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The politics of representation in Indian media: implications of the portrayal of Hindus and minority groups

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**The Politics of Representation in Indian
Media: Implications of the Portrayal of
Hindus and Minority Groups**

ROJI ALEX

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the politics of representation in Indian media with special focus on news television's portrayal of issues concerning Christian community. The portrayal of communities is studied in relation to the dynamics of engagement between India's rapidly expanding news television and the growing *Hindutva* (Hinduness) movement which espouses an exclusivist and majoritarian ideology, demanding a Hindu nation for Hindus. In its endeavor to understand this complex issue it focuses on India's two national news networks – *Aaj Tak* in Hindi, the country's most popular news broadcaster, and *Headlines Today*, a leading English-language network – locating their ways of engagement with the *Hindutva* movement. The thesis, which looks at the nationalist movement's involvement with the print media and cinema in India, claims that the socio-political situation in the country helped the *Hindutva* groups to realign the threads of nationalism with that of Hindu nationalism by re-organizing and redefining their ideology to suggest a particular version of national identity and citizenship.

The news television, while passing through various stages of evolution, has been engaging with a number of dominant ideologies. In recent decades, the right-wing Hindu ideology has been a powerful force in Indian politics and its engagement with news television, particularly Hindi language television, has been visible in the media narratives on various socio-political and cultural issues. The thesis claims that news television's treatment of communal issues has helped the creation of a *Hindutva* public sphere. In the process, the thesis argues, India's minority communities have been threatened, having to bear the brunt of this new alignment, undermining the secular tradition of India and contributing to anti-minority rhetoric. Drawing on a range of methods – including focus groups of news consumers, face-to-face, in-depth interviews with media personnel, as well as detailed content analysis of news reports, the thesis argues that Hindi news television, driven by market values, created new avenues and vistas for the Hindu nationalists to engage with the public. News television's association with the *Hindutva* groups, it is suggested, helped construct a new national identity and a new Indian-ness, conforming to *Hindutva* ideology.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Roji Alex, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

India has been witnessing communal clashes and violence from time to time over the last few decades. The frictions between various communities and cultural groups in a multi-lingual and multi-faith country of 1.2 billion, are, more often than not, rooted in economic disparities and their exploitation by political groups of various ideological orientation (Brass, 2003). In more recent decades, however, a particular version of hegemonic discourse has emerged which seeks to dominate and shape political agenda (Bauman, 2010; Vandeveld, 2011, among others). The issues of religion, culture, nationhood and identity come into play in this hegemonic discourse which has been playing a key role in shaping the social and political life of the country. A thorough study of the socio-cultural background of these developments might provide a few answers and raise many questions. However, no such attempt to study these developments can afford to ignore the other significant changes that are taking place in the socio-political life of the country: namely the exponential growth of news television – from a state monopoly until 1991 to more than 188 dedicated news channels in 2013, making India the world's most crowded and competitive news market.

Almost parallel to this transformation of news media, there has been an extraordinary growth in the so-called Hindutva (Hinduness) movement: more than 80 per cent of India's population is Hindu, while there is a substantial Muslim minority (the world's largest minority population – at 175 million), as well as smaller minorities, including Christians (Frykenberg, 2008). As a secular democracy the state does not discriminate on the basis of religion. However, in recent decades, a discourse has been created to promote a particular version of Hinduized India, which has arguably contributed to exacerbating communal harmony and led to religious strife and violence.

In the past, several studies have looked at the social and political issues, responsible for anti-minority violence. However, sufficient attention has not been paid to a significant development: the mediation of conflict by television

news. The growth of news television is to be understood not only in terms of the growth in number of news channels and the area of coverage but also in terms of its growing influence in shaping the national agenda. News television's prominence has become influential in every aspect of an Indian's life as the medium has grown to be the main source of information in India – thanks to its ability to engage with even the illiterate audience.

The incidents of sporadic violence have often involved Hindus and Muslims and they have been extensively analysed. In the recent past, Christian groups have increasingly been targeted in the religious conflicts which have been driven by the exclusivist ideology of the Hindutva movement (Kim, 2003). According to statistics, 'Christians are now attacked, on average, over 200 times a year' across India (Bauman & Leech, 2012: 2195). However, the communal violence against Christians has rarely been a topic of any serious academic inquiry, though there have been a few scholarly attempts that tried to understand the reasons for this social problem. In a recent study, Bauman and Leech pointed out the socio-economic and political reasons (Bauman & Leech, 2012).

The questions regarding the sharp increase in Hindu-Christian violence over the last two decades across India, especially in the north, prompts one to look for answers in the political developments during this time (Bauman, 2013). Since the anti-Christian sentiments run high in north India, the academic attention gets focused on India's main opposition party the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a key constituent of the Hindutva groups, which has emerged to be a dominant political force in India, particularly in the northern and western parts of the country. The involvement of various Hindu nationalist organisations that are collectively known as the Sangh Parivar (family), which includes a number of social, religious and cultural organisations as well as the BJP, has been highlighted repeatedly in the violence against Christians (Bauman & Leech, 2012). All these groups that are arguing for a 'Hindu nation for Hindus' might be driven by various socio-economic and political reasons. A few academic inquiries have made attempts to understand the violence against Christians as emerging from ethnic conflicts (Varshney, 2002; Kim, 2003; Bauman, 2010; Bauman & Leech, 2012). The studies that consider anti-Christian sentiments as

emerging from Hindu nationalist agenda, point out that Indian Christians have been ‘resented as a “foreign” element and suspected of divided loyalties’ (Bauman, 2013: 2). This research does not discuss the merits of those findings concerning the reasons for the violent communal conflicts, as they do not come under the purview of the study. However, I start my enquiry from the premise that the Hindutva groups have actively participated in the anti-Christian violence and continue exploring the myriad ways of ideological invasion of the society by the Hindutva groups. This study makes an attempt to explore the possibilities of the involvement of yet another major social institute - the television news media, which opens up a new avenue and a novel trajectory for research. Since the rise of Hindu nationalist movement is seen to be high in Hindi-speaking regions of India, I have focused on the most popular Hindi news channel, Aaj Tak, to investigate whether Hindi news television contribute to the growth of Hindu nationalism. To explore whether these news channels are anti-minority in their editorial policies, specifically in their coverage of Christian communities, efforts have been made to understand the dynamics of the mediation by news television. This study, which aims to trace out the areas of difference that exist between the English language news television and the mainstream Hindi TV news in their approach to minority and Hindutva issues, compares the news coverage of Aaj Tak and Headlines Today news channels, two of India’s leading national news networks and both owned by the same group – TV Today Group. It focuses both on the producer of the media text and the audiences who consume and careful attention has been given to interpret the media text and the audience behaviour to gain utmost accuracy.

The research locates its scope in a scenario where most of scholarly attention has so far been given to violence against Muslim community, not Christians. The research project focuses on both Hindi and English language television news to check their level of engagement with the Hindutva groups. The study has considered the arguments which support the view that the Hindi television news has shown greater tendency to sensationalise in order to gain more television rating points than the English television news channels do. It is also observed that, given their pan-Indian and more educated viewership, English news channels demonstrate greater degree of secularism in their approach. The

research looking at both the media text and audiences investigates whether the Hindi news television help the construction of anti-Christian sentiments, and thus contribute to violence against Christians.

The key research question this study aims to explore is ‘to what extent have mainstream Hindi news networks such as Aaj Tak, contributed to legitimising Hindu nationalism, based on the ideology of Hindutva, and whether this has contributed to anti-minority, particularly anti-Christian, discourse in India?’ The study, following a different theoretical approach from the studies so far, has looked at the ‘production of news’ and the journalistic practices involved in the construction of hegemonic discourse. The research, using media and audience theories, attempts to explain the formation of Hindutva public sphere and Hindutva public. A related sub-question, addressed in the thesis is, whether there is a discernable difference in the way Hindutva is framed in Hindi and English news channels?

To find answers to these questions, the thesis deploys a multi-method approach and focuses on a case study. The methodologies used include drawing on a combination of focus group interviews with consumers of news in both urban and rural setting; face-to-face interviews with leading journalists in India; content analysis of the two news networks – Aaj Tak and Headlines Today – to examine how they covered the anti-Christian riots in eastern state of Orissa in August-September 2008; as well as analysis of the content of these events on the websites of the two networks. By using a combination of methods, it is hoped, that the study will be able to do justice to what remains a largely underexplored area of research and scholarship and one which requires sensitivity in treatment and tone. With this in mind, the thesis, also has ensured that there is ample contextual and historical background provided – both in terms of media and socio-political dimensions - to examine how in the world’s largest and one of its most vigorous democracies, the dynamics between news television and social and political issues is played out, particularly in relation to a vulnerable minority. The Habermasian concept of public sphere is invoked and due concern is given to the ideological nature of mass media, drawing on a range of theoretical work.

The thesis begins with a discussion of the available literature on the origin and growth of Hindu nationalist movement in India and the following chapters make attempts to investigate how it received endorsement from the channels of public interaction, such as popular cinema and television. The chapters on fieldwork and the content analysis further analyse the core elements in the construction of identities and the shaping of nation-ness. The context has been analytically constructed in order to set the process of investigation and enquiry in a direction, which is useful for the study.

Hindu nationalism, attempting to redefine the Indian nation as Hindu, constructs audio-visual narratives that exalt the common 'glorious' past of the Hindus and relies heavily on the discourse of demonising the 'other' (Mankekar, 1999). The divisions and the degradation of the cultural fabric of the nation, in Hindutva's view, are due to the policies of secular political leaders of the country, Westernisation of its elite and Islamic influence (Fox, 1990; Mankekar, 1999). Hindu nationalism, reflecting the upper caste aversion to westernisation and shaped by such groups as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as a political force, initially sought to exploit the general mood of opposition to British colonialism. In the post-independence phase, its nationalist discourse excluded the minority religious communities from the cultural landscape of India. In the process of isolating the communities, Muslims have often been portrayed as the 'enemy within,' and the Christians as the carriers of Western culture (Mankekar, 1999). The BJP, being the spokesperson of the burgeoning middle class, in fact stands for economic westernisation, being a champion of free-market neo-liberal ideology. This raises a pertinent question - what is the content of their 'nationalism'? Is it purely religious nationalism? They seem to be embracing everything from the West but Christianity. So, is their dislike for Christianity to be understood as part of their project to polarise people in order to gain mileage in electoral politics?

Hindutva's burgeoning popularity in the 1980s was due to its acceptability among the lower middle class in north India, reflecting the political and economic scenario of the time. The prevalent mood among the Hindu middle

classes, who have become the backbone of Hindu nationalism, was to become the self-appointed guardians of tradition and thus protecting the cultural heritage became their primary duty (Mankekar, 1999). The communalisation of nationalism seeping into television programmes starting with that of state-sponsored television network *Doorsarshan* (which screened during the 1980s, the great Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*), is a sign of growing influence of the Hindutva – hegemonic upper caste Hindu identity, – ‘state’s deployment of various apparatuses toward constructing a homogenous national imaginary’ (Mankekar, 1999: 10). The state might have had a reason to deploy means to construct such powerful national imaginary, in view of uniting the nation state in the face of sectarian movements, afflicting such areas of the country as Punjab, Kashmir and north-eastern states. However, the ‘Indian-ness’ which such government sponsored schemes portrayed continues to be debated. It has been suggested that the viewers’ engagements with television narratives, supported by the Hindutva factions, constructed an environment favourable for the movement. Politically and culturally, it has been argued that television in post-colonial India has played a major role in the creation of identity and a brand new ‘nation-ness’. The nation-ness thus created has been greatly influenced by the television’s affiliation to the middle class (Mankekar, 1999; Rajagopal, 2001; Rajagopal, 2009).

The chapter on television begins with outlining the current media landscape in India and moves on to describe the impact of news television in India’s socio-political terrain and investigates how the narrative of television news media portrays India’s minority religions in its defense of Hindutva’s anti-minority stance. The news television has emerged as the main source of information in India. The news channels, while trying to keep its momentum with the market demands, have not been immune to sensationalism (Thussu, 2007). During this period of television transformation, the country has witnessed a number of changes in its social and political landscape too. The rise of Hindu nationalism is considered to be a notable development during this time and television has not been free from the influence which the movement made on the society. On the other hand, news television has shown powerful affiliation to the middle class and portrayed the urban middle class as the voice of the nation. News

television, giving visibility to the middle class issues and voice to their concerns, generally ignored the rest of India. The chapter also discusses the other prevalent trends in Indian news television – breaking news, paid news and the presenter-centred news broadcast. The consequences of news television's transformation are reflected on the democratic processes because 'news is not merely a media product but a vehicle for engagement in the democratic process, feeding off and into domestic policies and international relations' (Thussu, 2007: 2).

The chapter on Hindutva public sphere describes the ways in which the news television brings the Hindutva ideologues together and garners public support. Purnima Mankekar, in her work on ethnography of television viewing in India, suggests that 'the political ascendancy of Hindu militancy was also facilitated by its seizure of the public sphere' (Mankekar, 1999: 179). This chapter discusses the role of television in the construction of Hindutva public sphere and the possibility of multiple public spheres in the Indian context. The Hindutva's television public sphere, evoking the religious feelings that are deeply embedded in the cultural ethos of the people, it is argued, helped the Hindutvisation of the public. The complex discourse which mixed up the concepts of nationalism, national culture and Hindu identity, pronounced thorough the multiple media, has created a favourable environment and the Hindutva public sphere provided the ideological support for the movement's sustenance. The simultaneous use of 'Hindu nationalism' and 'Indian cultural nationalism' further blurred the difference between the two and gave certain amount of acceptability and legitimacy to Hindu nationalism. The movement has become, with its family of organisations including militant, political and cultural, rose to a major force to reckon with. The interactions between the media and religion, leading to the greater participation of religion in the public sphere remain a crucial topic of investigation in a society where the state is losing its grip in the age of new media (Dwyer, 2006). The new media has taken the public sphere and the 'imagined community' to a new level which is transnational in nature. The growth of the Hindutva movement was catapulted by the media explosion which helped them hugely to form transnational Hindutva communities.

Television and film have never functioned in isolation and the revolution that is taking place in Indian media market, flooding the tele-visual space with new ideas and voices, impacts the flourishing film industry too (Virdi, 2003). The economic liberalisation opened the way for the establishment of a number of Indian and multinational media companies. These changes coincided with the spread of satellite technologies, providing Indian television audiences with a wide-range of viewing choices. Media corporations have developed interests in film production and distribution, print media, advertising, and event management. Within the realm of Hindi films, the conglomeration of media interests with television programming has led to a shift in style. ‘Satellite channels offer the film industry an exponentially increased ability to promote and market their films through television previews, programming that features song-and-dance sequences, and the purchase of telecast rights to popular films’ (Govindan & Dutta, 2008: 183). Popular music channels on television too depend heavily on popular Hindi films. So the song-and-dance sequences are staged and directed to look like music videos precisely so that they can be aired on music video channels as advanced film publicity (ibid). The television and film industries work in tandem and together they construct an audio-visual world of allurements and appeasement. The audio-visual messages, film or television, are consumed in a similar fashion. The success of the film industry has been its ability to adapt to the demands of the people and providing them with stories that interest them. Similarly television, due to the competition to allure the audiences, has shown the tendencies to be shaped by the audience demand. The study, while trying to retrace the Hindutva’s engagement with the audio-visual world, focuses on the Hindi film industry’s association with the movement. The Hindutva groups and the media that support them, through the mediation of Bollywood films, by using songs and images, have made attempts to polarize communities. The role of Hindi cinema is to be seen in the larger picture of the construction of Hindu nationalist discourse that seeks to isolate minority communities. For example, 2001 feature film *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* which dealt with India – Pakistan partition was widely used by the BJP during the 2002 election campaign. ‘Gadar had become the rallying cry for those young Hindu men whose own experience and vocabulary were insufficient to

imagine the coming of a *Hindu rashtra* (Hindu nation, Hindu rule)' (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012: 88). Through the mediation of this 'Bollywood film, partition had become Godhra, and Godhra evoked partition' (ibid). This study, considering such power of cinema to include and exclude communities from the tapestry of nation, focuses on Hindi film industry's efforts to stereotype Christian communities.

The chapter on audience research, elucidating the audiences' interaction with the news television at various levels, describes its influence on the viewers. The focus groups, conducted in urban and rural samples in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous and culturally diverse state, offered valuable information to this study. The fieldwork I did in 2011 among the rural and urban middle class men and women introduced me to a world which is the conglomeration of religion, caste and economic standards. Navigating the research through such conglomeration meant that I paid meticulous attention to their level of engagement with the news television while focusing on the threads of cultural sensitivities that bind the communities together. In this chapter, I have discussed in detail the encounters I had during the course of my fieldwork. The socio-political context to which the news is related and the cultural constitution of the audiences play a crucial role in the understanding of the audio-visual text which the audiences receive in their living rooms. The connections some members of the audience made between Christians and the Western colonial powers helped me understand how they looked at Christians. Some of the views expressed in the focus groups reflected the audiences' tendency to shift their anger towards the colonial powers to the colonial religion – Christianity. The role of media becomes crucial when such opinion come from people who never had real life experience with Christians. In this chapter, I also explore the caste and religious constitution of the rural and urban north India and the role that television news plays in maintaining such social composition.

The content analysis of the news footage from the Hindi channel Aaj Tak and the English channel Headlines Today has been crucial in investigating the difference in their approach towards the ideological and sociological conflicts involving the Hindutva groups. This study, seeking to understand the news

television's treatment of Christian community and the issues in which they are involved, situates itself in the context of the anti-Christian violence in Orissa state in 2008. The web content analysis of the TV Today group's Aaj Tak and Headlines Today channels has provided the tools to survey the difference in the approach towards the subject under case study by the Hindi and English news channels. These channels, despite being part of the same organisation, have displayed different sets of values in their engagement with the topic as well as the audience. I extrapolate the trends in Hindi and English television news channels in dealing with such issues from the results obtained from the content analysis.

The final chapter, which discusses the findings lays out the key issues I have identified and the theoretical stances I have used in my enquiries. I explore the news television's association with the Hindutva from two angles – looking at the media from outside and looking at it from inside through a series of systematic audience research and interviews with key media personnel and the content analysis of relevant television news footage. In this chapter, I have made attempts to define direct audience and indirect audience which further describe television's dynamic engagement with the audiences. Through multi-dimensional engagement with the audiences, news television has played a major role in organising the Hindutva public sphere and public. The television influenced by the Hindutva public defined identity, citizenship and nation-ness which have implications on citizens' engagement with the civic spaces.

And finally, this research does not offer solutions for the social problem of communal conflicts and it is not meant to do so, or does not claim to have found answers to all the questions it raises, but it propels investigation to a higher level for better understanding of the connections that exist in the meeting ground of news television, religion and politics. I illustrate how television's mediation of Hindutva groups' engagement with the minority religious communities impacts the 'non-Hindutvised Hindus' engagement with the other religious communities. This thesis points out that news television, with its enormous power, has become a crucial player in the cultural wars where religion, caste, language and economic standards come into play.

Chapter 2

Contextualizing the Rise of Hindu Nationalism

India is a country that is obsessed with faith, culture, religion, and often the lines blur between all three. (Burkha Dutt-on 'We the People', July 24, 2011)

The excessive politicisation of religion is affecting political and media discourse in the world's largest democracy. The prominent place religion occupies in Indian politics raises questions about the secular nature of the country (Srinivasan, 2006; Heredia, 2007; Pandey, 2007). Even during the anti-colonial movement at the beginning of the 20th century, religious affiliations of political parties and individuals shaped the nationalist discourse, contributing to large-scale communal violence between the majority Hindu community and the large Muslim minority, culminating in the partition of the country in 1947. Since then religion has continued to shape political debates in an ostensibly secular nation state, with the majority Hindu religion dominating the discourse. However, given the geographical, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of India, this Hindutva (Hinduness) has been unevenly consumed across the country – more prominent in the Hindi-speaking north. In the non-Hindi speaking southern states, proponents of Hindu nationalism find it hard to spread their ideological agenda, based on majoritarian attitudes (Hassan, 1996). Such sectarian growth of Hindu nationalism impels us to investigate the media's role, particularly of Hindi news television as it has grown to be a major source of information in north India. This chapter, while tracing the growth and development of Hindu nationalism and its relationship with the media, reviews the available relevant literature on the issue.

India, a nation-state

The concept of nation, though relatively new, is so beguiling that it allures millions of people to kill and die for it. Nation-ness, according to Benedict Anderson, 'is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time' (Anderson, 1991: 3). Although it cannot be defined properly the

'phenomenon has existed and exists' (Seton-Watson, 1977: 5). Nation-ness may be considered a cultural construct capable of arousing emotional attachment, in spite of its ambiguous nature (Plamenatz, 1976; Anderson, 1991). The cultural artifacts of nation-ness and nationalism received new meaning towards the end of eighteenth century, combining with a wide variety of political and ideological constellations in a great variety of social terrains (Anderson, 1991). It soon came to mean a new concept 'nation-state' in Europe, which is meant to fulfill the political aspirations of a population living within a certain geographical territory (Oommen, 2003). Following the European model, nations and states came to be treated as synonymous entities in the ex-colonial countries and, constituting several cultural-political communities, nation-states were formed. India remains a classic example of a state formed of several nations or communities and thus creating a novel concept of what Jawahar Lal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, called 'unity in diversity' (Uberoi, 2002). Some sociologists view these movements as efforts to transform colonies into states and subjects into citizens.

The Nationalist Movement in India

Indian nationalism as a movement surfaced from the need to drive out the colonial powers from India's soil (Smith, 2003). The participants of those nationalist movements viewed themselves as citizens of a new state and they realised that fighting for a state was more viable than for a nation. Such anti-imperialist movements were political in nature and aspired to build further within the parameters of the state as a political unit. Proposing a definition of the nation as 'an imagined political community,' Anderson stated, 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson, 1991: 6).

In pre-independence India there were many skeptics, especially the leaders in the colonial regime, who never acknowledged Indian nationalism as a natural one. They thought the sustainability of one Indian nation that was ostensibly divided across culture, religion, territory and language was inconceivable (Guha, 2007). Given the diversity of the demography of India, some skeptics

thought that as a democratic nation, it was too complicated and confusing and thus unnatural. India's linguistic and religious diversity were thought to be incompatible with national unity (ibid). The existence of this country as a strong and vibrant democracy shows that all such apprehensions were unnecessary.

However, the nationalist movement in post-colonial India continued engaging with different sections of the society; expressions of which are not just the sign of the empowerment of the 'subaltern' (borrowing from Gramsci), but more about the changing nature of the Indian political sphere. Leela Gandhi argues that 'post-colonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath' (Gandhi, 1998:4). It involves remembering and recalling the colonial past. It is a compelling political obligation. Colonialism does not end with the end of colonial occupation. In the case of India, the adoption of English culture and European civilisation makes colonial presence possible in the country. So Gandhi's solution to this problem was to transfer the hatred of the colonised towards the colonizer, to their civilisation (Gandhi, 1998). Taking advantage of this Gandhian view, political parties and groups that claim to be the guardians of Indian culture, though not Gandhian in views, oppose religious movements that are branded western.

India's post-colonial narrative was not free from contradictions, mainly due to the tension between Nehruvian secular liberalism and the majoritarian Hindu ideology symbolised by Hindutva (Lankala, 2006). The distinctions and contradictions are best understood in their relationship with minority religions, especially Islam, and found expressions in their political discourse (Kolluri, 2002). These contradictions deepened after the end of the Nehru era and with the legitimization of religio-political movements. The presence of such movements led to the polarisation of the masses on the lines of religion and caste, resulting in frequent social conflicts (Baber, 2004).

These social conflicts, whether religious or class and caste rivalries, are made visible by the presence of a free press. Ramachandra Guha commented, 'at no other place in human history have social conflicts been so richly diverse, so

vigorously articulated, so eloquently manifest in art and literature, or addressed with such directness by the political system and the media' (Guha, 2007: xx).

Hindu Nationalism

Hindu nationalism is not an alien force in the Indian political sphere. As a political and ideological force, its origins can be traced back to the colonial period. It was an offshoot or an important tributary of Indian nationalism, but was kept under check by Gandhi and Nehru (Smith, 2003). The language of the anti-colonialist discourses of Indian nationalism led by Gandhi reveals its ambiguous relationship with Hindu nationalism (Chatterjee, 1993). Lankala argues 'Gandhi's use of popular Hinduism as part of the discourse of the Congress is seen as marking the beginning of a discourse that continues as India's official nationalism to this day' (Lankala, 2006:89). His moderate views and acceptance of other religions popularised and normalised the presence of religious views in political discourse. However, Gandhian views that accommodated and respected other religions remain distinct from the present-day militant Hindu nationalism (Jaffrelot, 2007).

