



ajf TEMASEK FOUNDATION
Asia Journalism Forum

Reporting **Religion**

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Media & Religion: Contestations & Continuities

Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals &
the Media in India

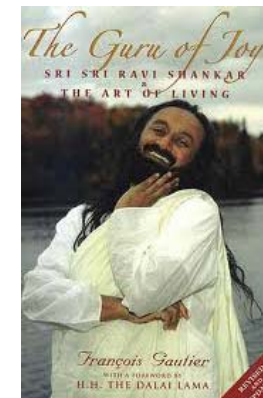
Issues that affect both Religion and the Media

- Representation
- Commodification
- Competition
- Continuity

New Life Assemblies of
God Church, Chennai



Reporting the Spiritual as the Material



Baba Ramdev: The Yoga Guru's Empire

- **100 crore** Number of devotees Ramdev says he has. The figure may seem exaggerated, but even though there are no realistic estimates, he does have a sizeable following.
- **Rs 1,100 crore** Annual turnover of Baba Ramdev's Patanjali + Yogapeeth Trust and Divya Yogi Mandir Trust. Both are located in Haridwar.
- **Rs 50 crore** Earnings from nationwide camps where yoga is taught and health concerns are addressed
- **Rs 50 crore** Sale of medicines
- **Rs 2.3 crore** Sale of books/CDs

- Crore= US\$2.2 million

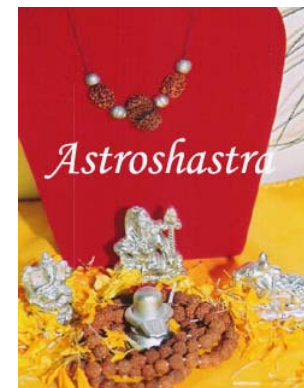
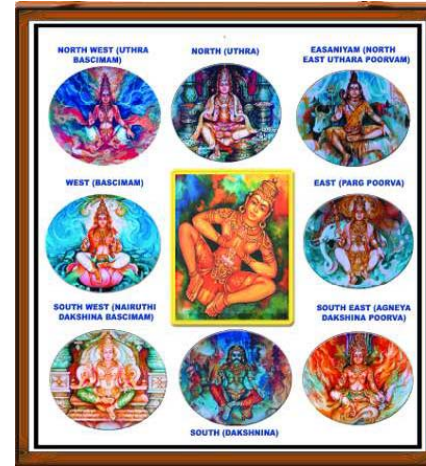
His Assets

- **Rs 17 crore** 300 acres on Little Cumbrae island off the Scottish coast, gifted by an NRI couple.
- **Rs 1,115 crore** 1,000 acres in Haridwar where the trusts are located
- **Rs 500 crore** Investment in a food park in Haridwar
- **Rs 44 crore** 40 per cent stake in a food park in Jharkhand
- **Rs 100 crore** University of Patanjali, Haridwar, Ramdev's pet project
- **Rs 16 lakh** Undervalued cost of 38 acres in Solan, Himachal Pradesh; actual value, Rs 90 crore

(Taken from Reddy, S. (2011), Vote for Baba Ramdev, Outlook India, March 14. Available at: <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?270745>. Accessed on March 20, 2011)

The Religious Market

- Growth of the Christian products market was stimulated to some extent by the neo-liberal market economy
- Just as products featuring the Hindu God *Ganesh* are available in every imaginable texture, so organisations like the Chennai-based *Jesus Calls* sell anointed books, DVDs and CDs including books such as 'The Gifts of the Holy Spirit' and 'Secrets for Success' that are endorsed on their 24-hour television channel *Rainbow TV*.



Custom Rosaries



Commodification

- One of the characteristic features of the major religions in Asia is their commodification.
- And what seems to be a fundamental reality in all religions is that the pursuit of piety is now undergirded by their involvement in a number of non-religious activities such as education, health, etc.
- While the 'service ethic' remains a strong aspect of these institutions and distinguishes them from other private educational outfits, these are nevertheless fundamentally business entities.
- So in a real sense all religions in Asia are characterised by being involved in what really has become the business of faith.
- Religious institutions now are involved in real estate, property development, invest in secular businesses such as the media leading to the establishment of what one might call very specific religious economies.

Christian Products at the Chennai Hope Festival



Mediated Christianity

GET **God's Blessings** VIA **SATELLITE**

Dish Antenna to receive Christian Satellite TV Channels **24 Hours**

ONE TIME INVESTMENT NO MONTHLY CHARGES

Tamil Channels	English Channels
Aseervatham TV	God TV
Angel TV	Day Star
	TBN
	EWTN (Catholic) (Live Coverage : The Pope Benedict High Mass)
	Hope TV (7th Day Adventist)
	3ABN (7th Day Adventist)
	Apostolic Oneness Network
	TCT World
	The Church Channel
	Smile of a Child TV (Kids Christian Cartoon Channel)

Malayalam Channels
Power Vision
Shalom TV

Telugu Channels
Subhavaartha TV
Aradana TV

Daily Christian Programmes through our dish from Remicham TV, Jeyaram TV, Win TV & 55 Music.

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Challenge for Research

- Religion and Media
- Religion as Media
- Issues with the universality of assumptions related to Western scholarship

The Globalisation of Pentecostalism & Neo-Pentecostalism

- Growing dissatisfaction with mainstream Christianity: doctrines, theology, objectives
- Ability of Ps & NPs to define, offer 'certainty', clarity, uncompromising view of Christian 'fundamentals'
- Their ready embrace of the media
- Their organisational strategies

The Rise of Hindu Nationalism.....

