be as far as fundamental questions of rights and liberties and the distribution of resources are concerned guided by norms that all parties can equally accept and that do not favour one specific ethical or cultural community.²¹⁸

The most straightforward way of justifying toleration is pragmatic. Accordingly, in current philosophical discussions of tolerance in multi-cultural, modern societies, the respect concept is often seen as the most appropriate and promising. Because toleration as respect can be justified in ethical-liberal views, as Kymlicka, argues respect is owed to individuals as personally and ethically autonomous beings with the capacity to choose, possibly revise and realize an individual concept of the good. This capacity is to be respected and furthered because it is seen as necessary for attaining the good life.²¹⁹ However, if we act to suppress such practices, we may provoke civil unrest, which may lead to a violent confrontation between religious groups.

Non-pragmatic defence of religious tolerance is associated with the liberal tradition. Liberal toleration is distinctive because it involves a clear separation of the state from religious organizations, which mirrors the liberal distinction between a public sphere and a private sphere. Roover & Balagangadhara observe on classical liberal views that the state has jurisdiction over the public sphere and no entitlement to interfere in the private sphere. Religious practice is generally understood as falling

²¹⁷ Thomas Scanlon, “The Difficulty of Tolerance,” in *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue*, ed. David Heyd (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 226–240.

²¹⁸ Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice*, trans. by J. Farrell (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 32.

²¹⁹ For detail discussion see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 152-170.

within the private sphere and thus should not be subject to state interference.²²⁰ Not only must the state refrain from interfering in religious practices, on most contemporary interpretations of liberalism that state is understood, but it also has a responsibility to act as a neutral arbiter between competing groups (including religious groups) within society and to prevent attempts by any of these to interfere with the practices of others.²²¹

Moreover, with the rise of democracies, privatization of religion, and modernity, tolerance increasingly takes the connotations of respect owed to the beliefs and practices of the other even if one disagrees with them on doctrinal matters. This particular modern form of tolerance is what Erlewine terms “tolerance-as-respect.” It demands that the other be recognized as a fellow citizen whose belief and practices must be recognized as politically if not epistemologically or metaphysically-worthwhile, then or at least worthy of a fair hearing.²²²

India, because of its multi-contextual, pluralism is also another term used by different philosophers; therefore, it is vital to examine pluralism because the pluralist accepts many ways of salvation, and they call for a mutual enrichment between religions.

2. Pluralism

Pluralism is a position that rejects the privileging of any one value or worldview over all others because it places inherent value in the diversity of perspectives. Pluralism goes further than tolerance in that it rejects the hierarchal privileging of one’s position over the other’s, as morally and politically problematic. As Wong points out, the pluralist fuses “moral relativism with one or more ethical premises.”²²³ Nevertheless, from the Christian perspective of religious pluralism, Pathil states that

²²⁰ J. De Roover, & S. N. Balagangadhara, “John Locke, Christian Liberty and the Predicament of Liberal Toleration,” in *Political Theory*, vol. 36, no. 4 (August, 2008), 523-549.

²²¹ H. Spector, *Autonomy and Rights: The Moral Foundations of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

²²² Robert Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance*, 7-8.

²²³ David B. Wong, *Moral Relativity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

“religious pluralism has been established today not only as irreversible historical fact but also as a theological principle.”²²⁴

Defining Pluralism

Pluralism has been defined in diverse forms by different philosophers. According to Alan Race, “Pluralism in the Christian theology of religion seeks to draw the faith of the world’s religious past into a mutual recognition of one another’s truths and values, for truth itself to come into proper focus.”²²⁵ However, in the words of Samartha “pluralism does not relativize truth. It relativizes different responses to the truth, which are conditioned by history and culture. It rejects the claims of any particular responses to be absolute.”²²⁶ Further in his argument on Christocentric to Theocentric, he noted that, “in theological terms, a plurality may even be the will of God for all life.”²²⁷ Theocentric Christology acknowledges God as the creator and redeemer of all life. It enables the entire world, humanity, to be included in the struggle for life and feel responsible for its preservation and continuation. For John Hick, pluralism is the view that advocates the different perceptions and concepts of faiths and correspondingly different responses to the Real or Ultimate from within the different cultural ways of being human. Within each of them, the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness is manifestly taking place.²²⁸

In the pluralist view, equality of religions, despite all the tangible differences, is accepted. These differences are attributed to context and time. It also recognizes the potential contribution that every religion could make for a better life. In general, the pluralist accepts many ways of salvation, and they call for a mutual enrichment between religions. Klootwijk writes that “in a divided world, pluralists call for mutual

²²⁴ Kuncheria Pathil, "Christian Approach to Other Faith: A Historical Perspective," in *NCC Review*, vol. CX, no. 2 (February 1990), 58-67.

²²⁵ Alan Race, *Christian and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religion* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), 148.

²²⁶ S.J. Smartha, *Between Two Cultures* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1997), 190.

²²⁷ S.J. Samartha, *One Christ Many Religion: Towards a Revised Christology* (Bangalore: SATHRI, 1992), 4.

²²⁸ John Hick, *Problem of Religious Pluralism* (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985), 91.

enrichment; cooperation; and the sharing of religious resources.”²²⁹ While recognizing the plural structure of reality, Samartha remarks that ‘religious plurality is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinite.’²³⁰

The philosophy of pluralism which gives the doctrine of multiplicity, showed tolerance towards other religions during pre-independent India. However, the partition of Indo-Pakistan, in post-independent, rise the Hindutva movement with Hindu religious ideology. Therefore, it is vital to study the formation and ideology of the Hindutva movement to understand why India still experiences religious intolerance.

3. Hindutva Movement

The foundational core of Hindutva is inculcated in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ‘swayamsevak’ (volunteers) through training that begins from childhood and its local cell. The broad-based work of spreading the ideology and its politics is undertaken through a network of an organization. The RSS has created and propagated organizations in every facet of socio-politics life in India, from political parties to children centres, trade unions, and the military. These groups are together known as Sang Parivar or the Sang family.

Hinduism, advocated by the Sangh Parivar with one Hindu community, is a recent development. For Thapar, when there was competition for political and economic resources between various groups in a colonial situation, there was the need for a change of identity from segmental identity to communal identity, which cut across the caste, sect, and religion.²³¹ As a result of the reform movement of Hinduism, there are fears of economic, political, and religious survival in the face of competition with other communities.

Hindutva groups are often referred to collectively as the “Sangh Parivar,” or “brotherhood.” This has more to do with the organizational shape of Hindutva than

²²⁹ Eeuwout Klootwijk, *Commitment and Openness: The Inter-Religious Dialogue and Theology of Religions in the Work of Stanely J. Samartha* (Zoeetermeer: Bockencentrum, 1962), 12.

²³⁰ S.J. Samartha, *One Christ Many Religion: Towards a Revised Christology*, 5.

²³¹ Romila Thapar, “Historical Realities,” in *Communal Problems in India- A Symposium*, ed. Ramjilal (Gwalior: _____1988), 82-83.

with its ideology. The key group in the promotion of Hindutva over several decades has been the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Voluntary Service Organization). The RSS is a voluntary organization that recruits and trains youth, structured in small units or cadres. Other Hindutva groups, the most notable of which are the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Vishva Hindu Parisad (VHP World Hindu Conference), are offspring of this mother organization groups and they draw their leadership from among RSS initiates.²³² Hence the Hindutva groups and their members form an extensive brotherhood.

i. *Hindutva Ideological Formation*

Ideologically, Hindutva claims to be a cultural organization and denies being a religious organization. Therefore, 'Hindutva' means a way of life or a state of mind based on the cultural and spiritual ethos based on the spiritual systems that evolved from India. Chatterjee observes that Hindutva is a philosophy like Communism or Socialism. The difference is that, whereas communism and socialism are materialistic philosophies intended to secure the economic welfare of individuals, Hindutva is a spiritual and economic philosophy founded and developed from ancient times in India for securing all-round happiness of all individuals irrespective of social levels of individuals. The focus in this philosophy, be it the ruler or the ruled, is on performing duty and conformity to a code of conduct.²³³ According to David Frawley,

*"Hindutva is practical, sometimes a political manifestation of the spiritual tradition that we call Hinduism. It is not simply Hindu politics or Hindu nationalism, but the dharmic political approach born of Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma. It is not bound to any sect or religious group though it draws its inspiration from India's ancient heritage."*²³⁴

Therefore, persons and groups espousing Hindutva often portray their ideas as continuous with a deep past. In their view, Hindus form a cohesive cultural community

²³² Richard H. Davis, "The Cultural Background of Hindutva," <http://inside.bard.edu/~rdavis/PDFs/hindutva.pdf> (accessed 08/09/2016).

²³³ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (New Delhi: GUP, 1986), 55.

²³⁴ David Frawley, *Hindutva and the Nation* (Bangalore: Naimisha Research Foundation, 2001), 3.

going back several millennia to the time of the Vedas.²³⁵ As an often subjugated majority in its homeland, they claim, this community has been seeking to recover its cultural and political dominance.

ii. *Formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)*

The RSS was founded in 1925 by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, a Brahmin from Nagpur, the capital of the Central Provinces. As a medical student in the 1910s in Calcutta, Hedgewar joined a revolutionary group, then returned to Nagpur and involved himself in Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign in the early 1920s. But by 1925, influenced by his reading of Savakar's Hindutva and disturbed by a communal conflict between Hindu and Muslim communities in Nagpur, Hedgewar took a path differing from both revolution and Satyagraha. Hindus, he decided, suffered from a psychological problem, and "what was required was an inner transformation to rekindle a sense of national consciousness and social cohesion."²³⁶ He determined to approach this need for transformation at the grassroots level. Thus, Hedgewar adapted the model of the akhara, or local gymnasium club, for his new organization. The basic unit of the RSS is the *Sakha* ('branch'), a small group of male volunteers, between fifty to hundred, and are divided into age groups, who would meet daily for fitness exercises, military training like marching and lathi (stick/root) practice, group singing, and ideological discussion.

These cadre groups acted in various capacities. Davis noted that Hedgewar envisioned the RSS as a service organization that would work towards the broader vision of a Hindu nation through removing foreign domination and recovery of Hindu cultural traditions. The first appearance of the RSS in action came at a regional festival in Nagpur, where a cadre of volunteers showed up in uniforms of khaki shorts, white shirts, and caps and worked to discipline the unruly festival crowd. In situations of urban communal violence, such as the Nagpur riots of 1927, RSS volunteers acted collectively to "protect the Hindu society".²³⁷

²³⁵ Ibid, 6-7.

²³⁶ K. Andersen Walter & Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood and Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (Boulder: Westview, 1987), 34.

²³⁷ Richard H. Davis, "The Cultural Background of Hindutva."

iii. *Formation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)*

The year 1947 marked the independence of India and the origin of Pakistan, dividing thus a nation (India) based on religious communities. However, it was found that even after the partition, due to the subsequent migration of respective communities, the avowed secular credentials of India were at stake. The fundamentalist wanted to strip the secular status of the independent nation based on communal harmony and thus needed an excuse to blame it on the then leaders of independent India.²³⁸

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a former Hindu Mahasabha member, one of the ministers of the Nehru Cabinet, openly criticized Nehru for his pro-Muslim stand and resigned from the cabinet and went for a new party Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS) with RSS. With Mukherjee, RSS was involved with Indian politics. Therefore, the philosophy of Jana Sangh was based on the RSS ideology, such as making Hindi the national language, banning cow-slaughter in the entire country, and fighting for the Hindu Rashtra. However, Jana Sangh was not successful in the political scenario till it merged with the Janata Party. Due to inner conflict, the Janata government fell in 1979, and on 5th April 1980, Jana Sangh was revived with a new name Bharatiya Janata Party with more RSS ethos.²³⁹

iv. *Hindutva Religious Ideology*

The formation of the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964 with the ideology and leadership of the RSS aimed to bring together all the castes and parties to work for a Hindu nation. Further, the group aimed to consolidate, strengthen Hindu society, protect and spread Hindu values through various activities, and establish and maintain links among Hindus in different countries. In other words, this group would act as the RSS affiliate in the field of religion. However, it was not entirely clear how best to accomplish these broad aims, and in this early year, the VHP experimented with various projects and symbols to spread its mission. Initially, the group directed much of its effort towards north-eastern India, where the VHP tried to counter the work of

²³⁸ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 216.

²³⁹ Sunil Kumar, *Communalism and Secularism in Indian Politics: Study of the Bjp*, (New Delhi: Rawath Publication, 2001), 59.

Christian missionaries. However, after a highly publicized case in 1981 where low-caste Hindus converted to Islam in southern India, the VHP began “reconversion” campaign designed to bring Indian Christians and Muslims back into the Hindu fold.²⁴⁰ This brought the Hindutva point of view that all Indians were original, at least ancestrally, Hindu and hence such campaigns of reconversion were merely coming home, returning to their ancestral tradition, which is called “Ghar Wapsi” in Hindi, meaning “homecoming” or “coming home.” In the light of the change in political power at the Indian capital since 2014 the reconversion debate has become more relevant.

v. *Hindutva in Communal Conflict*

Over the past three decades, one of the most significant and far-reaching developments in the subcontinent has been the rise of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism as a cultural, religious, and political force in modern India. According to Bidwai, “the VHP campaign has drawn on the most base, vile and coarse elements of Hindu society, and represents the ugliest face of the semi-literate middle-class Hindu in search of an identity.”²⁴¹ VHP, with the Hindu agenda, claims that Hindutva and nationalism are synonymous. However, VHP is the religious wing of RSS, and it is carrying out the religious agenda of RSS. Pradeep Mandav, noted, “finally the five-hundred-year-old mosque, (Babri Masjid) which stood as the monument of cultural synthesis was pulled down by the Hindu fundamentalists, especially under the leadership of the VHP on 6 December 1992.”²⁴²

In the wake of the Babri Masjid destruction, widespread riots erupted throughout northern India. Within two months, some 3000 lives had been lost, and countless families were dislocated due to social violence. Since then, numerous other conflicts have led to extensive street violence. In February 2002, a group of Muslims in Godhra, Gujarat, torched two train cars carrying Hindutva activities returning from Ayodhya, killing fifty-eight passengers. In a three-day spree of retaliatory violence,

²⁴⁰ Richard H. Davis, “The Cultural Background of Hindutva.”

²⁴¹ Praful Bidwai, “Now a legal Mandate for Saffron?” in *Rashtriya Sahara* (October 2002), 136-145.

²⁴² Pradeep Mandav, *Communalism in India: A Paradigm Shift to Indian Politics* (Delhi: Authors Press, 2000), 198.

Hindu rioters looted and burned Muslim homes and shops, raped and mutilated Muslim women, and altogether caused 2000 deaths.²⁴³

vi. *Politics and Hindu*

There was a strong move by Hindu fundamentalist groups for making Hinduism the state religion. However, the nationalism advocated by Nehru and Gandhi accommodates all cultures and religions of India. Nehru secularist nationalism dominated the Indian political scenario for a few decades in post-independent India. In opposition to it, the rightist parties like Jana Sangh adopted the Hindu nationalism stream of thought. In the same line of thinking, BJP emerged in Indian politics as the incarnation of exclusivism and as the last word in Hindu nationalism.

Hindu fundamentalists teach that the spirit of secularism enshrined in the Constitution of India provides an added privilege to the minorities to propagate and spread their religion among the Hindu majority. So, India is suffering at the hands of the minority. Sita Ram Goel remarks that Hindu society had always suffered atrocities at the hands of the Muslims and Christians and never given even a threat of retaliation. The Congress party, when it was in power, “agreed with mullahs and missionaries and conceded many privileges to the so-called minorities in the constitution of India. The Muslims and Christians were given complete freedom to propagate and spread their creeds to their best capacity. This suicidal policy was advertised as ‘secularism.’”²⁴⁴

Though RSS and its former political incarnation, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, opposed a state policy, the BJP coined the term ‘positive secularism’. The BJP affirms it to be genuine secularism, which is more conventional and integral to the Indian understanding. It is explained as the equal treatment of all religions. “The BJP defines secularism as the concept of the theocratic state as alien to Indian traditions and political thought; it advocates for a more positive idea of secularism as the same

²⁴³ Human Right Watch, "We Have No Order to Save You," .hrw.org/report/2002/india. (accessed 15/04/2018).

²⁴⁴ Sita Ram Goel, *India's Secularism New Name for National Subversion*, trans. by Yashpal Sharma (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1999), 25.

constitutes the bedrock of democracy.”²⁴⁵ It was explained as a policy of equal treatment of all religions, more positive ideas for the stability of democracy. In its interpretation, positive secularism would thus guarantee nationalism and national integration.

4. Inter-faith Relation in India: Brief Survey

India is a land of many religions with multiple cultures, languages, ideologies, and practices. Love, peace, and tolerance are indeed the core of every religious teaching. However, the major problem for the country today is disharmony resulting from religious identities and communal politics. People who cannot accept diversity threaten the peaceful coexistence of people belonging to different faiths and ideologies.²⁴⁶ Therefore, it is vital to study the teaching of every religious tradition for further understanding of its moral values.

4.1. Hinduism

Hinduism is a religion followed by the vast majority in India. It is more about what people do than what they think. Each individual follows a way of life that provides some meaning to it. The Hindu way of life is principally based upon the teachings in the Vedas. Rituals, customs, and beliefs together give direction to individuals to act in particular ways in everyday life and conduct certain rites and ceremonies for religious services or on public occasions. According to Swami Chinmayananda, “Love is the very basis of Hinduism. If you know how to love, you are a Hindu. All great people have become great because of their love for others. They gained greatness because they learned to love.”²⁴⁷

In Periyar’s opinion, there was, in fact, no such religion as Hinduism. He says, “the worst untruth that is in circulation is the claim that there is a religion called

²⁴⁵ Pratap Chandra Swain, *Bharatiya Janata Party: Profile and Performance* (New Delhi: APH Publishing House, 2001), 92.

²⁴⁶ Margo Kitts Mark Juergensmeyer, & Michael Jerryson, "The Enduring Relationship of Religion and Violence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

²⁴⁷ Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati (born Balakrishna Menon; 8 May 1916 – 3 August 1993) was a Hindu spiritual leader and teacher who inspired the formation of Chinmaya Mission; citing, Ashish Nandi et al., *Creating a Nationality: The Ramajanamabhoomi Movement and Fear of the Self* (New Delhi: OUP, 2000), 89.

Hinduism.”²⁴⁸ For him, the term Hindu originally meant Indians and not a religion. As for the emergence of Hinduism, Periyar further stated that “it is a religion forced on the people with the primary intention of hood-winking the people.”²⁴⁹ About this M.M. Thomas remarks that “for him (Periyar), Hinduism is founded by Brahmins for their power interest; they built on ignorance, illiteracy, and poverty of people and exploited them.”²⁵⁰

i. *Tolerance of Hindu Reformers Towards Other Religion*

Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) was a zealous Hindu, proud of India’s past and his race, eager to conserve all that was good and great in his ancestral religion, greatly influenced by Islamic Unitarianism and deeply affected by Upanishad Vedanta thought and highly appreciative of Jesus’ ethical teachings.²⁵¹ Farquhar asserted that Roy’s understanding of Jesus through his controversial booklet - *The precept of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness* in 1820 and the subsequent debates between him and the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore, brought new insight into socio-religious movements in India.²⁵² Roy had three ideas that shaped and controlled his religious thought: firstly, a monotheistic faith in the oneness of God, influenced from Islamic monotheism; secondly, the conviction that morality is the essence of true religion; and thirdly, a belief in rationalism which demands that religion should hold only to reasonable beliefs. This makes Roy reject superstition, mysteries, and the significance of miracles.²⁵³

Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1883), as explained by Mozoomdar, Sen is one of the prominent Brahmo leaders who has gone far ahead of Raja Rammohun Roy and other Brahmo leaders, and even most of the Hindu interpreters of Jesus Christ, in appreciating Jesus and having a personal attachment to him. One interesting part of K.C Sen’s Christology is his consideration of Christ as a universal principle that is

²⁴⁸ Periyar, *Man of Religion*, trans. by R. Sundaraju (Madras: Rationalist Publication, 1993), 17.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ M.M. Thomas, *The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meanings of Christ* (Madras: CLS, 1976), 128.

²⁵¹ D.S. Sarma, *Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Banaras: Benares Hindu University Benares, 1944), 72.

²⁵² J.N. Farquhar, *The Modern Religious Movement in India* (New York: Mackmillan, 1915), 32.

²⁵³ M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (Madras: CLS, 1970), 2-3.

not confined to Jesus of Nazareth.²⁵⁴ During one of his lectures, Sen stated that “if you go (to God) not through the son you have no access to the father, through sonship alone are we accepted by father.”²⁵⁵ For him, Christ is present in Greece, Rome, Egypt, and India. This Christ was the theme of Rig Vedic poets. The Christ of the universal humanity, the Son of God, is everywhere, in all human beings, in every true Brahmin, in every loyal votary of the Veda on the banks of the sacred Ganges.²⁵⁶

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (1869-1948) Gandhi is known as the ‘Father of the Nation’ in India. According to Sharma, “like every true Hindu, Gandhi believed that all religions are branches of the same tree, the Tree of Truth.”²⁵⁷ Gandhi envisaged a new dimension in inter-religious relationships in India. His life and struggle could also be taken as a tussle against Hindu fundamentalists forces trying to occupy the axis of the National movement. Apart from accepting the empirical realities of religion, he also said philosophically that “the one religion is beyond all speech.”²⁵⁸ Gandhi’s perception of religions is quite enriching as Nirmal Minz observes, “all religions are appropriations of *Satya* under the condition of culture limitation and human finitude, they are equal in the sense that no single religion has the absolute or exclusive truth.”²⁵⁹ In his view, all religions are true, and the differences are due to cultural variations. In the words of Gandhi, “as all religions were rooted in faith in the same God, all were of equal value, while each was specially adapted to its people.”²⁶⁰

Gandhi has, therefore, suggested how religions should approach each other as Sharma quoted Gandhi “the correct attitude is one of firm adherence to one’s own religion coupled with an equal reverence towards all other religions. It is not simply

²⁵⁴ P.C. Mozoomdar, *The Life and Teaching of Keshup Chunder Sen* (Calcutta: L.W. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, 1887).

²⁵⁵ K.C. Sen, “That Marvelous Mystery- the Trinity,” (A lecture delivered on 21st January, 1882), <https://www.revolvy.com/page/Keshub-Chandra-Sen?cr=1> (accessed, 05/07/2019).

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ D.S. Sharma, *Hinduism through the Ages* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1967), 193.

²⁵⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, *Fellowship of Faith and Unity of Religion*, ed. Abdul Majid Khan (Madras: G.A. Natesan and Co., 1948), 17.

²⁵⁹ Nirmal Minz, *Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (Madras: CLS, 1970), 1.

²⁶⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, *Fellowship of Faith and Unity of Religion*, 20.

a question of tolerating other faiths, but of believing that all faiths lead to the same goal.”²⁶¹ Again his attitude to religions was to “let Hindus become better Hindus, Muslims better Muslims and Christians better Christians.”²⁶² Gandhi’s philosophy of religion does not allow him to exalt one religion by denouncing the other. The various religions of the world should be treated as “complementary to one another, in no case exclusive. Their true meaning, their interdependence, and interrelation have still to be revealed to us.”²⁶³ For Gandhi, differences in the creedal aspect of religion are there as long as there are different brains. He maintains, “For me, the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore, they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect.”²⁶⁴

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was responsible for establishing and spreading the Ramakrishna Mission. He gave renewed energy to Hinduism when he spoke in the World Parliament of Religions. For him, all religions lead to the same end. As Robertson quoted for Vivekananda, “just as the river after traversing various hills and valleys, finally flows into the sea, Vivekananda said, all the religions of the world move towards the one Truth or God.”²⁶⁵ Apart from this, he even insisted upon religious tolerance. He is quoted to have said that “we believe not only in universal tolerance, but we accept all religions are true.” He was also committed to the service of the poor and needy, believing that service was the most refined form of religion. Since God dwells in man, he can be worshiped by serving man.²⁶⁶

According to Tapasyananda, Vivekananda takes a positive attitude of Hinduism towards other religions when he contemplates the magnanimity of India in

²⁶¹ D.S. Sharma, *Hinduism through the Ages*, 193-194.

²⁶² Mahatma Gandhi, *Fellowship of Faith and Unity of Religion*, 20.

²⁶³ *The Collected Wok of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 48 (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, 1999), 404.

²⁶⁴ R.D. Mawia Ralte, “Select Indian Gurus' Interpretation of Jesus Christ and Its Significance in Inter-Religious Reletion” (D.Th. dissertation, Senate of Serampore, 2014), 38.

²⁶⁵ S. Robertson, *Approaching Religion in a Pluralistic Context* (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2009), 122.

²⁶⁶ Swami Gokulananda, “Vivekananda-Unifying Vision and Mission and Our Response,” in *NCC Review*, vol. CXIII, no.8 (September, 1993), 507.

accommodating all victims of religious persecution from different countries. He acknowledges the Hindu religion, which has taught him the universal acceptance of all faiths.²⁶⁷

ii. *Causes for the Emergence of Hindu Fundamentalism*

For a long time, Hindus lived in a situation of subjugation and defeat in all corners of life. Cherian observes that from the thirteenth century onwards, Islam became a ruling force in north India and some parts of the Deccan in the south. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, India came under the Islamic throne, and it lasted till the advent of the British in India. The coming of the British marked the dawn of another foreign rule. As a result of centuries of subjugation, the Hindu community was at its lowest ebb. In this situation, the conversion activities of two vital proselytizing agencies posed a threat to the Hindu religion.²⁶⁸ Conversion activities were mostly directed at the untouchables, who were the menial workers of society. The Hindu society was not prepared to lose the menial workers who laboured for them, and who after becoming Christian or Muslim, did not want to continue in the same work. Not only losing the workers but also, as Jones observes, the conversion of the untouchables emerged as a threat due to the concern for their numbers, which in turn imbalanced the social structure.²⁶⁹

By this time, Christianity was perceived as the dominant ideology of the colonial world and of the conquerors whose technological and military superiority were unmistakable. The language used by the conqueror, English, was understood as the language of Christianity by most of the Indians. Moreover, as Griffiths states, "Christian missionaries of various types were often increasingly insistent in their public statements upon the obvious superiority of all things Christian to the heathen idolatry and decadence of all things Hindu."²⁷⁰ Missionary superiority forced the educated and enlightened Hindus to re-examine the value of their own religion and defend the same. There emerged numerous reforming agencies, some of which

²⁶⁷ Swami Tapasyananda, *Vivekananda: His Life and Legacy* (Madras: Sri. Ramakrishna Math Printing Press, 1988), 3.

²⁶⁸ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* 189

²⁶⁹ W.Jones, "Politicized Hinduism: The Ideology and Programme of the Hindu Mahasabha," in *Religion in Modern India*, ed. Robert Baird (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), 448.

²⁷⁰ Paul J. Griffiths, *Christianity through Non Christian Eyes* (New York: Orbis, 1994), 159.

worked for the generation of Hinduism in line with the secular criticism of the British. In contrast, others gave a more traditional defence of their faith and religion, claiming superiority for their religion. The result was the eventual emergence of fundamentalist tendencies.

iii. *Hindu Fundamentalist Agenda Towards Minorities*

Anti-beef Law

The origin of cow protection in India can be traced back to the 1860s, with the growth of the Sikh Kuka movement. The Kuka movement emerged as a Sikh religious reform community to bring unity among the Sikh community and separate themselves from the Hindus. The movement becomes vehement, and their activities were shortened by the colonial government that became widely condemned in 1870s.²⁷¹ In the 1880s the issue of cow protection became momentous with the support of Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati. According to Seunarine, "One of the motives of Arya Samaj was to unify Hinduism and Hindu society, to resist attacks by Muslim and British invaders. The Hindu urged to protect the cow and to take actions against the ritual and daily slaughter by the Muslims."²⁷² Nevertheless, cow slaughter often became the subject of Hindu-Muslim riots, especially in Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh) district in 1893 when more than a hundred people were killed.²⁷³ The sacred cow became the identity of the Hindu, whose cultural tradition is imagined as threatened by Muslims.

The cattle-killing became a troublesome issue in the Indian political arena, even in independent India. As noted by Narayan Jha, in 1966, almost all communal political parties and organizations joined hands to mastermind a massive demonstration by several hundred thousand people in favour of a national ban on cow slaughter. This resulted in a violent riot in front of the Indian parliament.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Therese O'Toole, "Secularizing the Sacred Cow: The Relationship between Religious Reform and Hindu Nationalism," in *Hinduism in Public and Private*, ed. Antony Copley (New York: Oxford University, 2003), 86.

²⁷² J.F Seunarine, *Reconversion to Hinduism Through Suddhi* (Madras: CLS, 1979), 15.

²⁷³ WDWjendra Narayan Jha, *The Myth of the Holy Cow* (London: Verso, 2002), 18.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

The Present Scenario

According to the Indian Express reports 04 March 2015, as per a 2015 law, “cow”, which includes a bull, bullock, ox, heifer, calf, and disabled/diseased/barren cows, cannot be killed. Punishment: 3-10 years jail, fine up to rupees one lakh (hundred thousand rupees). The sale of canned beef and beef products and the export of cows for slaughter is banned.²⁷⁵ The ban on the slaughter of cows gained attention worldwide due to the incident on 28th September, 2015 in Bisara Village near Dadri, Uttar Pradesh. A 52-year-old man named Mohammad Akhlaq was killed, and his 22-year-old son Danish was severely injured. The Hindu mob came and attacked them at their home, accusing them of consuming beef.

Ghar Wapsi

It is a combination of two words, Ghar meaning house, and Wapsi meaning coming back. Ghar can also be used for family or ancestors. Hindu religious organizations such as RSS and VHP consider it returning to the original religion, i.e. returning from the current faith to the original one to which they belonged earlier.²⁷⁶ Salette defines it, stating, “Ghar Wapsi is a word which means people who had once strayed away from the Hindu religion, and now they desire to come back to it either as an individual or in mass.”²⁷⁷

For Vincent Rajkumar, Ghar Wapsi is a campaign performed by the Hindu groups dedicated and committed to transforming Indian secular democracy to a Hindu State and re-convert Christians and Muslims to Hinduism. He says, “It is a most assertive manifestation of the Hindutva idea; it is not just conversion or a shift of faith, but it is a transition from the Indian citizen to Hindutva.”²⁷⁸ Giri K. also believes Ghar Wapsi to be a series of conversion activities initiated by Sangh Parivar to bring non-Hindu to the Hindu community through mass conversion or re-conversion.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ *The Indian Express*, (New Delhi) 04th March 2015.

²⁷⁶ Giri K, "Ghar Wapsi and Christian Response," in *Kerala Theological Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1 (February, 2015), 15-27.

²⁷⁷ Jenson La Salette, "The Conversion of the Converted and Ghar Wapsi," in *Mission Today*, vol. XVIII, no.1 (January to March 2016), 45- 56.

²⁷⁸ Vincent Rajkumar, "Editorial " in *Religion and Society*, vol. 60, no. 3 (September, 2015), III-IV.

²⁷⁹ Giri K, "Ghar Wapsi and Christian Response," 23.