Although originally it was a social and religious movement, Hindu nationalists soon transformed it into a political force in opposition to the Congress Party and Muslim League resulting in the institutionalization of Hindu nationalism (Bose, 2009). The evolution of Hindu nationalism as a structured organisation is seen in the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) which was formed in 1924. The formation of the RSS was an attempt to materialise the visions of Hindu saints and seers, writers, and reformers who wished to revive Hinduism as it had been attacked under Muslim rulers and Christian missionaries (Ragi, 2010). However, Hindu nationalists found a place in the political arena after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) acquired political power, partly due to the new political equations, which surfaced on the Indian political landscape in the late-1980s. This crucial transformation in Indian politics was due to the politicisation of India's majority religion and led to the degeneration of civic nationalism into ethnic nationalism (Bose, 2009). The BJP's rise to power further intensified the 'Hindutvisation' of Hindus while violent display of

militant Hindu dominance across the country especially, in BJP-ruled states, intimidated minority religions (Chatterji, 2009).

Though 'Hindutva' is loosely translated as 'hinduness' with an emphasis on the dominance of Hindus, the concept remains ambiguous. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, one of the leading figures who shaped the RSS ideology coined the term Hindutva and defined India as a Hindu Rashtra (nation) with a geographical area extending from river Sindhu in the North West to the great sea in the South (Savarkar, 1967). By this definition anyone whose religion had its origin outside India was not a Hindu. Defining the meaning and boundary of 'we' and 'they,' the idea of Hindu Rashtra excluded the people belonging to faiths of non-Indian origin (Ragi, 2010). Hindutva can be rightly called a religio-political ideology as Savarkar himself described its aim as to 'Hinduise all politics and militarise Hinduism' (Savarkar, 1967: 76). Hindutva as a political movement owes a great deal to the violent and exclusionary cultural nationalisms of the early 20th century. Hindutva's similarity with Christian fundamentalism is reflected in its attempt to demonise Islam and paint Muslims as the enemy of the nation (Lankala, 2006).

The RSS, the chief proponent of Hindu nationalism, by adopting a militant style with anti minority rhetoric, made it a synonym of Hindutva, which stands for cultural exclusivity and identity (Sharma, 2007). The Hindutva movement, under the umbrella grouping called the *Sangh Parivar* (Sangh family), works through 65 organisations spread over different fields of national life (Ragi, 2010). The main objective is to bring all Hindu groups together and strengthen the Hindu society against political Islam and political Christianity which they consider non-indigenous. The long-term aim of such unity is to propagate, promote and strengthen 'Hinduness,' so as to liberate the nation from cultural colonisation, a vestige of alien rule (ibid).

The Sangh Parivar used ideological justification for the construction of a Hindu nation, where minority religions are marginalised, and used this rhetoric to gain political leverage. However, the threat posed by Hindutva goes far beyond the electoral process. It has penetrated all levels of civic society through different

channels of religiosity, the media, and cultural bodies and is seen by some as a threat to the constitution of India which guarantees a secular society where religious pluralism is respected (Kuruvachira, 2005). Although the origins of Hindutva can be traced back to the late 19th century, a politicised Hinduism emerged from the 1920s with the formation of the RSS and acquired political prominence in the 1980s, which resulted in the polarisation of the polity on religious lines (Graham, 1993).

Hindutva and Religious Conflict

One of the major reasons for religious conflicts in India, pointed out by scholars, is the spread of the ideology of Hindutva, which proposes the suppression of other religious groups (Froerer, 2010). Communal violence can be a way of expressing one group's dominance over the other and a powerful way to polarise people on communal lines. The exploitation of religion for political interests and power has caused intensification of communal violence over the last three decades. The rise of Hindutva has intimidated and ghettoized the minorities (Puniyani, 2005). Minority religions are demonised in order to justify the communal violence committed against them over the years. Much of the movement's criticism is reserved for India's biggest minority – the Muslims, which comprise over 13 per cent of the country's population (Sharma, 2007; Hasan, 2008). Hindutva's entry into many prestigious educational institutions and interference in writing school history textbooks are seen by many as unwarranted and contributing to the anti-minority sentiments (Kuruvachira, 2005).

Language, religion, class and caste are considered the axes of conflict that operate in Indian society (Guha, 2007). However, with the implementation of national and international laws, divisions on lines of class and caste have started to disappear and the need for a global language to ensure growth and development - a contribution of globalisation - has made linguistic divisions less relevant. But religious faith, a fundamental feature of human identity, has continued to be used to divide people especially in a society where the Western model of secularisation failed to be dominant. The Gujarat assembly elections

of December 2002 - which Narendra Modi of the BJP won with an overwhelming majority in spite of the notorious Godhra and post-Godhra violence (which led to serious communal riots, claiming more than a 1,000 lives) - is an obvious example of the power of religion in India for political mobilisation (Kuruvachira, 2005).

Reasons for the Growth of Hindu Nationalism

A critical examination of why Hindu identity in India became so rapidly politicized in the 1980s requires an understanding of the history and issues relating to the emergence of Hindutva and its principal representative in the electoral arena, the BJP. The Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, critiquing the Indian political sphere commented: 'The BJP's powerful role in mainstream Indian politics and the might of the Hindutva movement are parts of the new political reality in India' (Sen, 2005: 50). Most studies have tried to look at the social and political conditions, which allowed the BJP to project itself as an attractive political choice for Indian voters. The developments that transformed Indian politics are believed to have emerged from the rise of Hindutva organisations that advocate Hindu supremacy and cultural nationalism as well as economic liberalisation. Though these two phenomena seem to have no direct relation, the Hindu nationalist movement benefited from the restructuring of the Indian economy during the 1990s into a liberal one (Lankala, 2006).

The surge of Hindu nationalism signals the changing face of the Indian political sphere where efforts are made to recognise religion-based politics as legitimate. As Anuja Bose argues, any attempt 'to explain the degeneration of civic nationalism into ethnic nationalism must adequately theorize the reasons why a particular ethnic identity has the propensity for mass appeal and politicization' (Bose, 2009:7). In mapping the multi-layered, highly complex socio-political environment in which Hindutva emerged as a militant religious nationalist movement, there is the need, as Manchanda suggests, 'to consider the political vacuum produced by the collapse of the Nehruvian vision, the frustration over the failure of the modernity project, the Mandal challenge, globalization, global Islamic resurgence, etc.' (Manchanda, 2002: 8).

Religion based partition of the country offered an opportunity for Hindu nationalists to push forward the idea and agenda of Hindutva but the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by one of its followers adversely affected its political future. This political isolation following the killing of Gandhi, to some extent, came to an end when the BJP was invited to join hands with secular parties to shape new political formations against the ruling Indian National Congress party at different times in Indian political history (Ragi, 2010).

The very nature of Indian politics, which is known for its ambiguities and complexities, helped the growth of Hindutva groups, mainly the BJP, the most prominent religion-based party in the Indian political spectrum. The BJP had remarkable growth between 1989 and 1992 because 'it provided a vehicle for the expression of grievances against the state and for the mobilisation of groups which felt victimised by the political system' (Basu, 1996:3). Taking advantage of the momentum achieved then and with further manipulation of the religio-political composition of the society, the BJP grew to the stature of a leading political party. Basu argues that, in some contexts, anti-state sentiment was inextricably linked to anti-Congress sentiment, and the BJP created an alternative to Congress rule (ibid). The decline of the Congress in the late-1980s, and the gradual erosion of democratic structures are the two most common reasons given to explain the rise of the BJP (Bose, 2009). The democratic politics, meant to transform the society for citizens' welfare, degenerated over the years. The elections have become a political game for power, which is essentially a numbers game. The political parties, in the number game, competed with each other to garner support of ethnic groups that can give them advantage in making useful equations to acquire power (Kothari, 1998). 'In desperate bids for votes, all national and regional parties have been glaringly guilty of playing a double-sided game by pitching the interests of one religious community against the other to suit their electoral interests' (Kumar, 2006:35). The Congress, claiming to be a secular party and the rightful guardian of the secular nature of the society, wasted no time in appeasing the religious minorities, especially Muslim groups, in order to acquire their votes. The BJP was quick to divert public attention to such a generous display of biases towards

Muslims. So as religion and faith started dominating the political discourse secular parties began losing their mass base and Hindu nationalist parties achieved an unprecedented growth. Thus the BJP has come to occupy the space created due to the decline of the Congress party. In the early-1990s it sailed effortlessly through the upper caste resentment at the growing political influence of the lower castes.

In the 1980s, the minority vote bank of the Congress Party was fragmented by the rising influence of other national parties like Janata Dal, the Communist parties, and many regional parties. The BJP, taking advantage of the growing majoritarian sentiments, soon jumped in to fill the organisational and ideological vacuum in the political sphere as the other political parties failed to provide serious alternatives to the Congress party (Seshia, 1998). So it is pointed out that the anti-Congress sentiments in the 1990s helped the BJP to thrive and grow to the stature of a national party.

India's decision to embrace globalization created a favourable atmosphere for the hindutva groups. The newly introduced policies like economic liberalisation and privatization have adversely affected the poor. At a deeper level, this phenomenon has gone in tandem with the rise of religion-based politics (Basu, 1996). India's new economic policy helped the Hindutva ideologues to thrive in the newly created globalised market-oriented society. Supporting the economic aspirations of the middle classes and simultaneously exploiting the changes that were taking place in the multi-caste and class society, the BJP created a prominent place for themselves in the Indian political sphere (ibid). It has been argued that communalism is rooted more in the middle class who have been the biggest beneficiaries of the economic development (Ananth, 2005). The middle and the lower middle classes needed to invent a saviour as they faced the threat of losing their secure jobs to the changing concerns of the new economic policy (Ananth, 2005; Puniyani, 2005). These classes soon got involved in the political discourse, realising the need to come together under the banner of religion to protect their interests even when the country had serious economic concerns (Muralidharan, 1990). It was the backlash from middle class Hindus who sought security and recognition under the Hindutva ideology responsible for the

politicization of the Hindu identity. In this context, violence, persecution and conflict may be seen as the consequences of the dominant group's reaction to the perceived threat (Hansen, 1999; Bose, 2009).

In India, globalisation is perceived by some as copycat westernisation and the 'Mall Culture'. Since culture is inseparable from religion, religio-political movements with radical views re-interpreted 'Indian culture' in the most bigoted ways (Ramnarayan, 2006). Bans and fatwas against literary works became increasingly common, often with the blessings of politicians who may not have read the offending text but play 'vote bank' politics to please religious groups (ibid).

The BJP, liaising with other organisations in the Sangh family like the RSS, the Bajrang Dal and the Vishva Hindu Parishad, created opportunities for the groups that felt marginalised to express their views. Many Hindu women were encouraged to take part in active politics and they felt more empowered than ever before as the women liberationists of the party started speaking about the violation of traditional family values and the modesty of women. The Miss World competition in Bangalore, a south Indian city, in 1996, was one of those events that irked them. To the advocates of Hindutva, 'the swimsuit' competition was an assault on traditional values by the west, as it was organised by a London-based group (Kumar, 2006:142). Since this mega-event was declared an assault on traditional Indian/Hindu values by the Hindutva ideologues, even the violent mass response was considered a legitimate expression of rightful anger.

Polarising communities on religious lines is essential for the growth of Hindutva movement and Communal violence has been identified as a powerful tool to achieve that goal. It was in the Hindi heartland, comprising of Uttar Pradesh, the largest Indian state, that 'the BJP most freely and militantly voiced Hindu nationalist appeals in order to attract the mass support that it could not otherwise attain' (Basu, 1996: 2). It has been suggested that the BJP attempted to gain political mileage, through 'Hindutvisation' of Hindus who make up more than 80 per cent of the country's population (Chatterji, 2009). For nearly

two decades, playing the ‘Hindu card’ has been a very successful method for the party: a strong revival of Hindu nationalism began after the demolition of Babri Masjid, a well-known 16th century mosque in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh in 1992. The ‘Ayodhya spectacle’ brought the BJP into political prominence, winning them national election in 1998. However, ‘in mobilizing support for the movement to replace the Babri Mosque with a temple in Ayodhya, the BJP and its affiliates fostered riots between Hindu and Muslim communities in large parts of North India’ (Basu, 1996:3). Upper caste BJP supporters consider Hindu nationalism as the symbol of their dominance as the Hindutva movement aspired to replace the growing political power of the lower castes.

Hindu nationalists, taking the advantage of the recent global trend of identifying Muslims with terrorists, interpreted every attack supposedly by people belonging to the Muslim community, as an attack against a Hindu-nation state. Such a discourse, highlighting the need to protect the nation from Muslim enemies, also shaped the violent campaign against other religious minorities as the ‘enemy within’ (Lankala, 2006). They denounced the Gandhi-Nehru version of Hinduism as an aberration and their answer to the weak state was to arm Hindus, following one of their founding fathers and a former chief of the RSS, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalker’s, comment – ‘every Hindu God is armed’ (Manchanda, 2002:9). Although, the traditionally popular Hindu God Ram is rarely portrayed using a bow, the Hindutva groups redrew his figure as a warrior God, which is central to the hegemonic discourse of the Hindu as militant (Manchanda, 2002). The picture of muscular Ram, invented by the RSS not only symbolises the angry Hindu fighting the enemies to protect his nation but is also an attempt to legitimise the militarisation of Hindus.

The Media and Hindu Nationalism

The media, especially the print and electronic media, have been used for the diffusion of Hindutva ideas through the language of religion (Mehta, 2008). The recent history of the Hindu nationalist movement in India provides a good illustration of how modern media technology qualitatively changes the politics of religious diversity and mobilization (Eisenlohr, 2011).

Scholars such as Arvind Rajagopal and Shanti Kumar have argued that the emergence of the national broadcaster, Doordarshan's national programming as a pan-Indian genre, was 'crucial for the post-colonial project of nation-building' (Kumar, 2006: 35). For good or bad, political elites sought to transcend the diversities of language, religion, ethnicity, class, caste, and gender in the modern nation-state with the help of Doordarshan's national programming. In the 1980s, realizing the power of television the government decided to use state-owned Doordarshan to tell stories that they thought could make people who belonged to various cultural groups in different states feel part of a single society. Doordarshan's national programming during primetime hours was meant to maneuver its audiences across the country to think 'national' by telling the stories of an ostensibly shared idealized past. The invention of such a glorious shared past was thought to be needed in order to shape a distinctive Indian identity, although the Indian society is multicultural with multiple identities (Rajagopal, 2001). The state, wanting to keep the nationalist aspirations of people alive, needed to tell people how they are connected to each other and united as a nation-state with the help of a single theme of social connectivity across the nation - religion (Manchanda, 2002). It is to be noted that 'at any given moment, more than half of the eight to ten serials and episodic series shown per week during prime time dealt explicitly or implicitly with nationalist themes' (Mankekar, 1999: 7). However, critics do not agree upon the success of Doordarshan's attempt to 'produce and circulate a 'Hindu-Hindi' image of Indian national identity' (Ray & Jacka, 1996).

The broadcasting of Hindu mythological serials notably *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* on national television was an attempt to evoke nationalist feelings among Indians. It enabled large numbers of viewers beyond their political convictions to identify with the images and themes belonging to the Vedic past that appeared on their television screens every week. Such identification made them feel part of a group of people who represented a sacred generation from the Vedic past. However, 'this identity is, of course, under fierce dispute as competing interests vie to redefine its character, currently, minorities, especially Muslims, are threatened by a blatantly "Hinduized" national identity'

(Rajagopal, 1993: 97). While creating such an identity the national television emphasised the un-Indianess of the non-Hindus (Mitra, 1993). It meant that Doordarshan, the only television network of the time, supposedly mediating stories and values of national interest, turned out to be a vehicle for the elements of religious nationalism. Thus, with the support of media networks, people's religious affiliations have skillfully been exploited by the religious and political parties in their quest for power (Puniyani, 2005). Rajagopal argues that Hindu nationalism's salience depended on and worked itself out through the media as it 're-shapes the context in which politics is conceived, enacted and understood' (Rajagopal, 2001: 1).

The reasons for Doordarshan's broadcasts of Hindu epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat*, according to many critics, must be examined in relation to the electoral calculations of the Congress party, which was, then in power (Rajagopal, 2001). Drawing on the might of electronic capitalism, which endorsed and financed the broadcasting of epic stories from Hindu mythology, political pragmatists aimed to create a 'holy' space for themselves in the Indian public sphere where religion and gods found prominence. Discovering a powerful way of advertising, business groups with economic interests happily sponsored such broadcasts and politicians also benefitted as they found it easy to harvest votes in such hallowed space. As Shanti Kumar has noted: 'When the Congress Party government had officially sanctioned the broadcasting of *Ramayana*, it had hoped to use its religious appeal for the more secular necessities of gaining votes in the elections by attracting a broad base of Hindu viewers into its nationalist fold. However, it did not anticipate that a marginal opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), would reap the benefits instead' (Kumar, 2006: 36).

The BJP cleverly manipulated the public appeal of the serial to draw attention to a long-standing dispute over the site of a sixteenth-century mosque in Ayodhya called the Babri Masjid, which is also claimed to be the birthplace of the Hindu God Ram - the lead character in *Ramayana* (Rajagopal, 2001). The BJP quickly seized the opportunity to revive its ill reputed brand of cultural nationalism which derives from definitions of India as an exclusively Hindu civilisation in

origin. It launched what it called a *Ram Janma Bhoomi* (the birth place of god Ram) movement, which gave a boost to the Hindutva movement's efforts to promote its alternative vision of cultural nationalism as a substitute for the state sponsored ideology of secularism which favours a multi-religious society (ibid).

The television series on Hindu stories helped the Hindutva mobilisation of communal praxis by refashioning the politics of religion (Farmer, 1996). The militarised Hindu public that was organised for protecting Ram's birthplace went on to the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (Mehta, 2008). Babri Masjid and other such disputed structures kept the anti-minority rhetoric active, and by perpetuating such conflicts the BJP and its allies enlivened the religious nationalism in their electoral politics. The nationalist narratives of the Hindutva groups worked in tandem with television serials such as *Ramayan* to legitimise the myth of a pre-colonial, pre-Islamic subject in the image of Ram as the ideal native of the land, and his Hindu descendants as the only ones with an undisputed claim to citizenship in the post-colonial context (Kumar, 2006).

The Hindutva narrative of Indian civilisation is predominantly anti-minority and anti-foreign: its rhetoric accuses the Islamic dictatorship and British colonialism of corrupting the ancient civilisation that was 'Hindu'. Such a passionate narrative derives its political legitimacy from influential media elites who had turned toward the BJP in their disillusionment with the Congress Party's manipulation of secularist ideals (ibid).

The News Media and Hindu Nationalism

The media explosion in the 1980s and the contemporaneous rise of Hindutva groups encouraged a series of studies on the relationship between the mass media and the construction of a Hindutva public and frequent communal violence. 'In the early 1990s, several media and cultural studies scholars focused on the linkages between the rise of the mass media, *Ram Janma Bhoomi* movement, the constitution of a Hindutva public, the increase in communal violence and the rise of the BJP' (Manchanda, 2002: 6). Several researchers discuss how mass media substantively shifted the nature of political

and cultural discourse; how it enabled the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) to project itself as co-extensive with Hinduism and facilitated the BJP to become the spokesperson of a hegemonic militant Hindu discourse (Farmer, 1996; Rajagopal, 2001; Manchanda, 2002). Media reports of attacks by insurgent or terrorist groups were dominated by terms like ‘weak state, anti-national force’, ‘foreign hand’, ‘terror exported by Pakistan’, which created a sense of fear among people. Hindutva’s answer to this fear was the proposal to build a strong state by militarising Hinduism and the Hindu community (Manchanda, 2002). The Hindutva movement, taking advantage of the ‘linguistically split public’- English and Hindi - sailed through the catalytic milieu provided by the media (Rajagopal, 2006).

The dichotomous views in media discourse about portraying Hindu nationalism also helped this movement. This dichotomy is due to the prevalent tendencies existing in the Indian media landscape: sections of the media try to portray Hindu nationalism as patriotism and some others as religious hatred (Chatterji, 2004). Such a scenario provides a useful entry point for any academic investigation into the media’s relationship with Hindu nationalism. Hindu nationalists used the contradictions of India’s split public to reshape it into a Hindu public in the 1980s. As Lankala has noted: ‘The English press in India (...) occupies a location at the centre of the contradictions of Indian nationalism, in ways that Indian language publications and other media cannot. Despite the actual insignificance of English as a spoken language in India, its role in defining and shaping the Indian public as a national entity places the English press at the conflicted intersection of a liberal nationalism and of a normalised Hindu majoritarianism. Any understanding of religious nationalism and its relationship to post-colonial secularism in India has to begin at this intersection’ (Lankala, 2006: 91).

While for the English language press, Hindu nationalist agitation was a law-and-order problem in the state, the Hindi press, considering it a cultural and political matter, treated it as a popular issue (Rajagopal, 2006). ‘The Indian and English language news media themselves worked together as well, the former expanding the support for the agitation, and the latter providing the friction

necessary for its forward movement' (Rajagopal, 2006: 283). In India, even in the era of electronic media, the importance of newspapers cannot be ignored. Print media's relevance is noticeably visible in its growth, with a steady rise in circulation figures, and the number of publications, along with a swelling income (Rao, 2010). There has been a significant amount of research done on the catalytic function of print media during the communal violence in Ayodhya campaign and the subsequent riots in many parts of India; and also in its role as a faithful vehicle for Hindutva ideology (Engineer, 1999). According to Rajagopal, Hindi language press helped the Hindu nationalists to garner effective support for the movement (Rajagopal, 2006).

On the other hand, the English language media, in general, falls within a liberal-nationalist ideological framework. As a result, the majority of them are critical of the BJP and take an unequivocal stand against its Hindutva affiliates. This difference is most visible in their stand while reporting religious conflict and related discourse around religious nationalism. However a few, prominent among them *India Today*, choose to articulate right-wing views (Lankala, 2006). They, along with a large number of Hindi and language press, brought about a significant shift in terms of public discourse, accusing the intellectual class and 'de-racinated' English media of promoting 'appeasement politics' and 'pseudo-secularism' (Manchanda, 2002). To analysts like Purnima Mankekar, the ubiquity of such expressions borrowed from the rhetoric of Hindu nationalists was a sign of the emerging Hindu public sphere (Mankekar, 1993). Subrato Chatterji narrates a classic example of media bias during the communal riots in Gujarat in 2002 in which hundreds of Muslims were killed. *India Today*, in its editorial writing about the victory of the BJP in the elections conducted immediately after the riots, ridiculed the secularists and all those who criticised the militarised Hindutva forces and described BJP's electoral win as the 'celebration of the popular will' (Chatterji, 2004:111). An article in another issue of the magazine praised Narendra Modi, BJP leader and chief minister of Gujarat, for fulfilling his mission. Chatterji argues that 'this newsmagazine with its huge circulation (more than its major competitors *Outlook*, *The Week* and *Frontline* put together) and its multi-lingual editions is reflective of dominant middle class views' (ibid).

Hindu nationalists, embracing the growing consumerism and employing a variety of methods to disseminate their ideological agenda, made themselves relevant in India (Corbridge & Harriss, 2000). Rajagopal argues that the Hindu nationalist movement advanced through visual and print media working in tandem. ‘Television spanned regional and language divides and provided a spark to Hindu nationalist consciousness, but it was through the Hindi language press that Hindu nationalists were able to obtain the most effective support’ (Rajagopal, 2006: 283).

The institutional changes in the Hindi media, especially with changing the ownership pattern, may also have helped the BJP to get their allied journalists into media institutions (Manchanda, 2002). The communal influence over the media began to be more noticeable after the Babri mosque demolition, and the subsequent installation of the BJP-led government strengthened this trend (Sinha, 2006). Following this, dominant sections of the Hindi press further divided people on communal lines and incited communal passion and riots in some parts of the country. ‘The media has allowed its ‘misuse’ by the communal forces to portray Indian Muslims as pro-Pakistan, Christians as pro-West and, as a corollary, to create a false notion that the patriotism of these communities are doubtful’ (Sinha, 2006: 127). It is part of a campaign that is meant to project only Hindus as true Indians and patriotic.

Television and Democracy in India

Television has strengthened the structures of Indian democracy. The radical economic reforms in the early 1990s led to an explosive expansion of electronic media and it successfully created a television public which has significant implications for democracy (Butcher, 2003; Kohli-Khandekar, 2013). It is responsible for the creation of a new social environment with an extended field for political action where audiences are mobilised to take part in the political process. News television does not explain every political change in contemporary India, but it recognises and manifests the change in the language of political discourse. So in a country where the political landscape is replete

with happenings television's contribution to the democratic processes and the political discourse cannot be ignored.