- Growth of Hindutva
- Attempt to Hinduise India and roll back the secularist/Left agenda
- The Historicisation of Hinduism
- Indians=Hindu
- Contesting Conversion



Soft forms of Religious
Fundamentalism versus Hard
forms

Soft Form – Christian Mission
work involving education,
health, development, Church
Planting

Hard form – Hate on the Web

Key Objective: Certainty

- Critically though, the allure of Pentecostalism is its ability to give back a certain, incomplete although it may be, sense of certainty to a people who either are the victims of globalisation or those who are experiencing the 'blessings' of prosperity. It is a coping mechanism, the tools of survival. Interestingly enough, it proclaims the centrality and munificence of capitalism – in direct contrast to the anti-capitalist rhetoric of the 'social Gospel' expressed in and through Asian and other variants of liberation theology. The market and individual enterprise are natural end states, indeed these are inspired by God and therefore the church must make use of the market to their own advantage. The health and wealth, prosperity gospels are perfectly suited for our times given the centrality of the market in the global imaginary.

Movement Dynamics: New Christian Identities and the Rise of Pentecostalism

- Christians, who for one reason or another have been dissatisfied with the services and pastoral care offered by mainstream churches, have been drawn to the many mediated Gospels of Prosperity, to weekly encounters with an accessible, personal God and to events that provide space for individual validations of God in one's life. Healing, testimonials, prayer, free forms of worship are the props that broadcasting has used to create symbolic dramas and spectacles around universal themes – the struggles between good and evil, the meaning of life, the spiritual basis for health and prosperity, the basis for sin and salvation.

The Enemy: Liberal Christianity as the New Satan

- The ecumenical movement in general and the progressive strands of mainstream Christianity have been in a crisis for more than two decades. A crisis of resources, vision, structures, interpretation, education, even credibility. While the mainstream Church is willing to dialogue with the conservative churches on certain controversial issues such as 'abortion' and 'women's rights', they are not similarly motivated to take on the theology, the politics and the structures of the well-resourced ultra-conservative churches, for example those aligned to the religious right in USA.

The Enemy: Secularisation

- Issues with the perceived secularisation of society
- Moral decay

Embracing Media

- Pentecostals believe that each new media is a gift from God that is to be used to fulfil the Great Commission

Pentecostalism & the Media

- God TV Vision Statement: *'To recognize, source, create, package and present world-class anointed, prophetic, supernatural content in a spirit of excellence across the globe into every nation, reconciling man, woman and child with God by the power of the Holy Spirit'* (<http://www.godnetwork.com>)



Broadcasting & Religion in India

- Attempts to introduce Christian broadcasting in colonial India
- Post-independent commitment to secularism, separation between religion and state, minority religions were given space on broadcasting during key festivals
- State broadcasting, radio in particular was committed to the Reithian emphasis of bringing 'High Culture' to the masses and that inevitably led to the dissemination of 'Brahmanic' Hindu culture

Broadcasting and Religion in India

- The prohibition on religious broadcasting on the state radio, state monopoly in broadcasting led to local productions that were broadcast over radio stations located outside India – namely TWR, FEBA, SLBC among others

The Context of Christian Broadcasting

- The relative non-involvement of the mainstream Protestant church in broadcasting
- The involvement of a variety of Pentecostal and other churches in production
- Strong accent on use of broadcasting for evangelism, conversion especially among Dalits, 'tribals', Hindus and Muslims

Broadcasting

- While they have a massive presence in print, their core media is undoubtedly broadcasting, and of late, the Internet. Christian broadcasting is a multi-million dollar industry and while there are significant variations within this industry from radio and television owned and operated by the mainstream churches to broadcasting that is specifically oriented towards fulfilling the Great Commission – taking the Word of God to the four corners of the earth, there is also broadcasting characterised by close correspondences with politics and political agendas.

Pentecostals and Television in India

- Five types of Christian television in India. 1) The occasional space on the national broadcaster Doordarshan for Christian programmes, 2) Transnational satellite channels including GOD TV, CBN, TBN, MiracleNet, and Daystar TV that are available via cable, 3) Christian programming on a variety of secular cable channels available throughout the country on Raj TV, Zee TV, Vijay TV and others channels, 4) stand alone indigenous Christian cable channels such as Blessing TV, Angel TV, Shalom TV, Jeevan TV and the free, 24-hour DTH channel Rainbow Television that features programmes from the Chennai-based Jesus Calls organisation 5) Web-based telecasting for instance Jesus Calls' 'Num.TV'.

HBI Statistics on the Impact of Radio and other types of Evangelism

Language	Total Response	Hindu	Christians	Muslims	Saved
Telugu	34,476	25,857	8,274	345	1,929
Tamil	2,964	2,223	445	296	266
Hindi	1,242	932	298	12	99
Marathi	528	396	127	5	68
Gujarati	264	198	63	3	34
Kannada	120	90	28	2	11
Total	39,594	29,696	9,236	662	2,407



Pray for India

Pentecostals in India

- Congregations based on Subaltern Christians as well as the middle and upper classes
- Intentional wooing of the new professionals, for instance in the IT sector
- Symbolic & Real Presence in the spaces of globalisation: malls, real estate, neon signs
- Strong family-based ministries off-TV and on TV
- Creation of a Christian *umma* beyond class, caste and other social markers
- Mainstream churches taking on the worship styles (Songs & Praise)

The Pentecostal Church in India: Distinctions

- Cell Churches
- Pastoral Outreach
- Strategic negotiations with globalising congregations
- Communication of a Worship Style
- Unity in Diversity
- Using Bollywood
- Singular Christian Identity
- The family
- Creation of a Christian *umma* beyond class, caste and other social markers

Challenges for Journalists

- Reporting the 'daily dialogue of life' can be one way in which religion is communicated
- Making sure that Big Religion is always Accountable