The Present Scenario

During the Ghar Wapsi movement, many people were brought back into the Hindu faith. Before their first conversion, and struggle with their religion and as a reason the religious shift happened. Arun Janardhanan reported to the Indian Express that at least 18 Dalit Christians, including seven schoolchildren, three girls, and four boys, were “re-converted” to Hinduism at a ceremony at Sankara Mutt, a private temple at T Nagar in Chennai on Friday. A “ghar wapsi” event in Tamil Nadu was held on Friday morning. It was organized by the Hindu Makkal Katchi, a Hindu political party founded in 1993, despite efforts by the police to prevent it.²⁸⁰

Ghar Wapsi has become a social-political issue. Ghosh says that the term ‘minority itself may create ‘insecurity’ for those people. On the other hand, their returning to their original faith may give a platform to social structure in India.²⁸¹ In Agra, the RSS converted the minorities by affirming that those participating in yoga would be given BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards and ration cards, which would help them in getting their rations and other small facilities.²⁸²

4.2. Religious Traditions of Christianity

Christianity continues to be what it has been historical: not one religion but three distinct overarching faith traditions; Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. As Juergensmeyer & Jerryson noted, in each of Christianity’s houses, there are a multiplicity of discrete, sometimes ethnically distinct, smaller groupings of Christian communions, to the point that it is estimated today that what we perhaps too confidently refer to as “Christianity” breaks down into more than 34,000 denomination, rites, or distinct “sects” worldwide, many of them independent churches or church collectives not wanting to affiliate with larger ecclesiastical bodies or denominations.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Arun Janardhanan, "First 'Ghar Wapsi' in Tamil Nadu, 18 Dalit Christians 'Re-Converted'", Indian Express <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/first-ghar-wapsi-in-tamil-nadu-18-dalit-christians-re-converted/> (accessed 7/08/2016 2016).

²⁸¹ Tapas Ghosh, "Ghar Wapsi: Politics with Religion," in *Journal of Mission and Intercultural Studies* vol. 2, no.1 (April, 2015), 101.

²⁸² Ram Puniyani, "Ghar Wapsi and Freedom of Religion," in *Religion and Society*, vol. 60, no.3 (September, 2015), 75-88.

²⁸³ Margo Kitts Mark Juergensmeyer, & Michael Jerryson, "The Enduring Relationship of Religion and Violence," 5.

Moreover, each of the major Christian bodies has a history of involvement with war and violence. Theological differences have naturally arisen among the wild diversity of Christians who have believed that their particular interpretation of the faith possesses an exclusive and excluding access to the truth of God's way with humanity. These differences have occasioned conflicts that Christian people have sometimes sought to resolve by restoring to force. Lloyd Steffen observes the conflict in three arenas.²⁸⁴

- i. Christians have come into conflict with other Christians, not only one Christian tradition against another but sometimes within the same tradition, denomination, or even within the same local church body.
- ii. Christians have resorted to violence against people of other faiths. Christian anti-Jewishness is perhaps the most notable example of nefarious and sometimes murderous bigotry directed against another religion, but a more broadly conceived anti-Semitism has historically been directed as well against Muslims and the religion of Islam.
- iii. The close relationship of Christian authority to political power, especially in Europe, has led to numerous situations over the centuries. For example, the state has called on Christian spiritual leaders to sanction and legitimate force against perceived enemies. This development affected Christian theological reflection on the state and the state's use of coercive power as it pertains to war, punishment, and social control.

4.2.1. Interfaith Dialogue in Christianity

For Christians in India, peace and harmony between religions seem to be more important due to their minority status; this Christian contribution towards inter-religious understanding is quite substantial.

²⁸⁴ Lloyd Steffen, "Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, eds. Margo Kitts Mark Juergensmeyer, & Michael Jerryson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 100-101.

i. *Protestant Contribution Towards Harmony of Religions*

Some of the protestant missionaries and scholars in India started reflecting Christian theology in a divergent way from the exclusive missionary theology in the last part of the nineteenth century. K.P. Aleaz noted that C.E. Krishna Mohun Banerjea (1813-1885) was one of the pioneers in bridging the theological gap between Christianity and Hinduism. Though he started with an exclusivist approach towards other religions, he seemed to have changed his position in the 1860s. In his book, *The Arian Witness*, he showed “the striking parallel between Old Testament and the Vedas” and argued that “Christianity was the logical conclusion of the Vedic Hinduism.”²⁸⁵ Similarly, J.N. Farquhar popularised what is now known as “fulfillment Theory” by projecting Christianity as fulfilling all the religious aspirations of the Hindus so much so that it is the crown of Hinduism.²⁸⁶

A.S. Appasamy Pillai (1848-1926) is another scholar who expresses the connection between Hindu and Christian scriptures. K.P. Aleaz noted that Pillai found in the Rig Veda “an anticipation of Christianity and hence it was for him like Old Testament,” and that *Hiranyagarbha* the Golden Egg in Rig Veda is for him, the golden Child who created everything and that “the germ of the doctrines of logos and atonement is found in the Rig Veda.”²⁸⁷ Aleaz further noted that the ecumenical movement and its emphasis and priorities profoundly impact how Christians respond to people of other faiths and their religions in India. For example, the World Missionary Conference, 1910 at Edinburgh and Jerusalem, 1928, had more or less no reference to the need for inter-religious relationships.

ii. *Catholic Contributions Towards Interfaith Relation*

The idea that the universal Christ is present in other religious traditions, fulfilling their religious aspiration and even giving the adherents the salvific knowledge is further developed by well-known Roman Catholic scholar Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and Raimondo Panikkar, son of a Hindu father and a Roman Catholic

²⁸⁵ K.P. Aleaz, "Christian Dialogue with Hinduism," in *Interfaith Relations after One Hundred Years: Christian Missions among Other Faiths* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 83.

²⁸⁶ J.N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), 74.

²⁸⁷ K.P. Aleaz, "Christian Dialogue with Hinduism," 85.

mother.²⁸⁸ Panikkar maintains that Hinduism and Christianity meet in Christ, which is possible because of the presence of Christ in Hinduism. He suggests that it is vital for Christians to recognize that Christ is present in an unknown way in Hinduism for inter-faith relations between these two religions.²⁸⁹

Though the Roman Catholic Church opened up herself officially after Vatican II with the endorsement of Karl Rahner's idea of inclusivism, more than half a century before Brahmabandav Upadhyaya (1861-1907) already showed an affirmative approach to Hinduism. Abhishiktananda observes that Upadhyaya attempted to interpret some of the most important Christian doctrines like the Trinity, Incarnation, Creation, Jesus Christ, etc., in terms of Advaita Vedanta. Before his baptism, he had already published a monthly paper, "*The Harmony*," in his attempt to harmonize pure Hinduism and purer Christianity. He showed the connections between God explained as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Brahman explained as *Sat-cit-ananda* and creation in Christian doctrine and Vedantic concept of *maya*. Thus, he was harmonizing the Hindu doctrine and Christian testimony as he successfully identified the meeting point of Hinduism and Christianity.²⁹⁰

iii. *Syrian Christian Contributions Towards other Religions*

The historical evidence suggests that the Hindus recognized the Syrian Christian community as part of the caste order of Indian society, which they accepted. In exchange, Forrester writes, "they were able to preserve down the centuries their Syriac liturgy, their formal orthodoxy, and their priesthood and episcopate; but they became completely oblivious to the wider religious climate of India."²⁹¹ Forrester further illustrated how Syrian Christians were given a high caste status within the caste hierarchy. The Syrian Christians were ranked after the Brahmins and equal to the Nair, and as such, they operated as a caste. This was in contrast with Christian converts in

²⁸⁸ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigation*, trans. by David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 283.

²⁸⁹ Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ for Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), 70.

²⁹⁰ Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point: Within the Cave of the Heart* (Bombay: The Institute of Indian culture/CISRS, 1969), 70.

²⁹¹ Duncan Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policies on Caste of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Mission in India* (London: Curson Press, 1980), 98.

later centuries from other parts of India who gravitated to the bottom of the caste system. The Syrians were governed by rules which were in no way influenced by their Christian beliefs.²⁹²

George quoted the observation of L.W. Brown that provides different accounts of Syrian Christians engaging in temple celebrations and giving offerings to the temples. Furthermore, the Syrian Christians celebrated Hindu festivals such as *Onam* and *Vishnu* or New Year's Day. However, the Syrian Christians developed different interpretations on many of the Hindu customs. For example, the fire, which signified *agni* for the Hindu, symbolized Christ, the light of the world, for the Christians.²⁹³

4.2.2. Movement of Christianity

i. Just War

War has devastating consequences for adversaries in terms of lives lost, resources spent, and destruction of property, not to mention other external factors such as disease and population displacement. Historically, several Christian thinkers used the term just war to justify war for religious and political gain. John Fabian Witt argues that warfare viewed as a tool for the defence of the political community was a way to achieve the common goal of peace through the spread of Christianity. Just wars were those waged in defence of the Christian faith or to punish wrongdoing on the part of an adversary, which has sometimes been taken to include the sin of idol worship or heresy.²⁹⁴ St. Augustine came out against the popular pacifist position of the early church and argued that we have a moral obligation to preserve our own lives against violent attacks. As Michael Walzer, observes this view contradicts and went against the prominent Christian doctrine of "turn the other cheek," which seemed to require that the practicing Christian allows harm to befall him even up to the point of loss of life so as not to sin himself. Augustine's concern was whether a good Christian could go to war and kill without sinning against God, in opposition to the popular pacifist view of many theologians of his time. By the end of the middle ages, the question

²⁹² Ibid, 99.

²⁹³ Geomon K. George, *Religious Pluralism: Challenges for Pentecostalism in India* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006), 28.

²⁹⁴ John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 111-13.

driving just war thinking had been turned on its head. It was generally accepted that a Christian could fight in defence of his life or for territorial sovereignty.²⁹⁵

Just war has evolved and modified over the centuries, but one constant in the background of a just war was the view that war is a terrible state of affairs, much to be avoided, and even if uses of force are considered legitimate, they must be restrained. McBrien asserted that “the purpose of just war theory was not to rationalize violence but to limit its scope and methods.”²⁹⁶ Just war thinking is Christianity’s most explicit institutionalized, church-related justification for using coercive force. Just war ideas have been criticized for rationalizing violence and serving national self-interest while failing to serve justice and peace.

ii. *The Crusades*

The Crusades offer another justification for the violence that has arisen within the Christian experience of holy war. In its simplest generic sense, Steffen explains Holy war means a war undertaken because it is divinely authorized, and all the monotheistic religions of the West have had their experiences with generic holy war. The Crusade was the name for holy war given by the church. Eight Crusades to Palestine were undertaken from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries (1095-1291), the age of Christendom when Christianity was both the temporal and spiritual backbone of European society.²⁹⁷

The official justification for the Crusade was religious. As explained by Vitalis, the Pope, Christ’s vicar on Earth, was sending forth an army with a divine commission to return Jerusalem and Christ’s tomb to Christian hands. The pope, a prudent man, summoned to war against the enemy of God. All those capable of bearing arms under the authority he holds from God, absolved all the penitents from all their sins from the moment they took up the cross of Christ, to go on the Crusade.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 255-63.

²⁹⁶ Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Study Edition* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), 1036.

²⁹⁷ Lloyd Steffen, "Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions," 112.

²⁹⁸ Ordericus Vitalis, *History of the Church* (1135). Cited in Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History, Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 156.

iii. *Heresy and The Inquisition*

Heresy was a religious offense, a denial of the articles of faith, but because society in the Middle Ages was theocratic, heresy was also a form of treason because it challenged rulers' claim that their authority came from God and tore at bonds of societal unity. According to Comby, "Anyone who has been manifestly convicted of heresy by the bishop of his diocese shall at the bishop's request be seized immediately by the secular authorities of the place and delivered to the stake. If the judge thinks his life should be preserved, particularly to convict other heretics, they shall cut out the tongue of the one who has not hesitated to blaspheme against the Catholic faith and the name of God."²⁹⁹ Inquisition and heresy trials employed violence on the ground that if a heretic was not reclaimed, others would be endangered.

iv. *Missionary Movements*

The missionary movement in the history of Christianity in India shows the impact of Christianity in social, cultural, educational, and economic life.

The missionary movement spread the religion of Christianity together with western education and other philanthropic activities. According to Sahay, the missionaries were also regarded as the first reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Their work inspired many natives to launch a movement of reforming society.³⁰⁰ Many educated Indians began to realize that western culture and the rising tide of Christianity posed a challenge to their age-old traditions and beliefs. In their attempt to remedy the situation, many reformers became critical of the past. They began to look for ways to rid society of its evils, such as caste distinction, Purdah system, and the custom of sati. They wanted a new social order in keeping with the traditional values and modern development. Many Indians were impressed by the progress made by science and the doctrine of the reason and humanism of the West.³⁰¹ The social conditions of the 19th century led to socio-religious reform movements.

²⁹⁹ Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History, Volume I: From the Beginning to the Fifteenth Century*, 167.

³⁰⁰ K. N. Sahay, *Christianity and Culture Change in India* (Michigan: Stosius Inc/Advent Books Division, 1987), 49.

³⁰¹ P. S. Joshi, M.R. Wadhvani & J.V. Pradhan, *Ancient Indian History of Civilization and Culture*, eds. (New Delhi: S. Chand & CO. Ltd., 1968), 313-314.

Some such reform movements as already discussed were the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Ramkrishna Mission.

V. 21st Century Christian Approaches to Other Religions

The Christian Protestant and Roman Catholic approach to inter-religious relations consist of two streams; *theoretical and practical*.

The first stream of approach, the theoretical approach, is contemplative and can be called the 'philosophical-theological approach'. Many Indian Christian Theologians formulate Christian theology in relation to Hindu and other religious traditions. According to Ralte, this approach originates in theologies of religion by discarding the traditional Christian approach to exclusivism. Later some Indian theologians came up with inclusivism, pluralism, and even pluralistic inclusivism as alternative theologies of religion. The guiding principle behind these theologies recognizes the truth in other religions and their validity for human religious aspirations.³⁰² Therefore, the Indian Christian theologians make attempts to formulate a Christian theology that is contextual, biblically sound, and religiously unoffending to people of other faiths by using religious resources of other religions.

Secondly, the practical venture towards inter-religious relations consists of two approaches, namely, the *Christian Ashram movement and inter-religious dialogue*. Robert de Nobili is considered the forerunner of the Christian Ashram movement in India. Initially, Christian Ashram was meant to propagate the Gospel among the Hindus, but later on, the focus changed from evangelism to dialogue and positive encounters with other religions.³⁰³ Some of these ashrams have close contact with Hindu Ashram, working hand in hand for training the devotees, enriching one another. The Ashram movement thus becomes one of the most effective mechanisms for building harmony between Christianity and other religions. The second practical approach adopted by churches and various Christian Organizations and Institutions that draws closer to other religions to Christianity and pacifies the growing religious

³⁰² R.D. Mawia Ralte, "Select Indian Gurus' Interpretation of Jesus Christ and Its Significance in Inter-Religious Relation," 133.

³⁰³ S. Rajamanickam, "Robert de Nobili: Christianity in the Indian Version," in *Jeevadhara* vol. 17 (July 1987), 8-23.

conflict is inter-religious dialogue. The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS), Bangalore, and Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad is actively involved in interfaith dialogue in India. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) with its Commission for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism and the Dharmaram College, Bangalore, with its Centre for the Study of World Religions and all the Christian ashrams in India are vibrant in interfaith dialogue. Protestant Churches like Church of North India, Church of South India, Marthoma, etc., and many theological colleges in India like Bishop's College, Kolkata, United Theological College, Bangalore, etc., are also involved in inter-religious dialogue.

4.3. Religious Tradition in Islam

The Word Islam is derived from Arabic Salama, which means to be tranquil, at rest, to have done one's duty, be faithful, and at perfect peace. The noun derived from it means peace, greeting, safety, and salvation. According to Justice Amir Ali, the word does not imply, as is commonly supposed, absolute submission to God's will, but rather it denotes striving after righteousness.³⁰⁴ Wahiduddin Khan noted that according to a tradition of the Prophet, 'Peace is Islam' (Al-Bukhari). This means that peace is one of the prerequisites of Islam.

Similarly, in the traditional story, a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands people are safe. One of the attributes of God described in the Quran is 'As Salam', which means peace and security.³⁰⁵ That is to say that God's Being itself is a manifestation of peace. Indeed, God is Peace. In the Quran, divine guidance is likened to the paths of peace.

For Islam, the Quran contains the core principles of morality and action. Khan further notes that the Quran avers that 'reconciliation is best' and judging by the consequences, the way of peace is far better than that of confrontation. God has decreed that success will be met only on a reconciliatory path, not on a confrontational

³⁰⁴ Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of the Prophet* (London: Christophers, 1949), 137-138.

³⁰⁵ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The True Jihad: The Concept of Peace, Tolerance and Non-Violence in Islam* (New Delhi: Goodword Book Pvt.Ltd, 2002), 30.

or violent course of action by the law of Nature. Whenever the prophet had an option between two courses of action, he always chose the easier non-confrontational one. This means that violent activism should not be indulged in if peaceful activism is an option.³⁰⁶ The Prophet taught that “You cannot be a true Muslim until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.” Another saying is, “The best among men is one who does good to the people.” He also said: “Be kind to all living beings, so that God may be kind to you”.³⁰⁷

i. Non-Violence and Islam

According to Satha-Anand, Islam seeks to discern commonalities of perception, teaching, and practice that can promote peace. Emphasizing the primacy of human beings in the physical universe, he claims that people of all persuasions share this assertion.³⁰⁸ Non-violence should never be confused with inaction or passivity. Non-violence is action in the full sense of the word. Rather, it is more forceful an action than that of violence. It is a fact that non-violent activism is more powerful and effective than violent activism. Non-violent activism is not limited in its sphere. It is a course of action that may be followed in all matters.³⁰⁹ Islam is a religion that teaches non-violence. According to the Quran, God does not love fasad, violence. Fasad is that action that disrupts the social system, causing huge losses in terms of lives and property.

ii. Islam Against Violence and Injustice

With the rise of Islam, there was a foundation laid for a unique social order. It allowed freedom of conscience to all who embraced it or who placed themselves under its protection. In a very short period, Islam became a shield against all types of persecution. Lawrence observes that societal violence has been as prevalent as military violence throughout human history, and in early seventh-century Arabia, one

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 31.

³⁰⁷ M. Mazzahim Mohideen, "Islam, Nonviolence, and Interfaith Relations," in *Islam and Nonviolence*, eds. Chaiwat Satha-Anand Glenn D. Paige (Manoa: Center for Global Nonviolence 2001), 125.

³⁰⁸ Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *Islam and Nonviolence*, eds. Chaiwat Satha-Anand & Glenn D. Paige (Manoa: Center for Global Nonviolence 2001), 3.

³⁰⁹ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The True Jihad: The Concept of Peace, Tolerance and Non-Violence in Islam*, 46.

finds numerous forms of social violence. These included, for instance, female infanticide, along with the abuse of orphans, the poor, and marginal. Against such forms of societal violence, Islam gives incontrovertible challenges and prohibits such practices. These directives are set down, transmitted, and encoded in the Qur'an.³¹⁰

*“And when the infant girl who was buried is asked
For what offense she was killed
(the person who killed her will have to answer
For his sin on judgment day).³¹¹
Do not kill your children out of fear of poverty;
We will provide for them, and you
Indeed, killing them is a great sin.”³¹²*

The two passages mentioned above reflect the Arabic killing of female infants, which was very common in pre-Islamic times. Islam not only prohibits female infanticide, but it forbids all types of infanticide, irrespective of whether the infant is a male or female, according to the holy Quran,

*“You should not kill not your children on account of poverty
We provide for you and them.
And do not approach the property of the orphan,
Except with what is better till he comes age.
Take not life which God has made sacred.”³¹³*

According to Razi Ahmad, when Islam began its expansion, the marching army was welcomed as deliverers of the oppressed peoples wherever it went. The revolutionary teaching of Islam had changed the attitude of those in the army. On account of their ways, they got full support from the masses. The following discipline was to be strictly enforced by the Islam army:

³¹⁰ Bruce B. Lawrence, "Muslim Engagement with Injustice and Violence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, eds. Margo Kitts Mark Juergensmeyer & Michael Jerryson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127.

³¹¹ "Surah al-Takvir, Quran," 81:8-9 <https://quran.com/81/8-9> (28/09/2019).

³¹² "Surat al-Isra, Quran," 17:31, <https://quran.com/17/31> (28/09/2019)

³¹³ "Surat al-Anam," Q 6:151-152, <https://quran.com/6/151-152> (28/09/2019).

*“Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kills a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy’s flock; save for your food. You are like to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services, leave them alone.”*³¹⁴

The injunctions were strictly carried out, and the marching army was taken by the vanquished as their liberators.

iii. *Interfaith Dialogue in Islam*

According to Khanam in Islam, constructive dialogue is not only permitted; it is commendable. The Quran reads, “Say, people of the Book, let us come to a word common to us that we shall worship none but God and that we shall associate no partner with Him and that none of us shall take others, besides God, for Lords”³¹⁵

Muslims are instructed to show the best of manners and wisdom when speaking of faith to others. Moreover, Muslims regard the term Islam not as an innovation that came in the seventh century, C.E., with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, but as the basic mission of all the prophets throughout history. Further, Khanam observes that dialogue finds its most perfect expression in the Quran. When God reveals His word through the Prophets, God is engaging humans in a discovery process whereby they learn what they would not otherwise know in revealing His word to humans. Thus, the first verse of the Quran gives us the concept of the Dialogue with other communities. Fourteen hundred years ago, the Prophet of Islam held a three-religion conference in modern terminology in Medina, a trialogue to exchange views on religious issues.³¹⁶ This gives evidence that Islam’s persuasion on peace and justice

³¹⁴ Razi Ahmad, “Islam nonviolence and Global Transformation”, in *Islam and Nonviolence*, eds. Glenn D. Paige, Chaiwat Satha-Anand & Sarah Gilliatt (Manoa: Centre for Global Nonviolence, 2001), 37-38.

³¹⁵ Farida Khanam, "Interfaith Dialogue and Islam," in *Interfaith Spirituality: The Power of Confluence*, eds. Leonard Fernando SJ, Ambrogio Bongiovanni & Victor Edwin SJ (Delhi: ISPCK, 2014), 64.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

are core pillars of faith and the practice of peaceful coexistence and interaction with one's neighbours and fellow citizens.

5. Religion and Spirituality

All the religions of the world consider human persons as divine beings and stress upon the essential unity of humankind. Religion and spirituality are synonymous terms in common parlance, as they coexist in the elevation of people's consciousness. While religion is socially organized, spirituality is more introspection of one's spirit or self. Ursula King rightly observes that each of the world's faiths possesses a rich spiritual heritage discovered with renewed interest today. We have better access to the rich spiritual resources of Christianity and those of Buddhism and Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, Taoism and Confucianism, not to forget African spirituality, that of indigenous and native people, and numerous new religious movements.³¹⁷

The terms spirituality and religion often appear together. According to Weiland, spirituality and religious uses are joined in history, common and professional usage, and language ambiguities. Religion reflects formal or institutional idioms of belief in God and concern with ultimate problems and questions of human life.³¹⁸ Then, what does the word "spirituality" really mean? It is difficult to define, and since spirituality can be linked to almost any longing of the human heart, many people do not want to use this rather vague and fuzzy word.

According to Bagchi, spirituality is above dogmatism, obscurantism, and fundamentalism. These are sectarian and dogma-bound exterior aspects of religion that stress forms, ritualism, and code of conduct that bind their followers to a rigid and complex socio-religious system. These external components of religion appeal to the emotional rather than to the rational mind underlining the preservation of the superficial structures rather than pursuing the inner spirit of religion. Such belief systems have several dimensions: ritualistic, ceremonial, mythological, etc.³¹⁹ At the

³¹⁷ Ursula King, *The search for Spirituality* (London: Canterbury press Norwich, 2009), 66.

³¹⁸ Steven Weiland, "Interpretive Social Science and Spirituality" in *Aging Spirituality and religion*, eds. Melvin A. Kimble, & Susan H. McFadden (Minneapolis: Date Publication, 1995), 589.

³¹⁹ Reeta Bagchi, "Streams of Spirituality for Interfaith Thinking: A Hindu Perspective," in *Interfaith Spirituality: The Power of Confluence*, eds. Leonard Fernando SJ Ambrogio Bongiovanni, & Victor Edwin SJ.. (Delhi: ISPCK, 2014), 52.

same time, all religions stress the same spiritual values. These are the divine virtues; Truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence, which provide physical, psychological, and social bonds among people on a national and international level of integration. This virtuous life is not one's matter but involves social relations. A righteous and moral life is the backbone of the spiritual progress of human persons and society.

Equality of Religion

S. Radhakrishna, in his lecture on comparative religion, states that "Comparative Religion postulates that all our faiths have some value."³²⁰ For him, the purpose of the scientific study of religion is not to demonstrate that a particular religion is superior to all other religions. He also remarks that the scientific study of religion has made untenable the distinction between true religion and false religion.³²¹ He writes, "any religion which claims finality and absoluteness desires to impose its own opinions on the rest of the world and to civilize other people after its standards."³²² In this vein, Max Muller asserts the equality of religions:

*"I wish we could explore together in this spirit the ancient religions of mankind, for one feels convinced that the more we know of them, the more we shall see that there is not one which is entirely false; nay, that in some sense every religion was a true religion, being the only religion which was possible at the time, which was compatible with the language, the thought, and the sentiments of each generation, which was appropriate to the age of the world."*³²³

From the above statement, Muller asserts that "the reason why we will not see the identity of a truth as enunciated in different religions, is generally the strangeness of the garb in which it is clothed."³²⁴ This gives the context of India, which shelters

³²⁰ S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1933), 18.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³²² S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1947), 52.

³²³ F. Max Muller, *Introduction to the Science of Religions*, New Edition (London: London University Press, 1882), 190.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*,

various religions, and therefore, accepting and following the principle of equality of religions can be the source of meaningful and peaceful coexistence.

6. Religious Freedom in India

Religious minorities remain a big problem in pre and post-independent India. According to the report of Central Intelligence Agency, the census based on Indian religion is Hindu 80% population, Muslim, 14% population, Christian 2% population and remaining are Sikh and others. While all these religious groups together form only less than fifteen percent of the total population, those who profess to be Hindu contributed to eighty-five percent of the total population.³²⁵ One of the rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution is the right to Freedom of Religion. As a secular nation, every citizen of India has the right to freedom of religion i.e., right to follow any religion.

As one can find so many religions being practiced in India, the constitution guarantees every citizen the liberty to follow the religion of their choice. According to this fundamental right, every citizen has the opportunity to practice and spread their religion peacefully. If any religious intolerance occurs in India, the Indian government must curb these incidences and take strict actions against them.³²⁶ The Right to freedom of religion is well described in Articles 25, Article 26, 27, and 28 of the Indian constitution, which also gives security and protection of the religious minorities.

According to James E. Wood, Jr., it is widely conceded that religious liberty is a fundamental human right. As expressed in their constitutions, he rightly said that religious liberty had become a normal principle for virtually all nations. At the same time, there is a sense in which all human rights, both individual and social, may be essential; there is a special place to be given to religious human rights in the widening horizons of understanding of human rights in contemporary society throughout the world. He concludes that “religious human rights are integral to the advancement of

³²⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, “World Factbook,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>. (accessed 10/02/2018).

³²⁶ P.B. Gajendragadkar, *The Constitution of India* (California: Oxford University Press, 1969), 40-41.

all other human rights.”³²⁷ Individuals need to be free to exercise the right to change, deny or conceive their religious beliefs. Religious associations should be given the right to function, organize and establish their worship places. These are the fundamental rights, and any improper interventions should not infringe them by the government or other religious and non-religious organizations.

7. Dialogue

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, the word “dialogue” comes from the Greek word “dialogos” which means simply “conversation.” In the history of religions, “conversations” is about the meaning of belief, rituals, and ethics. The notion of dialogue in its modern sense entered the world religions during the confused and confusing years after World War I, and was closely connected with the philosophy of existentialism. Its first and most widely read manifesto was Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* (1923), which urged that human beings should cease to look upon one another merely as objects and approach one another directly with mutual acceptance as fellow humans “I-thou.”³²⁸

There are four types of dialogue as follow ³²⁹

- i. Discursive dialogue involves meeting, listening, and discussing on the level of mutually competent intellectual inquiry. It was neither very new nor very remarkable, though it had always been fairly uncommon. As an intellectual activity, it could only ever be profitable among equally equipped partners since it presupposes the willingness of both to listen and speak.
- ii. Human dialogue rests on the existential foundations previously described, and assumes that human beings can meet purely and simply as human beings, irrespective of the beliefs that separate them. The great drawback to this approach is its individualism.

³²⁷ James E. Wood, Jr., “An Apologia for religious Human Rights”, in *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective Religious Perspective*, eds. John Witte, Jr., & Johan D. van der Vyver (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1996), 475.

³²⁸ Eric J. Sharpe, “Dialogue of Religion,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, eds. Dacian Rider Esther & Lindsay Jones, 2nd edition (New York: Thomson Gale, 2005), 2342-2345.

³²⁹ Ibid.

- iii. Secular dialogue stresses that where there are tasks to be performed in the world, believers in different creeds may share in a program of joint action without regard to their respective convictions.
- iv. Spiritual dialogue has been advocated chiefly by those who have been trained in the contemplative and monastic traditions and who have learned to set high value upon Eastern or other spirituality while not wishing to lessen their hold upon their own. Its locus is not debate and discussion but prayer and meditation. In recent years it has given rise to many ashram and mediation centres in East and West alike.

Interreligious dialogue is a challenging process by which adherents of different religious traditions encounter each other to break down the wall of division and look forward to peace. For Samartha, "interreligious dialogue is an attempt to understand and express our particularity not just in terms of our heritage but also with the spiritual heritage of our neighbours of other faiths."³³⁰ Therefore, interreligious dialogue is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate in spite of their differences.

It is possible when the role of other faith traditions in inter-religious dialogue is thus considered positively. According to John B. Cobb, "we confront with the conviction that others have something to say to us, that we need to listen as well as speak."³³¹ In other words, inter-religious dialogue expects that all partners are transformed because of enrichment from each other. The readiness for self-criticism on the followers of various religious traditions is vital for interreligious dialogue. Dialogue has an outstanding contribution towards resolving political and communal conflicts and restoring peace. Religious communities have the potential to improve conditions in world peace because most of the world's people identify themselves as members of religious communities. The capacity of religious communities to meet the challenges of our time is undoubtedly a vast untapped resource. Samartha has rightly

³³⁰ S.J. Samartha, "Courage for Dialogue: An Interpretation of the Nairobi Debate," in *Religion and Society* vol. XXIII, no.3 (September 1976), 92-105.

³³¹ Jr John B. Cobb, "Dialogue," in *Death or Dialogue*, ed. Leonard Swidler (London: SCM Press, 1990), 2.

asserted that “inter-religious dialogue, carefully prepared and practiced, can help people to respond to the dangers of religious fundamentalism not just on the political but on the religious level as well.”³³²

8. Religious Conflict at International Scenario: Brief Survey

Every religion of the world has expressed at some point, through its leaders and thinkers, a commitment to the value of peace. Furthermore, religious actors are playing an increasingly important and valuable role in resolving international conflicts. Many Christian denominational leaders have successfully intervened in and mediated peace. But a faith-based commitment to peace is a complex phenomenon. As Marc Gopin, observes “while some believers creatively integrate their spiritual tradition and peace-making, many others engage in some of the most destabilizing violence confronting the global community today. Throughout the long era of human history, religion has been a major contributor to war, bloodshed, hatred, and intolerance.”³³³

It is true that around the globe, no major religion is exempt from involvement in violent conflict. Religious conviction certainly was one of the motivations for the September 11, 2001 Twin Towers attacks and other violent actions by Muslim extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some Buddhist monks assert an exclusively Buddhist identity for Sri Lanka, fanning the flames of conflict there. Some Christian and Muslim leaders from former Yugoslavia saw themselves as protecting their faiths when they defended violence against the opposing faith communities in the Balkan wars. Religious justification is being made for conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. There are also interreligious rivalries in Iraq between Shia and Sunni Muslims, tribal warfare in India between Muslim and Hindu, Buddhist and Hindus in Sri Lanka, and sections of the US Christian Right between Christians and Muslims in Iraq. Marsden & Savigny rightly asserted that “terrorist acts are justified by some

³³² S.J. Samartha, "The Future of Inter-Religious Dialogue: Threats and Promises," in *Journal of Dharma* vol. XIX, no.1 (January-March 1997), 75-97.