The role of television news in India is significant as this most populous democracy is characterised with low literacy levels that impede access to the print media (Chopra, 1998). 'In a country where the literacy rate is well below 50 per cent, the power of print media to influence the political agenda has historically been quite limited' (Kumar, 2006:146). Unlike the southern part of the country, literacy rates are lower in the Hindi-speaking regions, making television an extremely powerful medium to shape political and cultural attitudes (Seaton, 2005; Mehta, 2008). Television reaches more than 60 per cent of Indian households while print media is still out of reach for 70 per cent of the population. News television with 188 (24-hour) channels dominates the entire spectrum of programmes.

The importance of television news channels is to be highlighted as most Indians depend on TV news for information. However, little attempt has been made 'to analyse and theorize the role television news plays in enabling and enacting democratic processes' in India (Cottle & Rai, 2008: 77).

Television and the Public Sphere

In order to assess the consequences of modern media use for the politics of ethnic or religious pluralism, their representation and participation in public spheres are to be studied (Eisenlohr, 2009). Television's power to impact the public sphere, by carrying social and political messages in programmes under the title 'entertainment' even when they are not eye-ball grabbing headlines or dealing with partisan controversies, is to be researched further (Kem, 2007). However, there is consensus on news television's capacity to create a national public sphere, which Habermas presented as imperative for an ideal democracy (Eley, 1996).

The political process in India, in the pre-television era took shape through systematic argumentation and deliberations. It has been noted that news

television provided a mass platform to extend the Indian propensity for argumentation and political debate (Sen, 2005). The most striking feature of Indian news television is its animated and highly argumentative presentation style. Using other programming genres, such as public debates, panel discussions on political and social issues, cartoons and puppet shows, news channels created this argumentative television, which exposed the complex issues and political decisions affecting the general public. News TV further created platforms for the audience to take part in the talk shows and interact with the political leaders who make decisions. They also enable the audience to engage in the process of news production through SMS messages and citizen journalists who send in video clips using mobile phones and other means (Mehta, 2008).

News production itself is a cultural process which goes beyond the text and cannot be separated from its social environment (Thompson, 1995; Rao, 2010). The rise of Indian news television can only be understood in the context of a society with a strong argumentative tradition of public reasoning. Democracy is intimately connected with the mechanism of public discussion and interactive reasoning, and news TV remains an ideal platform for such discussions. With the expansion of TV audiences, these discussions have the power to shape political changes (Schudson, 1995; Mehta, 2008).

Public opinion is formed in the public sphere and the public sphere is mediated through the means of communication. The study of the role of mass media in reflecting and shaping public opinion is to be located in this context (Manchanda, 2002). How do the media participate in the construction of an anti-minority, Hindu nationalist discourse?

The Media and Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson (1983) critically analysed the ways in which nations were 'imagined' and considered that 'the consumption of print news introduced a novel opportunity for shared, "mediated" experiences among populations situated in distant locales' (cited in Waisbord, 2004: 378). Print technologies

were critical in the emergence of a common public culture, a fundamental condition in the shaping of modern nations. Newspapers were platforms for imagining nations by acting as meeting spaces for articulating national views and synchronizing time and space (Larsen, 2001).

Nation-building being one of the chief functions of public broadcasting, the media used to be designed to portray a common culture for a diverse and fragmented audience (Scannell, 1996; Curran, 2002). Nation-building requires the nurturing of feelings of ‘common belonging’ among its people (Waisbord, 2004). Mass media provides an effective vehicle to reach a vast population and, by disseminating a set of practices, values, and rituals it helps nation-building (Brubaker, 1996). Serving the urban middle class, the public sphere of the 19th century which was central to the formation of nations, newspapers made vital contributions in the process (Eley, 1996). But in the 19th century, the print media’s nation-building potential was limited due to low literacy levels (Waisbord, 2004). A few decades later, growing literacy rates and technological developments contributed to the creation of consumer societies and markets which impacted on nation-making. According to Anderson, the media, especially the print media, have facilitated the formation of nations as imagined communities in modern world (1991). Film and radio technologies have helped to transcend the difficulties of distance and illiteracy, as sounds and images carried representations of nationhood, which is central to the formation of imagined communities. Thus, connecting people who had no chance of meeting and bringing together disparate populations under the same cultural roof, the media has played a crucial role in nation-building (Waisbord, 2004).

Transnational Hindu Nationalism

In the light of Anderson’s definition of nation as an imagined political community, it can be argued that nationalism can transcend the geographical boundaries of a nation-state especially when a new generation of communication technology is capable of transmitting messages in split seconds to audiences anywhere in the world (Wang & Servaes, 2000; Kanungo, 2008). People belonging to diaspora communities maintain a memory of their home

nation and transnational media flows allow these individuals to reconnect with their homeland. Due to the availability of transnational media, diasporas are able to have access to the media services from the country of their origin. Thus transnational media, effecting significant implications in the lives of migrants depending on the nature of their engagement, transformed the way they relate with their homeland (Aksoy & Robins, 2003). On the other hand, Cohen argues that deterritorialized social identities pose challenges to national identities as religious, linguistic or cultural bindings within diasporas seem stronger than formal citizenship or permanent settlement (Cohen, 1996).

Television is often conceived as a unifying force, mainly by creating a national imagery leading to the formation of a national 'imagined community'. But the emergence of transnational media deterritorialized these 'national imagined communities' and transformed them into transnational imagined communities (Featherstone, 2001). Media organisations in India have not expanded their purview beyond extremely India-centric Indian audiences, though the footprints of TV news channels now cross borders. Currently the Indian media has not sought to project a regional or global image and thus does not make special efforts to minimise national biases (Joshi, 2006). The media's tendency to disseminate issues related to specific communities, that too in their own specific language, helped to establish 'a sense of ideological proximity among geographically dispersed communities' (Sosale, 2010: 214). This view proposes a parallel space to geographical national media space (ibid). Spreading the nationalist movement to the diaspora communities, Hindutva parties seek to garner support in many possible ways from lobbying to financial assistance (Chatterji, 2004).

The Media in Times of Conflict: 'Othering' the Minorities

The dynamics of the media, understood in a stricter sense, can also drive conflict and contestation in religiously plural settings (Eisenlohr, 2009). Technology has played a key role in the process of carrying live images of events to audiences. When TV came on the scene, with its graphic ability to bring real-time images of conflict into the homes of viewers anywhere in the

world, it transformed the way audiences consumed and news agencies gathered news and broadcast it. However, this fast growing media industry has not been free from problems and limitations. It is observed that lack of expertise among the young reporters often led to exaggerated and even caricatured reporting (Joshi, 2006). Such reporting not only provided a vehicle for displaying the tension between communities but also contributed to the escalation of it.

Indian media have been quick to demonize the 'other' whenever there is a terrorist attack in the country, mainly as part of their deliberate attempt to paint themselves as more patriotic than their rival media groups. Media patriotism which is chauvinistic in nature is responsible for the propagation of war-mongering, xenophobic discourses. Heated TV debates over such conflict situations appeal to the emotions of the people and thus fan the flames of nationalism. The core element of such nationalism is the demonization of 'others' (Hallam & Street, 2000).

Demonization of the 'other' is part of the essential narrative of the Indian media's patriotic rhetoric and the kind of nationalism it evokes. 'While the same undercurrent of Hindu nationalist ideology is responsible for the construction of both these 'enemies' as the 'other' of mainstream Hindu India, the process of othering the Muslims takes place at different registers. The 'enemy within' of the RSS is an othering that occurs at the level of Indian political discourse and is part of what is understood and defined as 'Hindu communalism', while the demonising of the Pakistani Muslim 'terrorist' is a process rooted deeply within a secular post-colonial nationalism' (Lankala, 2006: 97). The Indian media's efforts to denigrate the Muslim community started in the 1940s. There have been conscious efforts to project Muslims as communal, anti-Hindu, Pakistan-loyalists and backward people who are averse to progress (Rawat, 1998). In a cultural framework where the tension between communities exists in the form of 'us' and 'them' or 'insiders' and 'outsiders' images, both photographs and films, speeches and print media in currency are to be looked at.

The news coverage of 2002 pogrom in Gujarat serves as a useful reference point for any study that seeks to understand Indian media's treatment of minority

communities. The media coverage during Gujarat violence has been looked at from various angles to understand its role in the political battle to gain people's opinion. Nalin Mehta points out 'the Hindu –Muslim riots of 2002 in the west Indian state of Gujarat, which reportedly claimed more than two thousand lives, proved to be a watershed in the evolving relationship between television and politics' (Mehta, 2006:396). The Gujarat violence began with the attack on Hindutva followers who were returning home from Ayodhya where they were part of a mobilization drive organized by the VHP, apparently to begin construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site. Fifty-eight of those Hindutva followers were burnt alive on a train at Godhra railway station in Gujarat after an altercation with some local Muslims. 'By afternoon all three major television networks (Star News, Zee News and Aaj Tak) had the images on air- 'bodies burnt beyond recognition being taken out of train carriages by rescue workers as the embers still smouldered around them' (Mehta, 2006:402). The communal conflict in Gujarat, for the first time in the history of television in India, was carried live on television (Ninan, 2002).

The news coverage, pointing out the failures of Gujarat government in handling the widespread violence played a major role in forcing the federal government to intervene and bring the situation under control (Sonwalkar, 2006). However, the bold and independent media coverage by the television media during the violence invited censures from the government and other political actors who were shown in bad light. STAR news and English newspapers like The Times of India and Indian Express received flak for criticizing the Hindutva approach (Ibid). The BJP and the state government in Gujarat came down heavily on the journalists and the media for not towing the BJP line and the cable operators were instructed to black out the STAR news (Mehta, 2006).

Chief minister Narendra Modi's approach to the media was very clinical. He successfully turned the aggressive reportage of the news of communal violence to his advantage. His success can be attributed to his ability to convert 'the stinging tirade against him, his party, its affiliates and his government into a criticism of the people of Gujarat' (Desai, 2004: 231). He turned the 'common man' of Gujarat and Gujarati language media against the English language

media. Desai says ‘this genius of politician doesn’t hate the media. He laughs at it and with it. He mocks it. He smirked when he rode to victory in Gujarat, riding roughshod over the media hype against him. (...) He does this with the help of the same media. His strategy was simple and straightforward. Just remain in the news (ibid: 228). Narendra Modi was selective in giving access and information to journalists and kept the English language media away and instructed his ministers to follow the same principle (Sonwalkar, 2006). The journalists were physically assaulted by the police and Hindutva supporters. Rajdeep Sardesai and Burkha Dutt of STAR News describe how their religious identity was inspected. The violent mobs singled out journalists from minority community and targeted them (Sardesai, 2014; Dutt, 2002).

On the other hand the local media, especially the Gujarati language media offered explicit support to the Hindutva forces. The divide between the local and the national media was visible in their reportage during these communal conflicts. The local press, Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar took pro-hindutva stance and often used inflammatory language, which led to the escalation of the already tense situation. ‘Sandesh’, supplemented train burning incident with stories of abduction of Hindu girls by a mob and the statements by local VHP leaders that confirmed the incident (Gassem-Fachandi, 2012). However, the newspaper was praised by BJP leader and the Chief Minister Narendra Modi for its work while the English language press was criticized. The pro-Hindutva stance seemed to have helped the newspaper as its circulation rose by 150,000 (Ahmed, 2010).

The newspaper reports, especially of Gujarati newspapers, had far reaching effects. These newspapers had drawn visual imagery ‘directly from the widely viewed 2001 feature film *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha*, which provided a screen memory of, and for partition’ (Gassem-Fachandi, 2012:64). The content of the news reports was often transported to the sphere of the illiterate orally with rumors playing a major role: rumors of the abduction of young women and the circulation of images of corpses whose identities remained unstated. The newspaper reports, drawing a parallel between the film *Gadar Ek Prem Katha* and the Godhra incident, brought the painful memories of India –Pakistan

partition. Thus the news media using the visual imagery provided by the Hindi film industry helped the Hindutva movement polarise the society on communal lines.

While Muslim community has suffered most in the combined effort of ‘othering’ rhetoric, other communities especially Christians too have faced similar problems. Although Christians constitute merely 2.5 per cent of the total population of India, Hindutva groups and the media sympathetic to their causes, tend to also attack the Christian communities, projecting them as ‘foreign’ (Puniyani, 2005). There is a growing tendency among Hindutva activists, some state officials and segments of the media, to rationalise anti-Christian violence by making unsubstantiated charges against them. The allegations of forced conversions by the Christian community and their alleged links with terrorist/Maoist organisations are part of an attempt to substantiate the premise of ‘Hindus as threatened’ and thus seek to legitimise violence against the Christian community (Chatterji, 2009).

The study of the media’s role as a propaganda machine for Hindutva requires us to focus on the media behaviour during anti-Christian violence. Vishal Arora explains how lies get propagated by the media and how the media inflated already heightened tension in violence hit areas of Orissa in eastern India, in August 2008. The Hindutva group’s spokesperson’s comment, on a popular TV news channel, that Christians were arrested for the assassination of a Hindu leader, though later proved wrong, was enough to infuriate the Hindutva followers and for the moderate Hindus to justify the violence against Christians (Arora, 2008). During the communal violence that followed the assassination of Laxmananda Saraswati, a Hindutva leader, scores of Christians were killed and hundreds became homeless. Attempts are made to make the Christian minority ‘the other’ and the ‘enemy within’ and violence against them is perceived as patriotic, reasonable, and a legitimate nationalist response to past colonial atrocities (Chatterji, 2009).

News for Propaganda

The portrayal of communities and defining identity and nation are to be seen as part of news media's function as a tool for propaganda. The impact of news frames on audiences has been a crucial factor in understanding media's propaganda function. There are a number of factors involved in the framing of news, including the policy of the organisation and the ratings-driven media ecology, which favours entertainment-led celebrity-driven news rather than sober analysis of social realities (Thussu, 2007). News channels, competing for a larger slice of the market, go all the way to please the audiences who want their sources not only to inform, but also to explain, interpret, persuade and entertain (Graber, 1984; Hamilton, 2003). This competition forces the news media to cater for the interests and prejudices of its audience with adulterated news (Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005). As has been noted in previous studies, conflict, crime or disaster determine news worthiness (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Therefore, media often tend not only to report conflict, but also to make it seem more intense than it actually is. It is the media's way of perpetuating conflict by defining it and giving it form. Crime reporting gets disproportionate importance in the media's intentional attempts to sensationalise (Sinha, 2006). Television's power to make audiences believe what they see has been contested and researched over the years. It is argued that news content is accepted or rejected, depending on how it is interpreted through viewers' personal histories, political cultures and class experiences (Philo, 1990). However, many researchers believe that the media, especially television, is a vehicle for opinion making. So its role in constructing images has to be carefully analysed (Engineer, 1999; Hoover, 2006).

Media in India, though relatively free, has a tendency to indulge in taking sides (Tagore & Belwal, 2006). It has been suggested that sections of the popular media help 'Hindutva' ideology as they are widely politicised, for example, during the 2002 violence against the Muslim minorities in Gujarat (Bunsha, 2002; Rawat, 2004). The BJP worked out a strategy to manipulate the media from 1977 and, as they got closer to power, more and more journalists were allured to it. The story of the most popular Hindi news TV explains this

existing trend. Aaj Tak, which started in 2000, set a new trend in Hindi television news with insightful reporting and well-scripted links. However, as competition with rival channels mounted, (Out of India's more than 350 dedicated news channels, many are in Hindi) Aaj Tak too began to dilute its news content. In addition, Hinduized stories started being aired – the channel provided dedicated time for covering shows of ‘god men’ and their supernatural powers (Chopra, 1998).

Scholars note that in India, the relationship between the popular media and politicians has been mutually beneficial (Chamaria, 2002; Rajagopal, 2004; Ninan, 2007; Rao, 2010). When journalists are respected and given prominence for their influence in political circles and their ability to be ‘power brokers’ rather than for their journalistic talents, space for merit journalism disappears.

Social production of news

According to Stuart Hall ‘news is the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories’ (Hall *et al.*, 1978: 53). Along with the bureaucratic organization of the media and the structure of news values the process of identification and contextualization is an important aspect of the social production of news. This process to give meaning to events locates them ‘within a range of known social and cultural identification’ (Hall *et al.*, 1978:54). Crucial assumption about the audience and the society are made in this journalistic practice.

It has become a common phenomenon in the media world to depend on official government agencies for news. Mark Fishman points out ‘the journalist’s view of the society as bureaucratically structured is the very basis upon which the journalist is able to detect events’ (Fishman, 1980:51). The attention given to the reporter- official relations over reporter- editor relations has become an important aspect of the social organization of news network (Schudson, 1989). However, it is important to look beyond the gathering of news and focus on other aspects like writing, editing and presentation and other crucial elements that influence the process. Hallin suggests that the media, fearing to become

ineffective, tend to work for their own integrity and credibility even when they depend on other external agencies and work for them (Hallin, 1985). The professional ideology of the newsmen also plays an important role in the selection news. It is the newsman's sense of news value decides what is extraordinary and normal in social life (Hall *et al.*, 1978) and the news value makes a story worthy enough to be on television or newspaper. Ultimately, it is the ideological stance taken by the newsmen determines the 'extraordinariness' of the news content.

Hegemonic constructions of the Media

The concept of hegemony, ever since Antonio Gramsci coined it, has been widely used in critical analysis of the news media (Anderson, 1988; Hallin, 1987; Gitlin, 1980). Language plays a key role in the hegemonic construction of 'common sense'. The notion of 'common sense' derives its meaning from a social world divided into 'us' and 'them'. Mass mediated public discourse, of which language is a crucial element, gives expression to hegemonic ideology and makes it available for public consumption. In Gramsci's view hegemony is the ruling class's domination through ideology and the shaping of popular consent. The media help the dominant class to spread their ideology and help the dominated class participate in their domination (Gitlin, 1980). The participation of the dominated class is essential for the hegemony to become part of everything people do and think in their every day life which is crucial in the creation of common sense. The involvement of media practices in the reproduction of hegemonic ideology necessitates the consideration of decision-making and journalistic practices in the newsrooms.

Tuchman has underscored the importance of media framing in the construction of social reality (Tuchman, 1978a) and her critical analysis of news further developed the concept of 'symbolic annihilation' (Tuchman, 1978b). Scholarship focusing on ethnic minorities and races in media has relied heavily on the concept of symbolic annihilation. The concept originally introduced by George Gerbner (1972) and later modified by Tuchman while explaining the symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media has been a useful tool to

explain the “absence” as well as “condemnation” and “trivialization” (Tuchman, 1978b: 17) races, ethnic groups and communities. ‘Symbolic Annihilation’ helps us focus our attention upon the more complex hegemonic potentialities of media. This concept is useful when it is used to point out the absence or trivialization of racial groups in media. As a concept, it is able to capably address concerns beyond media stereotyping.

The Danger of Live, Exclusive and Breaking news

India’s fledgling news media often run into problems by reporting unconfirmed news and sensationalizing. Competition among the news media creates the need to produce something with shock value and to deliver reports that leave a lasting impact on the audience (Ninan, 2002). Electronic media’s hurry to break the news first could lead to media disaster. Reporters with pressing deadlines may not have sufficient time to verify news sources or to reflect on the veracity of what they report. Television talk shows and discussions on communal violence and religious fundamentalism help the perpetrators of violence to transmit their ideology through the very channels of media that are meant to expose them (Stolow, 2005). Occasionally news is developed beyond the news controlled ‘reporting frame’, giving importance to ‘dominant frames’, which are created by the influence of authority or challenger groups within the social hierarchy (Cottle and Rai, 2008). Institutional policy is pivotal in a scenario where newsgathering is restricted and news production is sifted through institutional filters (Mehta, 2008).

The new trends in the Indian mediascape that are meant to capture the market and maximize profit, affect the quality of news reports. Commercial interest is one of the key deciding factors in determining the content of news bulletins. Marketing managers of news organisations who are responsible for profit making, on the basis of TRP (Television Rating Points), draw guidelines for the newsroom. The quantity of advertisement flow, the major source of income for a television channel, is decided by the TRP rating. In this competition to win TRPs, remote places and unpopular news items may be ignored (Saxena, 2006). In this new television news culture, journalistic skills and experience give way

to the physical appearance of news anchors and reporters as style takes precedence over substance (Thussu, 2007; Kohli-Khandekar, 2013). To add to this, the lack of expertise among many reporters can lead to superficial reporting, thus diluting the news content (Joshi, 2006). In such a scenario, it is argued that the 'Hindutva' supporters can infiltrate the relatively more gullible Hindi media to promote social and religious discord (Rawat, 2004).

The research already done on the role of the Hindi media as a 'political campaigner' will provide a strong footing for this research project. However, much of this work has focused on the Hindi press and very little research has been undertaken to study the role of television news in contributing to communal violence. My project, therefore, aims to fulfill an existing gap in this area of research and scholarship.

Chapter 3

Television in India

Television has become indispensable in India, as an entertainer, informer and a powerful educator of people of all ages. In post-independent India, television was introduced in 1959 as a tool to educate India's huge population and was not meant to entertain them. In the initial stages its function was to support the developmental programmes of the state and destined to be under powerful government control - a tool of government propaganda. However, the second phase of the television era, perhaps the golden era, began with the economic liberalisation of the 1990s. India's economy, thriving on the strength of the rapidly expanding middle-class with its aspirations set on Western lifestyle and a flourishing advertising sector, lured the transnational broadcasters to it (Thussu, 2000). Having been liberated from the strict government control, the broadcasting industry witnessed a boom, especially with the arrival of transnational television. During this period of transition television transformed the everyday life of Indian public and 'recreated media landscape's textured layers' (Butcher, 2003:49). The academic discussions about the power of television expose the complex nature of its influence. Television, 'occupying a central place in relation to the major concerns of all societies' (French, 2000:45), is perceived to be having a key role in bringing social changes and this perception influences the introduction and implementation of media policies.

The news television has emerged as the main source of information in India. The news channels, while trying to keep its momentum with the market demands, have not been immune to sensationalism. During this period of television transformation, the country has witnessed a number of changes in its social and political landscape too. The rise of Hindu nationalism is considered to be a notable development during this time and television has not been free from the influence that such a movement had on Indian society. This chapter explores the impact of news television on India's socio-political terrain and

investigates how the narrative of television news media portrays India's minority religions in its defence of Hindutva's anti-minority stance.

Mapping the Media Landscape

For a better grasp of the kind of transformation which television brought about, an understanding of the media landscape in which it was born is essential. At the time of independence in 1947, newspapers¹ dominated the media landscape though there was a state-run radio network² and a booming commercial film industry (Butcher, 2003). These urban-centred mass media carried news of government policies and social development. In September 1959, aided by UNESCO and the electronics company, Philips, a pilot television centre began in Delhi. Its purpose was to carry development messages to rural India and it remained without much original content till programmes were regularised in 1965 (Johnson, 2000; Butcher, 2003; Rao, 2005). The television network benefitted over the years under various governments due to favourable policies and a media-friendly environment triggered by the social and political environment (Butcher, 2003). The development of satellite communication technology helped to establish increased connectivity and took the media to a new level of communication. However, until the 1980s, radio was the main mode of communication, which connected India's culturally and linguistically diverse provinces.

In 1982, by establishing low-power transmitters across the country and connecting the regional production centres with the main centre in Delhi, Doordarshan (DD) could reach almost everywhere in India. Using both terrestrial and satellite links DD had reached 90 per cent of the population in 2002 and had 71 regional news bulletins everyday from 18 state capitals (Butcher, 2003; Rao, 2005). The widespread television network was considered as part of an agenda to create a television audience that is open to 'state's messages of economic development, national integration and intense political

¹ In 1790 India's first newspaper (English) was established and first vernacular press in 1818 (Athique, 2012).

² Radio began as a private enterprise in 1920 and later Government took over the company, which led to the formation of All India Radio in 1936. AIR (state run All India Radio) had 10 production centres and 0.2 million receivers in 1947 (Kumar, 1998:24).

propaganda at this time' (Butcher, 2003: 55). However, many commentators do not agree with the contention that DD was an instrument of national integration, as television remained a luxury symbol, which only the rich could afford even in the 1980s (Ninan, 1995; Shah, 1997). Doordarshan's nationalist narratives, weaving around the choices, memories and dislikes of upper caste Hindu elites, though seemingly reflections of popular culture, provided an arena for expressions that are deeply embedded in Hindu nationalist discourses (Mankekar, 1999).

The 1980s also witnessed the broadcasting of indigenous soap operas, which were meant to 'combine entertainment with the promotion of ideas of social development' (Johnson, 2000: 153). The success of tele-serials attracted advertisers and Doordarshan happily welcomed more from this popular genre.

Regional Television

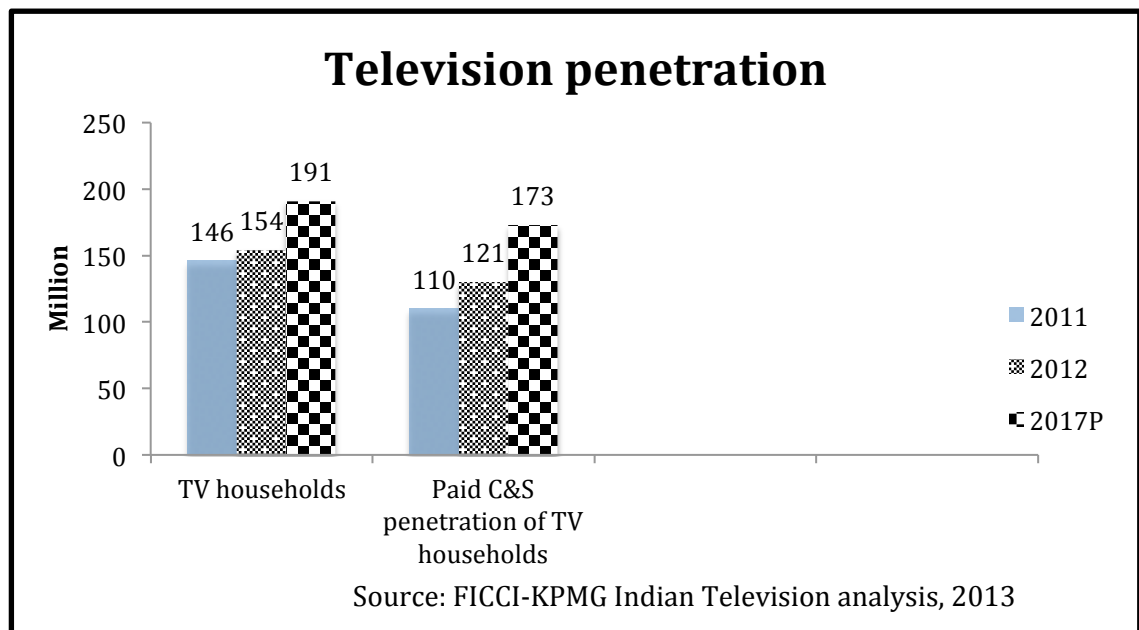
In a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country like India language is a key element in cultural expression. Though the Indian Constitution recognises only 18 languages there are more than 400 languages spoken across the country (Thussu, 2000). 'National' television, which claims to have pan-Indian viewership, is generally understood to be in Hindi (the most widely spoken language in the country) and English (the language of higher courts, top bureaucracy and higher education as well as of pan-Indian corporate elite). Although state-owned DD focused on creating a uniform 'national' identity through Hindi and English programmes, sensing the ground reality they started broadcasting in various regional languages in order to cater to the regional audiences (ibid).

However, private television channels are known to be responsible for the path-breaking changes that took place in the 1990s. In the post-liberalization era, the media atmosphere was ripe and, with the state policies favouring foreign investment, many Western and domestic media organizations established themselves in India's growing media market. The success of regional television channels encouraged the national and international media players to respond to

the market needs (Athique, 2012). India's dissatisfied audiences were only too happy to welcome the change brought about by the private television channels that spoke their own language. These private national channels and regional channels 'colloquialised' languages to audience's taste and 'indigenized the global TV products by adapting and developing local language derivatives of Western programme formats, such as drama serials, quiz contests, game-and-chat shows' (Thussu, 2000: 301). Satellite television channels in the south Indian languages (Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu) have become very popular and consequently Hindi and English channels were pushed to the sideline. While English remains an elitist language, Hindi is widely considered a north-Indian language. The success of language channels proves audience appreciation of native languages (Kumar, 2000) and the huge influence these channels have on people's buying choices. National channels, knowing the power of advertising to obtain the much-needed financial gain, launched their language editions too (Thussu, 2000).

Television and Print Media

In the Indian media landscape, with the number of newspapers and magazines growing along with increasing literacy rate, the print media still has a prominent place. 'It is estimated that for each per cent of growth in literacy, newspaper readership increases by five million readers' (Bhusan, 2013: 39). However, the pace of its growth is nominal in comparison with that of the visual media especially, television. Television's phenomenal growth seems to be global. According to Justin Lewis, 'despite the growth of Internet use, it is television that remains the big beast in our cultural environment' (2010:92), though technology futurists predict a decrease in demand for the traditional media following the new media explosion (FICCI-KPMG, 2013). However, India remains a growth market for 'traditional' media evidenced by the growth last year in TV audiences and radio listenership' (ibid: 10). In 2011, there were only 60 million houses which owned television in India (Bhusan, 2013). That number had gone up to 146 million in 2011 and 154 million in 2012. The chart below illustrates the growth in number of TV households and the number of paid cable and satellite households.



The number of paid Cable & Satellite households in India recorded a steady growth over the years - 76 percent of the TV households in 2011, 79 percentage in 2012 and is estimated to be 91 percentage of the TV households in 2017.

Television has, with its visual appeal, invaded Indian homes at a great speed. Scholars like Helene Joffe believe that it is due to the visual media's ability 'to send people along emotive pathways where textual/verbal material leaves them in a more rational, logical and linear pathway of thought' (Joffe, 2008: 84). The popularity of the television format is here to stay, though 'television set bound viewership' might decline especially in countries where television reached the saturation point. Television industry, to meet the growing demands of the market and the changing viewing trend of the audiences, especially of the youth, has started focusing on the online platform. These innovative ways are hugely supported by the 3G and 4G technology, which offers live TV and HD video/audio streaming facilities (FICCI-KPMG, 2013).

Although there is no empirical evidence showing that television news affects the newspaper readership, television has overtaken newspapers as the primary source of information (Rao & Vasanti, 2005). Researches also show that

newspapers and news television complement each other: television news bulletins provoke people and they refer back to newspapers for detailed news coverage (ibid). This shows the peculiar nature of the Indian audience: most of the newspaper readers are television viewers, though all viewers are not readers. Television's superiority over print is due to India's large-scale illiterate population for whom television is both visually charming and informative.

The Genesis of News Television in India

The first-ever privately produced television news in the Indian media was NDTV's commercially sponsored current affairs programme on international news, called *The World This Week* on DD's national network in 1988 (Mehta, 2008). Introducing the first live coverage of Parliamentary elections in 1984 for DD, NDTV's Prannoy Roy had already become well known among India's fledgling broadcasting world and its elite television audience. NDTV's *The World This Week* was hugely popular, mainly due to its visual impact and type of professionalism, which the Indian audience had never before experienced (Kumar, 1996; Thussu, 1998). The commercial success and the popularity helped Roy to make inroads into India's unexplored television news industry. National television, mostly due to the commercial success of Roy's programme, was also happy to give him more opportunities: live coverage of the annual government budget sessions, analysis of parliamentary elections etc. In 1995, NDTV entered domestic news with a daily newscast called *Tonight* on DD. Along with NDTV productions, two other privately produced half-hour news magazines- *Newstrack* and *Eyewitness* on DD's metro channels - also soon became popular. The deregulation policy of DD which was instrumental in these new developments in the news and current affairs sector, helped the emergence of competitive domestic news television, especially at a time when other national and multinational media companies like Murdoch-owned STAR (Satellite Television Asia Region) TV and Zee TV were trying to set foot in a highly competitive Indian market. DD lost its audience to rival channels like Star News and Zee News largely due to its 'amateurish approach to news delivery' (Thussu, 1998: 286) while private channels impressed the audience with high-production values and digital transmission. NDTV, looking for better

prospects left Doordarshan and tied up with Star News. Later NDTV spread out its own network and now it is known to be the most credible channel in Indian news industry. These private players knew the possibility of combining news with show-business and advertising, which could bring them financial gains.

Instant News: India's 24-hour Breaking News

The last decade witnessed an exponential growth in the number of 24-hour news channels around the world (Rai & Cottle, 2010). Changing the broadcasting ecology globally and invading social and political apparatus, real-time news re-invented itself over the years and made a mark on the journalism industry. It has grown to influence the political decision-making and empower the social movements across the world (Cushion & Lewis, 2010).

In India too, rolling news media picked up momentum as the appetite for such news has become insatiable in the country (Rai & Cottle, 2010). In January 1998, STAR TV introduced two 24-hour news channels - STAR news in English and Zee TV India in Hindi. Many others soon followed into the news television business, and by 2009, India had more than 100 news channels in 15 languages and more than 70 rolling news channels in 11 languages (Mehta, 2010). Many others soon followed into the news television business, and flooded the scene. While India had only one state owned television network in 1991, Indian viewers now have access to 386 news channels by 2013³. India's news television industry grew along with the already existing regional channels, which broadcast three to six news bulletins every day. All these news bulletins were sponsored and five to ten minutes of advertising gave them much-needed financial support (Kumar, 2000). Based on the assumption that 'use of the familiar' (Butcher, 2003: 69) is more effective in selling the media content to its audience, television companies opened up the vernacular language media, to cater to the fragmented audience (Butcher, 2003).

The arrival of new media has paved the way for transforming how we consume news. Television, newspaper and radio, even in India, are facing a growing

³ Figures are as on 20 March 2013 (<http://www.mib.gov.in/showDocs.aspx>) accessed 23 September 2014.

competition with the growth of Internet news. Web 2.0 offers a platform where audiences are also allowed to add original content along with web publishers. It has enriched the deliberative process with enhanced audience participation (Briggs, 2007). In recent past, television tying up with social networking groups, enabled the social movements to garner public support in Egypt, Yemen and in many other Middle Eastern countries. In India news television, influencing the way people think and act transformed the public life to a more transparent and vibrant one. India's 24-hour television news media played a significant role in the on-going anti-corruption campaign led by septuagenarian social activist Anna Hazare. Undoubtedly it was the live coverage of the protests at Delhi's Ramlila grounds and other cities and the studio-based discussions and debates involving eminent sociologists, philosophers and politicians on the issue that made it a mass movement. The government and politicians, fearing the news coverage rather than the protest, were forced to take hasty decisions, which quite often went wrong. It is argued that the rolling news media which works under the pressure of deadlines, adversely influences the functioning of democratic institutions as politicians try hard to keep pace with the demands of a 24-hour news cycle, with its updates every minute (Cushion & Lewis, 2010). A former British prime minister, Tony Blair, in his Reuter's speech on public life said 'political decision are to be quicker as it is difficult to let speculation stay out there for longer than an instant' (cited in Cushion & Lewis, 2010). However, this fast evolving genre, informing and enabling people to make choices, continues to influence the democratic process in India.

India's television has its own share of controversies too. One of India's leading media analysts Sevanti Ninan commenting on the rise of You Tube, quoting Pew Research Centre in Washington's finding that raw footage which is made available via social networking sites like You Tube has become 'part of a newsroom's toolset' (Ninan, 2012). Indeed, the raw footage available on the Internet has increasingly become one of the major sources of breaking news. Amateur videos of natural calamities and disasters streaming on mobile phones and computer screens bring in a large cache of information with natural, raw form. Raw footage of events goes viral on the Internet mainly because it is not

edited. The gruesome death in 2011 of controversial leaders like Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi was displayed with much less sensitivity to the dignity of the dead whoever they were.

The increasing popularity of raw footage is due to its immediacy. As it has the power to ignite revolutions, it can also violate persons in savage ways (Ninan, 2012). Apart from the sporadic use of raw footage by the netizens (citizens), some television news channels too depend heavily on such footage. In a recent incident where a teenage girl was molested in Guwahati, a north-east Indian city, all prominent national channels hosted discussions on the journalistic ethics of those involved in uploading and broadcasting such incidents without even hiding the identity of the victim, of course, ironically by using the same raw footage.

Ninan calls it a 'dilemma' for the news media 'arising from new technologies' (Ninan, 2012). Flooding the public space with 'breaking news' the news media, especially television news, try to imitate the new media forces with all the gore and blood and things that can be considered outrageous. Such competition with the new media technologies, due to the fear of being pushed out of the media landscape with lack of immediacy, puts news television under an obligatory compulsion. For most news channels, their audiences are consumers in a thriving competitive media market. The channels cannot afford to lose their audience, so it makes 'broadcastable' news out of explicit raw footage, uploaded by citizens, ranging from MMS clips to amateur videos (Ninan, 2012). This trend, resulting from the growing use of increasingly sophisticated media technologies, continues to shape the news culture.

In a situation where unconfirmed news get reported and sections of the news media displayed sectarianism questions are raised about media's accountability and the role of India's media watch dog, the Press Council of India. Although strict guidelines are given especially regarding the reporting of religious violence, the media tend to ignore them. The coverage of Gujarat violence has been pointed out as one of those in media history in India. The Press Council of India, regarding the coverage of communal clashes, clearly instructs 'Giving

community-wise figures of the victims of communal riot, or writing about the incident in a style which is likely to inflame passions, aggravate the tension, or accentuate the strained relations between the communities/ religious groups concerned, or which has a potential to exacerbate the trouble, shall be avoided' (Press Council of India: 21). The media, both print and television journalists, violated the Press Council of India guidelines on naming the communities involved in conflicts and openly identified the attackers and victims (Sonwalkar, 2006). While some journalists believed that naming the communities were essential for the story, some of them argued that television coverage of the events made it impossible to follow the regulations (Varadarajan, 2002). According to Hasan Suroor, formerly of *The Hindu*, the Press Council of India is an inefficient body which has no definitive power. He said 'first of all, somebody has to report any violation to them as they don't take notice on their own' and ... 'at the most it can ask them to carry an apology or clarification and Indian libel law has always been very poor' (for interview see appendix II).

Paid news - a new form of media manipulation

Paid news is camouflaged advertising under the garb of reports or editorial. The 'paid-news' phenomenon has become an acceptable business when the popular newspapers started selling space to politicians and the corporate world. Some major newspapers have even 'entered into lucrative partnerships – such as equity for coverage deals called 'private treaty partnerships' – with the corporate world' (Bhusan, 2013: 39). Initially, it seemed, only newspapers were affected by this phenomenon, which confuses the reader who gets caught up in the news-public relations conundrum. But there are incidents that show television too is a subscriber to this lucrative business. The recent Naveen Jindal episode exposes the attempt made by a popular Hindi news channel to make a 'pay or damn' deal with a business group that has stake in multiple areas⁴. Naveen Jindal's coal block allocations were being investigated by the Zee News. However, on 25 October 2012, Jindal accused the channel of extortion and conspiracy. To substantiate the allegation he released the tapes of a sting

⁴Naveen Jindal is a leading businessman turned politician whose company's coal block allocations are still under the scrutiny of India's comptroller and auditor general and investigating agencies.

operation conducted on the news channel's editors which allegedly show Zee editors discussing a deal involving advertising in return for laying off the damaging stories on coal block allocation. It possibly signals how media organisations can multiply advertising revenue and find new ways of doing paid news; probably a new kind of media extortion. The issue under the spotlight signals 'the increasing number of deals between corporate houses and media outlets, whether in the form of paid news or private treaties, to guarantee favourable press and, whenever required, to black out unfavourable news' (*The Hindu*, October 27, 2012). Quoting India's leading journalists, John Lloyd points out that advertising takes precedence over journalism, causing the low ethical standards (Lloyd, 2012).

As the news channels have grown powerful, corruption involving them too increased to unprecedented levels. In the report to the Press Council of India, two of the country's leading media commentators, Thakurta and Reddy, describe how media corruption, which is widespread, undermines democracy in India. The report elaborates on the steady rise of corruption from individual to organisational level: 'In recent years, corruption in the Indian media has gone way beyond the corruption of individual journalists and specific media organisations—from "planting" information and views in lieu of favours received in cash or kind, to more institutionalized and organized forms of corruption wherein newspapers and television channels receive funds for publishing or broadcasting information in favour of particular individuals, corporate entities, representatives of political parties and candidates contesting elections, that is sought to be disguised as "news"' (Thakurta & Reddy, 2010: 4).

In such an environment, the news media, proving itself to be just another profit-oriented business, collude with external forces and manipulative elements in public life. The media business, large sections of which are engrossed in corruption, not only affects the objectivity of news reporting but also the democratic structures it ought to uphold.

The Television News Revolution and Transformation of Public life

The sudden rise of Indian television, in the last two decades, to one of the largest networks in the world effected an epic transformation of public life. According to Ninan (1995) the arrival of satellite television brought about a dramatic change which no other industry or country could achieve. Satellite television made its 'striking impact transforming television from a state-run and operated organisation to one of the largest competitive new businesses in the country' (Johnson, 2000:157). The television industry has become one of the country's most income-generating industries with annual revenues of 265.5 billion rupees in 2009, which is 46 per cent of the Indian entertainment and media market (Roy, 2011: 762). Though all the genres of television account for such path-breaking transformation, only one of these, television news, lies within the scope of this study.

With the barriers of governmental control removed in the 1990s, India with 188 news channels has become home to the largest concentration of 24-hour television news networks in the world (Mehta, 2008). The recent academic works (Rai & Cottle, 2010; Thussu, 2007; Mehta, 2008, among others) narrating the implications and existing trends opened up new areas of research in the field. However, existing knowledge in Indian media studies is insufficient to explain the news media's influence on the social and political relations and economic development in one of the world's largest economies.

As Mehta has suggested, the fast growing television news media industry, with its political and economic influences on a multilingual democracy has created a 'television public' (Mehta, 2008:7). Impacting significant transformation in political, cultural and social arenas, in the last two decades, 24-hour news television carved out a niche for itself in a country where private radio news is still unknown to the public (Mehta, 2008). So the proliferation of private news channels, whether in English, Hindi or India's other major languages, enhanced the participation of the masses in the democratic process. Mehta, along with other scholars, argues that such extensive participation of the public is part of the 'dialogic and argumentative' tradition of the country. Opening up the media

world for the public, television further strengthens this tradition by using newer ‘technologies – SMS messages, audience polls, live public debates’ to help them engage with the democratic structures (Mehta, 2008:7).

India’s news revolution, creating a new television audience with new viewing practices and a burgeoning employment sector that offers glamorous jobs and money, shaped a new culture where ‘new practices of work; new aspirations; and new configurations of class and status relations’ exist (Roy, 2011: 763). News television’s transformative efforts are carried out by various powerful players - ranging from ‘citizen journalists’ who send amateur videos to media moguls of multinational companies who sketch out policies in a media organisation. Television, with the help of new media technologies, has opened up avenues for citizens to express their opinions and views on practically anything they wish. All the major news channels, during news-based programmes like panel discussions or talk shows, invite their viewers to ‘tweet’ their views on the issue being discussed. Viewers are increasingly using Facebook and other social media networks to express their opinion and some of them even appear on the television screen via Skype. News television’s interaction with the public has undergone an obvious transformation – the newsreader is no more seen as a portrait stuck to the television screen; news is not read, but rather, discussed.

Following the growing trends in the West, all the available alternatives to the television set, Internet-based broadcasting facilities have come to capture the attention of the Indian middle class. In a fast-evolving country where the public space is replete with actions and mobility is considered the byword of modernity, the young people prefer ‘mobile television’ to the traditional television. This trend does not indicate a dying television audience because people ‘are still watching the same shows, but they are streaming them on computers and phones’ (Stelter, *New York Times*, 2012). Television companies, especially news television, in changing the style of news and talk shows with new ways of offering audience participation, have responded quickly to this growing interest of Indian youth.

The concept of the 'second screen' is catching up in the Indian audio-visual market. Television companies, maintaining traditional television as the first screen, created applications for new media, which serve as the second screen. The second screen can be a desktop computer, laptop, mobile handsets, varieties of tablets or any new media enabled device in the market. In the age of \$40 tablets the ubiquity of screens, which appear on coffee shops, trains and buses, the importance of second screen cannot be ignored. For example, the popular English and Hindi news channel NDTV, created applications for the iPhone, iPad and Android to help the viewers to follow live shows, post questions in real-time and even vote on questions raised during the show. These applications enabling the audience to intervene and participate in the discussions transformed the way television is watched. These innovative measures can be interpreted as signs of news television's greater transparency.

'Indian news media – a bull horn for middle class interests'⁵

The attributes discussed above are primarily associated with India's vocal middle class. Television's middle class connection is to be understood in relation to its task of promoting national development and 'creating modern citizen-subjects' (Mankekar, 1999: 48). Television discourse on modernity has been meant to foster the interests of consumerism, through which it constructed 'middle-classness' which subsequently has become indispensable for the survival of television (Mankekar, 1999). Agreeing with the contention that the television news media feeds on and feeds into the interests of the urban middle-class (Sainath, 2006; Thussu, 2007; Chaudhuri, 2010), I argue that such mutual dependency isolates the vast majority of the population leaving them with the only option of being mere spectators and listeners. They are neither heard nor do their views get expressions on television in a country where the democratic process is so vital for its existence.

Pointing out that individuals in small towns are involved in the television news industry, Roy argues that 'non-metropolitan and non-elite agents also have a foundational and formative role in the world of television news' (Roy,

⁵ Jim Yardley's column in *The New York Times* on Child labour in India, 'Maid's Cries cast light on Child Labor in India' on April 4, 2012.

2011:764). Greater involvement of business and the political class in news media (Roy, 2011), which compromised the journalistic values, created a business-oriented corporate news media culture. Somnath Batabyal, commenting on private television news channels, argued that ‘it is a product of affluent journalists and their managers, produced for their well-to-do, privileged audience and institutionalising an imagined nation on the verge of global leadership’ (2010: 398). This imagined nation has been presented as ‘a homogenous group of consumers with one voice and one set of values’ (Bhusan, 2013: 38) and the others who do not subscribe to the consumerist values are dropped out of the picture – of a ‘shiny’ new India.

In Roy’s view media liberalisation ‘has yielded a minimally regulated investment terrain with spaces and opportunities for differently located social subjects to realise a variety of aspirations, ranging from profit-seeking on the part of established capitalist enterprises, to ‘power-seeking’ or attempts by various actors to garner and consolidate political, social-cultural and economic influence’ (Roy, 2011: 766). In southern Indian states, the political parties that are dominant in those states, own the majority of news channels and use them as their propaganda machines.

In order to investigate and understand the wider implications of television’s middle class connection we need to situate it in a larger framework of growing Hindu nationalism. The economic liberalisation of the 1990s benefitted the middle classes and the television industry. During the same period the majoritarian view of Indian identity gained currency, which subsequently benefitted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Influenced by the socio-economic developments, the middle classes idolized the so-called Non-Resident Indian (NRI)⁶ who is perceived to be rich and modern and who also became the chief financial contributors of ‘Sangh Parivaar’ (Therwath, 2010). The undercurrents of this complex relationship impacts on the way the society perceives and presents itself.

⁶Although the acronym NRI designates Indian citizens living abroad, I include foreign citizens of Indian origin too.

India's Reserved Newsrooms

In India's diverse cultural setting, social stratification, based on the caste system, still plays an important role. Even in the post-modern environment such stratification pre-empts the option of multiple identities where the reference point is one's caste not religion. The prominence of caste is inexorably visible, even in a world where the 'stability, firmness and predictability of national identity' are challenged by the growing concept of a global community, driven by the power of a global media (Richards, 2000: 29).

National and international scholars often comment on the under-representation of 'Dalits'⁷ in India's newsrooms (Cooper, 1996; Uniyal, 1996). According to Robin Jeffrey, it is a calamity that the Dalits and tribals are missing from the newsrooms, especially in a country where they constitute around 25 per cent of India's population. Their absence certainly signals a failure to implement the 'right to equality' guaranteed by the constitution (Jeffrey, 2012). These commentaries are to be read in the light of the lack of Dalit stories in the Indian media as if nothing newsworthy is taking place in a quarter of the population. Although it is not necessarily a corollary of the lack of Dalit media personnel, it can well be a subtext to it. The class representation which exists in the newsrooms makes one think that they are reserved for the high castes and leads to the question, - 'Who will speak for the subaltern?' Quoting a study conducted in 2004, Anand argues that there were no Dalits or tribals visible in the Indian media (2005).