³³³ Marc Gopin, "Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution," in *Peace & Change*, vol. 22 no.1 (January, 1997), 1-31.

religious actors in the name of Jihad or crusade with each one designated in this way feeding the discourse.”³³⁴

Furthermore, Marsden & Savigny observes that the decades-long civil war in Sudan is often described as a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. The north is predominantly Muslim, and the south is predominantly Christian or animist. In Iraq, the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites rarely stems from differences in religious doctrine and practice but rather from historical and contemporary competition for state power.³³⁵ Yet religion has also developed laws and ideas that have provided civilizations with a cultural commitment to critical peace-related values. The latter include empathy, an openness to and even love for strangers, the suppression of unbridled ego and acquisitiveness, the articulation of human rights, unilateral gestures of forgiveness and humility, interpersonal repentance, and the acceptance of responsibility for past errors as a means of reconciliation, and the drive for social justice.

Conclusion

Retrospecting the teaching of three major religious traditions in India, there is evidence that tolerance has been the principle of their religious practice, and the contribution towards inter-faith relations has been recognized. However, at the end of yet another calendar year, people, especially the minority community, face challenges to unpack the political reading of intolerance in India. Discussion on the idea of tolerance or intolerance indeed was very much a signature of despondency and disquiet in human history. There may not be any historical epoch where people and communities have not experienced intolerance. People and communities have been viewing ‘others’ as their enemy, though without mayhem and anger. However, in the recent past four years or so, with the rich sources of religious tradition that teaches tolerance and acceptance towards others, the experiences of intolerance in India have labeled the entire nation as a land of intolerance, a worrisome conclusion for

³³⁴ Lee Marsden & Heather Savigny, "Introduction," in *Media Religion and Conflict*, eds. (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 9.

³³⁵ Ibid,

minorities and peace-loving people. Unfortunately, the frequent talk of India as incredible India has indeed turned into intolerant India.

Unfortunately, the simmering realities of intolerance have become verbal on the world stage when the 'intolerance' bug has followed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United Kingdom on 13th November 2015. Surprisingly 200 writers, including Ian McEwan and Salman Rushdie, wrote an open letter to the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, urging him to raise the issue with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.³³⁶ This regrettable outcome is the prolonging of so many makers of modern India returning their medal of excellence.

The reactions and relentless defense by the state power machinery on the issue and atmosphere of intolerance in India are without sensible followers. Rather, their excuses and tactical moves show clearly that the real danger we are experiencing in India is not 'societal intolerance' but 'state tolerance to intolerance'.³³⁷ The core of every religious teaching is tolerance and peace; however, religions in India have become an agenda for the success of every political party. At the same time, the blind followers of religious traditions due to the politicizing of Indian religions have created several communal riots and disharmony where the majority always take advantage and discriminate towards minorities. Such 'unfortunate' attitude and position of the state in tolerating the intolerance has prompted writers, academicians, students, and scientists to protest in whatever ways they could.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher will discuss the theoretical framework. At the same time, the critical issue of the impact of social media, how religious traditions have been portrayed, and the technical and production functions required for religious communication to support peaceful communal coexistence in India through postmodern reading in this study, will be undertaken. The issues involved in the process of interview and data collection will also be considered. This will help understand how the media is misused by some political, religious, and

³³⁶ "Narendra Modi visit: authors call for David Cameron to address free speech," <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/nov/11/writers-lobby-cameron-to-press-narendra-modi-on-free-speech-issues> (accessed, 10/08/2019).

³³⁷ Ibid.

fundamentalist groups in ways that cause communal conflict and discrimination against the minority communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMIC OF POWER

Introduction

The topic of media and religion has become prominent in social media. There is no doubt, the availability and accessibility of social media sites in the public sphere guide the discussion in different directions. However, the arguments applied in communication fields like advertising and public relations have helped maintain social systems of domination and in that social media plays a vital role. Because of the explosion in information communication and technologies, religion and social media seem more connected, interdependent, and interconnected. Today people experience their dependency and mediated events and messages for their religious experiences, and that people's religious meaning is shaped by mediated messages. Therefore, critical perspectives on social media must be advanced, and one such perspective is informed by postmodernism. Considering the potentiality of far-reaching effects on society that organizations have via social media, the purpose of this chapter is to critically re-examine research on social media through postmodern lenses about the theoretical understanding of Michel Foucault. It encourages different and plural discourses that allow scholars to perceive more possibilities than in the field of vision of a singular dominant discourse of modernity and objectivity and the development of new perspectives on society, knowledge, discourse, and power. Jürgen Habermas's theoretical work on discourse and ethics will discuss to understand the principle of dialogical communication.

1. Conceptual Clarification of Postmodernity

Postmodernism is a mode of discourse that rejects and denies the existence of universal, stable, and single meaning. Postmodernism is more of a philosophy than a

prediction about the relationship between two variables that is testable and falsifiable. One way of understanding postmodernism is to consider what it rejects. Postmodernism can be understood as a reaction to modernist and positivist concepts of a single, objective reality. Instead, all knowledge is fragmented, and no one can piece it all together to form a single and certain truth. As Lyotard stated, "Postmodernism also favours plurality of ideas rather than one right idea, or one grand narrative that tells the true story."³³⁸ Therefore, Postmodernists look for underlying processes of power and discourse that shape social reality and lead us to form consensuses about what we consider 'knowledge' while marginalizing voices that disagree with the dominant consensus. It asks why and how we come to know things, especially through discourse.

Furthermore, postmodern theorists claim that in the contemporary high-tech media society, emergent processes of change and transformation produce a new postmodern society. Its advocates argue that the era of postmodernity constitutes history and socio-cultural formation, which requires new concepts and theories. As observed by Best & Kellner, theorists of postmodernity claim that technologies such as computers and media, new forms of knowledge, and the changes in the socio-economic system are producing a postmodern social formation.³³⁹ Baudrillard interprets these developments in terms of information, knowledge, and technologies.³⁴⁰ Therefore, the postmodern era introduced the concept that reality or the principle of the 'real' is short-circuited by the interchangeability of signs in an era whose electronic media and digital technologies dominate communicative and semantic acts. These processes also produce increased cultural fragmentation, changes in the experience of space and time, and new modes of knowledge, subjectivity, and culture. These conditions provide the socio-economic and cultural basis for postmodern theory. Their analysis provides the perspectives from which postmodern

³³⁸ Amanda K. Kennedy & Erich J. Sommerfeldt, "A Postmodern Turn for Social Media Research: Theory and Research Directions for Public Relations Scholarship," in *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, vol. 23, (February, 2015), 31-45; citing Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

³³⁹ Steven Best & Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogation* (London: Macmillan Education LTD, 1991), 3.

³⁴⁰ J. Baudrillard, "Extreme postmodern social theory," in *Modern sociological theory*, ed. G. Ritzer (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 499.

theory can claim to be on the cutting edge of contemporary developments. While Richard Rorty believes that postmodernism has a particular commitment to social liberalism,³⁴¹ Thomas S. Kuhn observes postmodernism as a rapid change on the basis of scientific knowledge to a provisional consensus among scientists, that it is a ‘paradigm shift’ in the structure of scientific revolutions.³⁴²

1.1. Development of Postmodernism

After World War II the notion of ‘postmodern’, breaks with the modern age. The notion has been discussed in philosophy with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-Francois Lyotard, which designates the state of our culture following the transformation. Since the end of the nineteenth century, it has altered the game rules for science, literature, and arts. However, it was Somervell and Toynbee who suggested the concept of a ‘post-modern’ age, and further Somervell asserted that beginning in 1875, to delineate the fourth stage of Western history after Dark Ages (675-1075), the Middle Ages (1075-1475), and the Modern (1475-1875).³⁴³ On this account, Western civilization had entered a new transitional period beginning around 1875, which Toynbee termed the “post-modern age.” This period constituted a dramatic mutation and rupture from the previous modern age and was characterized by wars, social turmoil, and revolution. Toynbee describes the age as one of anarchy and total relativism. He represented the previous modern period as a middle-class bourgeois era marked by social stability, rationalism, and progress of a typical bourgeois middle-class conception of an era marked by cycles of crisis, war, and revolution. The postmodern age, by contrast, is a time of troubles marked by the collapse of rationalism and the ethos of the Enlightenment.³⁴⁴ Bernard Rosenberg used the term postmodern in his introduction to a popular anthology on *Mass Culture*, to describe the new conditions of life in mass society. He describes the ambiguity of the new postmodern world, its promising and threatening features, and concludes, in short, “the postmodern world offers man everything or nothing.”³⁴⁵ This rational

³⁴¹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of nature* (Princeton N.T: Princeton University Press, 1989).

³⁴² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 83.

³⁴³ D. C. Somervell, *A Study of History*, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 13.

³⁴⁴ See Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. VIII (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

³⁴⁵ Bernard Rosenberg & David White, *Mass Culture* (Glencoe, Ii: The Free Press, 1957), 4-5.

consideration of the probabilities may lead to a fear that we will be overtaken by the social furies that already beset contemporary society.

Huston Smith found that postmodern conceptual shifts had greatly affected contemporary science, philosophy, theology, and the arts. For Smith, the twentieth century has brought a Western thought mutation that inaugurated the “postmodern mind.” He describes the transformation from the modern worldview that reality is ordered according to laws that human intelligence can grasp to the postmodern worldview, that reality is unordered and ultimately unknowable. He suggests that postmodern skepticism and uncertainty are only a transition to another intellectual perspective, hopefully characterized by a more holistic and spiritual outlook.³⁴⁶ It would be difficult to overestimate the size and importance of this conceptual shift. Whereas people argued and battled over which view of reality was confirmed in the past, the postmodern position is that none are true. Postmodernists even wonder if truth has any meaning in this context. As their perspective has gained, the former battles between beliefs, this one against that one; science against religion, capitalism against communism, these turned into fighting over the status of belief itself.

Deriving from the above assumptions, it is pertinent to state that postmodernism suggests a break or extinction of the modern movement. It portrays the end of contemporary ideology in art, social class to an era of globalization. B. Daniel rightly defined a postmodern society as a “Post-industrial and consumer society, a media society, an information society, an electronic society, a high-tech society and the like.”³⁴⁷ Therefore, the postmodern discourse presupposes a sense of an ending, the advent of something new, and the demand that we must develop new categories, theories, and methods to explore and conceptualize the social and cultural situation. Thus, there is an intrinsic pathos of the unknown that characterizes the postmodern discourses, and its celebrants tend to position themselves as theoretical and political avant-gardes.

³⁴⁶ Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 138.

³⁴⁷ B. Daniel, “Postindustrial Society,” www.standforsnaplopediaparlosiophy.com (accessed, 24/07/2015).

1.2. Power, Domination, and Resistance in Postmodernism

Common to all postmodern philosophies, are questions of power. Unlike systems approach that emphasize the process of public relations in establishing two-way symmetrical relationships designed to sustain an organization's equilibrium in its environment, postmodern perspectives consider how language is used to exercise power via domination and/or resistance.³⁴⁸ Postmodernists have theorized power as both domination: controlling, regulatory, and disciplinary and as resistance: constructive, empowering, revolutionary, and subversive. Domination regulates subjects while positive or resistive power works to liberate them and give them agencies. Thus, power differentials in relationships are not always inculcated. In postmodern philosophy, power is not inherently bad or good, but it should be used with introspection.³⁴⁹ Similarly, Foucault's concept on micropower is a kind of localized bottom-up agency, flowing from individuals in society to larger structures such as institutions and ideologies. Individuals who empower organizations by this process may not always realize their strength, and they may not speak practically, but they have many alternatives. But when they do speak, subjects who do not submit to institutionalized power might use micropower for resistance.³⁵⁰ Here resistance can be seen in terms of protest or boycotts, or sabotage.

As Raupp suggested, social media is likely to be just another arena in which organizations with deep resources may dominate discussions and perpetuate ideologies that uninterested and disengaged publics may unquestioningly accept.³⁵¹ Joseph Rouse, asserted that Foucault's perspective into the structure of discursive formation was the possibility of significant changes in the organization of such a discursive field. The power differences in organization public relationships are not so simple insofar as the public allows them. Thus, in a way, organization public relationships are always two-way, regardless of social media's capacity to facilitate interaction. Macrolevel organizations are empowered by their publics while exerting

³⁴⁸ D. R. Holtzhausen & F. Voto, "Resistance from the margins: The postmodern public relations practitioner as organizational activist", in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, vol. 14 (2002), 57–84.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 48–49.

³⁵¹ J. Raupp, "Organizational communication in a networked public sphere", in *Studies in Communication/Media*, vol. 1 (2011), 15–36.

power to rectify hegemonic systems of power by consent. Foucault power that flows from public to organizations is deeply wrapped up in macro-level structures that normalize this bottom-up empowerment of dominant organizations by lesser-resourced individuals or publics.³⁵² In other words, individuals, who grant consent to organizations to stay in power, may not always realize their strength, and they may not practically speak using many alternatives. In postmodernism, this symbiotic relationship, for better or worse, imitates larger systems of domination and resistance.

Thus, instead of viewing public relationships of organizations simplistically as one-way information diffusion or idealistically as two-way symmetry, practitioners should recognize and take on the responsibility that comes with what the power microlevel publics and existing social structures give them. Viewing relationships in the light of power-by-consent should provide practitioners with a new vantage point from which to see relationships and introduce a new discussion about ethics and obligations inherent in maintaining those relationships. Kennedy and Sommerfeldt observed that researchers and practitioners might ask who has power in relationships and why and how that power effects social media discourses and vice versa. How do religious institutes or organizations use social media to manufacture consent for hegemonic power structures? How do religious institutes, organizations, the public, and practitioners perpetuate power systems in relationships and social media? How can practitioners leverage that new knowledge and use social media to strategically and ethically foster the well-being of the public who enable their organizations to stay in power?³⁵³

With the above conceptional understanding of postmodernism the researcher will discuss the theory of Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas. Foucault and Habermas are considered 20th century philosophers who give an innovative critique of modernism and postmodern society. Indeed, Foucault and Habermas did not work directly on social media; however, the confrontation of two philosophers on

³⁵² See Joseph Rouse, "Power/Knowledge", in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. G. Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 95-120.

³⁵³ Amanda K. Kennedy & Erich J. Sommerfeldt, "A Postmodern Turn for Social Media Research: Theory and Research Directions for Public Relations Scholarship," in *Atlantic Journal of Communication* (2015), 35-38.

intellectual debate invested many questions as power, democracy, discourse from two distinct philosophical approaches, which is significant in the contemporary society and also give substantive way to study the powers and discourse of social media.

2. Michael Foucault's Readings on Postmodernism

Foucault was born in Poitiers, France, in 1926 and died in 1984. He began his academic career as a philosopher, studying with Jean Hyppolite at the Lycee Henri IV. Becoming intolerant of the abstractness of his discipline and its native truth claims, Foucault turned to psychology and psychopathology as alternative forms of study and observed psychiatric practice in French mental hospitals during the early 1950s.

Foucault's work provides an innovative and comprehensive critique of modernity and humanism and the development of new perspectives on society, knowledge, discourse, and power. These have made him a significant source of postmodern thought. Sara Mills, observes that Foucault, is regarded as one of the most influential figures in modern critical theory. His influence is apparent in many of the fields of post-modernist, post-structuralist, feminist post-Marxist, and post-colonial theories. His work has also been felt across a wide range of other disciplinary fields, from cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology to English studies in history. The challenging nature of his work is that his ideas have not simply been accommodated by others but have caused heated and productive debate from the 1960s and 1970s, when he emerged as a key theorist, through to the present.³⁵⁴ Foucault distinguishes between two post-Renaissance eras: the classical era (1660-1800) and the modern era (1800-1950).³⁵⁵ He sees the classical period as inaugurating a powerful mode of domination over human beings that culminates in the modern era. Therefore, Foucault theories have been concerned mainly with three concepts, namely; Power, Knowledge, and Discourse which will be discussed below.

2.1. Concept of Power in Foucault's Postmodern Analysis

Beginning in the early 1970s, Foucault attempts to rethink the nature of modern power in a non-totalizing, non-representational, and anti-humanist scheme. He rejects

³⁵⁴ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003), 32.

³⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live*, trans. by John Johnston, (New York: Semiotext, 1989), 30.

all modern theories that see power as anchored in macrostructures or ruling classes and repressive. Instead, he develops new postmodern perspectives that interpret power as dispersed, indeterminate, heteromorphous, subject-less, and productive, constituting individuals' bodies and identities. Further, Foucault marks a rupture in history that inaugurated a radically different power mode than theorized on the juridical model. This power is productive, not repressive, in nature, one who is bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them.³⁵⁶ Mills asserted that Foucault is very critical of the idea that power is something that a group of people or institutions possesses. Power is concerned only with oppression and constrain. Foucault tries to see power beyond the understanding of power as repression of the powerless by the powerful.³⁵⁷ He argues that rather than simply negatively viewing power as constraining and repressing, even at its most constraining and oppressive measures, it is productive, giving rise to new forms of behaviour. In other words, for him, power operates within everyday relations between people and institutions.

Marxist critics, such as that of Althusser have mainly focused on the role of the State's oppression of the people,³⁵⁸ but Foucault found such notions largely unsatisfactory since they focus only on one-way traffic of power, that is, from the top-downward. He focuses on the way of power relations that permeate all relations within a society. His focus is on daily ways in which power is enacted and contested. Hence his approach allows an analysis that focuses on individuals as active subjects, as agents of power rather than passive victims. Power for Foucault is something that is performed, more like a strategy than a possession. Power is something that does something rather than which can be held onto. He puts it in the following way,

“power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in form of a chain, power is employed and exercised

³⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 136-137.

³⁵⁷ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 33-34.

³⁵⁸ L. Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1993), 1-5.

through a net like organization, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.”³⁵⁹

Two critical points are to be noted from the above statement:

First, power can be seen as a system of relations spread throughout the society, rather than simply a set of relations between the oppressed and the oppressor.

Secondly, individuals should not be seen simply as the recipients of power but can be seen as a place where power is enacted and where it is resisted. Thus, he sees power instead of as a strategy, something which someone does in a particular context, Foucault argues that power needs to be seen as something which has to be constantly performed rather than being possessed or being achieved. Thus, power is a set of relations that are dispersed throughout the society rather than being located within particular institutions. He observed, “they are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration.”³⁶⁰ In such a way, to theorize the Foucault notion of power, it should draw us to reconceptualize the power itself and the role that individuals play in power relations, whether the subject is subjected to oppression or plays an active role in relations with others and with institutions. Therefore, Foucault’s notion of power has to be illustrated in a particular cultural context where the play of power is both visible and concealed. Imsutoshi Jamir argues that there is a play of power in human relations, which can be observed through the core dimension of culture, such as “culture is shared.” Jamir argues,

“the core dimension of culture such as ‘culture is shared’ by all members of a given society that is made up of gender, class, race, age, language and ethnicity Then it becomes imperative to know the context in which it is shared, by whom it is shared, in which ways and under what condition it is shared becomes a pertinent area to explore.”³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98.

³⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, “Critical Theory/Intellectual Theory,” in *Michel Foucault: Politics, philosophy, Culture: Interview and other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. Gerard Raulet (London: Routledge, 1988), 38.

³⁶¹ L. Imsutoshi Jamir, *Sites in tribal Cultural Studies* (Mokokchung: Tribal Development and Communication Centre, 2015), 71.

In the same way, Foucault argues that multiple forms of power relations are not so easy to observe in play. He said,

*“the relation of power is perhaps among the best hidden things in social body [our task] to investigate what might be most hidden in the relations of power; to anchor them in the economic infrastructure; to trace them not only their governmental forms but also in the intra-governmental or para governmental.”*³⁶²

Here, Foucault is more interested in the local forms of power and how they are negotiated with by individuals or other agencies, rather than simply locating the power in a centralized institution as earlier argued by Marxist. In other words, in the earlier Marxist thinking, the overthrow of the state and the liberation of the working classes through revolution was seen as a fundamental aim from oppression in power relations, since “the State consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible.”³⁶³ Rather, he argues that the State should be seen as constructing the power relations, which tend to put the people in ways to make the political system work, not as possessing power. A revolution may change specific systems and patterns that society runs, but it will tend to position the people in much the same way; therefore, the idea of liberation runs, but it will manage to place the people in much the same way. Thus, the idea of liberation from oppression through a revolution for Foucault should be treated with extreme restraint.³⁶⁴ The Foucault analysis of the relations between the individual and the wider society suppose that the individual is not powerless in relation to institutions or the state. Rather, by analyzing how power is dispersed throughout society, Foucault enables us to see power as enacted in every interaction. Jamir further elaborated on what Foucault observed; he says “people acting like women and men, parents and children, teacher and students,

³⁶² Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex: Discussion with Bernard-Henry Levy,” in *Michel Foucault: Politics Philosophy, Culture: Interview and other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. L. Kritzman (London: Routledge, 1988), 119.

³⁶³ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 122.

³⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, “The subject and power,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, eds. H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 208–226.

etc., can no longer be regarded simply as performing functionally defined role. Rather these define relations.”³⁶⁵ Therefore, power can be challenged at any moment and stage, which is necessary to renew and maintain the power relations. Foucault’s analysis of power relations sets an entirely new way of examining power relations in society, focusing more on resistance than simple passive oppression.

2.2. Concept of Power/Knowledge in Foucault Postmodern Analysis

In many cases, Foucault is more concerned with how we know something and the process whereby something becomes established as fact. In his collection of essays power/knowledge (1980), he explores how some statements has to be established as facts or true, but other equally valid statements have to be discredited and denied. Foucault is not so much interested in what is known but rather the processes which lead to certain facts being understood rather than others in a particular period. For Foucault knowledge is a ‘conjunction of power relations and information-seeking which he terms as power/knowledge.’ He states, “power cannot be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.”³⁶⁶ He characterizes power/knowledge as an abstract force that determines what will be known, rather than assuming that individual thinks and develops ideas and knowledge. He asserts,

*“The subject who knows, the objects to be known and modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformation. In short it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the process and struggle that traverse it, and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.”*³⁶⁷

In Foucault’s version, it is power/knowledge which produces facts, and the individual, scholars are simply the vehicles or the sites where the knowledge is

³⁶⁵ L. Imsutoshi Jamir, *Sites in tribal Cultural Studies*, 59.

³⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power /Knowledge*, 52.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

produced. Best and Kellner asserted that his concept of power/knowledge is symptomatic of the postmodern suspicion of reason and the emancipatory schemes advanced in its name. The circular relationship between power and knowledge is established in Foucault's genealogical critiques of the human sciences. This has emerged within relations of power through practices and technologies of exclusion, confinement, surveillance, and objectification. Disciplines such as psychiatry, sociology, and criminology, in turn, contributed to the development, refinement, and proliferation of new techniques of power. Institutions such as the asylum, hospital, or prison functions as laboratories for observing individuals, experimentation with correctional techniques, and acquiring knowledge for social control.³⁶⁸ As Foucault noted, the modern individual became both object and subject of knowledge, not repressed, but positively shaped and formed within the matrices of scientific-disciplinary mechanism, a moral-legal, psychological, medical-sexual being carefully fabricated according to a whole technique, force and bodies. He argues that rather than knowledge being a pure search after truth, in reality, power operates in the processing of information, resulting in something as fact.³⁶⁹ For example, during the colonial period, the Westerners imposed the knowledge system they proposed as a global objective system of knowledge and formulated a Western perspective with Western interests. This process of production of knowledge took place by excluding other, equally valid forms of knowledge that were perhaps more relevant to the context. Thus, Foucault's work on power/knowledge is vital for analyzing the historical process at work in the construction of what our society knows about the past. It is only by critically examining the history that we can deconstruct what we know about the past.

2.3. Concept of Discourse in Foucault Postmodern Analysis

Discourse is one of the most frequently used terms in Foucault's work. He refers to discourse as the public domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group statement, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for many

³⁶⁸ Steven Best & Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogation*, 50

³⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish the Birth of Prison*, trans. by A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 216-217.

statements.³⁷⁰ He means ‘the general domain of statement’ as that ‘discourse’ referring to all statements and words having meaning and effect. He further used the term discourse to refer to regulated practices that account for several statements. For example, there is no set of rules on how to write an essay, yet somehow, the students in the schools learn to write within the essay's framework. As noted by Mills for Foucault this unwritten set of structures and rules would constitute a discourse. It is this rule in which he was most interested rather than words and the text produced.³⁷¹

Many Marxist theorists have used the term ideology to indicate that certain statements and ideas are authorized by the institutions that influenced individuals’ ideas, but Foucault’s idea of discourse is not simply the imposition of a set of ideas on individuals. He states,

*“discourse is not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silence are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and make it possible to thwart it.”*³⁷²

Ideology is always assumed to be negative and constraining in Marxist theorizing; whereas for Foucault discourse is both the means of oppression and resistance. Further, for Foucault, everything is constructed and apprehended through discourse. He does not deny that there are real material objects in the world, but he states that we can only think about and experience material objects and the world through the discourse and structures it imposes on our thinking. In thinking about the world, we categorize and interpret experiences and events according to the structures available to us, which are often challenging to question because the structures are

³⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1972), 80.

³⁷¹ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 53-54.

³⁷² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 100-101.

assumed to be normal and solid. In other words, objects exist, and events occur in the real world, but we apprehend and interpret these events within discursive structures of which we are not always aware. Moreover, Foucault, in his analysis of discourse observed,

*“In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and distributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its power and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.”*³⁷³

Here, Foucault is primarily interested in the ‘structure of discourse’ and the ‘control of this exercise’. For him, procedures that constrain discourse and lead to discourse being produced suggest three external exclusions: taboo, the distinction between the mad and the sane, and *true and false*. Taboo is a form of prohibition since it makes it difficult to speak about certain subjects such as ‘sexuality’ and ‘death’ and constrains how we talk about these subjects. The second external exclusion is the distinction between the speech of ‘the mad and the sane.’ In his book, *Madness and Civilization* (1967), Foucault argues that since the speech of those considered insane is not attended to, it is treated as if it did not exist. In other words, only the statement of those considered rational is attended to. The division between true and false is the third exclusion practice for Foucault. He states that those in positions of authority who are considered as ‘experts’ are those who can speak the ‘truth.’ The statements of those who are not in positions of power will be regarded as not to be telling the truth. His work shows how truth is supported materially by practices and institutions, such as universities, government, publishing houses, scientific bodies, etc.³⁷⁴ All these institutions keep in circulation those statements that they considered true but excluded the statements they characterize as false.

From the above discussion of Foucault’s concept on ‘discourse’, for him, discourse operates in four primary ways: first, *discourse that creates a world*, by

³⁷³ Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Undying the Text: A Post Structuralist Reader*, ed. R. Young (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1981), 52.

³⁷⁴ For detail discussion see, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 2005), 47-49.

shaping one's perceptions of the world, the way one understands the world, the way one behaves towards objects in the world and towards other people. It is a kind of virtual world generated by our minds, not by us alone, but we constructed this world socially through a complex interaction between experience and environment. Discourse thus binds us as social beings (together) and plays a vital role in constructing social reality. Second, discourse constitutes the world that we socially constructed and all forms of '*knowledge and truth.*' To Foucault, knowledge is something that exists independently of language. In other words, knowledge is not simply communicated through language but is organized through the structures, interconnections, and associations built into the language. He even argues that certain discourses in certain contexts have power to influence people to accept the statements as true. Thirdly, *discourse says something about the people who speak it.* Discourse communicates knowledge about the intended meaning of the language and the person speaking the discourse, like the speaker's social relations. Fourth, *discourse operates power.* It operates by being intimately involved with a socially embedded network of power. Certain types of discourse enable specific individuals to speak the truth or be believed when speaking on a particular subject. This gives the individuals degrees of social, cultural, and even possibly political power.

Nevertheless, as Thomson observes from the Foucault discourse, that his work on discourse helps the theorists to consider the way of following queries; where that information comes from; how it is produced and under what circumstances; whose interest it might serve; how it is possible to think differently to trace the way that information accepted as 'true' is kept in that privileged position. Turning this way of understanding the discourse into the method, and applied to textual analysis, means asking the texts questions such as; "what is being represented here as a truth or as a norm? How is this constructed? What evidence is used? What is left out? What is foregrounded and backgrounded? What is problematic and what is not? What alternative meanings/explanations are ignored? What is kept apart, and what is joined together? What interests are being mobilized and served by this and what are not? How has this come to be? What identities, actions, practice are made possible and /or

desirable and required by this way of thinking/talking/understanding? What is disallowed? What is normalized?³⁷⁵

2.4. Postmodern Ethics in Foucault Analyses

Foucault's work focuses on technologies of the self, ethics, and freedom where both continuities and dramatic discontinuities are used. The continuities concern the extension of his archaeological and genealogical investigations to a new field of study that seeks the beginnings of the modern hermeneutics of desire. It also searches for the profound truth of one's being in one's sexuality in Greek, Roman, and Christian culture. The discontinuities arise regarding his new focus on a self-constituting subject and his reconsideration of rationality and autonomy. Foucault is concerned with the problematization of fundamental domains of experience in Western cultures, such as madness, illness, deviance, and sexuality. He has shown how subjectivity is constituted in a wide range of discourses and practices within a field of power, knowledge, and truth. Moreover, Foucault's notion in resistance perception is not merely a negative operation, in that by resisting contemporary forms of subjectivity we strive to affirm alternative modes of subjectivity. This more affirmative mood in Foucault's later work brings us to ethics from the axis of genealogy. John Simon asserted that Ethics involves a relationship to oneself, recognition, and self-constitution as a particular type of moral agent.³⁷⁶ There are techniques or technologies for the government of oneself just as there are for others, so in that sense, governmentality is the connection between ethics and politics. Ethical self-formation involves four aspects:³⁷⁷

- i. The substance or part of oneself which is considered problematic for moral conduct, such as desire.
- ii. The mode of subjection, such as obeying a universal moral law or conforming to a scientific norm.
- iii. Ascetics or the means of working on oneself, such as confession.

³⁷⁵ Pat Thomson, "A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis"
<https://patthomson.net/2011/07/10/a-foucauldian-approach-to-discourse-analysis/> (accessed, 02/10/2018)

³⁷⁶ John Simons, "Michel Foucault (1926-84)", in *Contemporary Critical Theorist from Lacan to Said*, ed. (Jaipur, New Delhi, Bangalore: RAWAT Publications, 2004), 196.

³⁷⁷ Ibid,

- iv. The goal of self-formation, such as self-fulfilment.

Foucault advocates an ethical relation to oneself, whose corresponding mode of subjectification is an aesthetics of the self, which has recourse neither to knowledge nor universal rules. Given that there is no essential subject, 'that the self is not given to us. There is only one practical consequence; we have to create ourselves as a work of art.' But, according to Bauman, the modern project of morality is flawed in an empirically new postmodern world. What sorts of ethics do we use in a time-space reorganized and risky world when we are creating not just say, shoes, at a long distance, as Marx foreshadowed, but dangerous products or the technology to create dangerous products, like pesticides and pharmaceuticals, so that our actions traverse distance and time heavy with the potential weight of disaster. What sort of ethics do we use when these long-distance dangers are one-sided, that is, when those in command of a factory, a weapons system, a consumer item, and those who have potentially threatened neighbours, workers, consumers, clients do not present reciprocal danger? How can we meet the demand in the new risk-aware to provide further legal, ethical and political principles no longer apply? And what sort of ethics will allow us to see individuals not as consumer capitalism passives dupes but as active in creating themselves and their ethics?³⁷⁸

Consequently, morality and ethics, it is commonly agreed, have generally resurfaced as important theoretical themes by a marked downward shift. These theories now explicitly find their justification in connections to broader intellectual tradition and political life's moral urgencies. Participating in this downward shift, postmodern ethics has seen two sorts of changes.³⁷⁹ First, it embraces a project of ethics, a rejection of morality, and a systematized approach to pressing questions favoring ethics that replaces formality with practicality and focuses on the autonomous individual as the source of those ethics. Second, postmodern ethics stresses the inception of new ethical questions and problems characterizing a postmodern epoch. Giddens noted that in a complex postmodern society, "new ethical

³⁷⁸ Ibid

³⁷⁹ Rekha Mirchandani, "Postmodernism and Sociology: From the Epistemological to the Empirical," in *Journal Sociological Theory* (March, 2005), 87-115.

spaces are opened up and political perplexities created.”³⁸⁰ Postmodern ethics challenges how we think about our social relations in a new, risky, time-space consumer society. Ethics is the analysis, evaluation, and promotion of proper conduct and virtuous character in light of the best available principles. Ethics does not simply ask how to live well. It asks how we should live well ethically, that is, with goodness and in proper relations with each other.