Although I do not intend to argue that non-dalits cannot successfully narrate Dalit stories, the investigation of class structure, which exists in India's newsrooms, is part of exploring the possible reason for the missing stories. I argue that it is a compelling necessity for any group to tell the stories that take place in the sphere where their life is conducted. The narrative of every story does have an essential imprint made by the narrator's existence in relation to the context. It may well be argued that, for the better representation of India's diverse social tapestry in print and visual media, its various communities should

⁷Dalits are those people who are not part of the four castes recognised by the Hindu religion and were considered untouchables until recently (even now in certain regions) (Kethineni & Humiston, 2010).

be represented. However, the present scenario does not seem to suggest that the Indian media organisations believe in the principle of diversity (Anand, 2005).

News Television for Political Power

The 24-hour news and current affairs channels are not only looking for financial achievements, but also seeking political influence which accounts for more than almost anything else in India. In India's multi-party democratic system, for politicians who seek to impress, the public television news media turned out to be a powerful instrument to mediate views and actions. Although state-owned television had a better reach, it was losing credibility as a news organisation due to its allegiance to the ruling party and, for the same reason, other political parties had to depend on private players. So the help was mutual. 'Television news organizations create venues and avenues for interaction between political and economic elites and institutions: television studios are sites where economic elites routinely engage in dialogue with their political counterparts, and economic power is paralysed into political clout' (Roy, 2011: 774). Though news channels produce meagre or no profit, media owners pump money into them- to keep politicians close, to influence them and obtain permits and openings for their business development, which is essential for further growth. The allegations of corruption that hit the Indian media industry, especially the 'Radiagate' affair⁸, are just a sign of journalists' growing influence in politics and their brokering power with the business tycoons. Hassan Suroor who has decades of journalistic experience in India summed up 'There is no such thing as independent television. All have some kind of political affiliation' (Interview in appendix II).

On the basis of an analysis of the nature of ownership of television news channels I argue that large national and transnational corporations set the news media trend in India. Access to political authorities and government structures is crucial for the existence of news media and this need necessitates connections with politicians. Journalists' success and professional existence depend on their

⁸In 2010, transcripts of phone conversations between political lobbyist Nira Radia and well-known journalists like Barkha Dutt and Vir Sanghvi were leaked. The transcripts seemingly show the journalists offering to use their influence to broker deals between politicians and business leaders.

ability to establish such connections. This means that their intellectual and literal capabilities are pushed to the backseat and such trends adversely affect the quality of journalism. Politicians often yield to the pressure of the media, as the media has the power to influence the popular political understanding, which is crucial in a democratic system. The relationship between the media and political systems has become inseparable, owing to their mutual influence. The media are not just ‘agents of information relay and debate’ but also policy-makers (Corner, 2007: 212).

In recent past, the news media, especially television news media, by deciding political actions and by harnessing popular support for various social movements has grown from its role as newsmaker to almost a policy-maker. One might argue that this role change has happened due to the ruling UPA (United Progressive Alliance) coalition government’s failure to understand the ways in which media conduct themselves. The media, being the principal channels of information and knowledge, exert power over, shape and direct the way politics is conducted. The media, providing information and creating multiple platforms for public discussions and deliberations, strengthens the democratic process. Many governments across the world have used the media to garner public support and approval (Corner, 2007).

Scholars such as Corner have argued that media, with its strong ties to market values, has made a transforming impact upon the political sphere. Writing in 2007, he noted that ‘in an active global media market like India, with eighty 24-hour television news channels, where politics is enacted in front of TV cameras, democracy can well be described as ‘mediated’ (Corner, 2007: 212). The power of 24-hour news television in India was on display during the 2011 monsoon and summer sessions of parliament. While parliament could not conduct business due to disruption by various political parties, spokespersons of major political parties were running from one news channel to the other for panel discussions and debates, in order to create a favourable public perception for their party. Television studios, conducting discussions in newsrooms, created a platform for debates and discussions, which are essential for a multi-party democracy. Of course the 1.2 billion Indians cannot access debates held in

parliament on various issues concerning public life. However, the debates conducted on television on a variety of diverse issues, including the daily trivialities that are played out in Indian homes constitute a key component in building public perception, which is considered supreme in a vibrant democracy like India.

Nonetheless in Corner's view, 'politics is still the dominant partner, even if this is not always visible, and media activities are framed by political factors that severely reduce the scope and independent agency of the media system' (Corner, 2007: 215). However, what goes above the power relationships between the media and politics is revenue - the deciding factor in the global media market. The influence of the media on politics is measured by the way that the media transforms the political culture by influencing how people, as citizens and political subjects, perceive politics in their everyday lives.

India's Public Sphere and News Television

The Indian government, stitching together ideas about culture, politics, and economy, attempted to form a national public sphere (Rajagopal, 2009). However, it failed in spite of repeated attempts by way of policy-making and the promotion of a national language - Hindi. This seemed unattainable in a multilingual society like India, with its large illiterate population. However, the Indian public sphere, with numerous platforms where public debates and arguments take place, fits in with the Habermasian notion of the public sphere to some extent, though such debates do not always strengthen democratic structures. Playing a crucial role in the formation of the public sphere and splitting it further, news media make themselves relevant in India's diverse society.

In Bayly's opinion the nature of cultural and political debate is typical of the India, which existed even before the emergence of print media, and he calls this public sphere 'Indian ecumene' (Bayly, 2009). Such debates and arguments were often triggered by gossip and village fables. The arrival of television, reinforcing the debates that take place in India's indigenous public sphere,

enabled citizens to engage in serious deliberations, which effectively strengthened the democratic process in the country. In many countries television, with its visual and vocal appeal, replaced the press as the primary medium for information (Corner, 2007). But in India television, occupying its unclaimed space, created a television public that remained unaffected by the growth of print media. This is peculiar to India, mainly due to large-scale illiteracy, which created a media vacuum that could only be filled by audio-visual media. According to Arvind Rajagopal, ‘oral forms of literacy and distinct forms of visual culture can flourish in the absence of widespread print literacy’ (Rajagopal, 2009:13).

In rural India, even before the arrival of modern media, people communicated news that concerned them, and even now, rumour remains a powerful medium of communication thanks to the high percentage of illiteracy in villages. This coexists alongside print and electronic media and bridges the ‘blind space that exists between new and old technologies’ (ibid). Although ‘rumour’ has been a medium since humans started oral communication, surprisingly, it thrived among the illiterate masses with the arrival of modern media. In the past, the themes of rumour were matters concerning people in their own communities. But now, with the availability of news from wider communities – national, regional or even international - through modern means of communication, especially television, the themes of rumour have also changed. This traditional form of communication, with stories stemming from television, has become crucial in rural communities where people are polarised on the basis of caste and religious belief. Stories with exaggerated facts and lies get propagated easily and debates and arguments triggered by rumours remain the characteristic features of India’s own public sphere.

For Habermas ‘public sphere’ is a ‘necessary space for the circulation of knowledge and deliberation’ (Corner, 2007: 213) for the well-being of the state. Television all over the world undoubtedly carries out its primary function - circulation of knowledge - though its merits are often questioned. Academic discussions should also consider the quality of the content of news with regard to the welfare of the state. In a free democracy like India, with freedom of

expression colluding with market interests, the news media occasionally fail to work in the interest of the state or to preserve democratic values. The quality of the Indian public sphere, if defined in Habermasian terms, is questioned when such trends in news television are brought under careful scrutiny.

The changing journalistic practices and the business interests of media groups create ripples in the public sphere. The news media, both broadcast and print, show the tendency to dwell upon the ‘scoops’ by one channel or newspaper. Such news often without proper verification, depending upon the news value, becomes the topic of discussions at every hour on 24-hour television news channels. The *Indian Express* story on the movement of army units is a striking example of such media activity. On April 4, 2012, *The Indian Express*, one of India’s major national newspapers, ran a cover story with an enticing headline ‘The January night Raisina Hill was spooked: Two key Army units moved towards Delhi without notifying Government’, it said the government was spooked by the un-notified movement of the army units. This news caught the attention of the country since it was reported after the government and the army chief expressed their disagreement in public on matters concerning his age of retirement and the arms procurement for the army. This story though, turned out to be fabricated and was later dismissed by the government and the army as unfounded, had sensational value as it suggested a show of strength by the army and a challenge to democratic government. So country’s news channels picked up this story and ran it on all the possible versions of news genre – panel discussions, talk shows, etc. The news media, perhaps faced with the compulsion to add shock value, tend to give unprecedented importance to such news leading to grossly exaggerated discussions and views. Such discussions and the views expressed by the news television impacts on the public sphere and the television public.

Hinduization by Television News Media

The propaganda of Hindutva groups is designed to construct a Hinduized national identity and to popularise such ideology. This is done ‘partly by means of ‘branding’ and displaying a selection of images, metaphors and narratives

deriving from broader values of popular culture so as to appeal to a broader audience in order to assemble them under this version of Indianness' (Brosius, 1999: 100). Brosius further argues that such communities can be constructed 'only through the use and packaging of such symbolic means, that enforce a complex communication system to which agents can relate and from which they can derive meaning' (ibid). Such community feeling is constructed and reconstructed through the participation of members and future members in a communication process on a regular basis. Media texts are carefully chosen in order to make the audience identify with the Hindutva notion of the community.

Hindu nationalists, using various genres of visual media over the years, formed a support base for their activities. According to Arvind Rajagopal, such a Hindu public was formed by dividing the television public with broadcasts favouring a Hinduized national identity (Rajagopal, 2009). When Indianness is presented as the core of 'Hindutva' and 'Hindutva' is described as a way of life, protection of that culture becomes essential (Brosius, 1999: 102). Such a definition takes the nationalist discourse to another level: the need to protect the culture and the nation-state from external and internal threats. This evokes an urgency to protect the motherland from the 'enemy within' and the 'enemy outside' (Lankala, 2006). Hindu nationalists, with the help of a section of news media, have made attempts to label India's Muslim community as the 'enemy within'. Attempts are also made to paint India's Christians as the 'enemy outside'. Cultural nationalists and ideologues speak about a dichotomous world and caution against 'colonisation' of the mind (Brosius, 1999: 103), which comes along in myriad ways such as in trade relations and cultural exchanges between countries and communities. So portraying Christianity as a by-product of colonisation, they found it easy to redirect the hatred of the colonised towards the coloniser to India's Christians. Thus followers of the coloniser's religion are enemies, and attacking them becomes patriotic.

The Hindutva groups' use of images constituting Indianness has changed over the years according to the context and need. These media texts are meant to connect the viewers to a wider audience, which consumes the same images (Brosius, 1999). The promotion of Hindutva thorough the mediation of its

ideology with a powerful use of images and metaphors is carefully done by using terms like 'Indianness' and 'Hinduness' interchangeably (ibid). The mediation of such ideas is done in films, television programmes and subtly embedded in news television too.

The news media reportage, not free from speculations, often links incidents that are not related. These unfounded connections, which the media make though not deliberately, influence the audience's understanding of the incident and the social problems involved in it. The audiences understand social issues, like conflict between communities, as they are informed by the news media, especially when they do not have direct access to the details of the event. The media narrative, which connects, unrelated incidents influence the audience perception of the problem and shape public opinion accordingly.

The clashes between two communities and the violence against one community by another are two different social issues and do not evoke the same public response. However, the media narrative of communal violence has often failed to make such distinctions. Recently, NDTV, which is considered to be a neutral news channel, reported 'on March 1, 2002, as communal riots spread across Gujarat after the Godhra train-burning incident a mob attacked 20 Muslim homes in Ode' (April 12, 2012). Although it could be an innocuous attempt to tell the story, locating the 'communal riot' in a context, it suggests that a communal riot in which hundreds of Muslims were killed in a village called 'Ode' was a reaction to the Godhra train-burning incident in which scores of Hindus were burned alive. The connection made between these two incidents provides justification for the communal violence, to some extent, though the real cause of fire on the train is yet to be found out. On the other hand, if they are presented as two separate incidents, they might evoke a different response from the audience.

In 2008, hundreds of Christians were killed in the eastern state of Orissa during the communal violence organised by the Hindutva groups. This communal riot started after the killing of a Hindu sage by Maoists, a left-wing extremist group. Associating these two incidents in their repeated reports, one act was portrayed

as a retaliatory response to the other. Such speculative reports legitimise the communal violence against Christians as it is perceived as a retaliatory response. During the month-long communal riots, some news channels conducted special debates on religious conversion, with the insinuation that the violence was due to the massive religious conversion by Christian missionaries. The field research I conducted in March 2012 in three villages near Firozabad shows how effectively television connected these two social problems - anti-Christian violence and conversion. During the focus group interview, with one member supporting the other it was suggested that Christians were attacked due to religious conversion by Christian missionaries⁹. Although they were convinced of the conversion work, none of them had any personal experience of this phenomenon and depended entirely on the information from the news media. The news media's influence in shaping the public perception depending on audience's engagement with the media text is discussed in the final chapter.

Conclusion

The Indian media landscape is peculiar in nature as it is inundated with a large number of channels both, national and vernacular/regional. This fast growing industry is interpreted in terms of market share, advertising, viewership and access. The emergence of vernacular news channels, which are able to give more attention to local issues, eats into the audience share of national news channels. The popularity of language media further enhanced the fragmentation of Indian media space as the national media had no choice but to enter into the regional media space.

News on issues of national interests, celebrations and events at the national level help to connect citizens across the country. This feeling of connectedness is crucial in the existence of this vast country of diverse cultures, religions, and languages, as one nation. At the same time, it is also important to give due attention and coverage to regional matters in this age of growing regional politics, national coalition governments and sectarian interests. While competing to create a space for themselves in the global media market,

⁹The report of the fieldwork is given in the appendix I.

television news media in India adopt new ways of engaging with people to expand viewership. In the pursuit of a larger audience share, elements of religious nationalists permeate into news media's delicate terrain and exert pressure on its structures. Such increased activity in the Indian media sphere opens up new ways of intense competition and new avenues for media research.

Chapter 4

Saffronising Bollywood: Cinematic Manufacturing of Hindu Identity

In India cinema has been a ‘compelling site for mediation’ (Punanthambekar & Kavoori, 2008: 6) and has ‘shaped Indian national identity for a century’ (Lorenzen, 2009: 81). India’s industrial capital, Mumbai (formerly Bombay) has been the hub of Hindi film industry, popularly known as Bollywood. Taking advantage of the economic liberalization of the 1990s, Bollywood has grown to be a global industry, which exports films and TV entertainment all over the world (Lorenzen, 2009). Television and Bollywood have been connected by the same cultural and commercial fibers and their growth has been simultaneous. Television as a mediating agent recreated and reinforced the stereotypes and caricatures the cinema produced over the years. So any study that investigates the television’s cultural mediation and the construction of identity necessitates the inclusion of Bollywood in its ambit.

The nationalist movement in India focused on the political liberation from colonial powers and the formation of a state was hugely supported by cultural nationalism, which found expressions in popular cultural artifacts. As the nationalist movement lost its original relevance in post-independent India, the nation saw the emergence of a new form of nationalism - Hindu nationalism. Hindu nationalism or Hindutva stands for militant political Hinduism, which represents politics of communal identity. The ideological basis for Hindu nationalism is derived from the reworked cultural nationalism which embraces ‘religion and its ancillary practices,’ as its core values (Bannerji, 2006: 363). In its attempt to reconstruct the religion-centered cultural nationalist project, Hindutva depends heavily on traditional and modern cultural artifacts. The Hindutva project relies on the media technology to disseminate messages that separate groups within the nation state. It is argued that ‘Hindutva has grown not just through its political organization or through existing religious elements of nationalism but rather within the domain of public culture’ (Dwyer, 2006b: 273).

The nature of India's social fabric underwent substantial changes in the 1990s, which meant an irreversible transformation of country's social, political and religious apparatus. Such powerful transformation has become the object of academic enquiry and the investigations interrogating various social phenomena have drawn relations and exposed connections leading to two processes: economic liberalization and sudden rise of Hindu nationalism (Sen, 2010). Manufacturing communal identity based on the principles of newly manufactured cultural nationalism is essential for the Hindutva movement in order to establish a hegemonic community. The hegemonic status is explained by the rhetoric on 'culture' and 'tradition' stuffed with jargons such as 'foreign' and 'sons of the soil'. The objective of such Hindutva discourse is to spread the notion that 'national' is equal to 'Hindu' (Bannerji, 2006). While creating the Hindu identity, Muslims have been traditionally placed against the larger Hindu community. However, Hindutva's language of 'exclusion' does not exclude other minority communities too, especially Christians. Considering the recent visible antagonism towards Christians, a nominal minority, it is imperative to investigate how they are posed as the cultural 'other' against the majority community. Over the years, Hindutva groups, have built up a highly structured network of cultural and political subsidiaries and the creation of a national Hindu community and stamping the 'other' as enemy are done by invading the sphere of popular culture through its elaborate network. Cinema has been the dominant and most popular cultural institution in India, which in the past delivered on 'nation-building' and supported anti-colonial movement while entertaining people of all segments (Thussu, 2008). 'Indian Cinema, more than any other media, (...) has mediated the imagination of the Indian nation through its extensive reach across the nation and the diaspora, and its consumption beyond the cinematic moment in other media, notably recorded music, radio, television, magazines and so on' (Dwyer, 2006a: 1). Although there is a robust vernacular film industry based in non-Hindi speaking states, 'Hindi cinema's audience transcends lingual-regional boundaries' making it pan-Indian and thus national cinema (Virdi, 2003: 2). Hindi film industry, due to its wide reach and narrative ability, has become a field of interaction and intervention by various players with multiple interests. Although Bollywood as a site of cultural

interpretation offers a wide range of possibilities for research, my study is limited to cinematic representation of Christian community, especially in its nationalist narratives. The filmy portrayal of the community becomes crucial in places where the tangible availability of the portrayed community is absent and media becomes the primary educator. This study locates Christian stereotyping at the center of Bollywood's systematic endeavors to construct national identity.

Cinema in India

The film industry in India is not a single entity but a conflation of industries, which produce over 900 films a year in Hindi and other regional languages (Ernst & Young, 2012). The industry has been growing steadily after the first Indian motion picture was released in 1913 (Therwath, 2010). The Indian cinema has played an important role in pre-independent and post-independent India both in motivating the masses and contributing to the national economy. In 1951 the central government, realizing its potential to influence people, took control over the industry by setting up a board to monitor the films (ibid). The film industry in south India - Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam - comprise a large chunk of Indian film industry. There is a significant presence of other language films in the north and east too, especially Bengali and Bhojpuri cinema. India tops the list of leading film-markets in many respects - numbers of films, number of tickets bought etc., though the revenue is comparatively low. The films have always reflected the socio-political issues of the time. During the border war with China (in 1962) and military conflicts with Pakistan, at various points in history -1948, 1965, 1971, 1999 - films, through belligerent patriotic rhetoric, tried to boost the morale of citizens. They also reflected the anger and dissatisfaction in the 1970s and created caricatures to define Indian-ness and glorified consumerism following the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s and the liberalization in the 1990s (Therwath, 2010). Although the industry is multifarious in nature and each one is independent in existence, the 'Indian film industry is synonymous with Hindi films' (Khandekar, 2006: 20).

The Hindi film industry based in Bombay is popularly known as Bollywood, an amalgamation of ‘Hollywood’ and ‘Bombay’. However, some even argue that ‘neither is Bollywood synonymous with Indian cinema, Hindi cinema, nor with the Indian film industry’ (Ganti, 2012: 13). The term became popular with the globalization of Hindi film industry – with global Indian themes and global audience. This could be seen as a sign of ‘Hindi filmmakers’ desires to legitimate their filmmaking and their aspirations to be accepted among social and cultural elites’ (Ganti, 2012: 14). Such trend is also an acknowledgement of Hollywood’s superiority. Indian filmmakers, especially those of Bollywood, considered Hollywood as a prototype to be emulated and Hollywood themes and style appealed to them. However, Indian films ignored the realistic aspect of Hollywood narrative while they resorted to an extravagant display of illusion and fiction, using dance and song (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998). In a globalized media environment where new media has become increasingly popular among the urban youth, Bollywood has come to terms with the demands to adapt the narrative to suit the television format, which is now readily available from mobile phones to mega digital screens. However, Indian cinema is much more than mere illusion and fiction. ‘They try to bring alive the anxieties and aspirations of its diverse audiences: on the one hand, a brash new middle class, connected to global currents, and determined to sample modern pleasures on its own cultural terms; on the other the assertive lower castes of India, who have found through democracy a way of making an impress on public life’ (Khilnani, 2006: 41). Indian cinema, with its variety of themes, has attempted to deal with the issues and concerns of India’s multicultural and multi-religious society. Indian films, deploying narratives that facilitate the construction of identity among its diverse audiences, have dealt with the concepts of democracy and citizenship.

Religion, caste and ethnicity in Indian Cinema

It is true that, in India, some scholarly attention has been paid to examine ‘the form of film, its history, its social context and its relation to politics, in particular its relation with nationalism’ (...) but ‘in fact there has been no research on religion and cinema in general’ (Dwyer, 2006a: 5). The study of

cinema in the context of the growth of Hindu nationalism is not just about the representation of religious communities or religion in cinema but a thorough interrogation of the wider topic which involves manufacturing identity for communities and detaching communities from the mainstream social life.

The films that are labeled 'secular,' often not giving explicit portrayal of religious and ethnic divide, weave a narrative in which religion is subtly embedded. Such narratives when placed against a religiously-charged context can produce powerful impact on public perception. 'The relationship between religion and society is evolving in India just as much as the representation of religion in Cinema is evolving' (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998: 62). The recent developments in Cultural Studies have brought issues related to ethnicity to the focus of academic discussions and a hot topic in political discourse in the country. The 'issues of ethnicity, identity and the problem of minorities are crucially linked' (ibid: 64). As in the case of any imaginaries in Indian context, to study religious nationalism, the best place to start is with film because it tells us how popular symbols are consumed by the audience and it reflects nation's cultural diversity (Dwyer, 2006). In the Indian context, studying cinema is an important way of measuring how the nation sees its communities and communities see one another and how they see themselves. In India's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, the issues of caste, ethnicity and religion galvanized by the political forces, create scenes of confrontation (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998). It is not uncommon to have such issues depicted in films, as films attempt to faithfully portray the society with vibrant social interactions.

Indian cinema, especially Hindi cinema's relationship with Hinduism exists on different levels - ranging from the explicit portrayal of religious themes sourced from religious texts to the themes critically looking at religious institutions and rituals (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998). Religious themes, mostly that of Hindu in outlook, starting with the first feature film *Raja Harichandra* in 1913 by Dadasaheb Phalke, have been commonplace in Indian entertainment industry (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Dwyer, 2006). Laying down the guidelines for themes and characters, the stories drawn from *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*, the great Hindu epics, stand to represent the inseparable link between religion

and cinema in Indian culture as these epics are often called to define Indian ethos and value system. Such strong relationship between religion and cinema resulted in the birth of a genre - 'morality plays' (Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 1998: 59). In order to understand this genre and the greater implications of it in social life we need to look beyond the general religious principle - good should prevail over the evil. These films have come to dictate the style and quality of life of 'good Indian' including the profession, food habits and dressing. The confluence of such impact of films and the cultural domination of the Indian society by Hinduism has given new meaning to such narratives of popular cinema.

The first Indian film, *Raja Harichandra*, though belonged to the mythological genre, created an immediate connection between religion and cinema in India (Dwyer, 2006). The picture, Hindi cinema has been projecting over the years, of the nation often interrupted by the differences due to caste and religion. Jyotika Viridi commenting on the Bollywood narrative says '...animosities among religious communities, primarily Hindus and Muslims, manifest themselves in overt and covert ways' (Viridi, 2003: 11). Bollywood has entertained explicitly Hindutva themes in the past: *Hey! Ram* (1999) in the pretext of carrying a Gandhian message depicted Muslim atrocities and portrayed retaliatory Hindu barbarity in a justifying tone (Dwyer, 2006b). The discussions on ethnicity and the problems of minorities in India can never evade the decades old problem that grips the society – the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. There have been attempts made to bring the issue to the screen and a number of filmmakers have made efforts to focus on this problem (Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 1998). On the other hand, the mainstream Hindi cinema, following a sequential pattern, adopted 'a variety of strategies of representation ranging from exoticization and marginalization to demonization', is responsible for the cinematic 'othering' of Muslims (Chadha & Kavoori, 2008: 134).

Globalization and market liberalization pushing modernity into Indian visual culture pose a new problem – conflict between religious and secular values (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998). However, even today, a majority of the

population view secular values as Western and consider anything Western is to be culturally avoided. Such popular understanding is a reflection of what is embedded in the Hindutva views on secularism. The Hindutva parties, while embracing modern lifestyle and market liberalization, distance themselves from secularism, which is considered a political tactic as ethnic and religious tolerance, reduce their political prominence. The shift towards secular values might help reduce the tension between the religious groups in the society, which subsequently adversely affects the political aspirations of Hindutva parties.