2.5. Foucault Analysis on Structuralism

After World War II, the modernization process in France produced a sense of rapid change and a feeling that a new society was emerging. John Ardagh, claims that between the early 1950s and mid1970s, France went through a spectacular renewal. A stagnant economy turned into one of the world’s most dynamic and successful. Material modernization moved along at a hectic pace, and an agriculture-based society became mainly an urban and industrial one. This brings conflict between rooted traditional and new modes.³⁸¹ The rapid changes in the social and economic sphere were thus paralleled by equally dramatic changes in the world of theory. Khoirul Zaman Al Umma observes that by the 1960s, these theories were superseded by the linguistically oriented discourses of structuralism. The development of structuralism touched many fields as changes from social structure to linguistic structure, and the social scientific focus moved from the social to language.³⁸² Structuralism has become more interesting because of its study about speaking of signs and practices where the meaning is the product of structure outside of human agents. The structural analysis aimed at objectivity, coherence, rigour, and truth and claimed scientific status for its theories, which would be purged of mere subjective valuations and experiences.

The structuralist revolution thus described social phenomena in terms of linguistic and social structures, rules, codes, and systems, while rejecting the humanism which had previously shaped the social and human sciences. Ferdinand de

³⁸⁰ Anthony Giddens, “Living in a Post-Traditional Society,” in *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. U. Beck, A. Giddens, & S. Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 190.

³⁸¹ John Ardagh, *France in the 1980s* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 13.

³⁸² Khoirul Zaman Al Umma, “Ferdinand De Saussure: Structuralism and His Role in Modern Linguistics,” in *Journal Lisano od-Dhad*, vol. 2 no. 1 (April, 2015), 1-19.

Saussure,³⁸³ argues that language can be analyzed in terms of its present laws of operation, without reference to its historic properties and evolution. Saussure further interpreted the linguistic signs as comprised of two integral parts: an acoustic-visual component, the signifier, and a conceptual component, the signified. Thus, language is a system of signs that expresses ideas or is signified through differing signifiers that produce meaning.

The goal of producing an analysis of the interrelated network of severe speech acts as a system of elements ordered by rules of transformation. Foucault notes that it resembles structuralism as “my aim is to uncover the principles and consequences of an autochthonous transformation taking place in the field of historical knowledge. It may be well that this transformation, the problems that it raises the tools that it uses, the concepts that emerge from it, and the result that it obtains are not entirely foreign to what is called structural analysis.”³⁸⁴ Foucault’s approach to structuralism means not the language in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather language in a very free verse sense. Language insofar as it has an autonomous and self-referring existence, freed from subjection to anything outside language. The mirror image of language, which appears when a language disappears and disappears when language appears, is discourse. Again, Foucault employs the word discourse in a unique sense, derived from the epistemological and linguistic writings of the ideologues. Discourse for Foucault is language from which all self-reference, all inner play, all metaphorical distortion are eliminated. The sole function of discourse is to serve as a transparent representation of things and ideas standing outside.³⁸⁵ Hence, language and discourse are antithetical; in language, the direction of meaning is inward, whereas, in discourse, it is outward. Where language disappears, as Foucault argues it did at the beginning of the seventeenth century, all that remains of language is its function as representation. Its nature and its virtues as discourse. Conversely, language returns, and Foucault asserts that it returned at the end of the eighteenth century.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Ferdinand de Saussure is one of the most influence figures in linguistics. His view of linguistics is considered as ‘new’ because of its difference with traditional linguistics i.e. historical linguistics. It is consisted of the study of phonology principal, structural and historical linguistics.

³⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 15.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 80.

³⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. by Velasquez (London: Routledge, 2004), 81.

However, the term Structuralism is used more in an abusive manner. It is used to describe any science, pseudo-science, or critical method, which finds the significance of human things in their structure. In other words, an approach to the human sciences that describes, explains, and analyses a specific field as a complex system of interrelated parts. Peter Barry asserted that structuralist theories had been proposed to interpret all of the following: language, actions, rituals, mythologies, religions, poetry, texts, clothes architecture, anthropology, psychology, psychoanalysis, literary theory. Four common ideas characterize structuralism:³⁸⁷

- i. Every system has a structure.
- ii. The structure determines the position of each element of a whole.
- iii. Structuralised are interested in structural law that deals with coexistence rather than changes.
- iv. Structures are the real things that lie beneath the surface or the appearance of meaning.

2.6. Foucault Analysis on Post-Structuralism

According to Craig Lundy, the early 1960s witnessed the emergence of a discordant structuralist philosopher, Jacques Derrida, whose position was perhaps the most ambiguous. As early as 1963, Derrida advanced an explicit critique of structuralism that would later be labeled as poststructuralist.³⁸⁸ The poststructuralist attacked the scientific pretensions of structuralism which attempted to create a scientific basis for the study of culture and strove for the standard modern goals of foundation, truth, objectivity, certainty, and system. However, Poststructuralists argued that structuralist theories did not fully break with humanism since they reproduced the humanist notion of an unchanging human nature.

³⁸⁷ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 3rd ed. (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2012), 38.

³⁸⁸ Craig Lundy, "From Structuralism to Poststructuralism," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Poststructuralism*, eds. Benoit Dillet, Iain MacKenzie & Robert Porter (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 79.

For Jacques Derrida, the author is not important, and the inquiry for fixed and present meaning is not helpful because there is no fixed meaning for any symbols. This new perspective challenges structuralism. “The meaning of meaning is the infinite implication, the indefinite deferral of signifier to signified. Its force is a certain pure and infinite equivocality which gives signified meaning no respite, not rest, it always signifies again and differs.”³⁸⁹ This production of signification that resists imposed structural constraints, Derrida terms ‘dissemination.’

Foucault is also considered one of the biggest influences on Post structuralism because of its historical analysis on how we have been dealing with those outsides of the societal norms, such as the mentally ill, prisoners and homosexuals, etc. In his book *History of Madness*, he shows the mentally ill people in the middle ages were considered as part of public life or they were part and parcel of the public sphere.³⁹⁰ For Foucault, poststructuralism was concerned with the principles by which elements can be organized together to produce coherent and meaningful patterns. As Gary P. Redford & Marie L. Redford, observes Foucault always seeks to describe concrete relationships that can be described between concrete items. Foucault describes the arrangement of this kind as ‘discursive formation,’ and simply refers to how a collection of texts are organized for each other. For Foucault discursive formations are real and concrete, just like the arrangement of books on a library shelf to be seen and touched and experienced because they are composed of the material object such as books.³⁹¹

Moreover, Foucault asserts during the processes of western modern society development, and people have been moving from the certain standard dealing with the norms of normal towards the increasing system of surveillance and discipline of the subject of the abnormal. So, all the history of modern institutions was about the measuring and judging of deviance. For example, in the educational system, it is all

³⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other essay on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 58.

³⁹⁰ See for detail discussion, Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness*, trans. by Jonathan Murphy & Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2006).

³⁹¹ Gary P. Redford & Marie L. Redford, “Structuralism, post-structuralism, and the library: de Saussure and Foucault,” https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235319554_Structuralism_post-structuralism_and_the_library_De_Saussure_and_Foucault (accessed, 10/08/2019).

about getting a grade, and therefore we are measured with the norm. However, in the long run, it becomes a norm that every student knows that they should do better, and in this way, surveillance becomes self-surveillance. This was how modern institutions make the norms through military medicine and law: all these measures and judge people. Therefore, Foucault noted the term genealogy of subjectivity, where people are surveyed without their knowledge because surveillance has been stored in the sub-conscience and lived as normal.³⁹²

Nevertheless, a poststructuralist approach to communication theory analyses shows how electronically mediated communication both challenges and reinforces systems of domination emerging in a postmodern society and culture. Mark Poster, in his thesis, wrote that the mode of information enacts a radical reconfiguration of language, one which constitutes subjects outside the pattern of the rational, autonomous individual. The familiar modern subject is displaced by the mode of information in favour of multiplied, disseminated, and decentred, continuously inter-pelleted as an unstable identity.³⁹³ Therefore, Communication theory needs to account for electronically mediated communication and take its proper place of importance in general social theory. This importance has not generally been recognized by the great theorists of modern society who emphasized action (labour) and institution (bureaucracy) over language and communication.

Further, Poster argues that the emergence of the mode of information, with its electronically mediated systems of communication, changes the way we think about the subject and promises to alter the shape of society. Electronic culture promotes the individual as an unstable identity formation and raises the question of social form beyond the modern, the possibility of a postmodern society.³⁹⁴ Moreover, electronic culture promotes theories such as poststructuralism that focus on the role of language in the constitution of subjects. These theories undermine the views of the reader and author as a stable point of criticism and authority.

³⁹² See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. I: An Introduction*.

³⁹³ Mark Poster, "The Mode of Information and Postmodernity," in *Theorizing Communication Reading Across Traditions*, eds. Robert T. Craig & Heidi L. Muller (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publication, 2007), 377.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, 378.

2.7. Domination and Resistance Foucault Analyses

Foucault's famous statement "where there is power, there is resistance"³⁹⁵ was preoccupied with exploring power and has been primarily studied as an analysis of resistance. Since resistance is helpful to understand power, Foucault's, observation on power has been caught within a complex grid of disciplinary, normalizing, panoptic powers that survey, judge, measure, and correct their every move. There is no space or primal liberty in society; power is everywhere. Foucault noted, "what I am attentive to is the fact that every human relationship is to some degree a power relation. We move in a world of perpetual strategic relation."

Moreover, this was a period in a rapidly developing youth sub-culture that produced music, art, and writing. At the same time, there was a potential major conflict between the principal political power blocs in the world. There was a disjunction between the young people representing freedom and peace and the older generation's values in positions of political power. Foucault turned on a conflation between power as omnipresent and as omnipotent. While power is everywhere, it is indissociable from contestation and struggle. He stated, "I am just saying; as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power; we can always modify its indeterminate grip conditions and according to a precise strategy."³⁹⁶

Furthermore, Foucault's primary interest was in using a new regime of surveillance, which he argued reflected the power and authority structures within society. Just as prisoners are closely observed all the time, as a strategy for controlling them, similar techniques could be used in other areas of society. Today, it is evident that with the widespread use of street cameras in urban areas, and google navigation systems through internet connection. With smartphones, we are, one way or other, under surveillance by the capitalist and state authorities. Social media is one example of surveillance. We constantly use self-surveillance to check whether we keep according to the norms, counting likes on different social media apps. We are careful

³⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1: An Introduction*, 96.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, 123.

of sending out messages, photos, videos, and comments because we are aware that we are under surveillance by people. Therefore, we are constantly taking the eyes of others to measure ourselves, and all these are about fitting-in. Many people use the internet and computers to copy, transmit, and freely distribute digital knowledge without knowing the power of social media. Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, noted: “they are hacktivists and part of the multitude’s struggle for the open common character of knowledge and services, although many do not know that they are part of this movement.”³⁹⁷ They further observe that this struggle has various fronts, such as the struggle against the privatization of public goods, the struggle against the capitalist appropriation of traditional knowledge and genetic information, the struggle for free access to the internet and new technologies, and the open-source character of digital learning, the struggles for global democracy and critical public, and so on. The internet is used in these struggles as a medium that helps in producing and distributing alternative and critical knowledge, free sharing knowledge and technology, making technology cooperatively, and changing and destroying hegemonic knowledge by cyberattacks.

Foucault insists that the creation of this new regime was not an “anonymous, unintentional process; on the factory production, private property, and profit.”³⁹⁸ However, Foucault does not believe that all power relations involve domination. He observes that we see power everywhere; hence, there is no place for liberty, which seems incomplete for him. But, he noted, “one cannot impute to me the idea that power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom.”³⁹⁹ Power is not itself evil, but power is simply the capacity to modify the actions of others. What counts, therefore, is how the power is used. It is used to increase the freedom of others or to capture them in relation to domination.

Kevin Jon Heller asserted that the feature of modernity that limits the proliferation of human possibility instead of promoting it is irreconcilable with the idea of freedom that animates Foucault’s thought. Foucault may well believe that all

³⁹⁷ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 354.

³⁹⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment the Birth of Prison*, 174.

³⁹⁹ 399 Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” in *The Final Foucault*, ed. David Rasmussen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 13.

global transformation projects inevitably reproduce the relations of domination they intend to eliminate; this does not mean, however, that he holds out no hope for localized struggle against forms of domination, or that he believes that the practice of freedom is impossible.⁴⁰⁰

Foucault's concept of resistance was based on the convergence of multiple and conflicting powers. He defined "the bodies of prisoners condemned to public torture and execution as resisting bodies."⁴⁰¹ This indicated that resistance is not only possible but is an intrinsic component of power's movement. This is why Foucault wrote, "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."⁴⁰² Resistance is not exterior to power precisely because it results from the convergence of multiple and different forces of power. Moreover, he argued that power breeds resistance and has on occasion pointed to tactics of resistance. However, there is no adequate description of resistance, the scope, detail, and rigour of which approaches the analysis of technologies of domination.

2.8. Critique on Foucault's Thinking

First, Foucault's radical skepticism towards several subjects has always caused difficulties for theorists to draw on his work. However, his work has profoundly impacted virtually every field in the humanities and social sciences. Undoubtedly, one of the most valuable aspects of his work is to sensitize theorists to the pervasive operations of power and to highlight the problematic or suspicious aspects of rationality, knowledge, subjectivity, and the production of social norms. Second, what Foucault's work does is suspend judgment; rather than assuming that a particular analysis of events is true. Therefore, for Foucault, the notion such as 'the past is inferior to the present' has to be avoided. Rather, he calls on us to suspend our judgment when we analyze.

⁴⁰⁰ Kevin Jon Heller, "Power, Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault," in *Substance*, vol. 25, no.1 (1996), 78-110.

⁴⁰¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment the Birth of Prison*, 46.

⁴⁰² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol.1: An Introduction*, 95.

Second, another significant element in Foucault's thought is that he does not seek to explain why something happened in any simple way, but rather he sees that events were over-determined that events had a multiplicity of possible causes. Third, he exposes the links between power, truth, and knowledge, to describe how liberal humanist values are intertwined with and supports technologies of domination.

Third, if we begin with the idea of investigation on a historical period or a subject using Foucault's work, we may not find much is applicable. However, if we focus on problems, such as the relation between groups or ethnic minorities and institutions, or social stigmatization of those with disabilities, his way of thinking is more likely to be crucial.

Fourth, the most interesting part of Foucault's approach is his radical scepticism. He questions the type of knowledge which we assume that everyone accepts as evidently true. Rather than taking the common-sense view that people who were classified as insane were imprisoned because of the fear that they might harm themselves or others and that they might be treated and cured, Foucault focuses on the way that the idea of madness performed an essential role in the construction of reason.⁴⁰³

Fifth, at many times, he acknowledges his debt to Marx. However, there are many Marxist elements within his work, especially the Marxist analysis of power relations and the role of economic inequality in determining social structures. However, Foucault distances himself from the notion of purely economic and State-centred focus, stressing that power needs to be reconceptualised and the role of the State and the economic function need a radical revision. Thus, he is seen rather, as negotiating with a Marxist framework of analysis that could no longer be applied in any simple way to France's more complex social structures in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁰⁴

Sixth, his political engagement has seen a great deal of discussion among the scholars. Due to his critical and radical position against any form of politics, scholars

⁴⁰³ See for detail discussion, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 125.

⁴⁰⁴ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 6.

have criticised Foucault for the essentially negative critical position he adopts. However, he describes his notion of progressive politics in contradiction to other forms of politics. He said,

*“A progressive politics is a politics which recognises the historical and specified conditions of a practice, whereas other politics recognise only ideal necessities, univocal determinations and the free interplay of individual initiatives. A progressive politics is a politics which defines, within a practice, possibilities for transformation and the play of dependencies between those transformations, whereas other politics rely upon the uniform abstraction of change or the thaumaturgic presence of genius”.*⁴⁰⁵

Thus, Foucault is concerned more about developing and describing a politics that considers the transformative possibilities in the present. He is against adopting a set of political beliefs by the people-centered around the individual leaders who have utopian visions of the future. It is clear from this attempt that he is committed to seeing politics from a broader perspective rather than narrow party politics.⁴⁰⁶ His analysis of politics moves away from the abstract notions of political agendas and is grounded more locally in acts and interactions.

Seventh, Foucault has been tremendously influential within the fields of postcolonial theory and feminist theory. Many feminist theorists have found Foucault's critical thinking helpful. They have found it necessary to rethink the conceptual framework that supports much of what is consistent within society. Rather than a top-down model of power relations that examines that state or institutions relations, he is concerned with developing a bottom-up model. Therefore, he sees the body as one of the sites of struggle and discursive conflict. He considers the body to be a site where power is enacted and resisted. He draws attention to the body as a 'historically and culturally specific entity'. In other words, for Foucault, the body is viewed, treated, and experienced differently depending on the social context and

⁴⁰⁵ Foucault cited in D. Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Verso, 1994), 195.

⁴⁰⁶ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 1-7.

regarded as natural, but always experienced as mediated through different social constructions.⁴⁰⁷

Eight, another important area of consideration is Foucault's conceptualization of power relations. Since Foucault sees power not as something imposed but as a network or web of relations which circulates through society, within the postmodern theory, postmodernism is no longer thought to be simply the imposition of power relations upon others but can be seen as enactment through violence and invasion, and also through the production of knowledge and information. Perhaps it is this analysis of power that has profoundly influenced political thinking. Rather than simply thinking of power as an imposition of the individual's will on another or one another, power is seen as a set of relations and strategies dispersed throughout society and enacted at every moment of interaction.

From the above theoretical discussion of Foucault, analysis on postmodernism, his theory did not show the principle of dialogical communication, which is very important in power play and discourse practices. Therefore, Jürgen Habermas discourse and ethics theory of dialogical communication will consider new ways to understand the principle and foundation for democratic communication.

3. Habermas Discourse and Ethics

Jürgen Habermas is a reconstructive philosopher whose primary task is to re-evaluate existing social theories and develop and articulate new theories that meet the challenges of the contemporary social condition. Habermas writes more extensively on the field of ethics and morality.⁴⁰⁸ Although this may appear to be a departure from his traditional areas of academic inquiry, in the words of David M. Rasmussen, Habermas is simply assuming the program of the German Enlightenment to establish somehow a basis for ethics that fully acknowledged that the traditional world has disappeared.⁴⁰⁹ No longer would tradition and history serve as the determinants by

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I *An Introduction*.

⁴⁰⁸ Michael John Ford, "Jürgen Habermas: Discourse Ethics and the Development of a Contemporary Christian Ethic," <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/de59/06d27b0610a01803af58572546f1e77f51cd.pdf> (accessed, 10/06/2019).

⁴⁰⁹ David M. Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1990), 56.

which ethical and moral decisions are made. In searching for a foundation for contemporary ethical inquiry, tradition needs to be augmented with reason. The tension between tradition and reason as sources of knowledge, particularly ethical knowledge, has existed for some time. It may be traced back to the German philosopher of the eighteenth century. According to Rasmussen,

*“there are two basic strains in the history of German philosophy. One strain argues that thought or reason is constative, the other that it is transformative. The former orientation can be traced to the debate initiated by Kant over the limits of human reason, while the latter can be traced to Hegel’s philosophy of history, which attempted to locate philosophical reflection in a discourse about the history of human freedom.”*⁴¹⁰

Rasmussen identifies two key characteristics in the history of German philosophy whose perspectives on the source of knowledge differ: Kant maintains that knowledge is derived from reason alone, and Hegel, who posits that reason is supplemented by tradition and history to shape what constitutes knowledge.

Two potential foundations for ethics have been proposed. Kant’s suggestion emphasizes the use of pure practical reason as a source for ethical knowledge. Hegel’s approach promotes the use of reason as a source for ethical understanding but acknowledges that reality is constantly in flux due to personal and corporate experiences. Thus, what has been considered valid ethical knowledge is also transitive based on the traditions and experiences the individual and community have shaped the original rational thought. So, the question remains, how is one to construct ethics that acknowledges the valuable contributions of these earlier positions yet makes its unique contribution? The answer for this can be found in the original work of Habermas.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ David M. Rasmussen, "Critical Theory and Philosophy," in *The Handbook/Critical Theory*, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 13.

⁴¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application Remark on Discourse and Ethics*, trans. by Ciaran Cronin, (Cambridge: The MID Press, 2001), 1.

For Habermas, the solution to this problem is ‘discourse ethics.’ Discourse ethics is an approach to ethics founded upon rules of dialogue, which encourages participants to approach an ethical dilemma with both pure rational reason and experience, firmly in hand. These facets of knowledge are intended to supplement the dialogue, and help the community reach a mutual understanding regarding a particular moral or ethical issue.

Foundational to the notion of discourse ethics, and to any speech communication at all, is Habermas's conception of validity claims. Introduced by Habermas in his early work “What is Universal Pragmatics,” validity claims represent the cornerstone of discourse and discourse ethics. In linguistic communication, where two or more people are engaged in dialogue, all parties must recognize four implicit validity claims as the mutual presuppositions underlying the dialogue.

The first validity claim is that “the speaker must choose a comprehensible expression so that the speaker and hearer can understand one another.”⁴¹² In the case of discourse regarding ethical principles, the speaker must select words and phrases that maintain the truths of the argument but that are understandable for the hearer so that they may understand the content of the argument.

The second validity claim is that “the speaker must have the intention of communicating a true proposition (or a prepositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share in the knowledge of the speaker.”⁴¹³ The discourse must be motivated by the desire of the speaker to share her or his knowledge with the hearer. Regarding moral or ethical discourse, the speaker must be motivated by the desire to share his or her knowledge with the hearer to enlighten the hearer to an alternative position.

The third validity claim is that “the speaker must want to express his intention truthfully so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker.”⁴¹⁴ In dialogue,

⁴¹² Jürgen Habermas, “What is Universal Pragmatics?” in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 2.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 2.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, 2-3.

it is assumed that all parties engaged are speaking truthfully to one another. When the speaker expresses a position, it must be assumed by the hearer that what is being expressed is the truth, so far as truth is understood.

The fourth validity claim is that “the speaker must choose an utterance that is right so that the hearer can accept the utterance and both speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance for a recognized normative background.”⁴¹⁵ The speaker must select an appropriate means of communication so that the hearer may take in what is being said and accept the validity of what they hear. When the validity of the statement is accepted, then the speaker's position too may be accepted.

In contemporary society, the term ‘argumentation’ carries with it a reputation. For many, arguing or engaging in argumentation is something to be avoided. For Habermas, however, argumentation is a cornerstone of discourse ethics. When people engage in argumentation, undergirded by the four presupposed validity claims mentioned above, they are able to express and hear various positions. However, in Habermas’s understanding of the term, some important concepts must be mentioned.

3.1. Habermas Approaches on Communicative Action

i. Strategic Versus Communicative Action

For Habermas, two types of rational action may be employed in discourse: goal-oriented action (strategic and instrumental action), and communicative action. Within the grouping of goal-oriented activity, Habermas focuses on strategic action. Strategic move exists when participants in discourse are oriented toward success. Communicative action exists when those engaged in dialogue are oriented towards reaching an understanding.⁴¹⁶ According to Habermas,

“whereas in strategic action one actor seeks to influence the behaviour of another by means of the threat of sanctions or the prospect of gratification in order to cause the interaction to continue as the first actor desires, in

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁴¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action - Volume I - Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 286.

*communicative action one actor seeks rationally to motivate another by relying on the illocutionary binding/bonding effect of the offer contained in her or his speech act.”*⁴¹⁷

One can conclude from this elaboration that strategic action attempts to force, by the use of threats or sanctions, the behaviour or agreement of another individual. However, an agreement is brought about in communicative action through the illocutionary binding/bonding effect created through a series of mutually acknowledged and accepted speech acts.

ii. *Speech Acts: The “Double Structure of Speech*

Habermas values the first speech act in communicative action as the ‘double structure of speech’. This principle contends that there are two components inherent in every utterance directed towards reaching a mutual understanding in a communicative situation: the propositional and the illocutionary. Propositional speech acts, also known as the propositional content of communication, refers to simple experiences uttered without ulterior motives. A propositional statement is simply a statement of fact. On the other hand, illocutionary speech acts refer to speech that is used to do something or accomplish a particular goal. In the case of discourse ethics, when both speaker and hearer employed the four underlying validity claims, they are freed to use illocutionary speech acts to convey various positions and attempt to attain a state of mutual understanding.⁴¹⁸

iii. *Illocutionary Speech Acts: Three Classes of Speech*

According to Habermas, illocutionary speech acts are those dialogical acts that serve to solve a problem or to convey one’s position. To explain how these illocutionary acts work, Habermas distinguishes between three classes of speech acts: constative, regulative, and expressive.

⁴¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. by Christian Lenhardt & Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 58.

⁴¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, “What is Universal Pragmatics?” 41-44.

First, *Constative*, there are ‘constative speech acts in which elementary propositional sentences are used.’⁴¹⁹ According to Mathews, constative speech thematize ‘the World’ of external nature in an objectifying, cognitive attitude. They seek to represent facts through propositional statements, and the validity claims that thematized is truth.⁴²⁰ If a speaker were asked to justify a constative statement, the speaker would appeal to a shared field or verifiable experience to secure the truth of her claim. Her utterance would be validated if she could ‘redeem’ or establish its true character in a manner recognized by hearers.⁴²¹ Constative statements are concerned with true, factual, propositional content that can be verified or justified through dialogue.

Second, *Regulative*: Regulative speech acts in which either elementary imperative sentences or elementary intentional sentences appear.⁴²² In regulative speech acts, which tend to be the basis of ethical and moral argumentation, the speaker thematizes ‘our world,’ the socially shared participatory world of inter subjectivity. Regulative speech acts make claims not about the facts or truth but about the norms that establish legitimate interpersonal relations. The validity claim for regulative utterances is appropriateness or rightness.⁴²³ It has already been established that truth is found in the justification of moral norms based on a mutual dialogue for Habermas. Thus, if the speaker were asked to justify a regulative statement, the speaker would appeal to norms, rather than purely factual information.

Third, *expressive* speech acts in which elementary experiential sentences appear.⁴²⁴ Such expressive speech thematize ‘my world’ of inner nature; that is, the inner, subjective world seeks to disclose the speaker’s subjective states or intentions to the hearers. The validity claim that corresponds to expressive utterances is

⁴¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action - Volume 1- Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 309.

⁴²⁰ T. Mathews, “Religious Meaning in the Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas,” in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. vol. 82. no. 3-4 (1999), 383-399.

⁴²¹ Ibid, 385.

⁴²² Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action - Volume 1- Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 309.

⁴²³ T. Mathews, “Religious Meaning in the Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas,” 386.

⁴²⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action - Volume 1- Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 309.

sincerity.⁴²⁵ Because the personal is so permanent in an expressive speech act, if the speaker were asked to justify an expressive statement, the hearer can only resort to the trust that has been established in the hearer over a while. The fact that the speaker has given evidence that their statements are trustworthy based on the proven validity of such statements in the past serves as the basis for accepting new statements. Though the speaker is only expressing subjective evidence to the validity of a statement, the hearer can accept the trustworthiness of the statements and thus deem valid what is being presented.

iv. *Speech Acts and the Bonding Principle*

At the core of Habermas conception of speech acts is the belief in a mutually reciprocal dialogical relationship. Habermas maintains that when two or more people are engaged in dialogue, each person may employ the features of these speech acts, to express valid claims. When the claims have been expressed, Habermas contends that the other person can express their validity claim. Then two parties can dialogue about the validity claims that have been expressed. Finally, each person may ask for further justification regarding all three of these types, and that justification must be extended. The hope is that when this process is undertaken, a discourse of this sort can result in mutually satisfactory agreements about a decision or course of action. While engaged in argumentation, when the speaker expresses a validity claim and when the hearer accepts the validity claim, then both speaker and hearer necessarily enter into a mutual relationship. According to Habermas, “as soon as the hearer agrees with the guarantee offered by the speaker, obligations are assumed that have consequences for the interaction in that, they create a binding/bonding effect between speaker and hearer that makes the continuation of their interaction possible.”⁴²⁶ His argumentation is that there is no longer something that divides two people, as is often the contemporary sense. Instead, argumentation allows exchanging valid claims and entering into a mutually satisfactory relationship between all parties.

⁴²⁵ T. Mathews, “Religious Meaning in the Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas,” 386.

⁴²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 58.

V. *Universalization*

When writing about the philosophy of discourse, Habermas notes a disjunction between theory and practice. For Habermas, “in theoretical discourse, the gap between particular observations and general hypothesis is bridged by some canon or other of induction. A similar bridging principle is needed for practical discourse.”⁴²⁷ Discourse, for Habermas, also is the fusion of horizon, whereby true and false prejudices are sorted out through conversation. His premise is that “in principle, a rationally motivated agreement must always be reachable, where the phase-in principle signifies the counterfactual reservation if argumentation were conducted openly and continued long enough.”⁴²⁸ The possibility of agreement is always contained in discourse because understanding is inscribed in communication. In introducing the time horizon, he also acknowledges the temporal structure of the telos of speech.

The theory of society based on the theory of communication can explain why the development of society gives rise to situations that afford contemporary individuals privileged access to the constitutive features of communicative action. Habermas further stated that “in modern societies, there is such an expansion of the scope of contingency for interaction loosed from normative contexts that the inner logic of communication action becomes practically true.”⁴²⁹

There are two realms in discourse. In one realm, there are the observations that one makes about oneself and the world. In the other realms, there are the hypotheses that these observations form when brought together, making them more than just observation but something with real meaning and content. James Tully observed that Habermas’s argument has three interrelated dimensions: (i) we are all essentially alike as humans (ii) because we use language and (iii) because the telos of our language-in-use (speech) is reaching an understanding. We would not be humans if our constitutive form of communication were not understanding. In other words, we are realizing and expressing our natures when we seek to justify our habitual practices of justification

⁴²⁷ Ibid, 63.

⁴²⁸ Ibid 105.

⁴²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action - Volume II*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), 403.

that are elevated to this unique position because it expresses the telos of speech and this practice is uniquely transparent to moderns.⁴³⁰

Therefore, below, the researcher considered the approaches of postmodernism towards public relations to understand social media participation in the public sphere.

4. Postmodernism and Public Relations

Postmodernism shatters seemingly unified concepts, making space for new ways of seeing and thinking about the social world and challenging dominant modes of consideration and universal truths. Postmodernism focuses on diverse, subjective, and local multiple truths, by identifying and deconstructing underlying processes of power and discourse that shape social reality by asking how and why knowledge comes to be.⁴³¹ In contrast to relationship management theories that position symmetrical relationships as central to maintaining organizational equilibrium, postmodernism considers power imbalances integral to society by examining how language expresses domination and resistance. Within this perspective, power is discursively constituted through processes of knowledge production. Systems of control are established and maintained through language and meaning creation. Power is both regulatory and empowering, a form of domination as well as a form of resistance.

According to L. Ciszek, a postmodern approach challenges theories that promote symmetry and excellence in public relations. One of the most important contributions of postmodern theory is its challenge to understanding the role of consensus in symmetrical public relations.⁴³² Therefore, the postmodern perspective argues the ultimate goal is not to work toward agreement and reconciliation between an organization and its public but rather towards embracing differences and disagreements.

⁴³⁰ James Tully, "Wittgenstein and political philosophy: Understanding practices of critical reflection," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 17, No 2, (1989), 176-179.

⁴³¹ D. Holtzhausen, "Towards a Postmodern research agenda for Public relations," in *Public Relation Review*, (August, 2002), 251-264.

⁴³² Erica L. Ciszek, "Digital Activism: How Social Media and Dissensus Inform Theory and Practices," in *Public Relation Review*, vol.42, no.2 (June, 2016), 314-321.

McElreath & Blamphin asserted that postmodern approach to public relations is based on a two-step process. The first is to deconstruct the language of management that has led to the exploitation of organizational participants who have been “excluded, marginalized and exploited through the modernist project.” This is done through a process of discourse analysis. The second step is to propose affirmative actions that support the postmodern stance against “racism, sexism, eurocentrism, bureaucracies, and colonialism.”⁴³³

The first step, the deconstruction of language systems, is based on the postmodern concept of discourse, which is one of the basic tenets of postmodernism. D. Macdonnell noted that discourse refers to the use of language, which, in its postmodern context, can only be understood within a broader, social environment. It challenges the modernist concept of a single truth and objective knowledge. Discourses differ “with the kind of institutions and social practices in which they took shape, and with the positions of those who speak and those whom they address.”⁴³⁴ Here, meaning does not always originate from spoken and written discourse but also through signs, which may be verbal or non-verbal. Meanings are to be found only in the concrete forms of differing social and institutional practices, and there is no objective meaning in language. M. Pecheux argued that a postmodern approach to public relations would focus on public relations as an institutional process and its role in organizational discourse. It would, in particular, be critical of how public relations is used to create perceptions of truth and devalue certain terms and positions to develop and promote organizational ideology.⁴³⁵

Contrary to the modernist endeavour, which R. Holtzhausen said “sought universal explanations that could approach the status of natural laws,”⁴³⁶

⁴³³ M.P. McElreath & J.M. Blamphin, “Partial answers to priority research questions and gaps found in the Public Relations Society of America’s body of Knowledge,” in *Journal of Public Relations Research* (1994), 69–103.

⁴³⁴ D. Macdonnell, *Theories of Discourse. An Introduction* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1986), 10.

⁴³⁵ M. Pecheux, *Language, Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious*, trans. by Harbans Nagpal (London: Macmillan, 1982), 45.

⁴³⁶ Derina R. Holtzhausen, “Towards a postmodern research agenda for public Relations,” in *Public Relations Review*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2002), 251–264.

postmodernism represents a broad theoretical approach and postmodern philosophers and theorists stress that there is no central postmodern theory. In response to the modernist emphasis on single, dominant theoretical perspectives and philosophies, referred to as metanarratives, postmodernists revel in multiplicity and diversity and even questions their theoretical perspectives. Lyotard says, “Theories themselves are concealed narratives (and) we should not be taken by their claim to be valid for all times.”⁴³⁷

Baudrillard believed a new era of simulation has dawned where society is organized around simulation codes and models that replace production as the organizing principle of society. He coined the term “semiurgic” society in which signs take on a life of their own, constituting a new social order structured by models, codes, and signs.⁴³⁸ Through their media relations function, public relations practitioners are directly responsible for a crisis of representation, which can be viewed as the “replacement of the factual by the representational of which representation involves the presentation of a reality that does not exist. It is “a perfect copy for which there is no original,”⁴³⁹ which Baudrillard refers to as a simulacral entity. This desire for a “perfect copy” gives rise to nostalgic feelings for the real object, which has never existed, creating a sublime state of detachment where the horrors of society are viewed with cynicism and disinterest.⁴⁴⁰

In public relations, this replacement of the real with the hyperreal already starts at the college level, where students are trained to write, act and think like journalists. J.E Grunig & F.C. Repper observes that the emphasis on writing skills and journalism training is a dominant focus in the exercise of undergraduate public relations practitioners, particularly at schools and colleges of journalism and mass communications. Through this training, the image of the public relations practitioner

⁴³⁷ .F. Lyotard, “The differend: phrases in dispute,” in *Theory and History of Literature*, trans. by Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1988), 126–130.

⁴³⁸ J. Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), 185.

⁴³⁹ J. Hassard, “Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis: An Overview,” in *Postmodernism and Organizations*, ed. J. Hassard, M. Parker (Sage, Newbury Park, CA: 1993), 50.

⁴⁴⁰ D. Holtzhausen, “Towards a Postmodern research agenda for Public relations,” 251-264.

as a journalist is created. Students are taught to use the Associated Press stylebook and all the news releases, video releases, and other media forms. This is done to create the illusion that practitioners think and act like and play an impartial role in their boundary-spanning function between the organization and its environment,⁴⁴¹ thus comparing it to the role journalists are perceived to play in society. In this way, public relations implodes the boundary between simulation and reality.

Baudrillard was particularly critical of the role new technologies play in the creation of hyperreality. Again, public relations have not allowed this opportunity to pass unutilized. Public relations practitioners are trained in web design and utilizing the internet for many purposes, from internal communication to lobbying.⁴⁴² Postmodern perspectives on technology, particularly those of Baudrillard, suggest that the media relations function of public relations will be more in demand than ever before. New technologies will tempt the organization to create a hyperreality that obscures the real intentions of organizational actors and sublates the underlying power issues that are detrimental to many publics.⁴⁴³ Public relations practitioners will increasingly be called upon to supply “meaningless communication” that can “become the integration mode of organizations.” This useless information will “fulfil external demands for communication while denying external groups any useful information.”⁴⁴⁴ The postmodern practitioner needs to be aware of this meaningless communication and ensure that all publics are fully informed and participate in organizational debates. This can again be done by privileging the organization’s public in the communication process, thereby further supporting the activist role of the public relations practitioner.

⁴⁴¹ J.E. Grunig & F.C. Repper, “Strategic Management, Public and Issues,” in *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, eds. (Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale: 1992), 115-157.

⁴⁴² D.F. Witmer, “Spinning the Web. A Handbook for the Public Relation on the Internet,” in *Public Relation Review* (2000), 371-372; citing, See J. Baudrillard, *Simulation*, (New York: Semiotext, 1983).

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ R.P. Gephart, “Management, Social Issues, and the Postmodern Era,” in *Postmodern Management and Organization Theory*, eds. D.M. Boje, R.P. Gephart, & T. Joseph Thatchenkery, (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1996), 39-40.

5. Social Media, Representation and Resistance

As rightly defined by David Hubert, Social media-based activism group has three basic types. First, ‘mass self-expression,’ that is the expression of opinion on publicly accessible social media sites, such as Facebook and YouTube. Second, social media can function as a forum for discussion. Third, social media networks can be used to organize collective expressions of support or dissent, whether in the virtual or real world.⁴⁴⁵ Finally, because the nature and potentiality of social media can change traditional communication to equal participation, while people used to rely on reading hard-copy print newspapers, now many have switched to reading e-papers.

Similarly, people used to search for a magazine to read. Now many are interested in pressing a button to read blogs. Thus, when social media is used to spread a message, it may reach a greater number of people in a target audience looking for any kind of information sharing. Participants can directly connect to people worldwide when they link their profile or post on social media. They can also keep all people updated about their post and drive massive traffic through social media.⁴⁴⁶

The arrival of social media dismissed the one-way communication by the posting of texts or videos online as ‘civic narcissism,’⁴⁴⁷ but others have argued that self-expression through social media provides the opportunity for articulation of identities by those marginalized in the mass media and is a legitimate and democratically useful response to problems of inequality of access to mainstream public spheres.⁴⁴⁸ Further support comes from the concept of the ‘public screen’. De Luca and Peeples argue that thinking about the public sphere has been dominated by the idea of face-to-face conversation as the ideal model of human communication and the belief that the conduct of politics should somehow approximate it as closely as

⁴⁴⁵ David Herbert, “Paradise Lost? Islamophobia Post-liberalism and the Dismantling of State Multiculturalism in the Netherlands: The Role of Mass and Social Media,” in *Social Media and Religious Change*, eds. Marie Gillespie, David Harbert & Anita Greenhill (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 93.

⁴⁴⁶ Jolyon Mitchell, “Emerging Conversation in the Study of Media, Religion and Culture,” in *Mediating Religion: Conversation in Media, Religion and Culture*, eds. Jolyon Mitchell & Sophia Marriage (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 337-348.

⁴⁴⁷ Zizi A. Papacharissi, “The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere and Beyond,” in *Handbook of Internet Politics*, eds. A Chadwick & P. Howards (London: Routledge, 2009), 238.

⁴⁴⁸ S. Cottle, *Mediatized Conflicts* (Maidenhead: Open University, 2006), 51.

possible.⁴⁴⁹ Instead, they argue that political communication needs to be thought of not just as on variation but as dissemination, which opens up conceptual space for appreciation of non-verbal communication such as symbolic protest, visual practices, and other performances as forms of cultural critique.

Conclusion

Postmodernism is considered an information society and an electronic society, where culture, tradition, and science are not valid. This transformation from the modern worldview emphasizes rationality, science, logic, and critical thinking in the religious tradition and society. Foucault's critique of modernity and humanism and the development of new perspectives on society, knowledge, discourse, and power have made him a significant source of postmodern thought. Foucault draws upon an anti-Enlightenment tradition that rejects the equation of reason, emancipation, and progress, arguing that an interface between modern forms of power-knowledge has served to create new forms of domination. In a series of studies, he has attempted to develop and substantiate this theme from various perspectives; psychiatry, medicine, punishment criminology, the emergence of the human sciences, the formation of various disciplinary apparatuses, and the constitution of the subject. Further, it has been discussed that Habermas' concept of discourse and ethics carried that argumentation provides the possibility to exchange validity claims and to enter into a mutually satisfactory relationship between all parties.

As Heidi Campbell, suggested most groups see media either as a conduit mode of knowing or as a social institution. Groups that conceive of the media as a conduit perceive media as a neutral instrument that can be good or evil, dependent on how it is used. Technology is seen as simply an avenue for delivering a message, so religious users can view media as a gift from God to do the work of the community.⁴⁵⁰ In the same way, Katz and Foulkes stated that the sociological tradition in media research pointed out that the question is not "what do the media do to people? but, rather, how

⁴⁴⁹ Kevin Michael DeLuca & Jennifer Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the "Violence of Seattle," in *Journal of Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol.19, no.2 (2002), 125-151.

⁴⁵⁰ Heidi Campbell, "How Religious Communities Negotiate New Media Religiously," in *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture*, eds. Peter Fischer-Nielson, Stefan Gelfgren, Charles Ess & Pauline Hope Cheong(New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 82-83.

do people do with the media?.”⁴⁵¹ Therefore from the theoretical framework, the researcher considered ten questions that will be applied during the interviews in the following chapter.

- i. Where did the information come from?
- ii. Is the information believable?
- iii. Is it manufactured information?
- iv. If so, who manufactured the information?
- v. How is the information constructed, and what evidence and techniques are being used?
- vi. What were the circumstances of the information?
- vii. In whose interest and benefit is the information disseminated?
- viii. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which were consciously ignored?
- ix. Is it only the majority voice that dominates the social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?
- x. Can people use social media effectively to bring harmony and peace at the same time as justice?

With the questions mentioned above, the researcher will present the case studies to understand the power and discourse of social media and give the interviewees' views from each case in the next chapter.

⁴⁵¹ 451 Elihu Katz & David Foulkes, “On the Use of Mass Media as ‘Escape’: Clarification of a Concept,” in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 23, no.3 (1962), 377-388.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The proliferation of communication technologies has advanced at an unprecedented speed. The creation of the Internet and, for that matter, social media are among the few things humans have built that they do not truly understand and control. What began as a means of electronic information transmission between and without borders, cultures, and religions have transformed into an omnipresent and endlessly multifaceted outlet for human energy and expression. The emergence of social media of communication establishes a pervasive and invasive e-culture, making people dependent upon the internet in their everyday activities and exerting a strong influence on all spheres of personal and community life. One cannot think of the convenience of everyday life without the use of social media nor imagine a future without it. In a way, communication and information technologies represent opportunities, and therefore social media can bring numerous human relational benefits with the increase in access and availability. At the same time, social media creates a public sphere where people without any borders, such as race, religion, ethnicity, and culture, can participate without any inhibitions. More than that, it provides bridges and possibilities that accommodate the human's communication needs. It has become the medium of strategic linking to share, support, and build community. Social media support social networking and has made our life easier.

The whole wide world is turning into a smart village. Our history, politics, economics, and culture are no longer confined to ourselves. Our society and its communal characteristics have become easily accessible to anyone who desires to know them and take advantage of them. Sometimes our cultures are better known by others than by us because of social networking sites. Therefore, an understanding of social media and the capacity to utilize it is vital for the different religious institutions.

Social media have already been promoted to extend relationships beyond religious boundaries. It allows the exchange of textual, visual, and video information among participants, who now are known not just as users but also as hybrid producers and consumers or pro-consumers. We can also foresee the strong influence of social media in how we interact with others and how we view ourselves, our neighbours, and others. All these dimensions of life will be influenced, determined, and driven by the online world around us.

Conversely, social media also has negative influences that can lower our moral standards and increase our threshold susceptibility to and tolerance of violence, the portrayal of sexual acts, and sexual conduct, which has not until now been considered acceptable. In a way, our human propensity for selective memory allows us to adapt to new habits quickly and forget how we did before. Some producers and participants in the social media ignore the distinction between what is considered morally or ethically acceptable and what is not acceptable. These days, it is hard to imagine a life without a smartphone, and knowing the fragileness of human mind and conduct, the producers and users utilizes whatever techniques and personal conduct they assess as likely to attract attention and markets it without contravening state laws. In doing so, they encourage the acceptance of a variant norm of private and public conduct. As global connectivity continues its unprecedented advance, many old institutions and hierarchies adapt to a new way of life or take the risk of becoming obsolete or irrelevant to modern society. In other words, communication technologies will continue to change the way we communicate and interact with people. With it, we will increase reach and relate to people far beyond our own borders and language, religious and cultural groups, sharing ideas, doing business, and building relationships.

1. Methodological Consideration

This research is attempting to access and measure how social media is manoeuvred during religious conflicts by different groups and how people from other religious communities used social media as a convenient tool for spreading their religious propaganda. Keeping these matters in mind, the case study research method was employed to obtain the context of the information. As discussed in the preceding

chapter, the postmodern theoretical approaches were considered and applied to understand questions such as:

- i. Where did the data come from?’
- ii. Is the information believable?
- iii. Is it manufactured information?
- iv. If so, who manufactured the information?
- v. How is the information constructed, and what evidence and techniques are being used?
- vi. How is information produced, and under what circumstances?
- vii. For whose interest and benefit is the information disseminated?
- viii. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which were consciously ignored?
- ix. Is it only the majority voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?
- x. Where there any other voices that countered the dominant voice?
- xi. Can people use social media effectively to bring harmony and peace at the same time as justice?

India is selected because of its plurality of demographics. It is the second-largest country by population and is home to seventeen percent of the world’s people. It is known to be the largest multi-religious country in the world. Every world religion is represented and practiced in India. It is the birthplace of four major religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Such pluralism is enriching, but it can also lead to misunderstanding and conflict, especially if competing proselytizing missionaries are active and disdain the dominant religious heritage. Unfortunately, in the recent past decade, India is also considered one nation where massive uprisings have befallen, resulting in religious conflicts and violence almost every day.

Looking at the enormous complexity of India on the one hand and the researcher's constraints in terms of time and space, only three states are identified for the case study purposes. However, the selection of the states and the case studies are being made with a very clear focus and logic. In other words, the researcher has chosen

three States, keeping in mind different religious communities- minority/majority equation in focus for the interviews. For this, Nagaland, as a Christian majority state, was chosen to understand the opinion of other religions in a Christian majority state. Assam, as a state with 48% of the Muslim population and Uttar Pradesh as the central part of India and the Hindu majority State were selected for the case studies and interviews.

Altogether, 5 cases were identified and minutely recorded in the study process, and 12 persons from three different religious organizations were interviewed. However, the names of the participants are not mentioned for privacy reasons. The researcher carefully identified three persons, each from the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities. For this exercise, the researcher personally was involved in the collection of data.

2. Area Selected for Case Study in India



Visual 1: Political Map of India Indicating Hindu, Muslim and Christian Majority States. Scale not to be used.

3. Presentation of The Case

3.1. Case Study One

Title: *The Murder of Sharif Khan* (Nagaland February 2015)⁴⁵²

Nagaland⁴⁵³ is a tiny State in the North East region of India, with a three million population. As per the government of Nagaland 2018 census,⁴⁵⁴ 98% of the population are identified as Christian. Dimapur is the biggest commercial city in Nagaland, and along with the natives, people from different parts of India, and illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar reside in the city. Apart from the natives, most of the population outside the state are involved in different businesses.

Mr. Syed Sharif Khan came from Nagaland's bordering State Assam. He was a son of an Indian Army official. He had a used car dealer business for 8 years in Dimapur, Nagaland. On 24th February 2015, Mr. Khan was accused of a case of rape of a Naga girl. Following the FIR (First Information Report) lodged by the victim, Mr. Khan was immediately arrested by the Dimapur Police on the same day, i.e. on the 24th of February 2015.



Visual.2: Sharif Khan being Dragged from Dimapur Central Jail by the Mob. (25 February 2015)

The accused Mr. Khan, during interrogation, told the police that he had consensual sex with the girl and for which he had given her five thousand Indian

⁴⁵² *The Indian Express*, 9 March 2015, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/dimapur-lynching-on-social-media-first-rape-then-bangladesh-man/> (accessed, 20/06/2018).

⁴⁵³ Nagaland is a state situated at the North Eastern part of India, with three million population. Geographically it has a boundary with Myanmar and close to Bangladesh. The Business are mostly control by the Bangladeshi and other mainland Indian.

⁴⁵⁴ "India Population 2018", <https://indiapopulation2018.in/population-of-nagaland-2018.html> (access, 12/07/2019).

rupees. However, within no time, very provocative news went viral through social media (a Facebook group) like, “A Muslim man from Bangladesh raped Naga girl,” “An Illegal immigrant from Bangladesh raped Naga girl,” “A Muslim from Bangladesh abused and raped innocent Naga girl in Dimapur.” The news on social media alleged that Mr. Khan was a Bangladeshi and a suspected illegal Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant. The forefront of the protests against the alleged rape also focussed on the Muslim illegal immigrant from a Bangladeshi angle. In a statement issued to local dailies on 25th February 2015, the Naga Students’ Federation (NSF) condemned the rape of “yet another Naga girl rape by a person of Bangladeshi origin in Dimapur.”

On 25th February 2015 a popular local newspaper *Nagaland Post* reported the alleged rape, followed by students from the girls’ college initiating a mass procession. At the same time, there was a call on the Facebook groups that all the like-minded Naga should participate and show solidarity to the victim. By 10 a.m. on the same day, the 25th of February 2015 hundreds of college students had descended on the streets, and consequently, shops had downed their shutters. The protesters marched to the Dimapur Deputy Commissioner’s Office. While some protestors demanded that the alleged rapist not be granted bail, other protestors deafeningly demanded that the rapist be handed over to them.

By this time, the protestors had turned into a mob. When the administration denied public demand, the protestors proceeded to Dimapur Central Jail where the rape accused Mr. Khan was kept in police custody. Hundreds of girls in college and school uniform stood in front of the main gate when the crowd reached the Dimapur Central jail. Seeing the seriousness and fragility of the situation, the police did a lathi⁴⁵⁵ charge followed by blank fire in the air to control the situation, following which the student protestors dispersed from the spot but only for few minutes. The news was updated on the Facebook groups and alarmed the viewers that the culprit Mr. Khan is kept at Dimapur Central jail and that the Police are protecting the rapist. The Facebook message provoked and triggered the public, and within no time, at least

⁴⁵⁵ The word 'lathi' in Hindi means 'baton' used by the Police to disperse the violent crowd. The word 'baton' has been replaced by 'lathi' and hence the word "lathi charge" is widely used in English in India.

five thousand angry protestors gathered outside the central jail. By this time, the photograph of Mr. Khan was already circulated through the Facebook groups, all the protestors were holding the photos of Mr. Khan on their smartphones. A large number from among the protestors forcefully broke the Jail gate holding the picture of Mr. Khan on their Smartphone screens and enquired from the jail inmates about him. Within no time, the protestors could identify Mr. Khan, and that is how he was tracked to the city centre by the protestors and was finally lynched.

The news and visual of Mr. Khan being lynched at the Dimapur City Centre reached the public through social media. At the same time, manufactured news items that show altogether different schema became viral through social media. Messages like ‘Muslims being attacked, and Mosques being ransacked, in Dimapur’, ‘Muslims are attacked by Christian’, ‘Muslims are in danger in Nagaland’, and so on. This provocative and confrontational news spread on social media like wildfire and brought high risk for the Naga people living in other parts of India. It also created an atmosphere for the possibilities of religious riots and confrontations in different parts of India. However, immediate pro-action by Muslim Council Dimapur with the statement that Muslims in Nagaland are safe in countering the fake news items overruled, and a peaceful atmosphere was created.

During an interview with a leader from the Muslim community, Dimapur, on 8th and 15th February 2019, it has been observed that he got the information through the phone first and from Facebook. The information on Facebook directly attacked the Muslim community.⁴⁵⁶ Further, he said that “the situation on 25th February, 2015 became very tense because the rumours spread on the social media was all distorted and constructed to anger and provoke the Muslims. Social media messages like, ‘Muslims were attacked in Nagaland’ and ‘Mosque being ransacked in Nagaland’ were all over the social media.” He further said that ‘with this news, I have received telephone calls from different parts of India, particularly from Muslim societies.’ He also mentioned that ‘the reaction of Muslim communities to Naga people outside of Nagaland was about to be very risky and dangerous.’⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Please refer to “interview 1 question and answer 1-5,” appendix.

⁴⁵⁷ Please refer to “interview 1, question and answer 6,” appendix.

Further, he stated that ‘in this unfortunate case, social media had spread the message of hatred so fast and therefore I realized that it could be cured only through the social media. With this urgency in mind, he, along with the Muslim council members, took a photo standing in front of the Mosque in Dimapur, and the photo was circulated through social media with the message that ‘Nothing happened to Dimapur Mosque’ and ‘Muslim in Dimapur, Nagaland is safe.’ Therefore, social media showed itself as a platform where everybody can participate; if we use it wisely, it can bring peace and serve justice.⁴⁵⁸

From this unfortunate incident of lynching as well as the circulation of fake news through social media, one can conclude the power and effectiveness of social media on the one hand and the danger of misusing it to spread rumours, hatred, hostility on the other, which can trigger communal riots. The effectiveness and power of social media like *Facebook* and *WhatsApp*, I suppose, is due to instantaneous visual message transference. The news on social media can be instantaneous. Thousands of people gathered at Dimapur central jail within no time after someone posted the message on Facebook that Mr. Khan, the immigrant Bangladeshi Muslim rapist, is kept in Dimapur Central Jail. The lynching of Mr. Khan was not a religious issue, but the manufactured information and news items spread through social media centred on; ‘Muslim’. Muslim man as a rapist, lynched for being a Muslim, Muslim as a minority in the Christian majority state, Muslim and Mosque as the victim, etc.

During the interview with Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) leader on 18th January 2019, she stated that the information was received through a phone and confirmed through a Facebook group. The information on Facebook was all distorted, targeting one community. Therefore, it is assumed that much information on Facebook is fake news manufactured by a few people for self-interest.⁴⁵⁹ Social media came to our society unconsciously as wildfire, and it has become a trend for the youths today. Whether true or fake, the news is being circulated very fast before the daily newspapers are published. I saw many comments and false allegations on pages of

⁴⁵⁸ Please refer to “interview 1, question and answer 7-10,” appendix.

⁴⁵⁹ Please refer to “interview 2, question and answer 1-5,” appendix.

Facebook groups. It is impossible to shut them down, but the only option is to create awareness and educate people about social media consciously. In Nagaland, we have lived peacefully for many decades, be it majority Christians or minority Muslims or Hindus. Unfortunately, with the intrusion and possibilities of social media in our contemporary Naga society, some people use the power of social media in negative ways trying to provoke religious communities. These fake news, manufactured information, false allegations, and counter-allegations are going viral every day, maybe with a determination to generate hatred and riots among and between different religious communities. But social media can also be used as a means to facilitate the citizen to bring justice.⁴⁶⁰

During the interview with a Hindu Krishna Movement Dimapur leader, on 5th November 2018, he observed that ‘social media has been used mostly by the youth’. He also said, ‘the possibility of consumers becoming producers of news and information clubbed with the fundamental right of freedom of speech and the easy possibility of the right to comment on the social media creates many unwanted situations. He further said, “for example, there was a small misunderstanding at the marketplace in Dimapur city between a Naga lady and an outsider. Somebody posted with their assumption that a Hindu, the outsider, assaulted the Naga lady at the marketplace.” He also mentioned without any hesitation that the unfortunate issue of a Naga girl being raped by an outsider and spread through social media groups like Facebook, Naga blog, ‘referred ‘Hindus’, ‘outsiders’ several times with negative connotation.’⁴⁶¹

Through this case study, the researcher observed that social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Youtube etc. could be misused in the heat of the moment and create havoc among and between religious communities because of its effectiveness due to instantaneous visual communication. However, a complete and measured examination of protests and uprising and counter visuals and messages sent through social media platforms suggest without any doubt that social media can be employed to dismantle hatred among different religious and ethnic communities. In

⁴⁶⁰ Please refer to “interview 2, question and answer 6-10,” appendix.

⁴⁶¹ Please refer to “interview 3, question and answer 6,” appendix.

other words, social media can be used as a protest machine against hatred and religious intolerance.

3.2. Case Study Two

Title: *Muslim Man Killed for Cow (Utter Pradesh June 2018)*⁴⁶²

Utter Pradesh (UP) is a Hindu majority state with a 79% Hindu and 19% Muslim population.⁴⁶³ Hindu being the majority, the state has implemented the cow protection law in the whole of the state. Two Muslim men from the Hapur District in Utter Pradesh, namely Mr. Qasim Hasin, 45 years old, and Mr. Sameyddin, 65 years old, were attacked and killed due to the rumours spread on social media.

On 11th June 2018, some unknown person posted videos of cows being slaughtered on social media. During the discussion on social media, some participants mentioned the suspicion of cow smugglers stealing cows from the farms of Bajhaida Khurd in the Pilakhua area of Hapur District. As the social media rumours spread further, people started gathering in the local farms to look for the smugglers. In the process, some people ‘heard’ that ‘some people’ spotted two people trying to smuggle local cows for slaughtering. When many people had gathered, they all ran towards the village Bajhaida and found Qasim and Sameyddin working on the farm. The crowd, without thinking, started beating both men with sticks and killed them. A video of the mob attack was circulated in several social media groups, which brought a tension of communal riot between Muslims and Hindus.

Hapur Superintendent of Police, Mr. Sankalp Sharma shared how he countered the spread of rumours and hatred through social media. Realizing the sensitivity of the matter, Sharma employed social media to assure the people that the police department was fully committed and would take full measure and responsibility to protect, safeguard and establish normalcy and requested the public to co-operate with the police. Through social media channels, the police department circulated the information clarifying that the two were innocent victims from the Hapur District. In

⁴⁶² *Times of India* (New Delhi) 15th June 2018.

⁴⁶³ “India Population 2018”, <https://indiapopulation2018.in/population-of-uttar-pradesh-2018.html> (access, 12/07/2019).

other words, police explained that the unfortunate incident happened with false rumours in no uncertain terms. Through social media, the police also informed that the Qasim and Sameyddin murder case had been registered, and justice would be served to the victim's family. As a result, the communal riot on the brink was controlled through the awareness and news spread through social media.



Visual 4: Cow as Holy Animal in India

‘This incident is not the first time in UP where Hindu population is a majority’, said the local Pastor when he was interviewed at Delhi on 5th October 2018. He said that he received this information through WhatsApp and Facebook. At the same time, it was broadcast on national news television. He also mentioned that Hindu fundamentalist groups are professional in technology manufacturing the news against the religious minority.⁴⁶⁴ It is a fact that after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in the Central government, the cow protection group is openly taking the law into their own hands. Many people are physically and verbally assaulted. They also use social media as a tool to warn people against cow slaughter. They used videos on WhatsApp groups, YouTube and Facebook, threatening the religious minority communities with the consequences of cow slaughter.⁴⁶⁵

During the interview on 6th August 2018, a Muslim Scholar and Priest in New Delhi said he received the information through WhatsApp, and some extremist groups manufactured the news and information. I am proud to be an Indian Muslim. The

⁴⁶⁴ Please refer to “interview 4, question and answer 1-5,” appendix.

⁴⁶⁵ Please refer to “interview 4 question and answer 6,” appendix.

answer to the question is, if an Indian Muslim consumed beef from a state where beef is banned, he has violated the state rules. The holy prophet of Islam has taught that ‘Loving our own country is an integral part of our faith’. He further explained, ‘So, it is obligated upon Muslims to obey the rules implemented by their government (Islamic rules). Now Muslims in Kerala eat beef because consuming beef in Kerala is not a crime. Now those Muslims who live in the states where beef is banned, listens to me, I have already mentioned that Beef is halal for Muslims, but every halal food is not compulsory. If they stop eating beef, they won’t die. If beef is banned, you can eat other non-vegetarian foods like chicken, fish etc’. Our founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community stated that, “for tying up a good relationship with Hindus, we are also ready to stop eating beef. I currently live in Punjab, where they have banned cattle slaughter, so I don’t eat beef in Punjab. But when I go for a vacation in Kerala, I eat beef there.”⁴⁶⁶

During the interview on 8th August 2018 in New Delhi, a Hindu stated that he received the information through WhatsApp. At first, he did not believe it because there is much-manufactured news spread through social media. The incident happened with the interest of some anti-national people. The cow indeed represents the giving nature of life to every Hindu. Honoring this gentle animal, which gives more than she takes, we honour all creatures. Hindus regard all living creatures as sacred mammals, fishes, birds, and more. “We acknowledge this reverence for life in our special affection for the cow. At festivals, we decorate and honour her, but we do not worship her in the sense that we worship the Deity.”⁴⁶⁷

From the above discussion, we understand that many people consider the news and information in social media as true. However, social media is a platform where news and information are produced, not by professionals. Therefore, much information is one-sided, which causes severe issues for innocent people, especially the minorities.

⁴⁶⁶ Please refer to “interview 5,” appendix.

⁴⁶⁷ Please refer to “interview 6,” appendix.

3.3. Case Study Three

Title: Muslim Assaulted by Hindu with Pork (Assam April 2019)⁴⁶⁸

The Assam religion census provides good insight into current demography. As per the 2018 census, Hindus are a majority in Assam State. Hinduism constitutes 55% of the Assam population. In all, Hindus form the majority religion in 18 out of 27 districts of Assam State. Muslims stand second with few a percentage differentiation, with 48% of the total population. Islam is followed by the majority in 9 out of 27 districts.⁴⁶⁹

A Muslim man Shaukat Ali, 68 years old, was running an eatery shop in Biswanath District of Assam, a Hindu majority district in Assam. The eatery has been running for more than 4 years. On 10th April 2019, Ali, the eatery owner, was attacked by a group of people with the false allegation that the eatery sells beef.

The videos of cow meat serving in the eatery had been shared on the WhatsApp and Facebook groups. In just a few hours, a group of people claiming themselves as cow protection group attacked Mr. Ali at the eatery and forced him to eat pork. Mr. Ali stated that “the attacker not only assaulted him physically but forced him to eat pork and for him eating pork was more painful than the physical assault.”

In a video of the incident circulated on social media, Ali is on his knees covered in slush, with a harrowed expression on his face. The mob surrounding him fire a barrage of questions at him in Assamese: “Why did you sell cow meat here?”, “Do you have a license?”, “Who gave you license?”, “Are you Bangladeshi?”, “Do you have your name in the NRC (National Register of Citizens)?” Ali tries to reply but is cut short by angry voices. The mob won’t listen to Ali. What Ali has to say doesn’t matter.