‘Nation’ in films

Bollywood ‘is often cited as a social microcosm of India, a world where the members of the majority and minority communities work together to produce a staggering output of anywhere between 150 and 200 films on an annual basis’ (Chadha & Kavoori, 2008: 133). In an ideal situation this is meant to point out how popular cinema unites the diverse cultures of India and communities work in harmony without shedding out their pluralist character. However, the expression of unity is often limited to the technicalities of film production and the media text which plays an important role in formulating the national identity and shaping the national imagination is seemingly linked to a set of values that support the Hindutva mode.

Although religion and ethnicity are the major factors of diversity, religion seems to have received more attention from filmmakers especially when they seek to focus on national unity, in line with the official secular nature of the constitution and government. National unity in India has been understood to be the unity among various religious communities. The films that have tried to evoke the sentiments of national integration and unity turn out to be films that celebrate religious harmony often telling the stories of people belonging to the major religions. Such rare conscious attempts to include India’s minority religions into the ‘national’ frame itself is emblematic of the reality of division and the powerful counter attempts to dominate the notion of nation by the majority religion. The attempts to ‘include’ and ‘exclude’ sections of the society from the picture that appears to be projecting the national mainstream are done by

maneuvering the socio-political factors that influence the popular film industry in India. It is pointed out that ‘what happens to India will largely depend on how powerful Hindu nationalism becomes - for example, the influence of Bal Thakaray’s Shiv Sena¹⁰ in Maharashtra’ (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998: 68). Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the capital of Maharashtra where Bollywood is based, seems to be politically dominated by the Shiv Sena and they appear to be running the ‘moral censor board’ of India.

In the post-global India the corporate media, especially the news media seeks to cater to the interests of the middle class who continues to exert pressure on the political establishment and enjoys the niche as the ‘decision makers’. ‘And Bollywood has emerged in the recent years as a great ally of this corporate media’ (Mehta, 2010:5).

Bollywood: India’s cultural image

The film audience in India is sharply divided: with the ‘elitist middle class’ favouring ‘art’ film or realist cinema and the new middle class favouring commercial or popular cinema. These distinct groups supporting two different genres of film have also come to represent social institutions of political influence. Popular cinema has been understood to cater to the tastes of those ‘groups with less economic and educational capital’ (Dawyer, 2006b: 274). The economic revival due to the market liberalization in the 1990s, paralleled with the rise of Hindu nationalism, leading to a significant transition in Bollywood (Basu, 2010; Mehta, 2010). This transition, considered to be the ‘game changer,’ drew international attention and Indian popular cinema came to be ‘counted as a valid cultural product’ (Mehta, 2010: 6). In the recent past, mainly due to the changing scenario, the gap between the ‘art’ and ‘realist’ cinema started disappearing, with popular commercial cinema, especially the Bollywood started receiving universal acceptance and labeled as ‘Indian’.

¹⁰Shiv Sena, founded in 1966, vowed to protect the interests of the people of Maharashtra (a state on the western coast of India) with the slogan ‘Maharashtra for Maharashtrians’ (Joshy, 1970). Later, transforming into a militant Hindu communal organization it has become a powerful supporter of Hindutva groups.

Bollywood's portrayal of Indian life remained predominantly that of upper caste and upper class Indians, sometimes with a detailed account of Hindu rituals. The emulation of Hindu upper caste lifestyle, seeking to create a benchmark for all Indians is a sign of Bollywood joining hands with Hindutva (Desai, 2007).

Bollywood and Hindutva

The emergence of Hindutva coincided with the rapid expansion of middle classes followed by the economic liberalization of 1991. These significant developments in India's history led to new formations, which have far reaching consequences on public culture - 'many supporters of Hindutva have emerged from this group, which also generates much of India's public culture, both as producers and consumers of television and film' (Dwyer, 2006b: 274). Although nationalism has not always been the central theme in Indian cinema, the theme has found dominant presence in certain genres like historical and social films (Dwyer, 2006a).

Rachel Dwyer points out that the popular Indian films produced in the 1990s did not bear any obvious Hindutva ideology and 'most Hindi film industry personnel do not espouse Hindutva ideology, although some stars are active in BJP politics' (Dwyer, 2006b: 275). However, popular Indian cinema has never been devoid of Hindu values and before the arrival of cinema traditional art forms were used to illustrate Indian religious practices (Dwyer, 2006a). The complex interactions between religion and the media (traditional, contemporary and new media) have come to affect religion and the understanding of its nature (ibid). Yet another peculiar feature, perhaps due to excessive media portrayal, visible in the domain of religion and the value system of the society, is the general understanding of 'Hindu' values as 'Indian'. Such extensive overlapping of the 'Indian values' by 'Hindu' values helps the Hindutva groups infiltrate the cultural fabric of the nation by confusing the audience. The vast majority (83 per cent) of India's 1.3 billion people are practicing Hindus and the Hindu representations dominate the public life, though the country is constitutionally secular in nature. It is political Hindutva's interest and agenda to identify with Hinduism in order to expand the realm of their political action.

Hindi film industry's close association with Hindutva is manifest in Bollywood themes that mirror that of Hindutva politics: 'emphasis on piety; the "modern" but not "Western" woman; the importance of diasporic Indians as models and as a core part of the nation, (...) the centrality of the theme of Kashmir, terrorism, and Pakistan' etc. (Desai, 2007: 53). The Hindutva groups have always been quick to cash in on any story that would fit in with their ideology. In 2001, the release of the movie *Gadar Ek Prem Katha* had led to serious social unrest in several Indian cities, especially in Gujarat. The film became popular because it performed the historical division between Hindus and Muslims while offering an imagined resolution that was desired. The music and the dialogues from the film were played during festivals and helped the stereotyping of Muslims. 'The movie has become the reference point for imagining the nature of Hindu-Muslim relations' (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012:89). The BJP and their Hindutva affiliates used the powerful imagery and the provoking sound bites from the film for their advantage. 'During the 2002 election campaign, Narendra Modi's Gaurav Yatra employed tunes from *Gadar* as BJP election songs with altered lyrics' and the 'replicas of the burning Sabarmati Express in Godhra were displayed' (Ibid).

While attempting to identify with the popular Hinduism, Hindutva groups separate the majority religion from the rest and thus isolate the rival groups. In view of creating and isolating the rival groups, such groups are often portrayed as bearers of foreign culture, which can corrupt the cultural values of the country. The Hindi film industry, stereotyping characters belonging to minority religions, though not deliberately always, draw out a set pattern of lifestyle for them. Such apparently harmless stereotyping helps the Hindutva groups in their attempt to isolate the minority communities. In such a scenario, the Hindu nationalist ideas normally emerge at the intersecting points between religions and the social customs portrayed in Hindi films. The attempts to interpret the Hindutva practices in films might seem to miss the target due to its similarity with popular Hinduism. However, it is important to note that rather than concentrating on the obvious Hindutva ideology in films, I make an attempt to focus on interpreting the social practices of characters belonging to other religions.

The antagonistic approach of supporters of Hindutva towards those who support secularism, scheduled castes, Muslims and Christians, has been noted before (Anand, 2005). However, with the Censor Board opposing the explicit portrayal of communal tensions, the Hindutva supporters look for milder version of communal hatred (Dwyer, 2006b). The Hindutva forces, assuming the role of Censor Board, have created a scenario where they take the final call on the public screening of films even when permitted by the Censor Board. This has been true in the case of a few films showing characters with Hindu names in poor light: notably Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996) and *Water* (2005), among others.

Hindi: Language of the nationalists

Hindi's ascent to the state of India's national language is a result of the political imbroglio following its independence and partition leading to the formation of Pakistan in 1947. The political scenario charged with passionate nationalist discourse denied Urdu, the primary language of the Muslims, though more popular than Hindi in the north and south, the official status (Viridi, 2003). Hindi's recognition as a national language, when Urdu was the dominant literary language, is seen as a result of the powerful influence by orthodox Hindus who stood for linguistic hegemony (ibid). Language, in the age of transnational communities and imagined communities, is essential for nationalist movement as opposed to traditional geographically limited nationalism. This explains why Hindi was chosen over Urdu despite Mahatama Gandhi's opposition to Sanskritized Hindi (Rai, 2000).

Although Hindi had taken over Urdu in literature and most of audio-visual culture, cinema was seen not quick to follow the trend. In India's history, Urdu had long been the social and cultural link between diverse communities (Muslims & non-Muslims) and 'provided the vocabulary and idiom for countless Hindi films' (Chadha & Kavoori, 2008: 133). But the linguistic division started appearing in films too, with art cinema known for realistic approach adopting Sanskritized Hindi. Gradually popular Hindi films too started shaking off its Urdu connection, partly due to the influence of radio and

television (Viridi, 2003). It is often argued that the most valued audiences for the industry are the metropolitan elites who belong to the new middle-class which subscribe to the Hindutva ideology (Dwyer, 2006b). In middle-class Hindutva rhetoric, the idea of India is closely linked to Hindi and their efforts to cut off nation's cultural connection with the language of the enemy is legitimized through films and other cultural artifacts.

Diaspora communities

The right-wing Hindu nationalists have a different modus operandi among non-resident Indian communities (Rajagopal, 2000). Muslims and Christians, in Hindutva view, do not consider India as their motherland and have been projected as nation's enemies and to preserve the purity of India, these communities are to be subjugated or Hinduized. However, Hindus even if residing in a foreign country, India is still their motherland and '*punyabhoomi*' (sacred land). Non-resident Indians being one of the major supporters, Hindutva re-orient themselves slightly to accommodate their views. It is inconvenient for those supporters of Hindutva in the United States, Canada, Britain or Australia, to subscribe to obvious hostility towards people of other religious communities. So Hindutva groups in other countries present themselves as a religious movement standing for traditional family values, which is understood to be the essence of Indianness.

In the 1990s, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party allured the non-resident Indians to invest in the homeland and offered a bridge to connect them with their homeland in the form of Overseas Citizenship of India Act¹¹ (Holtzman, 2010). The shift in governmental attitude towards NRI is significant as they were considered anti nationals in the past. This highly appreciated pragmatic venture brought in funds for the infrastructure development and the party (BJP) opened a lifeline for them-funding for their work and the power of lobbying through powerful NRIs.

¹¹Overseas Citizenship of India status entitles one to have lifelong visa to India and permits to take part in financial, economic and educational fields (Ministry of Home Affairs, India).

The film industry and the Hindutva parties supported each other and kept on inventing new ways of association. In 1998, recognizing the popularity of Bollywood cinema and its role as a national ideological tool, the BJP-led government officially recognized the commercial film sector as an industry entitled to tax protections. In response to government recognition, Bollywood film producers began to craft features reflective of the BJP's Hindu-centric political agenda and its desire to attract and appease NRI investors (Holtzman, 2010). The contemporary Bollywood cinema, moving away from traditionalist approach, engages with themes that manifest nation's liberalized economy while 'maintaining a strong national identity grounded in the celebration and retention of cultural and religious (primarily Hindu) values and traditions' (Holtzman, 2010: 121). This contributed to the transformation of the NRI in Bollywood narrative, who once was hated for being less patriotic and a symbol of moral degradation, into the heroes of India's growth story (Therwath, 2010).

Bollywood and Imagined Nation

Imagined community is formed when the members of the nation, though not known each other, are connected with a sense of national fraternity. In Indian scenario, with its powerful ways of engaging with people of all sections (literate and illiterate) film plays a crucial role in the construction of nationhood (Ansari, 2007). Hindi cinema is considered to be the flag-bearer of Indian culture and privileges itself to be a prominent manufacturer of nationness and national identity (Viridi, 2003; Sen, 2010). Bollywood being the bioscope of stories of human interactions, staying unaffected by the economic, social and political changes which started in the 1990s, seemed impossible. In spite of the presence of regional films, Bollywood appears to enjoy national and global acceptance, and made the re-imagined nation on the big screen a major cultural event. Hindu nationalism providing cultural and ideological support to economic liberalization made inroads into India's upper and middle classes. Although opportunistic, the association between Hindu nationalism and economic liberalization led to mutual reinforcement (Rajagopal, 2001). Hindutva 'not only changed how people thought of themselves and each other, but it also altered the collective imaginary of nationhood' (Sen, 2010:146). Some scholarly

enquiries made into the structure and nature of these two forces, point out how similar they are, both in terms of implicit and explicit behaviour (Sen, 2010). The combined force of Hindutva and economic liberalization acted upon and influenced the artifacts of Indian public culture, which has become essential for their existence and survival.

The socio-economic changes due to liberalization prompted the Hindu nationalists to reconfigure nation's cultural constituents – excluding certain groups and including some other groups – in view of constructing a Hinduized nation. When a nation's cultural boundaries are redrawn, non-resident Hindus became 'sons of the soil' and other communities, though very much within geographical boundaries, were stamped anti-national and foreigners (Desai, 2007). Such reconstruction of the national boundaries and re-imagination of the nation have been an on-going process – of continuous portrayal and continuous re-construction. In this context, it is important to consider those arguments that seem to concur with Benedict Anderson's notion of nation as imagined community, especially when it is defined in terms of Hindi cinema's influence in India and abroad (Viridi, 2003). Hindi cinema, albeit having a large audience abroad, is still produced and mostly consumed in India. Bollywood, promoting Hindu middle class identity, constructed an imagined community within the national borders and in diaspora in line with the Hinduization project of Hindutva (Dudrah, 2006).

In a liberalized global market, Bollywood soon realized its potential to earn economic revenue and made efforts to reach out to the transnational audience. Bollywood, providing the Indian communities world over with visuals, helps the diasporic subjects imagine a homeland and connect with it which in reality is far way (Ansari, 2007). For second-generation citizen migrants (...) Bollywood is the most readily available mode for establishing cultural contact with a homeland –that has never been' (Chowdhuri, 2010). Tradition, family and patriotism with religion running through - the three being the essential constituents of a pleasing cinematic narrative - Bollywood cashed on them and subsequently helped to form a Hindu national space. Bollywood has become an advocate of family values suggested by the patriarchal Hindu joint family

system (Banaji, 2006). Thus like print media and transnational television, Bollywood too has come to help the diaspora to form part of the imagined community.

Along with Tejaswini Niranjana, Ashish Rajadhyaksha argues that 'Indian may no longer be limited to national boundaries' (Rajadhyaksha, 2000: 269). Large diaspora communities across the world, seeking to be in touch with the homeland, make all the possible means to stay connected with the collective cultural experience of the nation. Hindi films, serving as one of the major vehicles of cultural experience for Indians living within and outside the national borders, play a significant role in the formation of imagined communities.

During the financial crisis of the 1990s, the country's economy largely depended on the remittances by Indian emigrants from the Persian Gulf who were temporary workers in less privileged positions (Desai, 2007). These temporary workers who did not choose to emigrate permanently are more closely connected to India than those affluent emigrants who made Western countries their home. However, Bollywood in its narrative chose to ignore this group as they did not fit into the industry's Hindu middle class frame as most of the members of these groups belonged to workers from minority communities.

Stereotyping in Hindi films

Due to the overarching influence of Sanskrit drama on popular cinema, dramatization and comedy continue to be an essential element of entertainment for popular consumption (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998). Ethnic stereotyping is one of accepted forms of comedy and irrespective of religion it is widely used in Indian films (Ibid).

Hindutva, exercising its influence over the Hindi film industry, seeks new ways of redefining Indian culture and re-constructing 'Indianness' in order to establish an assertive Hindu nation. On the canvas of Bollywood, religious identity has been the paint to draw the 'good' and the 'bad', which usually goes by the majority understanding of the community. 'One of the chief ways in

which Hindutva's project is being reinforced in the wider culture is through the projection of new national stereotypes' (Desai, 2007: 50). Although occasionally, the Hindi films have not failed to give a few jingoistic lines to a Muslim character to create good Muslim, it has never challenged the caricature of a Muslim as a 'terrorist'. In fact, even in the midst of rising militant Hindutva, in Bollywood Hindu militancy has never been a theme. However, there are no good Christians or bad Christians in Hindi films, but only stereotyped Christians, which is true even in the case of many memorable Christian characters Hindi cinema has produced. Christians in the Bollywood's bioscopic lens, whether good or bad, can only be in a certain way - Westernised. These stereotyped Christian characters usually drink a lot, swear, and spit a few English words. Christian men are usually drunks and small-time racketeers while the skimpily clad Christian women in Hindi films are reminiscent of liberal feminism representing Western culture (Dwyer, 2006a).

Stereotyping: 'National' versus 'Anti-national' and 'Foreign'

'One of the chief ways in which Hindutva's project is being reinforced in the wider culture is through the projection of new national stereotypes' (Desai, 2007: 50). The entertainment cinema in India, serving a larger conflation of interests, has sought to move around the principal narrative-Indian national identity (Chakravarty, 1993; Mehta, 2010). The Bollywood offered to be the major conduit for the proliferation of the new definition of 'Indian', which one might argue as part of the elaborate scheme of Hindutva politics, though there is no obvious signs of such collusion. The postcolonial cinema maintained a distinction between the spiritual, chaste and morally superior East and the materialistic, corrupt and sexually degenerate west. 'The bad women in popular films have frequently been 'Westernized vamps', for example: the signifying markers being short hair, consumption of cigarettes and alcohol, revealing Western attire etc.' (Mehta, 2010: 8).

However, Bollywood did not create the divide between the East and the West. It provided a popular platform for the extension of an already existing discourse, which has been an essential element of nationalist narrative. It was

primarily an attempt to define and separate ‘home’ from ‘the ‘world’, which was controlled by the colonizer’ (Mehta, 2010: 7). In Bollywood’s attempts to define ‘home’, in sharp contrast to the West, ‘tradition’ and ‘woman’ played major roles, often portraying female characters in line with female Hindu deities.

Christian stereotypes

Although there are views that Christian community has been marginalized and did not get a fair treatment in the mainstream cinema, there were a few Hindi films set in a Christian community and which tried to be sincere in their approach. However, the stories of most of those films emerge from the Christian communities that have Western influence - Anglo Indian and Goan Christians who still have Portuguese influence (Dwyer, 2006a). The indigenous Christian communities in India remain left out from the supposedly pan-Indian canvas of Bollywood. Such deprivation by the most popular cultural carrier, leading the community to be viewed as an extension of Western Christian communities, isolates them from the nation as a cultural entity.

While the relation between Indian film industry, which takes up a sizable portion of entertainment industry and religion, needs academic attention, I am interested in religious stereotyping of Christians in popular Hindi films. There have not been many attempts made to study Christian stereotypes in Hindi cinema. In order to point out and assess the implications of stereotyping, further enquiries are to be made into the text. To study Bollywood’s narrative of Christian community, I will be looking at two films in detail: K. Sethumadhavan’s *Julie* and Shyam Benegal’s *Trikal*.

***Julie* (1975)**

Julie, set in a socially marginalized Anglo-Indian community in the 1970s, draws the picture of a community’s undying love for its English roots and strong dislike for the Indians. The film presents the contradictions that run deep in the society while the state seems to have embraced the secular form with its popular motto – ‘unity in diversity’. The dominant narrative, even when the

story revolves around personal relationships of a charming female protagonist, is the aspirations of the community, which is in conflict with the nationalist interests of the citizenry. The community stands out against the contrasting features of the 'Indian milieu' provided by the native Indians.

The pictures of Gods and Goddesses emphasize the power of religion and every conflicting argument seems to have developed from the religious belief of those involved. The heroine represents a new generation of Anglo-Indian women who try to liberate themselves from the restrictions imposed by their parents and community in order to materialize their dreams in a world they are born and brought up in. This film attempts to glorify the nationalist interests and 'Indian values' while portraying the large cultural divide existing between India and the West. One might also see an attempt to define national identity without visual and aural excesses but mostly by pointing out those that are not Indian.

This film stands out among the popular Bollywood films of the time due to its novel theme: female protagonist, that too from a minority community. Although not considered path-breaking, the film stood apart among the 'angry young man' films of the 1970s and 1980s (Sharpe, 2005). While the angry young man films portrayed class conflict, *Julie* illustrated a conflict of traditions: Indian vs. Western. I seek to identify and follow those motifs that are ostensibly religious but are meant to mark the cultural division between India and the West. The study also includes how Bollywood, as a site of cultural interaction, operates to form a collective Indian identity and how religion is mixed with nationalist narratives that are floating over the story.

The film attempts to, in line with Leela Fernandes's allusion, identify the purity of Indian nation with the purity of the Hindu woman who seeks to imitate the perfect woman in the sacred tradition - Sita (Fernandes, 2001). The male protagonist Shashi Bhattacharya's mother, a devout Hindu, keeps away from cooking and other household chores her daughter Usha, as she is impure for two days every month. Her keen observation of ritual cleaning and dislike towards non-vegetarian food are to be seen as an attempt to idealize the Hindu values. The violation of Indian values on Indian soil is a reference to the presence of an

intruder in the Indian culture or the connotation could well even be the presence of colonizer's values.

Julie is caught up between the cultural conflicts and the moral dilemma due to the love and devotion she developed as a young woman. Her domineering mother, Maggie, who boasts of her English roots, loving but alcoholic father, Morris, and a younger brother and sister mostly from her world, though her friend Richie and Shopkeeper, Rahman occasionally pop in. Julie falls in love with her best friend Usha's brother, Shashi and the relationship develops into an inseparable kind of union. Their relationship leaves her pregnant and Shashi is unaware of it as he is away in college. Julie's mother, agitated at the news and without telling the rest of the family, takes her to a faraway place and leaves her with her aunty so that Julie can have her baby in secret. Later, Julie is forced to leave her baby in an orphanage and return home. When she comes back home she meets Shashi and narrates what had happened. Shashi wants to marry her but faces opposition from his mother, as Julie is a Christian. Julie too faces the same kind of problem as Maggie forces her to forget everything and disapproves her marriage with a Hindu boy who does not fit in her 'English world'. However, finally Shashi's father intervenes and they decide to live together.

Julie is no different from the usual Bollywood stereotyping of Christian woman as mini-skirted, morally loose and lover of Western modernity (Sharpe, 2005). Socializing, dancing and drinking with men are acceptable practices among Anglo-Indians and Julie and Margaret seem to be following the normal customs of the community. When this text is read in the light of Hindutva's attempt to present and perceive 'Hindu' as 'Indian', a non-Hindu fails to qualify to 'occupy the position of the pure Indian woman' (Sharpe, 2005: 74). Margaret and Julie are not only Christians but members of a community, which has roots in the colonizer's land as well. The centuries old antagonism towards the colonizer is systematically smeared around these characters and the film attempts to portray their culture as inferior to India's. Julie, around whom the story revolves, often portrayed as an object of male desire and seen breaching the boundaries of 'Indianness'. Her interactions with Rahman, the shopkeeper

(especially her failure in reacting to his sexual innuendos as any Indian woman is expected to do) and the cycle ride with Richard are signs of her 'loose' character, which does not conform to Indian woman.

Margaret's scorn for Indians is brought alive in her comments about Julie's association with 'Desi' (native) friends. Julie, due to the influence of Usha and Shashi, starts developing affability towards Indian culture and started explicitly expressing her dislike towards partying and alcohol. If such transformation in Julie can be seen as the victory of good over evil, her mother's strong dislike for India and Indians, is seen as the power of evil to corrupt even the superior good. The motifs denoting the superiority of Hindu practices and values over that of the West keeps appearing occasionally in the film. Julie's appreciation for the fragrance and the serenity in Bhattacharya family over her noisy and alcohol stinking house is presented not without a purpose. Maggie's disagreement with Julie using such incense meant for Hindu worship and her demand of replacing them with Christian symbols like candle are perhaps meant to portray how distinct their values are.

Margaret's domineering nature and superiority in her home stand out as a clear contrast to a 'patriarchal Indian' family and the values Margaret represent are against the Hindutva ideology which stands for a male Hindu nation (Bannerji, 2006). Although Julie's alcoholic father, Morris is likeable and funny, such a submissive male figure is not part of patriarchal India. Devki Bhattacharya, Shashi's mother echoes the most obvious Hindu nationalistic discourse when she says 'Christians are happy to contaminate our religion'. Although she seems to be a lone voice in the household, she stands to represent a larger group of people who are not as educated as her husband and children. Bhattacharya's comment that his wife can be a parliament member signals the existing trend among politicians to polarize people on communal lines.