In the video, Ali is allegedly handed a piece of pork meat and is forced to eat it. There are threatening fingers egging him on to consume the meat that his religion

⁴⁶⁸ *India Today*, 9th April 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/assam-mob-thrashes-muslim-man-beef-force-feed-pork-1497292-2019-04-09> (accessed, 12/05/2019).

⁴⁶⁹ “Population of Assam,” <https://indiapopulation2018.in/population-of-assam-2018.html> (accessed, 12/05/2019).

forbids. The men, with hound-like focus, prey on Ali's humiliation. It is the barbarism of territorial vigilantism, where identity is the territory. They humiliate, all at once, Ali's conscience, his body, and his political status. What is common to all three consciences, body, and political status is his Muslim-ness. In the name of being Muslim, the mob could ask him if he was Bangladeshi and if his name was in the National Registration of Citizen (NRC).⁴⁷⁰ Ali, before being anything else in the eyes of the mob, was politically suspect because of his religious identity.

Ali suffers this humiliation in the name of an alleged crime that is being thrust upon him. Or he suffers it simply out of his fear of the mob. In such situations, it is impossible to distinguish the cause of anxiety and tell one fear from another. Moreover, the nature of this fear is political because Ali suddenly finds himself under question, accused of breaking the law.

The mob that asks him questions acts like a vigilante that assumes the responsibility of the state. It wants to ascertain multiple legalities, from Ali's right to sell beef, to him being a citizen of Assam. Being a Muslim is enough to have your citizenship under a shadow of a doubt. From this episode, Ali receives a political lesson: 'A Muslim in Assam has to prove his citizenship first because it does not naturally belong to him.' Once his citizenship is under question, his rights are stripped of everything 'human'. Citizenship is reduced to a majoritarian concept, where minorities are potentially illegal subjects, subjected to arbitrary coercion.

Muslims being the second-highest religion in Assam with only a few differences from Hindu, suspicions and hatred developed among the two religious groups.

⁴⁷⁰ National Register of Citizen law has been implemented in Assam to check the illegal immigrant from Assam.



Visual 5: Shaukat Ali, assaulted and forced to eat Pork

A very respected senior member of the Muslim Council in Guwahati, Assam, during the interview on 20th April 2019, stated that he received the news through WhatsApp, “I was confused whether it is true or fake, because I see many videos and photos used by the majority threatening the minorities.” Further, he observed that the situation of Muslims in India is dismal as far as socio-political marginalization of the community is concerned. Such socio-political marginalization has a long history after the formation of the Republic of India.⁴⁷¹

Further, he said, “However, in the recent past, the process of marginalization and insecurity among Muslims has been a result of a series of mob lynching incidents in the name of cow vigilantism, targeting Muslim youths under the bogey of ‘love jihad’ and low-scale communal riots in various parts of the country. There are also credible studies showing the denial of rights to Muslim in non-Muslim localities, aggravating the process of ghettoization of the community.”⁴⁷²

At the backdrop of what he observed, the under-representation of Muslim minorities in the Indian parliament after 2014 has reached an all-time low. On parameters like literacy rates, mean years of schooling, graduates, Muslims, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, Muslims lag behind upper-caste Hindus, Hindu OBCs⁴⁷³, and other religious minorities.

⁴⁷¹ Please refer to “interview 7,” appendix.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Other Backward Class, this term has been used in Hindu caste division for the backward Hindu.

At the same time, Cow vigilantism has become a menace in India. Unfortunately, cow vigilante groups are people who randomly target those they suspect of owning cows for slaughter and beef consumption. In this regard, he said, they claim that their purpose is to rescue cows, but all the indications, not to mention incidents, suggests that they are vigilante bands of robbers whose sole purpose is to target Muslims, to unleash violence.

What has led to the growth in violence towards Muslims over the last couple of years? Violence against Muslims in India is not a recent development. It is something Hindus have been putting up with for years. History shows that since the 1940s, the loss of life and property among Muslims has been disproportionately high. The emergence of the Ayodhya movement in the 1980s, however, saw societal antagonism towards Muslims mushroom. Hate campaigns conducted by various right-wing organizations have consistently presented Muslims as an existential threat to Hindu identity. Moreover, under the BJP government, these groups now feel emboldened. Of course, that is not to say that the previous governments were exceptionally efficient at protecting Muslim lives or property.

What is behind the lynching of Muslims? Is lynching mainly used to create a climate of fear among Muslims, expecting that they will eventually stop slaughtering cows and consuming beef? However, it is not going to work. Eating beef has been turned into a Hindu-Muslim issue. However, the fact is that *dalits*⁴⁷⁴ also eat beef, so it is an upper-caste issue. Cow vigilantism reflects the muscle power of majority politics, the message being: you live and die at our mercy.

During an interview on 22nd April 2019, with a senior Lecturer in Guwahati Women College, she stated that she received information through WhatsApp. There are many fake videos and photos circulated on social media, and it is difficult to distinguish the fake from the true. However, “after the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP),⁴⁷⁵ came to power in Central government, the minorities in India especially the religious

⁴⁷⁴ In Hindu religion there are four types of caste, Brahmins are known as the priest and teacher, Kshatriyas are known as the warrior and rulers, Vaishyas are known as the farmers traders and Merchants, Sudras are known as the labourer and Dalits are known as the outcaste people.

⁴⁷⁵ Bhartiya Janata Party, is a Hindu political party in India with Hindutva ideology.

minorities are not safe.” She further said, “Social media is a platform where all kinds of information and news are published according to the individual's will. It is also a platform where many people share their opinions and comments. I have seen lots of debate related to public security, law and order, and modernization in India, but when it comes to religious tolerance, I have seen the debate never ended with a good solution. Therefore, the religious fundamentalist group used social media as a tool to propagate their religious agenda and use the same social media to threaten the minority.”⁴⁷⁶

In other words, what we can infer from the above interview is the need and possibility of religious institutes to use social media as a platform to share their religion's moral teaching and principles of life and peaceful co-existence with others. Therefore, it is also pertinent that religious and formal educational institutions implement a social media education curriculum.

3.4. Case Study Four

Title: Christian Church Torched in Majuli (Assam, October 2018)⁴⁷⁷

Majuli Island is the World's largest river island. It is located at the Brahmaputra River in Assam. The Island is inhabited by a Hindu majority with a 99% Hindu population.⁴⁷⁸ The literacy and social development were lacking, and therefore, different Christian organizations and churches came to support the people.

On 15th October 2018, a group of about one hundred miscreants shouting slogans favoring Satradhikar Janardan Deva Goswami, a Hindu religious leader, reached Raidangani Banshichuk Village. The village is dominated by Mishing Tribals, who the upper caste Hindus have dominated. The Believers Eastern Church was established in the year 2000. The church organized several awareness programs. A community feast is organized during Christian festivals and celebrations, where all

⁴⁷⁶ Please refer to appendix, interview 8 question and answer, 1-6.

⁴⁷⁷ *Sabrang India*, 17 October 2018, <https://sabrangindia.in/article/church-torched-majuli-assam> (accessed, 10/05/2019).

⁴⁷⁸ “Majuli Circle Population, Caste, Religion Data: Jorhat District Assam,” <https://www.censusindia.co.in/subdistrict/majuli-circle-jorhat-assam-2076> (accessed, 15/05/2019).

the villagers, including the Hindus, are invited. From the beginning of its ministry, the Believers Eastern Church played a significant role in educating the villagers.

However, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, *Lok Jagaran Manch*, and *Bajrang Dal* members were furious with the growing popularity of Christianity. They had been threatening the tribal people of the area who have been accepting Christian religious beliefs. The growth of Christianity in the village has been portrayed in WhatsApp and also in Facebook. This increased the tension between those practicing Christianity and the Vaisnavaite group; the Hindus have seen and portrayed Christianity in an adversarial manner. As part of this overall communal polarisation, the attack on the church occurred by torching the Church building and destroying the church properties and torturing the Christian priest and elders. A Hindu leader said, “Majuli is a place of Vaisnavaite culture, and there should not be any other religious prayer house in this locality. The people who accompanied him also issued open threats, saying, “We will demolish all churches here in Majuli as Christianity is unsuited to Indian culture,” and this went viral in social media groups. The attack was also due to the ‘alarming’ social media posts in WhatsApp and Facebook that Christian missionaries were converting Hindus to Christianity. The mob destroyed the church, the cross, and the church’s signboard. According to the local Christians, the mob demanded that the Christians should leave the village or convert to Hinduism. There was also a message spread across WhatsApp and Facebook that on Majuli Island, the Hindus would not tolerate the activities of the other religious groups.



Visual 6: Christian Church and the Bible Burned in Majuli, Assam (October 2018)

During an interview on 2nd December 2018, a leader of Majuli Christian Forum said that “India is a secular country and every citizen has a right to choose their religious belief and faith. But the present BJP government with Hindu fundamentalist have failed to protect this Constitutional right. They have every right to choose their religion. But, strangely, the people's fundamental rights have been violated here by the miscreants associated with the powerful in the ruling BJP government. The police are also not acting. None have been arrested after the incident.”⁴⁷⁹

Further, he observed, “In this atmosphere of persecution, in which Christians have to cope with harassment daily and often even have to fear for their lives. Earlier the attacks used to be more verbal, but now groups of extremists enter the church and disrupt worship. We have never forced anybody to be a member of our church, but the Hindu extremist came with photos and videos showing that Christians converting the Hindus to Christianity. The extremists also claim the evidence through social media that many Hindus were in the church.”⁴⁸⁰

A member of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, stationed at Guwahati, during the interview on 4th December 2018, stated that “Hindu honour all religious traditions and the people within them. While our faith is uniquely endowed, we believe there is no exclusive path, no one way for all. In India, where Hindus are the overwhelming majority, the rights of religious minorities have always been honoured. Hindus have welcomed, embraced, and lived peacefully among other religions for centuries. During those same centuries, Hinduism itself evolved into hundreds of strains, and thus Hindus are fully at home with many different traditions and viewpoints within their faith. Hence, they are naturally tolerant of other religions, respecting that each has unique beliefs, practices, goals, and paths of attainment, and not objecting when the doctrines of one conflict with those of another. Hindus readily accept that it is not necessary, desirable, or even possible for everyone to hold the same beliefs. And certainly, such differences should never be the cause for tension, criticism, intolerance or violence.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Please refer to “interview 9,” appendix.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Please refer to “interview 10,” appendix.

He further affirmed that “Hindus do not try to convert members of other faiths to their own. Proselytizing is based upon the belief that one’s religion is the only true religion and everyone else should join it. Hindus hold the view that all faiths are beneficial. A devout Hindu is supportive of all efforts that lead to a pure and virtuous life and would consider it unthinkable to dissuade a sincere devotee from his chosen faith. They know that good citizens and stable societies are created from groups of religious people in all nations. While encouraging others to follow their chosen path with dedication, Hindus hold Sanatana Dharma⁴⁸² to be the fullest expression of religion. They do accept sincere souls who seek entrance into Hinduism.”⁴⁸³

The threat transmitted through social media and the portrayal of the minority communities as intruders through fake visuals have created untold hatred and violence in contemporary India. Nevertheless, as seen in the interviews and the explanations provided by the Hindu leaders, we can consciously and with commitment employ social media to teach religious values and interdependence of different religious teachings for harmonious co-existence and mutual development.

3.5. Case Study Five

Title: Social Media Rumours Drives North East People Exodus from Bangalore (North East India April 2012)⁴⁸⁴

Panic triggered by wild rumours of impending violence sparked a heavy exodus of people of North-Eastern origin living in Bangalore City to their home states. Many people, especially the youth from the States of North East India, migrate to cosmopolitan cities in India, in search of jobs and for studies.

On 16 April 2012, thousands of people packed the City railway station on Wednesday night to catch the earliest available trains to leave the City. The rumours

⁴⁸² Traditionally, Hinduism is known as Sanatana Dharma, meaning eternal duty. Dharma actually means duty. Sanatana Dharma means the eternal duty of God. This Duty of God is shared, not just by Hindus, but by all beings in creation, including gods and the rest of the humanity. Dharma is also used in reference to any set of moral and religious laws and principles that govern religious duty and human conduct upon earth.

⁴⁸³ Please refer to “interview 10,” appendix.

⁴⁸⁴ *India Today*, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20120827-people-from-north-east-flee-bangalore-racial-attacks-759475-1999-11-30> (accessed, 12/01/2017).

spread with horrible photos and videos of people being beaten up, tortured, murdered among the Muslim community. The caption that the victims were all Muslims and the perpetrators were Bodos and Buddhists from the Northeast India.

These fake videos and photos were circulated after the clash between the Bodo people of Assam and Muslims, allegations that the Muslims were illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. But, again, this was just a problem in the Bodo-dominated regions, and other North Eastern tribes like Mizos, Nagas, Meiteis, Khasis etc were not involved.

Despite appeals by the police to ignore the rumours, the rush to get back home was unabated. Officials of the Bangalore Railway division who were stunned to discover 4,793 tickets being booked on a single day scrambled to organize two special trains departing on Wednesday night to Guwahati to accommodate them.

At a hurriedly-convened press briefing on Wednesday evening, in-charge Director General and Inspector General of Police, Lalrokhuma Pachau appealed to people from the Northeastern states not to leave the City, and sought to dispel their fears. Despite all the awareness and conscientization, the people from North East India moved to their state searching for security. The Inspector-General of Police stated, "We have received reports that there has been a fear psychosis created among the North-East community based on rumours and fake news. But I assure them that not even a single such incident has been reported in the city. Therefore, I appeal to them not to heed to any rumours and leave the city."

Police Commissioner said patrolling and security had been intensified in sensitive areas. He said, "We have instituted an inquiry into the source of these rumours and will take stern action if found. Even I will supervise the night rounds and patrolling. We assure the community that we would protect them in any eventuality. But we foresee no such eventuality."



Visual 7: Northeast People Departing from Bangalore

During the interview on 18th February 2018, the leader of COVA⁴⁸⁵, Hyderabad, observed that information in social media had brought a revolution in many parts of the world. However, it has also brought barriers and hatred for the different communities, especially in India. He said, “I received the same video and photos of people being beaten up, tortured, murdered among the Muslim community through Facebook. At first, it was shocking and disturbing. Many people commented that Muslims in Hyderabad should be ready to react towards the people of Northeast in Hyderabad. But it was found out that the news and videos on Facebook were fake. Later, it was found that some individuals with fake identities joined the Facebook group of the Muslim Community in India and spread hatred towards other communities in India. Therefore, I clarified the fake news in our Facebook group”.⁴⁸⁶

He further said, “We were informed that the Northeast people are returning from Bangalore because of this rumour. Therefore, we came up to Vishakhapatnam train station with food and water to help the Northeast people traveling back.”⁴⁸⁷

During the interview on 20th March 2018 with the leader of Naga Student Union, Bangalore, who was very much part of the Northeast exodus group in 2012 as a new college student, he stated that “during that ‘northeast exodus movement’ we have received phone calls from two of our student friends who said that they were threatened by some of the locals and told to leave the city. Another guy who works at

⁴⁸⁵ Confederation of Voluntary Association (COVA).

⁴⁸⁶ Please refer to “interview 11,” appendix.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

Bengaluru International Airport claimed that he was verbally threatened by a passer-by when he was returning home from work”. According to the student leader, another northeast student told him that a stranger ran into him at Neelasandra, area Bangalore who asked him to “leave” Bangalore. “He mistook me for an Assamese and said I should leave the city immediately. Things will otherwise be difficult,” he said. One of his friends also received a similar threat. A man walked up to my friend and asked him to go away immediately, or else his head will be chopped off.⁴⁸⁸

A student leader further said that the authorities tried to locate the perpetrators but failed to identify them. People started to panic, and many reports came to the student union through phone and social media messages. There were many comments on the Facebook groups, and people were hurrying to book train and flight tickets. The student union and Muslim union in Bangalore met and published the meeting minutes on social media that there is no hatred, and the situation came to normal in a few days.⁴⁸⁹

Conclusion

When social media with its speed, reliability, and authenticity is used for religious tolerance in a multi-religious and polarized country like India, and when social media facilitate the movements for declaring genuine religious tolerance, its effectiveness, power, and instantaneous visual communication can be the means that bring change without violence.

As discussed in the preceding chapter Foucault analysis on postmodern shows that power has been largely studied as an analysis of resistance, in which power is seen everywhere. From the above Case Studies, Foucault's theoretical works have found that social media has endorsed every individual as an active agent of power rather than a passive victim because social media is not about one thing but many. The study also affirms that individuals in social media are both producers and consumers of messages and meanings. Therefore, it also has become a basic need for all, either for entertainment, information, connection, education, and business. In this context,

⁴⁸⁸ Please refer to “interview 12,” appendix.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

religious institutions have an important role in educating the people about the moral standard and tolerance of their religion through social media. At the same time, considering Habermas ethics and discourse principles will enhance the participant's understanding of more democratic and dialogical communication. Therefore, in the concluding chapter six, the considerations will be documented on the findings from the Case Studies, and concluding remarks with suggestions for religious tolerance in social media will be provided.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the Case study research and the analysis of cases. This chapter summarizes the findings and provides suggestions on the challenges of religious tolerance in social media. It is crucial to accept social media as a means for religious tolerance because of its characteristics and forms that give immeasurable limits. For example, geographical issues no longer exist in social media because anybody from any corner can publish and spread the information to people, whether right or wrong. Therefore, the researcher documented the findings from the case study and the suggestions for using social media as a tool for religious tolerance.

1. Findings

- i. It was found that social media has been used as a tool to spread fake messages and videos by different religious fundamentalist groups for their political and religious propaganda. The expansion of social media in the new millennium brought a significant shift in the media landscape, thus altering the contexts for religious institutions. Henceforth, social media introduced new avenues of political expression for the everyday public who had access to internet connectivity and, more importantly, had reasonable knowledge of how online networks worked. Simultaneously, in social media, religion and politics were variously used by the political leaders and parties who could now directly enter into a dialogue with their constituencies and keep voter loyalties alive with direct interaction.

It was also found from the theoretical work. It is parallel to the case analyses that social media practices for political influence and popular participation represent a

global trend, reconfiguring the connections between media and the public within national, transnational fields. The role of social media in social and political movements is a phenomenon amply illustrated by the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, the Nirbhaya rape protest movement, and similar dramatic events of confrontation between the public and established authorities in a different part of the world. Shirky elaborates on the ‘political power of social media’ by listing many enabling tools available for political participation in the digital era. Social media, she argues, offers ‘coordinating tools’ that helps to create ‘shared awareness’ and fosters ‘horizontal communication.’⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, corrective accounts have raised pertinent questions about how social media is transforming from a potential forum for radical empowerment of ordinary citizens’ voices to a propaganda tool of political authorities who are increasingly investing in the new communication form for influence enhancement using big data marketing, and data surveillance.

- ii. It was found that many publishers in social media embarked on the content of the message without knowing their audience and the relevant messages for the receivers. At the same time, there are many retweets, comments, and posts made without verifying the evidence of the news and information. It was also found that many social media users are not aware of morals and ethics, what is right or wrong, and whether it is moot. The dynamics of personal relationships and interactions have changed. Some feel that because they are hiding behind a computer screen and typing the words instead of speaking them, unethical behaviour does not count.
- iii. It was found that the potential to reach large numbers of people with in-depth information instantaneously is often very limited in mass media, owing to a scarcity of space and time. As social media expanded across urban India, a range of new voices emerged on social networking sites, especially Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, leading to a distinctly middle-class debate culture precipitating along the divide between self-fashioned ‘liberals’ and religious majorities like online volunteers of Hindutva. They are primarily urban educated youth from the upper

⁴⁹⁰ Clay Shirky, “The Political Power of Social Media,” in *Foreign Affairs*, (2011), 28–41.

caste and intermediary caste groups. They range from students and owners of small retail businesses to tech entrepreneurs of small-sized enterprises and those working for multinational companies; they have reasonable tech-savviness as end-users or coders and fluent enough English to compose the post, or are adept at using regional language scripts by enabling platform-specific features. With the spread of affordable smartphones, the volunteer base has expanded beyond urban middle-class users, although comprehensive data on this is as yet unavailable. However, the social media users in Indian accounts have proved that the fundamental groups increasingly court lower-middle-class youths from small towns from religious institutions. Those online actors participate in discussions on the grander points of the ideology, gliding around a set corpus of themes, and by commenting, tagging, tweeting, retweeting, and posting, reproduce the ideological formation from various points of entry and exit. Moreover, the fact that most of the discursive work is taken up by the net-savvy youth of their own will, fuelled by the excitement of scoring over their ideological rivals on online media, is indicative of a new form of ideological work which constitutes a key strand of enterprise from religious fundamentalist groups. Fuchs stated that “the affordances and default setting on social media platform reward self-revelation and disclosure while penalizing reticence and non-participation.”⁴⁹¹ Furthermore, users' participation in online media contributes to content flows in ways that demonstrate that leisure merges with labour.

- iv. Discussions on the issue at hand and clarification have happened using different chatroom mediums, wherein organizers have been able to motivate people towards the cause using interpersonal and group communicators. Such motivated individuals have reached venues of the protests physically for participation, thus promoting the effectiveness of the social movement. Therefore, we find from the theoretical work that social media enhances equal participation. Carpentier conceives participation as “equal power relation in decision-making processes” and media participation as co-decision-making in the contexts of media technology,

⁴⁹¹ Christian Fuchs, *Internet and Society Social Theory in the Information Age* (London: Sage, 2008), 8.

content, people, and organizations.⁴⁹² This notion of media participation is explicitly a political concept focusing on involvement in media decision-making and avoiding a broad definition of participation. Carpentier does not include aspects of media ownership, neither does he consider ownership questions as questions relating to participation. Carpentier ignores the level of the political economy of participation and reduces participation to the political level.⁴⁹³ The problem of Carpentier's political reductionistic concept of media participation is that it implies that full participation can be achieved without letting people participate in the ownership of the organizations in which they work, as long as they are involved in decision-making. The topic of inequality of privilege and wealth is ignored and declared to be secondary or unimportant.

Participation means that humans have the right and reality of being part of decisions and governing and controlling the structures that affect them. Rights are always universal and not particularistic. For example, if human rights are only valid for some people but not others, they are not rights. Similarly, participation is a universal political demand, not a relative category. Otherwise, a dictatorship is a participatory democracy because a ruling elite is participating, which is, however, only a relatively small part of the population.

- v. It was found that the signing of online petitions and their submission to specific governmental and non-governmental agencies to showcase the pertinent issue has played a vital role in prompting different departments to take action/change policies where social media help spread social awareness and kindness. Every social media platform like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube can be a great platform for campaigning for our rights and the rights of other people.
- vi. It was found that there is a significant proportion, especially of youths who use social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp through their mobile. Therefore, social media is influencing life to a great extent in that their ways of living and

⁴⁹² Nico Carpentier, *Media and participation. A site of ideological-democratic struggle* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 69.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 355.

relationships with people have changed to a great extent. However, most of the participants share views and ideas without understanding the multi-religious context of India, and so that invites tension among the different religious groups.

- vii. It was found that in many incidents accessed by social media, there has been a loss of property, damage, and innocent lives. For many people, a social media platform has been a place to pour out their anger towards governmental functioning, religious tradition, and practices, which ended up with arguments and personal enmity. As noted in the case presented, reaction to the arguments ends with the majority power, but as Foucault argued, the power beyond the understanding of power as repression of the powerless by the powerful in the postmodern concept of power. It was found that the use of power by the religious majority is visible and that power they use is simply viewing the power in a negative way, as constraining and repressing, and even at their most constraining and oppressive measures, they are in fact productive, giving rise to new forms of behaviour. However, it was also found that social media also plays a significant role in power-play through countering against the fake news and information of the majority.
- viii. Looking at the other side of the social media roles in different social movements, we see that in all the exchanges of information through social media, there is an element of the hyper-textual, meaning someone can choose how to navigate or act. People behind the computer screen can, in their hyper-textual environment, decide what to do with the content. Social media makes it possible for individuals and different groups to tell their stories to a potential amount of people, but as we have seen in the hyper-textual context, it is up to those many people to either accept the story or share it. The use of social media also makes it possible for people to receive and send information from various sources, giving people the opportunity to choose what they want to see and listen to. This is a good thing for the democratization of information, but it can also polarise people at the same time. Choosing what you want to see can mean that you never get to know what you need to see. Another element we see can also mean that you never get to see what you need to see. Another element we see in the impact of social media usage in social movements is the framing of our actions and thoughts, which are largely influenced by a

person's cultural, economic, and political circumstances. Therefore, despite many positive outcomes we see in the progression of social movements, some concerns need to be addressed in our struggle to pin our alternatives towards the use of social media in promoting religious tolerance.

- ix. It was found that many disturbances in a community are easily considered as inter-religious issues, where social media has been used as a tool to spread the rumours and bring the religious fundamentalists for action towards the minorities. As Foucault observed, people can oppose the exercise of power through a committee structure, but it may require that individuals are prepared to fight those higher in a hierarchy and accept that this may incur the displeasure of such people. Foucault's opposition to power took the form of collecting and disseminating information about an issue and then allowing momentum to develop in the press and public opinion. The exercise of power is related to concepts of freedom, authority, subjugation, and resistance. He saw power as an aspect of an inter-relationship or interaction between human beings. However, it is pointed out that the exercise of power could seriously limit the actions of others and restrict their freedom to act or to resist.
- x. It was found that the spread of communal hatred and violence in many rural areas is due to the social media platform. Social media platforms are used as tools to spread hatred along with religious communities. Social media has given a rural population a platform to present their views. However, the mindset of people in India is usually quite conservative. Therefore, fake news or messages on issues like inter-religious marriages, cow slaughters, and inter-religious comments go viral and sparked conflict very easily.
- xi. It was found that religious education is very poor. Though India is one of the most religiously diverse nations globally, the vast majority of citizens are woefully ignorant about religion itself and the basic tenets of the world's major religious traditions. The consequences of these religious illiteracies are significant and include fuelling the culture wars, curtailing historical and cultural understanding, and promoting religious and racial bigotry. Though it is not suggesting that our

widespread religious illiteracy is the sole cause of these phenomena, we contend that our lack of understanding about the ways that religion itself is an integral dimension of social, historical, and political experience coupled with our ignorance about the specific tenets of the world's religious traditions significantly hinder our capacity to function as engaged, informed, and responsible citizens of our democracy. In these ways, religious illiteracy has helped foster a politically dangerous and intellectually debilitating climate.

2. Suggestions

Based on these research findings, the case study, and conversations with the three religious leaders, the following observations and suggestions are offered about the challenges of religious tolerance in social media.

- i. Today, social media is one of the most effective vehicles or means of reaching out to people and fostering interaction and participation. Citizen journalists must be challenged to be sensible in handling social media gadgets. What to produce and to whom to direct it? With what purpose is it concerned, and how would it be utilized? Religious institutions should take advantage of it and provide awareness and training for leaders and how to use the internet.
- ii. Educational institutions should recognize the importance of social media and take the initiative to provide computer education and internet education for their students. Furthermore, teachers and Professors should be well trained to make use of the effectiveness of social media which can help them foster discussion, interaction, and feedback at the academic level with the students, in applying more creative pedagogical methods using the resources available through the web.
- iii. Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram can be one of the most effective media to reach out to society. It is one of the most frequently used social media platforms among people, especially the youth. The different religious institutes can open separate accounts on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram and regularly keep the members updated on all the events and happenings. These sites can also serve as one of the most effective media to facilitate discussions and feedback for

reconsidering communication strategies, thus making the people more communicative and fostering a viable community.

- iv. YouTube is another popular social media platform, which can be used effectively by religious institutes to teach the moral values of their religion. YouTube allows a user to view, upload and download videos. Different religious institutes can open their accounts on YouTube where inspirational messages can be uploaded. It can also be one of the most influential media for giving the perception of religious education in short films. Moreover, YouTube is also a media that is interactive and communicative.
- v. Apart from the popularly used social networking sites like Facebook and YouTube, several other social networking sites can aid people more professionally. For example, Twitter is one of the best sites where they can follow any ongoing issues on political, economic, religious, or any other fields of interest and participate by giving their views and opinions in the form of tweets. The blog is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. MySpace is a site that allows users to meet and make new friends at a professional level, especially concerning promoting music, and WhatsApp is an app that connects the internet through the phone to let you message and call, send photos, videos, documents, and voice messages. These are some of the other web sources that religious institutes can use to provide more information to members. Religious institutes should take initiatives to train and educate the members and youths on making use of these social networks. It is also pertinent to make available in the educational institution with curriculum on the subject ethics and power of social media.
- vi. Social media is one of the best channels to enhance citizens' rights to information and freedom to speak, write, and share information. However, at this juncture, there is every possibility that this media can be misused to nurture misunderstandings, hostility, and conflicts. It can also be misused so that it can affect the moral standards of the users. Therefore, religious institutions and different non-

governmental organizations should play the role of educators in bringing awareness about the potential, both good and bad, of social media.

- vii. From the Grassroots level, social media awareness needs to be given intensely, and using one's conscience about social media development becomes a must. Each citizen must take this responsibility to safeguard peace and confront the provocative elements whenever they are detected or suspected on social media sites.
- viii. An effective media practitioner should be acquired in the community. It may be government-based, religious organizational based, or any other related-based media expertise, so community members are well informed and sensible in receiving the messages from social media sites. Unwanted trouble would be avoided in the vicinity. In a context such as India, where religious institutions influence a majority, every religious institution must bring peace. They must not turn a deaf ear about social media concerns in this present era.
- ix. Creative use of words, images, and videos will prevent hatred towards each other and promote religious tolerance. Therefore, people in positions of responsibility in the media should write, design, direct and produce, messages and these can help change such coverage by providing balanced reporting. By emphasizing social responsibility for profit-making and by promoting peace-building initiatives. Religious organizations can use their structures and networks to challenge communicators, to be ethically and socially aware, recognizing that people are citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked.

3. Risk-Taking Journalism as a New Paradigm

Media ably supported by information technology is endowed with power, and those in power and authority have monopolized media to control people further. But, as Foucault argued, power is not only located in powerful bodies such as the state or companies; "we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it 'excludes,' it 'represses,' it 'abstracts,' it 'masks,' it 'conceals.'",

power produces, it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained belong to this production.”⁴⁹⁴ He said that “there are no relations of power without resistance.”⁴⁹⁵

From the above argument, it is clear that power has to do with who can influence what society looks like and who controls the means that allow such influence. In the information society, communication and communication technologies have become ubiquitous in everyday life and society. Therefore, the question is how power has been transformed in an information society and what communication power is.⁴⁹⁶ However, to gain power is not about domination but to have the right to speak the truth, which has become the ‘risk’ in the context of India, where the religious majority own and control the political power.

Etymologically, the term risk is derived from the Italian ‘*risco*’ or ‘*rischio*’ meaning ‘run into danger’ knowing the impending ‘danger,’ if someone jumps into it by succumbing to or venturing into or embarking upon for a cause, is said to be at ‘risk.’⁴⁹⁷ So, the risk is something which has to do with progress, change or advancement. Therefore, the risk is a ‘human-made construct’ that combines politics, economics, socio-cultural, religio-ethical, and technological dimensions. In this way, ‘risk’ has to do with social relations and political arrangements. Risks are thus inseparable from the ‘object realities’ of hazards or danger. Risks are varying in dimension and degrees and so can never be uniform or the same. The degree, veracity, intensity, and alacrity of risk keep changing from one context to another.⁴⁹⁸

Grabill and Simmons's discussion gives a glimpse of the risk communication model, “the technocratic approach,” which views risk communication as a one-way, linear process with scientists and experts functioning as knowledge producers offering

⁴⁹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish the Birth of Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 250.

⁴⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 142.

⁴⁹⁶ Christian Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (London, New Delhi: Sage, 2014), 69-70.

⁴⁹⁷ Online Encyclopaedia Dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/risk> (access, 12/06/2019).