During the course of the film Julie, due to her association with the 'civilized Indians', turns out to be a more refined girl than before. The signs of her growing up to a morally sound Indian are to be seen in her reluctance to drink alcohol and the submissive 'yes' and 'no' to sex. The film stuffed with religious

symbols seeks to emphasize the overbearing influence of religion on culture and value system of a society. The incidents and decisions at every turning point in the film seem to be seeking the approval of Gods as the camera zooms in on the pictures of Hindu Gods and Christ and Mary. Julie, immediately after her passionate sexual encounter with Shashi, is stricken with fear and guilt as she is faced with the picture of goddess Durga¹² hanging on the wall. In Hindu tradition Durga is considered the embodiment of the Supreme Being who is responsible for preserving moral order and righteousness in the universe. Goddess's intervention in their life seems to be a warning against the female intruder who corrupted the sacred sphere of a Hindu family and a reminder about the need for preserving female purity. Goddess's anger is well depicted in the picture in which she is shown slaying a demon - destruction of evil by good. On the other hand, in Julie's home Maggie enjoys the approval and blessing of her God as the camera moves swiftly from Maggie tearing apart Julie's letter to Shashi to the picture of Jesus.

The Anglo-Indians are shown to be united and willing to sacrifice personal interests for their community. The aspirations of the community are not linked to India as they wish to be connected to England and their Western lifestyle is an exhibition of their allegiance. Maggie's assertion that they are not part of 'Hindustan' and happy to leave the country signals the community's frustration and contempt for India. The larger question is –why do Indians tolerate such disgruntled community who do not consider India as their motherland? The elements of religious nationalism become obvious when the film attempts to mix values of Anglo-Indians with Christianity and Hindu values with India.

The film, loaded with religious symbols and the rhetoric swinging around their religious belief, attempts to portray the division in the society on communal lines. Christians protested against the film for presenting the community in a poor light and objections were made against the way Julie's sexuality was shown (Dwyer, 2006). Although set in Anglo-Indian community, *Julie*, a remake of Malayalam film *Chattakkari*, perhaps conveyed more than it was

¹²Durga is described as a ferocious invincible warrior who descends into the world from time to time to combat evil of various kinds, especially demons (Kinsely, 1988).

meant to. It is a difficult proposition to accept that in the 1970s the average Hindi cinema viewing public understood the difference between Anglo-Indians and Christians especially when the film carries a plethora of Christian religious symbols.

The Bollywood narrative of the Christian community has been invariably linked to Western culture, which is perceived to be immoral and unacceptable for a moral Indian. In many films, the community's presence was limited - to spice up the scenes with Western clad women who play bar tenders or cabaret dancers. With that said, there were films set in the community, attempting to produce an unbiased narrative. Aparna Sen's *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981), Anjan Datt's *Bada Din* (1998), Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Kamoshi- The Musical* (1998) and *Black* (2005), among others, have tried to explore Indian Christian communities and their harmonious interactions with other communities. However, in most cases Bollywood, restricting the presence of Christians in India to Goa and certain of Anglo-Indian ghettos, ignored the presence of indigenous Christians in the country.

Trikal (1985)

The film, made in 1985, gives a clear picture of the Portuguese occupied Goan Christian community in the 1950s. The story takes shape in the Souza-Soares Bhattkar family. The matriarch, Dona Maria has a daughter Sylvia and an illegitimate daughter of her husband Senhor Ernesto named Milagrina, whom she adopts and who works as a domestic help. Sylvia has two daughters - Anna and Aurora - and two young sons. The story unfolds as through the flash back narrative of Riuz Periera who has returned to Goa after 24 years. In this film Shyam Benegal, the father of Indian realistic cinema and winner of many film and civilian awards, has painted the characters with extreme care.

The story opens with the scene of the death of Senhor Ernesto. While the grieving family and friends are around the body, Ernesto's wife Dona Maria is seen in a rocking chair listening to Portuguese music (Fados). It is interesting to see how Maria seeking the permission of her dead husband as the family was

preparing for the wedding between Anna and Erasmo, who has come from Lisbon. Meanwhile, Erasmo realizes that Anna is pregnant and the wedding is called off, though reluctantly. Anna is deeply in love with Leon, a nationalist who has escaped prison in Lisbon and is hiding in basement of Anna's house. Unwilling to reveal her affair with Leon, Anna bewilders everyone in the family. Dr. Simon, a family friend offers to his nephew, Ruiz (the narrator) in marriage to Anna. But Maria rejects the proposal as they belong to a different caste. Finally, Anna elopes with Leon to Lisbon, strangely enough, on the day of Goan independence. With Anna leaving for Lisbon the story comes to an end as everyone leaves one by one to different places except Maria and Milagrina.

Trikal is a family story, which depicts in detail the meticulous narration of Goan Christian aristocracy. Yet the film chooses to speak about a larger point – escalating mood of Indian nationalism in the community and their reluctance to sever the affiliations with the Portuguese colonizer. Dr. Simon Periera, during the post-funeral dinner, makes a speech about Indian state's efforts to free Goa from the Portuguese colonialism and merging in the Indian union. His nationalistic overtures are not appreciated by most of them and it looks to be the reflection of community's worries about the imminent Indian invasion. For most, the Portuguese way of Western life has become the norm and do not see a flourishing community under Indian rule. Some of them, especially the Souza-Soares family, in the past had sided with the Portuguese and helped the suppression of the fledgling Indian nationalist movement. The family's anti-nationalist affiliations are visibly evident in the appearance of the ghosts of nationalist heroes like the Ranés who fought the Portuguese. As Dona Maria tries to communicate with her dead husband using Milagrina, the ghosts of people who were hurt by the family appear.

The film depicts vividly the close relationship Christianity maintained with the Portuguese rulers and its affiliation and approval of the Western life. The Catholic Church, the dominant Christian community in Goa, represented the community's resistance to be part of Indian union. The priest, in a church where prayers are made in Latin, in his sermon vigorously opposing India's move, is an embodiment of community's stand on the issue. The intention of the

filmmaker is not to be seen as anti-Christian or cannot be accused of making an attempt to show Christian community in poor light. Shyam Benegal, who has known the culture and life of the people, and as critics from the community point out, has taken a realistic approach.

The irony that is deeply embedded in the nationalist imaginations of Goan Christians is portrayed in *Trikal*. Although Leon, Anna's boyfriend, is a fervent nationalist and has spent time in Portuguese prison, eventually escapes to Lisbon. Does it mean nationalist elements among Christians seek to be pragmatic in the face of adversity?

The Western music, Portuguese dance and parties are not to be missed out if the approach is realistic. The social interactions among the members of the community, dress and food habits show how different they are from the rest of India and remain an essential part of the narrative. These and the discourse on culture, independence and politics, which arise often in their gatherings, make them distinct from the majority community in Goa. The Christian community, in spite of being the minority in Goa, seems to be getting more attention and people often speak of 'Christian Goa'. The ubiquity of Christian symbols and churches, owing to the Portuguese occupation, gives a Christian facade to the state. It is important to note that in the market-oriented Bollywood industry Westernized life of Christian community is preferred over the majority 'Hindu Goa'.

Christianity, Religion of the Colonizer

The European colonizers, unaware of the existence of a Christian non-West, held that Christianity in India is colonial and some nationalist writers portrayed 'colonialism as a Christian endeavor' (Joseph, 2010: 181). This assumption is often flaunted around in post-colonial narratives and the corollary of such presumption is Indian Christians are colonial products and subscribers of colonial interests. So in the anti-colonial discourse of Hindu nationalists the followers of colonial religion are largely excluded from the national community. It also explains why the relationship between colonialism and

Christianity contribute to anti-colonial sentiments that abet the continued oppression of Christians in 'Hindu India'. Hindutva's efforts to revisit the colonial history and rediscover the colonial connection of Christianity, are to be seen as part of articulating a justified narrative for the oppression of Christians. Post-colonial literature and film, recreating the colonial experiences and adding communal colour to it at times, take part in the nationalist endeavors of Hindutva.

Conclusion

Although militant Hindutva is only a small part of the 'new metropolitan Hinduness', it has shown signs of assertiveness (Basu, 2010:7). While religio-political spheres remain the platform for the overt manifestation of their assertiveness, making systematic interventions into the components of public culture, such as films and music, it seeks to influence, the family values and the concept of nation-ness. The changes Bollywood underwent over the last three decades, especially regarding the stereotyping of minority communities, are symptomatic of the overarching influence of Hindutva. Bollywood in its bid, seeking to build the idea of Hindu nation by drawing parallels between congruent institutions, centers its narrative on families and the familial values are transposed on the nation. Such affinities are drawn with the vocabulary of familial ties – 'mother tongue', 'motherland', 'father of nation' etc. and the relationships in families define femininity and masculinity in the context of Indian nation (Viridi, 2003). The stereotyping of Christian woman is symptomatic of the problem: they have been rival characters that are meant to conflict with the 'ideal of *Bharatiya Naari*', (ideal Indian woman) 'an indigenous symbolic construct' after which Indian women are expected to model their conduct (Mankekar, 1999: 8).

Contemporary Bollywood films, in line with India's status as a rising economic power, reconstructed its expressions of sexuality, jingoistic nationalism and above all consumerist lifestyle (Holtzman, 2010). Its narrative of 'national' provides useful insights on the 'national identity' as viewed by the world and by Indians themselves. The narrative overshadowed by the diversities the state

boasts of - gender, class, and religious communities - disrupt and even redraw the history and the picture of national identity (Viridi, 2003). An event is not just a phenomenon in the past but an ongoing happening depending on how it is interpreted. An event becomes historically significant when it is refracted through cultural scheme (Bhattacharya, 2010). In Indian cinema, the discourse on national identity and citizenship are closely linked to the narration of nationalist endeavors and past events. Hindi cinema's projection of identities depends on the narration of 'violent social events and the iconicity of their representation as historical phenomena' (Bhattacharya, 2010: 130). Its sensationalized illustration of India-Pakistan rivalry, the continuing conflicts between communities and the colonizers brutality, are all part of construction of identity and naming the enemy. Hindi films have shown inclinations to the proclivities to project Christians as culturally delinked from the nation due to adequate lack of 'Indianness' and affiliation to the Western culture. Such alienation on platforms of popular culture, seeking to construct a 'non-Indian' identity for the community, offers justification for Hindutva's definition of Indian nation.

The alienation of undesirable communities within the national imaginary and ethnic cleansing are achieved through the cumulative use of cinema and other popular audio visual media. The Hindutvisation of the television is an extension of the Hindutvisation of cinema and television's engagement with Hindutva reflects Bollywood's interactions with the Hindutva's hegemonic ideology.

Chapter 5

A *Hindutva* Public Sphere? Analysing the Tele-visual Formations in a Digital World

The public sphere, as conceived by Jürgen Habermas, is a site free from authoritative control of the state, family ties and restrictions laid down by market values. Private people coming together to form this public sphere, led by reason, engage in dialogues and deliberations in order to force the state to take decisions for the public good (Habermas, 1991). Although some scholars argue that it is not more than an imaginary ideal community, the concept of the public sphere has become essential in political life (Chandhoke, 2005). The public sphere has been a favourite term for theorists of political science, cultural and media studies and sociology, among others. Their contribution, subjecting the term to further critical scrutiny, helped to accelerate the evolution of Habermas's term. During the process, Minna and Ingrid point out, it has been 'altered, and rediscovered to the point where it has almost become a generic slogan for theorizing, and often promoting, both mediated and unmediated arenas for democratic deliberation' (cited in Aslama & Erikson, 2009: 2). The concept, based on 18th century bourgeois Europe, in Habermas' own opinion had by the 20th century already been 'refeudalised', and he regarded the role of mass media as forming a public sphere 'by appearance only'. It is not surprising that his theorization has influenced numerous disciplines. Taking the lead from Habermas, the concept has been further expanded and developed and theories focusing on the media's role in public opinion and political processes have been drawn. Debates ranging from the democratic theory of political science and the self-reflection of cultural critics to empirical studies in sociology and communications, have all embraced the term in their own ways – and continue to do so (Calhoun, 1992; Garnham, 2007). However, in spite of its many drawbacks Habermas's approach, focusing on the strong ties between the institutions and practices of mass communication and the institutions and practices of democratic politics, provides scope for further debate and research. This normative framework when explored further and engaged with critically,

refining and reshaping it according to the context, gives adequate space for other theories too.

Globalisation, impacting on the working relationship between media, polity and culture, has created a new scenario in the nation state (Lunt & Livingstone, 2013). Media, driven by profiteering ideals, have the potential to manipulate and construct opinions in order to privilege private interests. Such invasion by various interest groups makes the public sphere corrupt and subsequently exerting pressure on the state to safeguard their interests. Even Habermas, showing a shift in his stand proposes a 'pragmatic programme for including religious voices in the political public sphere in order to facilitate rational communication' (Sheedy, 2010:5). Taking cues from this suggestion, I argue that religious groups, if present in the public sphere, have the potential to animate debates, promote their ideas and make the political authority accept them. This chapter explores the possibility of the formation of a Hindutva public sphere in a scenario where the civil society is informed by a plethora of views and news provided by various forms of media, with television leading the race.

The Significance of Habermas in India

Much has been discussed about the public sphere, perhaps in some instances even forgetting the author of the concept, Habermas. While introducing such an influential concept, 'Habermas offered a historical argument about how letter writing, novel reading, and critical discussion prepared the ground for individual participation in modern democracy' (Rajagopal, 2009:2). Since it is an historical argument or as some scholars suggest, a normative theory, its empirical existence could well be questioned today. But his attempt to identify a democratic forum, independent of the state, which is capable of making the government accountable to people through vibrant discursive process is important for any democratic society. It is imperative that any investigation into such a sphere, includes a thorough understanding of the employment of the semantics and the factors that make this public forum possible.

Habermas's concept of the public sphere acting as a foundational framework enabled further discussions on the mass movements that have come to shape the evolving democratic structures in India. However, it is essential to read and understand Habermas according to the context, without ignoring the need for critical analysis of the concept. I argue that the Habermasian concept of the public sphere provides a basic structure and offers a useful starting point for any study of civil society in India. The basic concept provided by Habermas has been subjected to vigorous criticism over the years, of course without undermining the importance of key aspects of this theory, but instead, enriching it (Calhoun, 1993). Critically evaluating the theory, it may be pointed out that the concept has to be interpreted in view of accommodating the pluralist nature of the public sphere. In multi-layered and culturally diverse country like India a vibrant society offers enough space for pluralistic public sphere, as Garnham suggests they can exist alongside, and some in opposition to the other (Garnaham, 1993). At a later stage, I shall deal with the multiple public spheres, which have made the Indian public space active and strengthened Indian democracy with diverse ideas and views.

Media and the Public Sphere

The communicative function of the media is crucial in a public sphere where citizens, equipped with the freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express their opinions about matters of public interest, come together for public deliberation. The media employed for transmitting information to the public could be, as Habermas suggests, newspapers, radio, television (Habermas, 1964) and Internet in modern times. For Habermas, the free press remained an institution of the public itself, effective in its role as a mediator and a facilitator of public discussion, though face-to-face communication is the steering principle of his theory.

A number of studies have been done on the mass media's ability to help and enrich the public sphere as a democratic forum where rational debates on issues concerning the state are held (Curran, 1991; Dahlgren, 2009, among others). The mass media, re-organising themselves to fit in with economic and

regulatory pressure, have moved from the initial public service model to a model that includes market interests (Garnham, 1990). Such market-oriented media behaviour, affecting the relationship between the citizens and the government, brings its role as a powerful mediator between civil society and political authority under scrutiny. In this context, it is imperative for any study on the role of the media in political process to look critically at television's role in creating such a democratic forum. It is all the more important in the case of television when it is seen to be a forum to involve people actively and engage with the government in a participatory democracy like India. The political public sphere is enriched by the contributions from the literary public sphere (Habermas, 1964) and the political thinking in India is shaped and guided by the intellectual support extended to it by the literature from every field of study and the enormity of the media texts bombarded onto the public space.

For the citizenry to play a role in democracy 'it needs access to an institutionally guaranteed forum in which to express their opinions and to question established power,' as Livingstone and Lunt argue, adding that 'the media now constitute a major forum for political communication' (1994:10). Taking a lead from this argument I suggest that the media acts as a public sphere where the citizenry engage in discursive deliberations for the welfare of the state and interact with the representatives of political power. The early writings of Habermas accuse the media of providing a pseudo public sphere where, instead of actively taking part in debate, citizens become passive spectators (Habermas, 1984). This Habermasian view perhaps proved to be true in 18th and 19th century Europe. But this theory is to be checked, for validity, within the spheres of political communication and interaction in contemporary societies across the globe where the media seems to have a more powerful role to play. I argue, side stepping from the normative theory offered by Habermas, that the contemporary media theories create adequate room for discussion and debate on the mass media's power to act as an active public sphere in India.

The Public Sphere and Civil Society in a Mediated World

The closely related institutions, the public sphere and the civil society are meant to exert influence over the government as part of building a welfare state. The public sphere, as commonly understood, 'arises as part of civil society, incorporating adults who have gained maturity and intellectual autonomy in another of its parts, the family' (Calhoun, 2010: 301). Civil society, on the other hand, as an institution, organises social life by giving 'expression of the views expressed in the public sphere' (Castells, 2008:78). Civil society, providing a powerful public sphere capable of challenging the government by way of active discussions and constant engagements, establishes a medium of interaction, which is essential for the survival of a democratic society.

Freedom of expression is an essential quality of a free democracy where the government seeks to engage with the people in view of making negotiations and approval for its policy-making decisions. The political authority in power, in order to facilitate such engagements with people as part of a vibrant and mature democracy, requires the mediation of communication through a free media (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). But there is always the danger of this communication being biased. In Indian participatory democracy, television, in offering opportunities for a greater level of public participation in the political process, has become an important player.

The talk shows that appear mostly on news television which open up a forum for the audience to take part in discussions of contemporary political and social issues, are signs of a maturing democracy in the media age (ibid). However, Habermas did not seem to agree with such power of the media when he said 'critical debate arranged in this manner certainly fulfills important social-psychological functions especially that of a tranquillizing substitute for action' (Habermas, 1989:164, quoted in Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). The political debates on television can be 'managed shows' to give the audience false impressions, as Habermas feared, especially when the medium is biased. However, in contemporary times, the discussions on television have become increasingly democratic much more than hitherto, with the introduction of

second screen and other new media facilities. The broadcast media, working in collaboration with the new media, opens up new ways of audience interaction, which enable the members of civil society to engage with the public sphere. However, the nature of questions from the audience and the direction of discussion in the television studios are controlled and shaped, to a large extent, by the anchors of the programme. The monitoring of questions raised during the course of the programme, though essential to prevent possible abuse, enables the media to shun questions and comments that do not suit their policy and ideology. In such a situation, television's power to influence civil society and manufacture public opinion cannot be ignored.

India's Pluralised Public Sphere

In his theory Habermas emphasised face-to-face communication and rational debate but not media – mediated communication with the help of technology. But now the communicative functions of the modern media in the deliberative democracy have become more crucial than ever, with the opening up of new ways of discursive deliberations by diverse groups. According to Kellner 'new media and technology could lead to an expansion and revitalization of new and more democratic public spheres' (Kellner, 2000: 271). Habermas's concept of the public sphere, based on eighteenth century bourgeois Europe, in his own admission, had been 'refeudalised' by the twentieth century and is still undergoing transformation due to various socio-political changes. The new communication media such as, radio, television and the Internet, create new public sphere by triggering debates and discussions on issues concerning public life and offering forums for the discursive process. More and more people have come to interact with like-minded people and engage in discussions that can force the state to be accountable to the polity. The multiplicity of social groups and political formations not only emphasises a maturing democracy at work but also reflects the possibility of multiple public spheres. In a country like India when drawing a theory, a wider approach is to be employed so that the diversities in civil society can be accommodated.

Television and the Middle Class Public Sphere

The rise of Indian language media both print and visual, leading to the formation of public spheres, not seen anywhere else in the world, helped to shape politics in the country in ways not anticipated before. The expansion of the media industry depended on its focus on the consumer preferences of the middle class. Some scholars consider the growth of television in the 1990s 'depressed the scope for serious journalism' due to its greater focus on entertainment (Rajagopal, 2009:15). However, most commentators seem to agree on one thing - the rise of television accelerated the expansion of the consumer market and, arguably, the overall development of the country.

The media as an industry depends on the power of middle class consumption, which makes catering to their taste essential for its existence. Due to such dependence, the media assumed itself to be the representative of this class and attempts are made to protect the interests of India's growing middle class (Rajagopal, 2009). The changes in society, which helped the growth of the media and later, reinforced by the same media, transformed the democratic process in the country by making it more discursive, which resulted in the formation of a vibrant middle class public sphere. The needs and aspirations of this group, some of course provided by the media, give it a pan-Indian character. Although middle class public sphere existed in India before the arrival of the vibrant media, especially television, it stayed invisible to the public. Television, by giving visibility to this dormant middle class and the middle class public sphere, has become their spokesperson. In the recent past, India witnessed a sudden upsurge of social movements of mostly urban youth and a new dimension of media activism. Most television news channels, giving live coverage to these demonstrations, christened them 'young middle class agitation' (some sociologists do have a different opinion on 'middle class') and thus they gave visibility to both the middle class public and middle class public sphere. The 'Delhi gang rape'¹³ case is a prime example of media activism in highlighting middle class issues. While media activism was positively commented upon as it kept the public memory alive and forced the government

¹³ On December 16, a 23-year-old student was brutally gang raped on a moving bus in New Delhi. Succumbing to her fatal injuries, she eventually died in a Singapore hospital after two weeks.

to act, many questions were raised about the media's urban middle class connection. In India, once every forty minutes a woman is raped (*The Indian Express*, December 24, 2012) and there have been other rapes more brutal than this one. But most of such incidents that take place in rural India or involving women who belong to subaltern groups are generally ignored by the mainstream media. Based on a study conducted by Centre for Media Studies (CMS), Radhika Sachdev points out that television news channels dedicated '7,551 minutes of news coverage, special bulletins and talk shows against the 46 minutes devoted to all rape cases in March 2012 and 17 minutes to cases of molestation' (Sachdev, 2013). Television, showing such leniency towards the middle class, created a space flooded with middle class interests. This public space of action, according to television, is to be claimed by the nation-loving citizenry. The suggested middle class centred public space is reinforced and further constructed by television's loyal audience who regularly subscribe their news as well as give feedback via twitter and Facebook on the news channel's on-line version. These social network platforms offered by the news channels, bringing like-minded people, augment the existing forum. Television, thus legitimising the 'middle classness' and projecting it as having the most desirable status, has 'played a crucial role in the cultural constitution of these middle classes as a powerful cultural bloc' (Mankekar, 1999:9). The middle class dominance over the national public space is not new in India: it is argued that the nationalist discourse has always been, whether anti-colonial or post-colonial, intertwined with the powerful middle class discourse (Mankekar, 1999).

Audience and the Public

In modern societies across the world 'the distinction between audience and public is increasingly hard to draw, as the media become ever more deeply embedded in all aspects of society' (Livingstone, 2005:35). The conceptual overlapping of the audiences and publics and the intersections of both in everyday activities make this work difficult (Livingstone, 2005). However, an attempt is made to point out the existence of the two. A *public* is a group of individuals who hold similar views and opinions but not an amorphous mass.

This group is '(...) characterised by a style of performance. This performance may be either consensual or provocative, but on no account can it be invisible' (Dayan, 2001: 744). To understand and define the notions of 'audience' and 'public' two important questions are to be raised: How are the media audience and public related? Can one exist without any reference to the other? The formation of public opinion, which is essential for the reality of public, 'may occur without television' but not without the help of any media (Dayan, 2001: 745). The media, in whatever form it exists (ranging from rumour to mass media), providing information to the public, becomes essential for the formation and survival of public(s).

In order to draw out a distinction between the two, rather to understand them, a few characteristics may be laid down. *Public* requires an atmosphere to work out some kind of relationship between the other members of public(s) but, in sharp contrast to this, audience is not compelled to be sociable and it can exist in isolation (Dayan, 2001). Although all the members of *public(s)* do not exercise rational discursive power, they seek to express their opinions in common platforms. While *public* is endowed with the capacity to 'perform' and transform their opinion to demands, mostly led by the public sphere, audiences tend to stay outside the world of performance and actions (ibid). So in the existing media environment, *public* requires the media and the broadcast media, especially television, is believed to be an important player in the formation of *public(s)*. The television audience can remain as invisible viewers and listeners while still being part of a larger, even transnational audience community. The television audience and *public* remain two distinct entities, though they are closely linked and often the television audience forms the major constituent of public.

Middle Class Public Sphere and the Public

The audiences coming from all the possible groups and classes associated with the visual field offered by television, formed a 'public' outside the middle class public sphere –television public. Powered by their wider reach than regional languages, English and Hindi play a major role in bringing national issues to the

public sphere for discussion. The middle class public sphere, although located within various linguistic boundaries, stayed as one unit owing to their common subject for discussion and debate. I contend that the national news media, both English and Hindi, serve the regional language media with national issues to discuss. News television, with an elaborate network of national and language media and on-line social media, creates discursive public spheres in democratic India.