⁴⁹⁸ John Mohan Razu, He is a Retired professor at the Department of Christian Ethic, United Theological College, Bangalore, India. The concept of risk-taking has been taken from his development of risk-taking theology.

risk analyses and the public as consumers of such knowledge. However, they consider the technocratic approach inadequate because it ignores power relations, audience participation, and democratic decision-making.⁴⁹⁹ Leiss and Powell observed, “to achieve effective risk communication practices, we have to break down the barrier between the two languages “expert” and “layman” to facilitate the productive exchange between the two spheres”⁵⁰⁰ Rheingold described how “social media help people gain new forms of social power and new ways to organise their interactions and exchanges just in time and just in place,”⁵⁰¹ because enhanced interactivity and the democratization of information.

The researcher’s thoughts on the critical journalism of risk-taking in a postmodern context rejected the single and dominant way but acknowledged the fragmentation of knowledge. The social context of those who live for truth and transparency is filled with threats and constant struggles that those journalists and media persons face in their day-to-day vocation. In such a scenario, contextualization is nothing but an inherent dynamic of faith and critical praxis.⁵⁰² So, critical journalism risk-taking is rooted in concrete experience. Therefore, journalism of risk-taking is not something optional but mandatory. Critical journalism of risk-taking starts by removing the journalism blinkers so that the raw, brutalized body and the battlefield of those journalists stand for truth and objectivity.

Critical journalism of risk-taking emerges to articulate the media person's raw and rugged experience and critique the fake news and blatant lies that the media covers. It provides the required language and basic materials to challenge the dominant power. It lays the foundation for the resistance of the dominant that hold power in their political discourse.⁵⁰³ Peeling back the social and political context of

⁴⁹⁹ J. T. Grabill & M. Simmons, “Toward a Critical Rhetoric of Risk Communication: Producing Citizens and the Role of Technical Communicators, in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 7, no. 4 (1998), 415-441.

⁵⁰⁰ W. Leiss & D. Powell, *Mad Cow and Mother’s Milk: The Perils of Poor Risk Communication*, 2nd ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 29.

⁵⁰¹ Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002), xii.

⁵⁰² Alfred Masino, “The Risk of Journalism,” <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/the-risks-of-journalism> (accessed, 16/07/2019).

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

the media layer by layer as the layers get cracked off, the materials that come out form the constitutive element for risk-taking journalism. Risk-taking journalism emerges from this inter-subjective world of the media.

As Mohan Razo asserted in the *theology of risk-taking*, the terrains are impregnated with anger, dejection, resistance, resolve, and resilience. Their actions can only be understood when their social context is understood comprehensively. Only then, the interaction with the text is plausible and meaningful. However, the nature of the contexts of the victims is dynamic and vibrant.⁵⁰⁴ Both the internal and external factors influence it. Therefore, context is necessary, which determines everything. In such a ruptured, devastated, ravaged, and besieged context where the victims have been living with fake news, resulting in lynching and intimidation, many succumbed to the forces of domination. In contrast, the others went all out defying and resisting.

In such a context, resistance and defiance involve risk-taking. Succumbing, avoiding, remaining passive, or being silent in the long run is counter-productive and will further strengthen the mobocracy Democracy in the context of fake news, and mobocracy is not a reality. For them, avoiding dangers is no safer in the long run than outright combating. However, risk-taking journalism is not an engagement in polemics, as Foucault elaborated in “ethics subjectivity and truth” in a series of play of questions and answers. In the work of reciprocal elucidation, the rights of each person are in some sense imminent in the discussion. They depend only on the dialogue situation. The person asking the question is merely exercising the right that has been given him: to remain unconvinced, to perceive a contradiction, to require more information, to emphasize different postulates, to point out faulty reasoning, and so on. As for the person answering the question of the other, question and answers depend on a game that is at once pleasant and difficult in which each of the two

⁵⁰⁴ John Mohan Razu, “Media Turns Predatory-Privacy, Profit and Control: Proposing A Theology of Risk-Taking,” (Regional Seminar, January, 2019) John Mohan Razu, Papar, Clark Theological College Archives, Mokokchung.

partners takes pain to use only the right given him by the other and by the accepted form of the dialogue.⁵⁰⁵

On the other hand, the polemicist encased in privileges that he possesses in advance will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner searching for the truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat. For him then, the game consists of recognizing this person as a subject of the right to speak but abolishing him, as interlocutor, from any possible dialogue. His final objective will be not to come as close as possible to a difficult truth but to bring about the triumph of the just cause he has been manifestly upholding from the beginning. The polemicist relies on a legitimacy that his adversary is by definition denied.⁵⁰⁶

3.1. Communication Power

Power is a key concept in political theory, but it has been defined in different ways. Max Weber says that it is the “chance of a man or some men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action.”⁵⁰⁷ For Habermas, power has to do with realizing collective goals, means of coercion, symbols of power and status, decision-making authorities, disadvantages, power of definition, counter-power, organization, and legitimation.⁵⁰⁸ Niklas Luhmann, sees power as the achievement of inducing someone to act in a certain way when he would not act that way normally and only does so due to the threat of possible sanctions.⁵⁰⁹ For these authors, power has to do with the capacity of one group to use means of coercion against others so that it asserts its will and interests. Whereas Foucault argued, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, such definition of power ignores the fact that power is not only located in powerful bodies such as state or

⁵⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, *Ethics Subjectivity and Truth, The Essential Work of Michel Foucault Volume 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 111-112.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 111-112.

⁵⁰⁷ Max Weber, *Economy and society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, trans. by Ephraim Fischhoff (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 926.

⁵⁰⁸ See Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of communicative action*, Trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1984).

⁵⁰⁹ Niklas Luhmann, *Die Politik der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 39; cited in Christian Fuchs, *Internet and Society, Social Theory in the Information Age*, 69.

companies, he further said that there is no relation of power without resistance, which means that power is distributed to everyone and this is a fundamental right for humans.

Manuel Castells's concept of communication power in social media stresses the role of the internet and social media in what he terms the network society. For him, social media communication is mass self-communication. He argues that the emergence of this type of communication has resulted in profound shifts in the power structures of society. The task of communication power is to "advance the construction of a grounded theory of power in the network society."⁵¹⁰ Castells introduces four kinds of power in the network society: Networking power, network power, networked power, network-making power. Inspired by Max Weber, he defines power as "the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence the decisions of other social actors asymmetrically in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interests, and values."⁵¹¹ Power is associated with coercion, domination, violence or potential violence, and asymmetry. He refers to Foucault, Weber, and Habermas's power concepts and argues that he builds on Giddens's structuration theory. For Giddens, power is "transformative capacity," the capability to intervene in a given set of events so as in some way to alter them,"⁵¹² the "capability to effectively decide about courses of events, even where others might contest such decisions."⁵¹³ Power is, for Giddens, characteristic of all social relationships; it "is routinely involved in the instantiation of social practices" and is operating in and through human action."⁵¹⁴ In Giddens' structuration theory, power is not necessarily coercive, violent and asymmetrically distributed. Therefore, it becomes possible to conceive and analyze situations and social systems of participatory democracy.

⁵¹⁰ Manuel Castells worked for a long time in urban sociology and with the rise of the world wide web became a leading internet researcher. He is Professor of sociology at the Open University of Catalonia in Barcelona, where he also directs the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute. He is also Professor of Communication Technology and Society at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication. For detail discussion see Manuel Castells, *Communication power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵¹¹ Ibid, 9.

⁵¹² Anthony Giddens, *A contemporary critique of Historical Materialism. Vol. 2: The nation-state and violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 7.

⁵¹³ Ibid, 9.

⁵¹⁴ Anthony Giddens, *A contemporary critique of Historical Materialism. Vol. 1: Power, property and the state* (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), 49.

3.2. The Importance of Habermas and Foucault Power, Discourse for Risk-Taking Journalism

Even though Foucault's work was written before social media, his theoretical approach on power, discourse, and knowledge can be applied in a tangible way to understand social media functions and power. On the other hand, Habermas's work on communicative action gives language the fundamental method humans coordinate activities, showing the imperative perspective on social media discourse and ethics. From the above argument, it is found that Foucault and Habermas theory gives enormous ways to social media as risk-taking journalism.

As the researcher has discussed in chapter one, the digital technologies of the social media or social networks platform journalism profession have brought the media revolution or convergence. However, media convergence is not just a matter of technology merging. It is a continuous process with comprehensive and substantial implications on every aspect of journalism culture, including producers, consumers, distribution of power, and influence. Foucault thus rightly attempted to show how power manipulates a person's beliefs and behaviors and plays a fundamental part in constituting them as a subject. Therefore, for Foucault, power is not a tool that can be owned and used but rather a dynamic. Power is therefore not an object or a quality that one has or has not. Rather power is seen as an omnipresent field produced from one moment to the next, at every point or instead in every relation from one point to another and is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere.⁵¹⁵ According to Jenkins, new media organizations try to speed the flow of content across delivery channels to enlarge revenue opportunities, expand markets and enhance viewer commitment. On the other hand, citizens struggle to control the flow of news and information.⁵¹⁶ Therefore, in postmodernism, social media have become much more active in producing and distributing news and views where the power is the core for both consumer and distributor.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid, 92.

⁵¹⁶ Henry Jenkins, "The cultural logic of media convergence," in *International journal of cultural Studies*, vol.7, no.1 (2004), 33-43.

Habermas proposes a sophisticated liberal interpretation of modern law that he depicted as contemporary constitutional democracies and their systems of rights as historical steps in the direction of personal freedom and autonomy. Habermas suggested that modern law is constituted by a normative and a factual dimension. Law is, in fact, a set of commands backed by sanctions and, at the same time, a series of rules of action that demand compliance on the basis of its legitimacy.⁵¹⁷ The central foundation for such an ambitious project is represented by Habermas discourse principle, which states: “just those action norms are valid to which all possible affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourse.”⁵¹⁸ This system provides a powerful scheme of legitimization, granting the parties a space of communicative freedom where they would be able to coordinate their action plans based on a consensus that depends in turn on their reciprocally taking positions on intersubjectively recognizing validity claims.⁵¹⁹ To make possible such a dynamic, every democratic legal system must work out a basic system of rights that would guarantee every citizen's equal and fair participation in the legal and political discourse.⁵²⁰ In this way, every citizen would have the possibility to participate actively in the construction of democracy. However, social media Journalism can be risky because social media is more metanarrative than normative thought.

Sociologist William Dutton at the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) argues that we are witnessing powerful new news platforms and networks, which act independently and out of control of the traditional mainstream media. Dutton has termed these powerful platforms the “Fifth Estate” that already undermined and worked beyond the boundaries of existing news media organizations.⁵²¹ Castells rightly observes that to challenge existing power relationships, it is necessary to produce alternative discourses that can overwhelm the discursive disciplinary capacity of the state as an essential step to neutralizing its use of violence.⁵²² Social media are platforms that can

⁵¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and Democracy*, trans. by William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 38-41.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid*, 107.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid*, 119.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid*, 121-136.

⁵²¹ William H Dutton, “The Fifth Estate Emerging through the Network of Networks,” in *Prometheus*, vol. 27, no.1 (2009), 1–15.

⁵²² Manuel Castells, *Communication Power*, 15-16.

be driven by citizens who do not specialize in journalism but can produce, disseminate, and consume news. As professional and non-professional citizens actively participate in social media platforms without representing their organization, institution, or community, they express their views and interests. Therefore, social media can also be misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. However, social media also challenge the dominant power and demand transparency and democracy. Furthermore, social media empower the marginalized and minority people who suffer from an inability to express their opinions and voice their interest in the mainstream news media due to the structure of power in a given society.

3.3. Power in Social Media

People are increasingly connecting in social media, sharing personal stories, commenting, liking, and arguing on different topics, and therefore social media is a platform for dialogue in contemporary postmodern society. Social media is also the platform where public relations are focused primarily on how social media platforms can be leveraged to the advantage of organizations for relationship building and so-called dialogue with the public. As Kennedy, & Sommerfeldt observes, social media has positioned on opportunities for information exchange, perpetuating models of public relations grounded in systems theory that ignore power imbalances.⁵²³ However, postmodern theories exposed power as both dominations; controlling, regulatory, and disciplinary and as resistance; constructive, empowering, revolutionary, and subversive. Domination regulates subjects while positive or resistive power works to liberate them and give them agency.

According to Fuchs, social media are spaces where media power and counter-power are played out. Dominant platforms, such as Facebook, Google, YouTube, and Twitter, are privately owned, and there are economic, political, and ideological forms of media owners at play; private ownership, concentration, advertising, the logic of consumption, and entertainment. At the same time, dominant structures are questioned by phenomena such as file-sharing, commons-based social media that are non-profit

⁵²³ Amanda K. Kennedy, & Erich J. Sommerfeldt. "A Postmodern Turn for Social Media Research: Theory and Research Directions for Public Relations Scholarship," in *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, vol. 23 (2015), 31-45.

and non-commercial, such movements' use of social media for political purposes, the development of alternative social media, protests against the dominance of platforms like Google, protest and legal disputes over privacy violations, etc.⁵²⁴ Therefore Social Media is a platform where different organizations may participate in the discussions by enhancing the meanings and principles of dialogue.

Castells argued that social media result in revolutions and rebellions. He shares the widespread ideological talk about "Twitter revolutions" and "Facebook rebellions"⁵²⁵ Fuchs also argues the media-social media, the internet, and all other media are contradictory because we live in a contradictory society. As a consequence, their effects are contradictory. They can dampen/forestall or amplify/advance protest or have not much effect at all. Also, different media stand in a contradictory relation and power struggle with each other. The media are not only factors that influence the conditions of protest-they stand in contradictory relation with politics and ideology/culture that also influence the conditions of protest.⁵²⁶ As quoted by Castell's social media is a form of 'mass self-communication and the social realm where communication power and counter-power are exerted. The notion of power, the use of computer science terms for analyzing society, the assessment and categorical description of the power distribution between global multimedia corporations and the creative audience, the feasibility of the notion of web 2.0, and the centrality of information and communication power.

3.4. Tolerance in Dialogue

The liberal understanding of toleration promotes the stage of tolerating something even though we disapprove of it. This method of toleration is a passage to political liberalism, where the equality constraint is more prominent. As R. Dworkin stated, "each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all."⁵²⁷ Equality here may be understood in two ways. It might mean that the liberties must be the same

⁵²⁴ Christian Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, 80.

⁵²⁵ Manuel Castells, *Communication Power*, 15-16.

⁵²⁶ Christian Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, 75-79.

⁵²⁷ R. Dworkin, "What is equality? I Equality of welfare," in *Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol.10, no.3 (1981), 185-246.

for everyone, or equal and adequate liberties in the state law for everyone. This liberal principle of tolerance works with lawful coercion to be consistent with the freedom of everyone else. According to Kant;

*“In accordance with reason there is only one way that states in relation to one another can leave the lawless condition, which involves nothing but war; it is that, like individual human beings, they give up their savage (lawless) freedom, accommodate themselves to public coercive laws, and so form an (always growing) state of nations (civitas gentium) that would finally encompass all the nations of the earth.”*⁵²⁸

Kant, further claims about the principle of moral dialogue. Practical reason can provide us with sufficient motivational ground for action. Practical reason has this motivational power because it is capable of generating a pure a priori moral law. But this moral law is a formal moral law. The idea of formal law is based on Kant's distinction between the form and matter of a practical principle. Kant thinks that a practical principle represents an object of an affective state such as desire.⁵²⁹ However, Kant believes that the fundamental principle of morality is not a principle with a material component. It only has a formal component. The moral law does not assume any empirically given object that a moral agent can desire.

The purely rational moral agents justify their actions based on considerations that every sensible party can be expected to endorse. Caglar Cömez argues the crucial implication of this point is that as long as a particular moral agent is a rational moral agent, it justifies the moral judgments by appealing only to considerations that can be expected to be mutually endorsable. Hence, as rational moral agents, when we engage in a moral dialogue where there is a conflict between our moral judgments, we follow the principle that demands that if we are to justify a moral judgment in moral dialogue, we appeal only to reasons that can be expected to be endorsed by each party in the

⁵²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. & trans. by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 357.

⁵²⁹ Ibid, 155.

dialogue.⁵³⁰ This principle rules out appeals to feelings as a ground for our judgments. This is because feelings and sentiments cannot be expected to be shared by each rational party.

Because it develops a moral principle that omits appeals to feelings that cannot be expected to be shared by every moral agent in an ethical dialogue and which demands that our moral judgments be mutually endorsable, Kant's moral philosophy lays a common basis for different moral agents who have different social backgrounds and different sets of sentiments towards the same action to engage in a moral conversation. According to Kant's moral philosophy, the fact that the parties in an honest dialogue are from different cultures with different moral feelings is not important. They are included in the same ethical dialogue as long as they appeal to mutually endorsable reasons for their claims as rational beings.⁵³¹

The importance of promoting and facilitating inter-religious dialogue is aimed at tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding, and freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief. However, it also recognizes that the manifestation of discrimination and intolerance threatens the security of individuals and societal cohesion, which may give rise to wider-scale conflict and violence. In this respect, the approach is expressed in UNESCO's (1995) Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, which reads:

*“Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.”*⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Caglar Cömez, “David Hume, Immanuel Kant, And the Possibility Of An Inclusive Moral Dialogue,” https://www.helsinki.fi/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intellectual_history_archive_2018.7_comez.pdf (accessed 01/07/2019).

⁵³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, 358.

⁵³² UNESCO (1995) Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, Proclaimed and signed by the Member States of UNESCO on 16 November 1995. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13175&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed, 12/07/2019).

According to Peter Balint, “the best method of achieving a tolerant society will be capable of both dealing with all difficulties and unpleasant cases, as well as not targeting all citizens for the sake of the few, and this is particularly problematic if a method is unlikely to even affect those few.”⁵³³ The above argument gives the relevant Indian context that it may become easy to make a minority community victims. The best alternative is to focus on the fundamental notion of tolerance because tolerance is not the absence of argument or sharing. It is an equal opportunity for all. It fosters the knowledge for the citizen’s rights in the public sphere, the respect of sameness in which the message can be regardless of what you think or feel, all citizens must have their rights respected. The discourse in argument brings the truth from both parties, and therefore, tolerance in dialogue is significant for understanding the practices and beliefs of citizens.

Moreover, dialogue is a crucial tool of any effort aimed at conflict prevention and post-conflict reconciliation. It is the means through which immediate tensions that could lead to conflict can be diffused, differences and disagreements discussed, misunderstandings and misconception corrected, compromises identified, and solutions negotiated. Without dialogue, tensions may grow to the point where they create a climate where some will perceive violence as the only way to resolve problems. Therefore, the World Association for Christian Communication framed the Principles of Christian Communication, which promote communication as a human right.

4. The Principles of Christian Communication by WACC

In 1986, the Board of World Association for Christian Communication, under the leadership of its General Secretary Hans W. Florin adopted the Christian Principles of Communication. Michael Traber, head of WACC's research unit, was the key drafter of these principles. Philip Lee points out that: “It came out of a growing awareness that, while communication is common to all human beings, the way we

⁵³³ Peter Balint, “Education for Tolerance, Respecting, sameness, not difference,” in *Religious Tolerance Education and the Curriculum*, eds. Elizabeth Burns Coleman, & Kevin White (Rotterdam, Boston: Sense Publisher, 2011), 42.

communicate, communicative action could be the subject of more explicitly Christian principles.”⁵³⁴ WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, gender, or religion. It advocates full access to information and communication and promotes open and diverse media. In addition, WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding, and justice.

Dennis Smith says that “in the context of the UNESCO debates, WACC hoped these “Christian Principles” would challenge church hierarchies to disassociate themselves from power structures which keep the poor in a position of subservience and to promote genuine reconciliation through which the dignity of all people can be reaffirmed”⁵³⁵ Further Dennis points out that through the Christian Principles, WACC challenged the secular ethos of the age by insisting that communication is a function of transcendence. The introduction to the Christian Principles observes that “communication remains God’s great gift to humanity, without which we cannot be truly human.” Somehow, there is something sacred about the creation of meaning in common; communication reflects the spiritual values at the heart of human identity.⁵³⁶

The WACC affirmed the following five Christian Principles as guiding principles for action:

4.1. Communication Builds and Shapes Community

Philip Lee, while defining that, “Communication creates community,” states that, “A Community of people and nations, as well as a community of different churches and religions, has to emerge and cooperate if the world’s pluralistic and multicultural societies are to survive.”⁵³⁷ WACC builds on the assumption that genuine or effective communication cannot occur where division, alienation, isolation, and barriers disturb, prevent, or distort social interaction. Just as the document states that “one aim of our works is the breaking down of all kind of barriers

⁵³⁴ Philip Lee, “Communication for Ecumenism,” in *Christian Communication: Ecumenical Changes for the 21st Century*, ed. Samuel Meshack (Yogyakarta: WACC-Asia, 2011), 44.

⁵³⁵ Dennis Smith, “WACC Communication and Ecumenism” in *Christian Communication: Ecumenical Changes for the 21st Century*, ed. Samuel Meshack (Yogyakarta: WACC-Asia, 2011), 56.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Philip Lee, “Communication for Ecumenism,” 45.

which prevent the development of communities with right and justice for all,”⁵³⁸ every Christian communicator is directed to build up the community. It further states true communication is facilitated when people join together regardless of race, colour, or religious conviction, and where there is acceptance of and commitment to one another.

The life of a community is enriched by open, honest, and transparent dialogue about decisions and events affecting its members' lives. This applies equally to a neighbourhood or village, a city, a religious community, or a community of nations. Relationships with a community are created and strengthened by face-to-face conversation, social media that enable genuine participation in political, social, and cultural questions relating to the common good. Social media can help revitalize communities and rekindle relationships since they represent ways of communicating open and inclusive, rather than one-way and exclusive.⁵³⁹

In many societies and cultures, social media replaces mass media as a source of news, common interest, community formation, etc. Social media is undoubtedly open and inclusive, seen in the rapid development of members on Facebook, Tweepers, YouTube, etc., creating and building online communities. Social media can help revitalize communities and rekindle communal relationships since, when there are no obstacles or constraints, they represent ways of communicating the truth with open and inclusive risk, rather than one-way and exclusive.

4.2. Communication Enhances Participation

One of the most serious concerns of the WACC in Christian communication is participation. This concern arises from the WACC's belief that participatory communication can give people a new sense of human dignity, a unique community experience, and the enjoyment of fuller life. For the WACC, communication is, by definition, participatory in a two-way process. It refers to the full involvement of participants in communication processes and includes giving individuals access to

⁵³⁸ K. Lalzarliana, “Christian Communication Principle according to WACC,” <https://zarteak.blogspot.com/2014/02/christian-communication-principles.html> (accessed, 03/07/2019,).

⁵³⁹ “WACC Communication for All,” <http://cdn.agilitycms.com/wacc-global/Communication-for-All.pdf> (accessed, 02/10/2019).

communication channels and enabling them to participate freely and equally in any Christian communication. Since participatory communication shares meaning and establishes and maintain social relationships, every Christian communicator is anticipated to maintain this principle in their communication process.⁵⁴⁰

Participatory communication is open to dialogue, the fluid exchange of ideas, and the transformation that emerges as a result. Inclusive communication does not seek to persuade people to accept pre-conceived ideas. Instead, the genuine conversation changes all participants; ideas become a collective work in progress, enlightenment, and enlightening. Participation also leads to transparency and mutual accountability as people come to understand their involvement in the context of their communities' well-being. When communication is inclusive and invites participation, worldviews and collective experience are more prosperous and more vivid. More images, thoughts, and points of view are added to the public sphere.⁵⁴¹

Social media has made the sharing of information both immediate and accessible. People can upload words and images instantly while events are unfolding. This power to immediately create and propagate ideas and pictures is on-going resistance to the presence and preservation of stereotypes. The danger of stereotypes is not simply untrue, but that they make us assume that one story is the only one, and one image becomes a token for all. Participatory communication resists single stories, monolithic cultures, and the powerful monopoly, insisting that all people have a right to communicate in the public space.

4.3. Communication Supports and Develops Cultures

Hans Georg Gadamer defines the culture as communication, which means “to share something with someone else which, by sharing, everything grows. The culture could be defined as a field that contains everything that grows by sharing. The external goods have such a nature that makes us feel lonely, and when the view is attracted

⁵⁴⁰ K. Lalzarliana, “Christian Communication Principle according to WACC.”

⁵⁴¹ “WACC Communication for All,”

only by them, we withdraw from reality in our souls.”⁵⁴² Similarly, Georg Simmel stated that what leads us to understand the essence of the culture-communication relation is the sense of the language itself. “The culture is the way from the closed unit, by a large deployment of plurality, to another unit, deployed also.”⁵⁴³ Therefore, culture is a social phenomenon; most of the recorded human culture is the interpretation and conferral of meanings. Communication is not external to the culture; it belongs to its meaning and essence. The proof of this fact is that “history does not know any closed or sealed culture, not even in communities of people geographically isolated; communication is a human’s organic necessity, appeared from his nature, which is never self-sufficient, and it cannot be ontic or axiological by itself.”⁵⁴⁴

The term “culture” may refer to the complex collection of knowledge, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and give a common identity to a particular group of people. The Document on Principles of Christian Communication says that, “One of the greatest riches of today’s world is its many different cultures, reflecting God’s image in all its diversity. Communicators are responsible for exploring and enhancing this symbolic environment of images and meanings and respecting the religious and cultural values that lie at the heart of other cultures. It also falls to public education to strengthen interreligious understanding and cooperation.”⁵⁴⁵ It helps to cultivate self-respect and, thereby, respect for other people and other cultures.

4.4. Communication Liberates

The WACC document on Principles of Christian Communication states that communication liberates and enables people to articulate their own needs and helps them act together to meet those needs. It enhances their sense of dignity and

⁵⁴² Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Cultura, si cuvântul,” in *Elogiul Teoriei Mostenirea Europei* (Iasi: Polirom, 1999), 26; cited by Viorel Miulescu, “Communication and Culture: Cultural Paradigm and Referential,” in *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, vol. 6 no. 1 (2014), 691-700.

⁵⁴³ Georg Simmel, *Cultura Filosofica* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 211; cited by Viorel Miulescu, “Communication and Culture: Cultural Paradigm and Referential,” in *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, vol. 6 no. 1 (2014), 691-700.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

emphasizes their right to full participation in the life of society. It aims to bring about structures in a community that is just, more egalitarian, and more conducive to fulfilling human rights. Human dignity lies at the heart of communication that liberates.⁵⁴⁶

Freedom of expression and the press affirm fundamental rights over centuries, which mandates that communication is a fundamental human right. Philip rightly points out that, “Genuine communication presupposes the recognition that all human beings are of equal worth. The more explicit equality becomes in human interaction, the more readily communication occurs, the more easily we cross the bridge into unknown territory.”⁵⁴⁷ Communication that liberates might be explicitly designed for the oppressed, marginalized, and whose voices are silenced everywhere in the world. Social media can multiply voices, representatives of the youth, women, and children, supported by other concerned people. Social networks that can bring multiple expressions can be essential tools for resistance and liberation.

4.5. Communication is Prophetic

Samuel Meshack points out that “Prophetic communication expresses itself in both words and deeds and prophetic action must be willing to challenge the principalities and powers, to serve truth and to denounce falsehood.”⁵⁴⁸ For Christians, the events of the day are part of God’s agenda for action. God’s plans are revealed through changing circumstances and new opportunities. To discern and interpret situations correctly, Christian communicators must listen to God and be led by the Spirit. This is a condition of prophecy. However, words are only part of the picture. In communication terms, being prophetic includes stimulating critical awareness of the reality constructed by the mass media. Today, the virtual worlds of social communications and Web 2.0 technologies are helping people to distinguish truth from propaganda, reality from unreality. They often help in exposing the truth and help rebuild trust as vital steps towards reconciliation.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Philip Lee, “Communication for Ecumenism,” 47.

⁵⁴⁸ Samuel Meshack, “Christian Communication: A Theological and Ethical Exploration,” in *Christian Communication: Ecumenical Changes for the 21st Century*, ed. (Yogyakarta: WACC-Asia, 2011), 118.

Prophetic communication also denounces the powerful abuses and defending the dignity of widows and orphans, outcasts and strangers. Communication can also announce the good news of how God is working in our midst to bend human history towards justice and peace. Such discernment takes on lasting meaning only when words are accompanied by action. To challenge injustice is to challenge the “principalities and powers” and may carry a high price. Communication that affirms justice and challenges injustice serves truth and illuminates falsehood since deception and half-truths threaten the common good. It also stimulates critical awareness of the realities constructed by the media, helping people identify special interests and differentiate that which is ephemeral and trivial from lasting and of value.⁵⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it is very important to note that risk-taking journalism is citizen journalism, that irrespective of religion, it is the voice of common people towards the unjust society. It can articulate how we can express our political understanding at a micro-power level by placing social knowledge in the position of truth and digital democracy that could transform our social, economic, and political networks. The change is possible with risk-taking journalism because people rely increasingly on the internet to gain a great deal of information and discussion. It is not about what one person says but about the opinion shared by different individuals. This is made possible by the internet and allows us to hold highly informative campaigns without relying on personal wealth or special interests. This is the mandate of postmodern philosophy that challenges the dominant power of modernity through resistance and risk.

Conclusion

The remainder of this chapter argues that religious tolerance in social media is crucial because social media discussions cannot govern in a single direction. The researcher found that many people, especially the youth in India, use the internet to access social media sites; it was also found that Facebook and YouTube are the most popular sites among people. Moreover, the influences of social media in the life of

⁵⁴⁹ “WACC Communication for All,”

youth are very high. Therefore, the researcher has discussed some suggestions that religious institutions can work on bringing strategies for using these social media for justice and reconciliation. At the same time, the researcher documented the new paradigm in social media as “risk-taking journalism” from the postmodern theoretical framework. In the context of India, where the religious majority controls political power, resistance which is risk-taking, can play a vital role for the common people.

The Principles of Christian communication, enunciated by the World Association for Christian Communication, are being looked at from the perspective of Social Media of communication. A proper analysis of social media and their use can promote interaction and, in a way, dialogical communication. The interactive communication supported by the new communication media such as social networking and blogging, Web 2.0, help in getting the fruit of achieving the results enunciated in the Principles of Christian Communication. Hence communication can serve building communities, enabling the participation of everyone irrespective of class, caste, sex, rich and poor, differently enabled, protecting the vulnerable. It can support and enhance people's cultures, help fight for the rights of people in getting their rightful place in society, and it helps in speaking prophetically to power structures to bring justice. Many examples of the use of Facebook, Tweepers, YouTube, etc., around the world, voicing out and fighting for justice and freedom and enabling people's power have been witnessed.

The internet has enabled worldwide Peer Learning Networks (PLN) that engage in sharing and distributing knowledge to come together as close-knit, functioning communities. Today, it is possible to rise above traditional limitations and learn from diverse groups of people and experiences from across the globe, no matter where you are. Anyone who has access to the internet can identify resources, discover solutions, share knowledge, gain support/advice, dialogue at the click of the mouse. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., make great foraging grounds for all kinds of information and source material. Social media is not just about academic knowledge, but these networks are a great way to interact with like-minded people and support a cause. The interactions, discussion, postings, and the constant support we can get from our close-knit online community have a significant role to play in

keeping us grounded and fighting for the causes we believe in; they keep alive our engagement and enthusiasm.⁵⁵⁰

Moreover, the spread of social media challenges the hierarchical constitution and functioning of society and culture. Interactive and participatory methods largely replace the one-way or linear model of communication. As a result, traditional and hierarchical values and systems are often questioned and discarded. Instead, a more participatory production of significant and relevant meanings to specific groups is accepted and promoted. Together with the hierarchical values, the institutional structures are also vanishing in favour of communities, where all members are equal participants.⁵⁵¹

People are looking for connections. They are looking for a community, and our greatest need is to belong. The Internet has allowed us to do this in space and time never before experienced. Networking is the modern mantra of communication. In this networked global village, those who find physical isolation experience community through virtual groups like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and the like.⁵⁵² Of course, social media is not the source of social change without people. However, social media functions as a tool for social change, as it enables knowledge sharing, information dissemination, and coordination, making it easier to organize social movements.

⁵⁵⁰ Bindu Sridhar, "Peer Learning Networks," *The Hindu*, Chennai Edition: 14 December 2011.

⁵⁵¹ Jacob Srampickal, *Communications Can Renew the Church* (Kochi: Karunikan Books, 2009), 70.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Dafne Sabanes Plou points out that human communication is interactive, and technology should be a tool to aid that interactivity. It should not be used to exploit or subordinate people.⁵⁵³ Social media, the core of the new information technology, fulfills human communication's interactive element. Social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, come in such a way that we cannot sideline those facilities and live our lives in isolation or without being influenced by their use around us. Moreover, social media has become a determining factor in shaping the religious, social, and cultural life of the people.

Furthermore, the development of communication and information technologies and the convincing nature of social media have become so strong that many people worldwide feel that their own culture is under threat. That is certainly the case with many communities in India. However, we should understand that social media is a series of facilities that do not aim to invade and impose one culture upon another. Social Media does, because of its limitless reach, embrace different cultures, and this allows people to participate in such a way that every user can learn and take the best from other cultures they come in contact with.

As indicated in the second chapter of the thesis, religious tolerance among different religious and cultural traditions in India at the backdrop of social media has been discussed. Further attempts have been made to identify and explain the nature and extent of social media sites and networks of identifying the challenges of religious tolerance in social media.

As the researcher put up a query in the introduction, religious tolerance among India's different religious and cultural traditions has been discussed. Also, the challenges of religious tolerance in social media have been identified, and the nature

⁵⁵³ Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Global Communication: Is there a Place for Human Dignity?* (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 73.

and extent of social media sites and networks with particular reference to India, explained.

Furthermore, from studies of social media analysis, the new communication media has laid the foundation for social media tools, which can be understood as a continuation and strengthening of participatory communication. This participatory approach aims to build awareness and consciousness and facilitate people's conscientization and mobilization for collective action. Every society on earth lives in an age of media revolution. The new communication media becomes vital for the effective operation of life, shaping people's cultural, social, and religious spheres. Religious institutions acclaim the achievements of media technology, and it isn't easy to imagine life without the presence of media technology of communication. Converging technologies have changed the way we should look at information. They raise a set of fresh issues that need to be fully explored and addressed if we realize the full potential of the information age. At the same time, the growing dependency on information and communication technologies to publish, consume and manipulate information has impacted social, economic, and cultural life. The information age has produced a new society, the information society. With the thousands of apps, websites, and other platforms for people to communicate through media that are all over the internet these days, this is indeed the age of social media. Ordinary people, bureaucrats, business and politicians everyone takes part in social media platforms on the internet. Whether updating a Facebook status, fitting a joke and cementing on some issues, WhatsApp or Instagram, sharing their products, we are on the internet a lot. Social media is a massive part of our culture.

However, from the different incidents, many people seem to have a negative outlook on social media and its influence, especially today's youth. Advertisers have endless opportunities to manipulate and influence us. Privacy is not an option for most social media users. At the same time, the internet is now an environment that allows people to quickly and anonymously hurt others. Cyberbullying has become a massive problem in the last few years. These are all negative aspects of being a part of online communities. That being said, social media is not bad. It provides a space for users to

share opinions, stories, and thoughts. It allows people to connect with people all over the world. It can be used for bad things, but it can also be used for good.

Since the time of technology invention, religious groups of every stripe enthusiastically embrace computer technology. The extraordinary growth of the internet has been accompanied by an enormous proliferation of religious databases and user groups.⁵⁵⁴ Almost every religious institution has its Web page, Facebook groups, and the religious lessons are being taught on YouTube. The internet and World Wide Web have, in a way, made the theoretical point to be more precise and focused on a range of observers. Then scholars have suggested that the internet is forming the basis for whole new ways of seeing and doing religion and spirituality, and that kind of restructuring of religion, is rooted in these new media.⁵⁵⁵

It is observed that India is the most populous secular, democratic nation in the world. Though the country's people profess many religions, every religion has equal status, as there is no state religion. The constitution of India enshrines and guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens without any favour or discrimination. The architects of the Indian Constitution thoughtfully inserted special safeguards guaranteeing the minorities their fundamental rights. This, in fact, has instilled a sense of confidence and security among the minorities. This secular framework of the Indian constitution creates a basic, innate unity in the multi-religious context among the Indian masses. Religious pluralism is the acknowledgment of the legitimate presence of all religions in the universe. It accepts all religious heritage as a common heritage of humanity. Hence religious pluralism cannot support eradicating all other religions by any dominant or powerfully backed up religion. The coexistence of all religions is considered justifiable in terms of religious liberty and human rights. The three religions in India, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian, have strong beliefs in love, respect, tolerance, and the code of ethical principle.

⁵⁵⁴ Dean R. Hoge, "Religious leadership/Clergy," in *Handbook of Religion and Social Institution*, ed. Helen Rose Ebaugh (Texas: Springer, 2000), 375.

⁵⁵⁵ Steward M. Hoover, "Media," *Handbook of Religion and Social Institution*, ed. Helen Rose Ebaugh (Texas: Springer, 2000), 314.

But today, there is an increasing tendency among some vested interests or religious fundamentalists to use religion for their own hidden agenda and personal gains. Such fundamentalists use different sites of social media as a tool to bring division and cause disharmony among the masses. To achieve their ill-gotten, narrow, political goals, they exploit the poor and marginalized section of the society, thus trampling upon and canceling by practice the rights and privileges of the minorities and the poorer sections of the community.

Awareness and education on risk-taking journalism affirm the rights of the minority and poor who are made to endure being 'voiceless.' For citizen journalism, the increasing sophistication of smartphones with three A^S namely, availability, affordability, and accessibility, is significant in enabling people and communities living in distant locations, and often empowering these disenfranchised groups. This feeds into an emerging trend whereby citizen journalism plays a key role in covering remote communities. Social media are now well-established tools facilitating audience participation and journalistic practices with different networks. *Twitter* has taken place alongside the cementation of *Facebook* and *YouTube* and the growing popularity of *Instagram* and *Whatsapp*. These platforms allow audience members to share news information and participate meaningfully in local and global debates.

As discussed in the introduction, public relations theory also has broader implications for the applied communication discipline, especially in strategic communication processes related to issues management, activism, and managing relationships between organizations and the public in general. As such, the postmodern perspectives presented here have value beyond public relations theory and practice. Therefore, practitioners should not assume that the publics and organizations share good faith and win-win goals. They should recognize that social media platforms may act as megaphones for the publics, whose goals for communicating images of the organization vastly differ from what organizational communicators might expect. Because communication brings people together for interaction and fellowship, it aims to build community and unity with one another instead of creating divisions among human communities, enhancing participation, affirms justice, and challenges injustice. Our efforts to assist different religious communities in living in unity and

peace would be with no other means than discussing and sharing our opinions through social media. In postmodern society, it is pertinent to consider the statement as Taylor and Kent wrote, “The question today is not so much a question of ‘if’ but ‘how’ to use social media in public relations.”⁵⁵⁶

As Foucault, observed the central idea of change like education was a change in the nature of discourse. For Foucault, the discourse was fundamentally connected to the nature of power. Those who had the power to influence the nature of discourse exerted considerable control over the nature of the discourse system and how people thought about the world.⁵⁵⁷ For Foucault this type of discourse was very significant in terms of power, because it encouraged young people to create their vision of truth in the world, rather than being told what they should believe.

For Foucault, his participation was not in the politics of political party but of the pressure groups the politics of micro-societal change that sometimes managed to influence the state on a larger scale. Foucault grasped the idea that the exercise of power was not necessarily about overthrowing institutions, organizations, bureaucracies, or the state. The practice of true power was much more about the redistribution of influence and the ability to change the way people thought. Then, given time and the appropriate circumstances, it was possible that institutions would be changed, too.⁵⁵⁸ Foucault further argued that in society, there is an inescapable connection between power and knowledge. Power requires knowledge to be effective, and knowledge, at the same time, generates power. The education system also provides access to power. Most directly, an education system provides access to specialized knowledge, which thus helps to determine who is viewed as an ‘experts’ or specialist in society. However, more subtly, an education system gives access to a mode of thinking that enables those effectively introduced to this mode of discourse to determine whether something can be considered true or false. Those included within the academic mode of discourse can, for example, determine the type of data that is

⁵⁵⁶ Michael L. Kent & Maureen Taylor, “From Homo Economicus to Homo dialogicus: Rethinking social media use in CSR communication,” in *Public Relation Review*, vol.42 (2016), 60-67.

⁵⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978),101.

⁵⁵⁸ Paul Oliver, *Foucault- The Key Ideas* (London: Hodder Education, 2010), 33.

acceptable when addressing a particular question.⁵⁵⁹ In a postmodern society, where the majority of the people have access to computers, the internet, and the means of communication, ordinary citizens are well-equipped to challenge state decisions. Campaigns on public issues can be mounted very rapidly and can be a serious challenge to governmental authority.

Therefore, the challenges of religious tolerance in social media are contingent on the ethics of social media users. With the modern structure, discipline, power, and observation, this has been carried in postmodern times with different paradigms and participation. The postmodern critics of the modern are more on the dominant power. Therefore, postmodernist provisions on the social media characteristics and form have equal participation with individual rights and freedom. It is true that religious organizations in India participate actively in electronic media but have not played a role of tolerance in social media. The fact is that because of the freedom and availability to access public discussion, many individuals and groups participate with the dominant ideology.

Tolerance in social media is intermittent because social media platforms are used to share individual opinions and comments on issues from personal experience with religion, culture, politics, and society. Social media platforms have been used as places of debate, and today's youth especially have voices like they never had before. Information overload is a well-known and widely recognized problem. As Neil Postman exclaimed, “we are glutted with information, drowning in information, have no control over it, do not know what to do with it.”⁵⁶⁰ This anomaly shows that we may have no tolerance unless we reconsider our informing and more efficient information creation and dissemination, which information technology has made possible.

Therefore, Habermas’ approaches through the discourse and ethics give the core answer on how social media can be used for religious tolerance. For him, a norm must

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 33-48.

⁵⁶⁰ Neil Postman, *Information Overload*. Keynote speech at German Informatics Society Conference, (Stuttgart, October 11, 1990). www.eff.org/culture/criticisms/informing_ourselves_to_death.paper (accessed, 20/08/2019).

embody a common position to all, which can only be determined through active participation in the deliberation of the norm, resulting in its eventual consent. The moral norm facets of knowledge are intended to supplement the dialogue and help the community reach a mutual understanding regarding a particular moral or ethical issue. This position raises the disputation of validity claims in a dialogue setting; consensus can be reached regarding the validity of a moral or ethical issue.⁵⁶¹ To accomplish this, however, specific parameters must be in place that regulates the dialogical interaction to conform to Habermas's view of argumentation and his concept of universalization. According to Habermas "Argumentation" ensures that all concerned in principle take part, freely and equally, in a cooperative search for truth, where nothing coerces anyone except the force of the better argument. Practical discourse is an exciting form of argumentation decision-making.⁵⁶² The premise is that in a dialogue, each person affected by the outcome will have an opportunity to express personal opinions and beliefs, and ultimately the best argument will prevail.

Different religious institutions should affirm the "right to communicate," a prerequisite for other human rights. There is a direct connection between communication and all those other rights that stress participation in public affairs. Society and its institutions must enable the active involvement of all in the community's religious, social, economic, political, and cultural lives. This is not a high-minded expression of benevolence, but a demand for justice, denouncing falsehood and affirming truth and human dignity. Such participation is more than 'consumer choice' or passive access to the mass media or even the interactive chats between people on the Internet. It is a public dialogue about the public good. Its aim is to contribute to the debate about society, its values and priorities, and, above all, our common future. It is a dynamic and ongoing process aimed at change and transformation that will help hold the society, community, or nation together with the development of digital education.

⁵⁶¹ Jürgen Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?" in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 3-5.

⁵⁶² For detail discussion please see Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. by Christian Lenhardt & Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999).

Diversity in race, religion, and language is a divine creation.⁵⁶³ This celestial creation has an objective of mutual understanding and harmony, although this multiplicity has been used for mutual aggression and destruction. The world, however, could be a lot happier if it employed a discipline of harmonious human existence, that is, the actual divine objective. One can observe that there is a uniqueness to God's creation within diversity. A critical and significant question is how we make use of this diversity. If we take the path of conflict, it will result in communal destruction. Suppose we follow the path of harmony, finding peace in frank discussions and healthy competition for excellence and betterment of human beings and humanity. In that case, we will enable mankind to lead a happier life on this planet. Humankind belonging to two or more diverse cultural settings might inspire their purposes in life differently. Still, if all people agree that doing good for human beings is a core point of their lives, their objectives are alike.⁵⁶⁴

The purpose of risk-taking journalism is to contribute to the liberation of all people and promote life. The religious institutes cannot afford to be indifferent to what is going on in the world. Every religious institution must prepare its teaching and ministerial activities to backdrop the signs of the time that this powerful and persuasive social media is presenting to us. Ignoring the signs of the time will only make our communication irrelevant. Therefore, in such context in which we live, it is both pertinent and imperative that every religious institute seriously and consciously involves itself in this scenario.

⁵⁶³ M.K.A Siddiqui, *Muslim in India: Issues and Challenges* (Kolkata: Abdi Publication, 2011), 90.

⁵⁶⁴ Intekhab Hossain, "Hindu Muslim Cultural Syncretism, Mixed Heritage and Inter-faith Harmony: Some Pragmatic Observation from Eastern India," in *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Frans Wijssen, Udo Tworuschka & David Cheetham (Birmingham: Peeters, 2018), 1-3.

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ABBREVIATION

AHAD	: American Hindus Against Defamation
BCE	: Before Common Era
BJP	: Bhartiya Jana Party
BJS	: Bhartiya Jana Sangh
BPL	: Below Poverty Line
CBCI	: Catholic Bishops Conference of India
CISRS	: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society
CMS	: Church Mission Society
CNN	: Cable News Network
COVA	: Confederation of Voluntary Association
GPS	: Global Positioning System
HTML	: Hypertext Mark-up Language
ICT	: Information Communication and Technology
IRF	: Islamic Research Foundation
IT act	: Information Technology Act
MMOG	: Massively Multiplayer Online Games
NCCI	: National Council of Churches in India
NPR	: National Population Register
NSF	: Naga Student Federation
NRC	: National Register of Citizen
OWS	: Occupy Wall Street
OBC	: Other Backward Class
PLN	: Peer Learning Networking

TNYT	: The New York Time
TVNZ	: Television New Zealand
RSS	: Rastriya Swayamsevak Sang
SMS	: Short Message Service
SNS	: Social Networking Site
UNESCO	: United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organisation
UNESCO	: United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organization
VHP	: Vishwa Hindu Parishad
WACC	: World Association for Christian Communication
WELL	: Whole Earth Lectronic Link
WWW	: World Wide Web

APPENDIX

LIST OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Interview 1

Sl. no	Personal Information	
1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Ahidur Rahman President
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	60
4	Religion	Muslim
5	Place	Dimapur (Nagaland)
6	Occupation	President (Muslim Council Dimapur)
7	Date and Time	08 February 2019, (11:00 – 13:00) 15 February 2019, (14:00 – 15:00)

1. From where the information come from?

First, I got the information mobile phone, then Facebook group

2. Is the information believable?

About the rape case it was confirmed but other information like Mosque in Dimapur being destroyed are fake news

3. Is it manufactured information?

Information like Muslims were attack, and a Muslim man from Bangladesh rape Naga girl are rumours

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

I think some outsiders are creating this information

5. How is the information constructed and what evidence and techniques are being used?

Text messages, targeting the Muslim religion

6. What was the circumstance in the case of Sharif khan?

The situation on 25th February 2015 become very tense because the rumours spread on social media were all distorted and constructed to anger and provoke the Muslims. Social media messages like, 'Muslims are attacked in Nagaland' and 'Mosque being ransacked in Nagaland' was all over the social media". He further said that 'with this news, I have received telephone calls from different parts of India, particularly from Muslim societies.' He also mentioned that 'the reaction of Muslim communities to Naga people outside of Nagaland was about to be very risky and dangerous'.

Further, he stated that 'in this unfortunate case, social media had spread the message of hatred so fast and therefore I realized that it could be cured only through the social media'. With this urgency in mind, he and the Muslim council members took the photo standing in front of Dimapur Mosque. The photo has been circulated through social media with the message that 'Nothing happened to Dimapur Mosque' and 'Muslim in Dimapur, Nagaland is safe'.

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

The information was spread in support of local people

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?' or 'were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

From the incident, I can say that the majority voice was very powerful

10. Can people use social media effectively to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 2

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mrs. Talijungla Longkumer
2	Gender	Female
3	Age	48
4	Religion	Christian
5	Place	Mokokchung (Nagaland)
6	Occupation	Vice President (Nagaland Baptist Church Council)
7	Date and Time	18 January 2019 (16:00 – 18:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

From Mobile phones and also Facebook

2. Is the information believable?

Yes

3. Is it manufactured information?

It is complicated because few information was truth, but many are manufactured information

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

No answer

5. How is the information constructed and what evidence and techniques are being used?

The messages were constructed targeting the minority community

6. What was the circumstance in the case of Sharif khan?

social media came to our society unconsciously as wild fire, and this has become a trend for the youth today. Whether it is truth or fake, the news is being circulated very fast, before the daily newspapers are published. I saw many comments and false

allegations on pages of Facebook groups. It is not possible to shut down, but the only option is to consciously create awareness and educate about social media. In Nagaland, be it majority Christians or minority Muslims and Hindus we lived peacefully for many decades but unfortunately with the intrusion and possibilities of social media in our contemporary Naga society, some evil designs are at work trying to provoke religious communities and that manufactured information, false allegations and counter-allegations are going viral every day, may be with an evil determination to generate hatred and riots among and between different religious communities.

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

The information was spread with the support of the majority

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

Yes, Mr. Khan was an Indian son of Indian Army, but the rumours make him an illegal migrant from Bangladesh.

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?’

Yes, majoritarian voice was more but there was other people’s voice to counter dominant voice

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes, but need to give media education first

Interview 3

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Shri. Ram Kopal
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	55
4	Religion	Hindu

5	Place	Dimapur (Nagaland)
6	Occupation	Secretary (Krishna Movement)
7	Date and time	05 November 2018 (10:00 - 12:00)

1. From where the information come from?

Friends and telephone

2. Is the information believable?

Yes

3. Is it a manufactured information?

No answer

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

No answer

5. How the information is constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

The information was constructed against the other religious community

6. What was the circumstance on the case of Sharif khan?

Social media has been used mostly by the youth'. 'the possibility of consumers becoming producers of news and information clubbed with the fundamental right of freedom of speech and the easy possibility of right to comment on the social media create many unwanted situations. "for example, there was a small misunderstanding at the market place in Dimapur city between a Naga lady and an outsider, and somebody posted with his/her assumption that a Hindu, the outsider, assaulted the Naga lady at the market place." He also mentioned without any hesitation that the unfortunate issue of a Naga girl being raped by an outsider and spread through social media groups like Facebook, Naga blog, 'referred 'Hindus', 'outsiders' several times with negative connotation.'

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

No Answer

8. Was there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

I think Mr. Khan was innocent but because of minority and outsider his innocent was ignored

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates the social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘was there any other voices that countered dominant voice?

Social media is a platform everybody can participate

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 4

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Gaikao Dangmai
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	39
4	Religion	Christian
5	Place	New Delhi (Utter Pradesh)
6	Occupation	Pastor
7	Date and time	05 October 2018, (16:00 – 20:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

Facebook groups, television news Times of India and WhatsApp.

2. Is the information believable?

Some

3. Is it a manufactured information?

Mostly are manufactured

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

There are some religious fundamentalist groups I belief

5. How is the information constructed and what evidence and techniques are being used?

Videos and photos

6. What was the circumstance in the case of Mr. Qasim Hasin and Mr. Sameyddin?

This incident is not the first time in UP where the Hindu population is majority' It is a fact that after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (Hindutva ideology) comes to power in the Centre the cow protection group are openly taking the law into their own hands. Many people are physically and verbally assaulted. They also use social media as a tool to warn the people against cow slaughter. They used videos on WhatsApp groups, YouTube and Facebook, threatening the religious minority communities the consequences of cow slaughter. Taking the law in hand and also lynching in the name of religious organization is wrong.

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

Majoritarian, it was found that one person opens multiple accounts to like and comment hatred against the opponent.

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?' or 'were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

It is both majority and minority that give voice.

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 5

Sl.no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Bilal Ahmed
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	49
4	Religion	Muslim
5	Place	New Delhi (Uttar Pradesh)
6	Occupation	Priest
7	Date and time	06 August 2018 (16:00- 18:00)

1. From where the information come from?

Social media, WhatsApp

2. Is the information believable?

Not everything

3. Is it a manufactured information?

Many are manufactured information

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

I cannot say but some extremist groups

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

Video and photos, Most videos on WhatsApp are circulated and so it looks like the real but I don't know whether the video is fake or real.

6. What was the circumstance on the case of Mr. Qasim Hasin and Mr. Sameyddin?

I am proud to be an Indian Muslim. The answer to the question is, if an Indian Muslim consumed beef from a state where beef is banned, he has violated the state rules. The holy prophet of Islam has taught that 'Loving our own country is an integral part of

our faith.’ He further explained, ‘So, it is obligated upon Muslims to obey the rules implemented by their government (Islamic rules). Now Muslims in Kerala eat beef because consuming beef in Kerala is not a crime. Now those Muslims who live in the states where beef is banned, listen to me, I have already mentioned that Beef is halal for Muslims but every halal food is not compulsory to eat. If they stop eating beef, they won’t die. If beef is banned, you can eat other non-vegetarian foods like chicken, fish etc. Our founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community stated that for tying up a good relationship with Hindus, we are also ready to stop eating beef. I currently live in Punjab where cattle slaughter is banned, so I don't eat beef in Punjab. But when I go for a vacation in Kerala, I eat beef there.”

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

The information was disseminated for the benefit of majoritarian

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

Social media is for everyone

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 6

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Aman dep Bhagat
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	52
4	Religion	Hindu

5	Place	New Delhi (Utter Pradesh)
6	Occupation	Government servant
7	Date and Time	08 August 2018 (18:00 - 20:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

WhatsApp

2. Is the information believable?

Very few

3. Is it a manufactured information?

Many

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

It is manufactured by some anti nationalist people

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

Videos and photos

6. What was the circumstance on the case of Mr. Qasim Hasin and Mr. Sameyddin?

The incident happened with the interest of some anti national people, it is true that cow represents the giving nature of life to every Hindu. Honouring this gentle animal, which gives more than she takes, we honour all creatures. Hindus regard all living creatures as sacred mammals, fishes, birds, and more. We acknowledge this reverence for life in our special affection for the cow. At festivals we decorate and honours her, but we do not worship her in the sense that we worship the Deity.

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

Interest of the producers

8. Was there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

I don’t think

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes,

Interview 7

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Mujibu Rehman
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	53
4	Religion	Muslim
5	Place	Guwahati (Assam)
6	Occupation	Senior Member
7	Date and time	20 April 2019 (13:00 – 15:00)

1. From where the information come from?

Phone and WhatsApp

2. Is the information believable?

Yes

3. Is it a manufactured information?

It is true

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

No answer

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

The Hindu fanatic group take video and spread to threaten the Muslim

6. What was the circumstance in the case of Shaukat Ali?

The situation of Muslims in India is dismal as far as socio-political marginalisation of the community is concerned. Such socio-political marginalisation has a long history after the formation of the Republic of India.

Further he said, “However, in the recent past, the process of marginalisation and insecurity among Muslims has been a result of a series of mob lynching incidents in the name of cow vigilantism, targeting Muslim youth under the bogey of ‘love jihad’ and low-scale communal riots in various parts of the country. There are also credible studies showing the denial of housing to Muslims in non-Muslim localities, aggravating the process of ghettoization of the community.”

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

No answer

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

People say’s that he never sold beef but it was a Hindu fanatic group the create videos

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

Yes, we all can take part equally

10. Can people use social media effectively to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 8

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mrs. Asha Gogoi
2	Gender	Female
3	Age	37
4	Religion	Christian
5	Place	Guwahati (Assam)
6	Occupation	Senior Lecture
7	Date and Time	22 April 2019 (18:00 – 20:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

WhatsApp

2. Is the information believable?

Not everything

3. Is it a manufactured information?

I don't know

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

No answer

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

No answer

6. What was the circumstance in the case of Shaukat Ali?

I belief that Mr. Ali was innocent but after the BJP came to power in Central government, the minorities in India, especially the religious minorities, are not safe. "Social media is a platform where all kinds of information and news are published according to the well of individual, it is also a platform where many people share their opinion and comment. I have seen lots of debate related to public security, law and

order, and modernization in India, but when it comes to religious tolerance, I have seen the debate never ended with good solution. Therefore, the religious fundamentalist group used social media as a tool to propagate their religious agenda and use the same social media to threaten the minority.”

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

The information was spread with majoritarian interest

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates the social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘was there any other voices that countered dominant voice?

Social media is a platform everybody can participate

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 9

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Parma Pegu
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	53
4	Religion	Christian
5	Place	Guwahati (Assam)
6	Occupation	Secretary (Majuli Christian Forum)
7	Date and time	02 December 2018 (10:00 – 12:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

Telephone and friends

2. Is the information believable?

Yes

3. Is it a manufactured information?

The Hindu manufactured the news with videos and photos and used as propaganda

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

No answer

5. How the information is constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

They used fake videos and photos

6. What was the circumstance on the case of church destroyed in Majuli?

India is a secular country and every citizen has a right to choose her/his religious belief and faith. But the present BJP government with Hindu fundamentalist have failed to protect this Constitutional right. They have every right to choose their religion. Strangely, the fundamental rights of the people have been violated here by the miscreants associated with the powerful in the ruling BJP government. The police are also not acting. None have been arrested after the incident.”

In this atmosphere of persecution, in which Christians have to cope with harassment daily and often even have to fear for their lives. Earlier the attacks used to be more verbal in nature but now groups of extremists enter to church and disrupt worship. We have never forced anybody to be member of our church, but the Hindu extremist came with the photos and videos showing that Christian converted the Hindu to Christian. The extremist also claims the evidence through the social media that many the Hindus were in the church.”

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

No answer

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?' or 'were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

Everybody can give voice on social media

10. Can people use social media effectively to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 10

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Ramnath
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	43
4	Religion	Hindu
5	Place	Guwahati (Assam)
6	Occupation	Volunteers (International Society of Krishna Consciousness)
7	Date and time	04 December 2018 (10:00 - 11:30)

1. From where the information comes from?

Different social media

2. Is the information believable?

I don't belief in all

3. Is it a manufactured information?

Many are manufactured information

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

Not certain

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

Many information are constructed with fake videos and photos

6. What was the circumstance in the case of church destroyed in Majuli?

Hindu honour all religious traditions and the people within them. While regarding our faith as uniquely endowed, we believe that there is no exclusive path, no one way for all. In India, where Hindus are the overwhelming majority, the rights of religious minorities have always been honoured. Hindus have welcomed, embraced and lived peacefully among other religion for centuries. During those same centuries, Hinduism itself evolved into hundreds of strains, and thus Hindus are fully at home with many different traditions and viewpoints within their faith. Hence, they are naturally tolerant of other religions, respecting the fact that each has unique beliefs, practices, goals and paths of attainment, and not objecting when the doctrines conflict with those of another. Hindus readily accept the idea that it is not necessary, desirable or even possible for everyone to hold the same beliefs. And indeed, such differences should never be cause for tension, criticism, intolerance or violence.”

He further affirmed that, “Hindus do not try to convert members of other faiths to their own. Proselytizing is based upon the belief that one’s religion is the only true religion and everyone else should join it. Hindus hold the view that all faiths are beneficial. A devout Hindu is supportive of all efforts that lead to a pure and virtuous life and would consider it unthinkable to dissuade a sincere devotee from his chosen faith. They know those good citizens and stable societies are created from groups of religious people in all nations. While encouraging others to follow their chosen path with dedication, Hindus hold Sanatana Dharma⁵⁶⁵ to be the fullest expression of religion and accept sincere souls who seek entrance into Hinduism.

⁵⁶⁵ Traditionally, Hinduism is known as Sanatana Dharma, meaning eternal duty. Dharma actually means duty. Sanatana Dharma means the eternal duty of God. This Duty of God is shared, not just by Hindus, but by all beings in creation, including gods and the rest of the humanity. Dharma is also used in reference to any set of moral and religious laws and principles that govern religious duty and human conduct upon earth.

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

Interest of the producers

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

Social media give equal rights to everyone

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes

Interview 11

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Dr. Mazhar Hussain
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	57
4	Religion	Muslim
5	Place	Hyderabad (Telangana)
6	Occupation	Social Worker (COVA)
7	Date and time	18th February 2018 (14:00 – 18:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

First from the Facebook and then got a telephone call

2. Is the information believable?

Not really

3. Is it a manufactured information?

Yes, it was manufactured

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

I don't know

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

The used the videos and photos

6. What was the circumstance in the case of social media rumours drives North East people exodus from Bangalore?

I received the same video and photos of people being beaten up, tortured, murdered among the Muslim community through Facebook, at first it was shocking and disturbing. Many people commented that Muslim in Hyderabad should be ready to react towards the people of Northeast in Hyderabad. But it was found out that the news and videos in Facebook were fake. It was found that some individuals with fake identity joint in the Facebook group of a Muslim Community in India and spread the hatred towards other communities in India. Therefore, the I clarified about the fake news in our Facebook group

He further said, "We were informed that the Northeast people are going back from Bangalore because of this rumour. So therefore, we came up to Vishakhapatnam train station with food and water to help the Northeast people travel back."

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

The information was disseminated for the interest of some community

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No Answer

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?’ or ‘were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

People use social media so, it depends on the intention of the users

10. Can people use social media effectively to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes, but with proper education

Interview 12

Sl. no Personal Information

1	Name of Interviewee	Mr. Moatoshi Jamir
2	Gender	Male
3	Age	25
4	Religion	Christian
5	Place	Dimapur (Nagaland)
6	Occupation	Student Leader
7	Date and time	20 March 2018 (13:00 – 15:00)

1. From where the information comes from?

From phone

2. Is the information believable?

It looks very real

3. Is it a manufactured information?

Yes, it was manufactured

4. If so, who manufactured the information?

No answer

5. How is the information constructed and what evidences and techniques are being used?

Text message, fake videos and photos

6. What was the circumstance on the case of Shaukat Ali?

During that 'north east exodus movement', we received phone calls from two of our student friends who said that they were threatened by some of the locals and told them to leave the city. Another guy who works at Bengaluru International Airport claimed that he was verbally threatened by a passer-by when he was returning home from work. According to the student leader, another northeast student told him that a stranger ran into him at Neelasandra, area Bangalore, asking him to "leave" Bangalore. "He apparently mistook me for an Assamese and said I should leave the city immediately. Things will otherwise be difficult," he said. One of his friends also received a similar threat. A man walked up to my friend and asked him to go away immediately. Else, his head will be chopped off.

Student leader further said that the authority tried to locate the perpetrators but failed to identify. People started to panic and lots of reports came to student union through phone and social media messages. There were lots of comments in the Facebook groups and people were hurrying to book the train and flight ticket. The student union and Muslim union in Bangalore met and published the meeting minutes on social media that there is no hatred to each other, the situation came to normal in a few days.

7. Whose interest and benefit the information is disseminated?

It was the interest of the producers

8. Were there other possible alternative meanings or explanations which was consciously ignored?

No idea

9. Is it only the majoritarian voice that dominates social media during religious conflicts?' or 'were there other voices that countered the dominant voice?

There is no majority and minority at such in social media, everybody is free to voice out and participate

10. Can people use social media effectively in order to bring harmony and peace at the same time justice?

Yes