The developments in Indian public life due to the rise of television are far beyond its contribution in the formation of public spheres. The plethora of television channels, both news and entertainment, in almost all major Indian languages, established a visual field not restricted by the barriers of literacy (Rajagopal, 2009). Television, using the power of its audio-visual appeal, reach out to the illiterate and neo-literate masses and created an active television public. ‘The television public’, joining with the ‘public’ which exists not in reference to the television audience, forms an allied force capable of triggering even violent conflicts. The members of the ‘television public’ do not participate in rational discussions and are not to be seen as part of the public sphere, but provide their mass support to the conclusions, which emerge from the deliberative public spheres. The public sphere, which mediates the demands to the public and to the state, becomes a source for the competition of interests, competitions that occasionally assume the form of violent conflict. It can even, endowed with the support of the public, force the government to yield to their demands. The reforms and laws which result from the ‘pressure of the street’ can scarcely be understood as arising from the consensus of private individuals engaged in public discussion (Montag, 2000: 132). If such is the nature of the public sphere, it is certainly not the one Habermas spoke about but perhaps it is the way it exists. The participants of the middle class public sphere depend heavily on the English media, partly to fulfill their elitist aspirations. Although Hindi – in its various regional accents - is the most widely spoken language in India, English, the colonial language, still is the lingua franca, especially to bridge the linguistic gap between the north and the south.

Television as Public Sphere

The powerful connections which mass media maintain with the state and economy and its ability to reach out to both private and public persons, lead to questions like: Does the impact of media lead to the fragmentation of public opinion and help the formation of a discursive public sphere (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994)? The public sphere, having the potential to form coherent public opinion, is powerful enough to make the state accountable for its actions to its citizens. The discussions concerning the state that lead to rational propositions are considered to be the nerve-centre of the public sphere. Such actions on the public sphere influence the shaping of politics and the way democracy is conducted in the state.

The media-created public sphere too has the potential to criticize the authority of the state and force it 'to justify itself before an informed and reasoning public' (Thompson, 1990:109). This media-generated forum is open to the public and has the enormous potential to influence others who are not participating in the discussions physically or via the Internet. When manipulated, it even creates a false notion of 'popular' views and negatively impacts the policy-making of the government. Although the forum is open to all, every citizen is not provided with the facility to access this forum. According to Habermas, 'a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body' (Habermas, 1964: 49). For example, the debate conducted in TV studios can be considered 'a portion of the public sphere' as it is a public body, though they are only five or six in number. This modern public sphere offered by the media is different from the normative structure proposed by Habermas. The debate starts in a minuscule public sphere or a portion of the public sphere grows over the duration of the programme with more participants taking part through various modes of communication, namely, telephone, social networking media like twitter, Facebook or even via Skype. Thus television, offering a public sphere, which starts in TV studios and then supported by online social networking sites, creates a new public sphere - an amalgamated version of the public sphere: a tele-net public sphere. But the problem is, in a country like India where only 14

per cent¹⁴ have access to the Internet, the rest of the population is left without the technical means of access, even if they wish to participate on line. Leaving a vast majority outside the public sphere, it poses a problem for civil society in India. The television public, informed by the tele-net public sphere, is prone to be influenced by the views of those who are taking part in the discussions.

Contemporary media and political theories suggest that there are grey areas of contradictions regarding the political functions of the mass media (Livingstone, 1994). However, theorists may agree on one thing: ‘the media contains both manipulative and emancipator elements’ (Livingstone, 1994: 21). Using these manipulative and emancipator elements, television interacts with both the state and with civil society.

Participatory Television

Television not only provides people with a forum where they can meet both ‘physically’ and ‘virtually’ and voice their opinion and debate issues, but it is also a source of ‘social representation too’ (Livingstone, 1994). The critics who explore the existence of a bourgeois public sphere, as defined by Habermas, might consider the participatory television programme as a pseudo-public sphere. For audience discussion programmes to be a public sphere, Livingstone suggests, ‘the participants must be constructed as a public rather than a mass with equal rights to speak, with feedback, with action consequences and without media manipulation’ (1994: 32). Television, being a space for discursive deliberation, can be called a public sphere albeit limited in terms of media regulation and manipulation. However, the sustainability of the television-public sphere depends on the support given by the off-screen public sphere. In a media age like ours the support has to be mutual for their survival.

Speaking about special interest groups in the public sphere, Livingstone commented, ‘How ‘public’ opinion is expressed ‘depends on how the organisation’s membership is constituted and how it relates to the state, to other

¹⁴100 million PC-based Internet users and 373 million of 873 million mobile users make a total of 473 million users in country of 1.3 billion people (Kohli, 2012). Although 373 million mobile users are equipped with Internet facility, only a small percentage of them use it due to lack of the necessary technical knowledge and the high cost.

social organisations, and to the mass media' (1994: 23). These social interest groups emerge from their own private sphere and, if they are able to expand the sphere further, subsequently these private spheres become public. Audience discussion programmes provide a space in which the ordinary experiences of lay people are collected together and served to the public authority for decisions.

Spectacle and Visibility

As was discussed earlier, television not only provides for and acts as the public sphere but also helps the formation of an active 'television public'. The television public along with the members of the general public, coming together with the intention of giving visibility to a public opinion, make a public spectacle, which has the potential to influence and persuade public authorities as well as other non-participating members of the public. The role of television is manifested here in two ways: feeding the public with the views of the public sphere and giving visibility to the public demonstrations. Such public demonstrations turning into spectacles are often considered as the expressions of strong public opinion and the governments tend to be influenced by them. Television becomes a key player, more than any other media, as the strength of public influence often depends on the visibility television offers to them. The mass support which the anti-corruption movement in India received is perceived to be due to the wide media coverage. The news television, giving 24-hour live coverage to the meetings and protest rallies, including fasts by its leaders, made the activities of the movement a public spectacle. Such publicity, given by television, encouraged many members of the television public to join the movement in different parts of the country and the political parties rallied behind the movement to avoid public ire.

Publicity is generally explained in terms of the degree of consumption and it is as Warner claims 'difficult to realize how much we observe public images with the eye of the consumer' (Warner, 1993: 386). The members of the public are simultaneously both the audience and the consumer. The public display of views and ideas is important in a public sphere. Public persons in representative

public sphere owe a great deal to the mass media for their popularity and power due to the media coverage (Warner, 1993). Public opinion is to be made visible in order to influence the policy-making decisions of the state. Giving visibility to public opinion is one of the functions of the mass media too. Television has tremendous powers to give visibility to public opinion and, it also has the power to create illusion. The visibility of public opinion is best understood to be represented in television's portrayal of mass gatherings demonstrating public appreciation, or opposition, to government policies. This influence is two way – on both the decision-making body of the governmental machinery and on the non-participating TV public.

The Networked Public Sphere

Theories have been drawn, over the years, of varied forms of public sphere contemporaneous with the political, sociological and communication developments. However, most of such new theories require validation through a thorough investigation by researchers. The attempts to understand the fast-changing societies resulted in models like the 'plural public sphere' (Kellner, 2000) and the 'counter public sphere' (Wimmer, 2005). Some media-centric definitions consider the Internet as the latest in a long line of media, all of which have been, and will continue to be used to animate the public sphere (Aslama & Erikson, 2009).

In the age of social networking and web communities, researchers across the world tried to explore the possibility of the existence of a networked public sphere (ibid). The attempts to explore such a possibility have become inevitable for any study seeking to understand the ways of participating in post-broadcast democracies. These researchers pitch their investigation from the concerns raised by scholars who had explored the core question: do social networks facilitate platforms for democratic debate and participation in our 'post-broadcast' democracies characterized by a networked information economy? (Prior, 2007)

Broadly speaking, certain conceptualizations of ‘network,’ ‘public sphere,’ and ‘publics’ correspond to the disciplinary fields in which they are theorized and debated. For example, within the fields of sociology and political science, the notion of the public sphere is generally understood as a parliament-like place where debates and discussions take place.

Many seem to agree on the potential of the Internet to provide a forum to express opinions, initiate political discussions and to acquire and share information (Langman, 2005; Wimmer, 2005). Such a view also recognises the existence of the diversity of publics and on-line communities connected via a large number of networks. Civil societies, over the years and across the world, existed on the foundation laid by the web of network and such networking among the citizens with the media facilitating it, the formation of public sphere became a reality. However, network has become explicit and found a new dimension with advanced technology (Castells, 2008). Such a claim implies that the public sphere is essentially constituted by the mass media and networks of communication. Although the term ‘networked publics’ has been used widely and debated over by the academic world it is to be empirically investigated to understand how closely related the ideas of ‘public’ and ‘networks’ are within the networked public sphere.

Religion in the Public Sphere

It is argued that the public sphere, in any society, is not free from the influence of cultural elements present in it and the belief system of participating people. The belief system one carries, to put it in Habermasian terms, from the private to the public terrain of the life world –from family to the public sphere is considered to be formed due to one’s moral, humanitarian, or religious convictions, or a mixture of every participating element in one’s ‘life world’ (Habermas, 1987). Religion, for centuries, undoubtedly played an influential role in human civilization by laying down norms of living and thus shaping the culture. During and after the industrial revolution, due to socio-economic changes, at least in the developed world, society was seen to be moving away from religion and modernisation was linked to the secularisation of society

(Panikkar, 2009). Habermas points out that progress in science and technology as the reason for the decline of the relevance of religion. The sidelining of the religion-sponsored theo-centric worldview opened up new ways of thinking, which along with the economic transformation gave greater social security (Habermas, 2008). However, many scholars believe that the modernisation theory has lost its validity in the contemporary world as studies show the signs of a global resurgence of religion and have even started emphasizing the importance of public discourse focused on religion (Panikkar, 2009; Calhoun, 2010). Since 2001, a significant change is found in Habermas's position regarding religion too¹⁵. In 'post-secular' societies, he argues, religion has become influential and relevant and should be included in the public sphere (Sheedy, 2009).

India, still a young and maturing democracy, albeit the largest one, offers new ways of understanding the public sphere. Recently conducted surveys show the growing influence of religion in Indian society (Panikkar, 2009). The increase in the number of religious institutions and religious television channels, and the increase in the number of mass movements and programmes sponsored by religious groups testify to this claim. Modernity and technological advancement in India have not diminished the importance of religion as has happened in the 19th and 20th century Europe. The many possible reasons for the prominence religions in the Indian public space evoke academic interest for further research. Such relevance of religion could well explain why it has never been easy to separate religion from the structures of state power and why secularism in India is defined differently from that in Europe. It is argued that in India the political and economic atmosphere which existed during the 19th and 20th centuries due to colonisation, hindered the development of a secular and democratic public sphere (ibid). However, colonial suppression led to the formation of a different kind of public sphere - a 'restricted public sphere'. It was restricted vis-à-vis the European public sphere by colonial constraints: limited transactions among civil society members, and the power of mass media as a constituting and fostering

¹⁵ In his 2006 essay 'Religion in the Public Sphere' Habermas suggests the inclusion of religion in the public sphere in order to facilitate rational communication.

agency. The civil movement for India's independence was defined within the parameters of this 'restricted public sphere', envisioning a secular democratic state in all levels of its life as a nation. However, even the public sphere, which was meant to mediate between the state and civil society, was not entirely free from the influence of religion, though the common cause made possible the co-existence of secular and religious forces.

This study does not intend to discuss the merits of a religion-free public sphere or to subtract the achievements resulting from the presence of religions in it. It simply discusses the nature of the public sphere which existed in the past, while tracing its trajectory in recent history. More importantly, it explores the possibility of the 'Hindutva public sphere' in contemporary India, which has the potential to change the course of political events in the country.

The use of religion for political objectives is closely linked to the pervading presence of religion in every dimension of private and public life in India. Although religion plays a crucial role, Indian society has been projecting a divided picture – one divided on caste lines. Making electoral politics a mere numbers game, virtually all political parties in India take advantage of people's religious and caste affiliations. During the colonial period, when electoral politics was introduced, the major political party of the time, the Indian National Congress, failed to represent the middle class Hindu aspirations, in contrast to the minority-sponsored Muslim League. Since then, the attempts to build a political organisation which preserves the majority interests have been caught up in the hierarchical powers due to the caste system in popular Hinduism. The upper caste Hindus, realizing the need to construct a single 'Hindu community', propagated the idea of 'Hinduness', which is free of caste divisions (Joshy, 1996). The identification of 'Hinduness' with a political community, and the militaristic representation of this community gave birth to the 'Hindutva ideology', which seeks to unify people under the umbrella of religion (ibid). The Hindu nationalist movement creating a Hindutva public sphere, established a medium of negotiation between the state and the Hindu public.

Television and the Hindutva Public Sphere

Although Habermas admits that the media is not a mere organ for the propagation of news, he is not willing to consider it the medium of the consumer culture. However, as he points out, in the transition from the literary journalism of private individuals to the public services of the mass media, the public sphere was transformed by the influx of private interests which received special prominence in the mass media (Habermas, 1964). In India, the growth of the media industry, with TV seizing the central stage, has been seen in tandem with the liberalisation of the market. When the public service function of the media is blended with the business interests of private groups and organisations, its role of working for a welfare state is negatively affected.

In cultural and audience studies, distinctions are made between 'citizen-viewer' and 'consumer-viewer' (Livingstone, 1994). However, I argue that the audience, participating in the mass media in whatever role act as the 'public' informed by the media. Without disputing the existing views regarding the role of audience as 'passive' or 'active,' I argue that television does play an important role in the formation of the public sphere. The consumption of media informs a group of people simultaneously and, in so doing, defines a public audience, more recently referred to as 'publics' (Sheller, 2004; Varnalis, 2008).

Arvind Rajagopal describes how with the broadcast of Hindu epics, television helped to form a Hindu public, which spread across the heterogeneous Indian society (Rajagopal, 2009). The television narrative of the Hindu epics hugely helped in the construction of the bridge between religious belief and the politics in India, with the media text describing a unified nation. The construction of this unified nation is assumed to be possible only by a community which shared a common heritage - Hinduism. The Hindu public, further expanded due to vote-bank politics, have grown to overshadow the secular ideals on which the country is supposed to have been built. The symbols of the majority religion became ubiquitous and came to represent the symbols of national pride and be held in great honour. Television not only creates a Hindu public but it supports the Hindutva public sphere as well. When television gives visibility to the

members of the Hindutva public sphere, which is firmly rooted in the socio-political structures, it leads to its further expansion and to the extension of the Hindutva public across the country. The Hindu public, informed by Hindutva television news, has the potential to become the Hindutva public. Television, on the other hand, giving visibility to the campaigning activities and the public demonstrations of the Hindutva public, helps them in their attempt to compel the state to act in favour of their ideology.

Counter-Public Spheres and Violence

Considering the prominence and the influence of the Hindutva public sphere, one might point out the possible emergence of counter public spheres. The fear of suppression of the 'subaltern' groups often leads to the formation of 'subaltern counter-publics' to resist the majority domination. There is a strong tendency, in Fraser's view, among the subordinated social groups to constitute alternative publics. They affirm themselves as a parallel discursive arena where counter discourses are formulated and circulated (Fraser, 1989). 'The increasing voices of counter publics composed of subaltern peoples, existing in tension with the dominant public' (Vernelis, 2008: 155). These efforts by the subaltern - the minority groups who feel threatened, challenge the hegemonic Hindutva public sphere.

Habermas suggests that it is reason that rules reasonable argumentation in the public sphere. While maintaining its ideal nature as a 'space for dialogue and deliberation' the public sphere can still trigger violence in civil society. The consequences of the deliberations and debates are duly felt in the sphere of civil society, the space for public demonstrations and spectacles. So if the discussions are capable of inciting violence, such discursive process in the public sphere can be a source of violent action in the society. Neera Chandoke, exploring the public sphere-civil society relations, observes that 'it is not unknown to find the shadow of violence lurking threateningly over the public sphere of civil society' (Chandoke, 2005: 328). In order to understand the dynamics of violence it is important to focus on the relationship of the public sphere to social movements. Staying away from the field of violence, public

sphere incites the public associated with it and depending on the nature of visibility television offers, violence can take new shapes and forms.

The Digital Public Sphere and Imagined Communities

Since the public is both the audience and the civic body, the public sphere has always been associated with media. It has been generally held that television, with its various genres of programmes, helps in the formation of the public sphere as well itself serving as public spheres – both national and transnational. ‘The genre of news and current affairs’, it has been suggested ‘best captures the kind of public sphere Habermas imagined centuries before’ (Cushion, 2012: 15). Today Internet and on-line communication offer almost unrestricted participation and it has become increasingly important to discuss the merits of the on-line public sphere. According to Wimmer, on-line media has become, in terms of democratic action, more prominent than ever due to the easy accessibility, which makes the participation in on-line social groups easier (Wimmer, 2005).

Although on-line political discussions do not ensure equal and universal participation (Velasquez, 2012), some researchers contend that, by expanding the public sphere, on-line political discussions, make a substantial contribution to deliberative democracies across the world (Dahlberg, 2001; Dahlgren, 2005). The contents posted on social media networks have the potential to influence the development of opinions and to make an impression on participants of such communities (Velasquez, 2012). The relationship between the media and the audience largely depends upon the form of communication and the nature of the media. So control of the media, depending on the mode of communication, is significant in influencing public dialogue and, subsequently, public opinion. Both electronic and on-line media, being susceptible to external influence, have provided space for rigorous activity by the Hindutva ideologues. The Hindutva influence may be investigated by following the cues provided by the commentaries about the radical changes in Indian public life. The simultaneous rise of Hindutva and media has been a topic of many systematic enquiries (Dwyer, 2006).

To investigate Hindutva actions at a national and transnational level, I explore the possibility of linking two popular theories of our time - Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined Community' and Jurgen Habermas' 'Public Sphere'. Placing the Habermasian public sphere in the context of digital communication, the converging points of both theories are pointed out and discussed. The definition of national identity is no more limited by the geographical state boundaries, due to the mass movements of people across borders which is necessitated by globalization. Such mass emigration, which results in the formation of communities as part of the reaffirmation of their national identity, provides new ways of imagining and defining that national identity. Media and communications are central to the formation of such communities - connecting them to their 'national experiences' and to the collective memories of the past. The role of television in the formation, as well as the sustenance of transnational communities, has been a topic of research for a long time. Television viewing is a collective exercise and the viewers become part of a community of viewers who are simultaneously watching the same image (Dayan, 2001). The experience of simultaneity associated with television viewing, makes 'invisible meetings' with other members of the audience possible, and indicates the possibilities of imagined communities.

The technological developments in the field of communication impel us to explore new ways of practising and experiencing national identity. When citizens are connected and interact on a regular basis over electronic and online media, in view of them forming part of a public sphere which exists in a real or virtual space, it can be called a digital public sphere. The possibility of the existence of such a public sphere helps us to explain how it is related to Imagined Communities. In the light of the above discussion I argue that virtual or online public spheres are part of imagined communities. The online public sphere which forms part of imagined communities gives new dimensions to the study of nationalism. According to Benedict Anderson, 'electronic communications, combined with the huge migrations created by the present world-economic system, are creating a virulent new form of nationalism, which I call long-distance nationalism: a nationalism that no longer depends as it once

did on territorial location in a home country' (Anderson, 2001:42). Television, for example, recalling the experiences that people are supposed to have shared as a nation, constructs an image of the unified nation, which they can own as their motherland (Morley, 1992). The members of trans-national nationalist imagined communities, according to Anderson, are empowered by the Internet and other electronic media 'to have a powerful influence on the politics of their country of origin, even if they have no intention any longer of living there' (Anderson, 2001:42).

The growth of Hindu nationalism is to be understood in the context of the support being extended by the 'long-distance nationalist' communities enabled by transnational television, the Internet and other electronic media. Amrita Basu argues 'the BJP's use of both print and audiovisual media is remarkably well-suited to its project of creating an imagined Hindu community' (1996: 64). Since the last decade, though Hindutva has not become the dominant ideology among the diaspora Hindus, there is a noticeable proliferation of Hindutva ideology and organisations in the South Asian communities across the world (Bhatt & Mukta, 2000). However, to stretch the discussion to a level which includes online media and to see how social media creates egalitarian spaces that constitute public spheres, further research may be required.

Conclusion

The notion of public sphere has been evolving over the years to fit in with the changing ways of public life across the world. During the process of evolution this Habermasian theory has been developed further and has been instrumental in drawing out many useful democratic theories. Today the term is often used generically to refer to the democratic goals and responsibilities of media and civic life (Aslama & Erikson, 2009). In a deliberative democracy the media play a crucial 'role in enabling individuals to be informed, taught to seek information, and, if effectively educated, to critically assess and appraise information, to transform information into knowledge and understanding, and thus to make citizens capable of participating in democratic discussion and deliberation' (Kellner, 2000: 270).

In India, the fast development in the field of the Internet, by enhancing the quality of democratic participation and debate, leads to the creation of new spaces for political action and intervention. The new public spheres created as a result of the contributions made by the broadcast media and the new media have become spheres of active political deliberations as well as manipulation and social control. In such a scenario, it is important to study the dynamic nature of platforms that truly facilitate meaningful debates that are capable of making an impact on transnational, network-based online democratic processes, especially when attempts are made to investigate the ways in which the traditional and new media are used by the Hindu nationalist movement to form a public sphere and an active public surrounding it.

Chapter 6

Methodological Framework

The methodology outlined for this research project is meant to help the study which focuses on the influence of television news in the construction of the public perception about communal violence involving Christians in India, their understanding of Indian-ness and national identity. Given the complexity and social and cultural sensitivity associated with this topic, a multi-method approach was deployed to examine various aspects of the dynamics between television news and its consumption among selected audiences. The study explores the audience's understanding of the news media reportage of religious issues and communal conflicts and clashes, especially their understanding of television news. To understand the audience perception of the Christian community and to study the editorial policies of the media organizations regarding the issues involving Christian community, a relevant topic was chosen – namely the anti-Christian violence in the eastern Indian state of Orissa. These clashes, which took place in August-September 2008, was considered to be useful in identifying the underlying perceptions of the audiences – largely comprising of Hindus - about Christian communities, which greatly influence their opinions. The fieldwork, involving focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with senior media personnel, gave some understanding of the ways that the media interact with the audiences and the media's influence on them. The content analysis of the news footage of anti-Christian violence, of the leading Hindi news channel Aaj Tak and the English news channel Headlines Today, adequately exposed the difference in their approach to the issue guided by the editorial policies. This study, both the audience research and the content analysis, provided valuable data to check if Hindu nationalists' views about India's minority religions are reinforced by the news television and if it consequently helps to legitimize and promote the Hindutva movement.

Focus Group Interviews

Television, blurring the boundaries between ‘local’ and ‘national’ owing to the transnational flows directed by the principles of consumerism, has redefined the nature of audience. In the context of studying the role of television in forming communities that extend beyond the boundaries of the family unit, it is imperative to look at the ways in which television offers ‘viewing subjects opportunities to connect imaginatively with larger collectivities’ (Mankekar, 1999: 46).

The well-moderated discussions conducted in the focus groups are expected to produce useful insights into the complexities of the topic under research. They help us to understand the complex and obscure ways of human interaction and to gather information that is not easily obtained by other methods of research. Group interviews, which developed in the last century as the key activity in this method, have grown in popularity among researchers and have been shown to produce reliable data (Merton *et al.*, 1956). Focus groups, standing between the traditional individual interviews and participant observation, provide data that are difficult to obtain through these two methods (Morgan, 1997). One of the benefits of focus group interviews is gaining insights into people’s shared understandings of everyday life and issues that concern them. When discussion is facilitated through a guided interaction, participants are stimulated by the views of other participants. Such an environment encourages them to participate actively in the discussions where the ideas get reinforced and occasionally refuted. Such discussions produce results, which may not emerge in individual interviews or surveys (Bloor *et al.*, 2001). These discussions also offer an opportunity for the moderator to pursue certain ideas and explore them further in order to obtain a better result. This research method offers a secure environment wherein the participants feel confident to express experiences and opinions that they would not otherwise share (Morgan & Kruegar, 1993). In focus group sessions the participants are encouraged to express themselves in whatever language without having the fear of making mistakes or going wrong. They are not discouraged even when slang terms are used to express genuine opinion.

This research method was chosen to obtain knowledge about several perspectives on the given topic. The study of television's influence on its audience demands an exploration of other related topics. These include how television is watched by Indians, both in urban and rural areas, how important television is as a source of information and how the Indian audience perceives politics, religion and media and the dynamics of their perception in a multi-cultural and multi-religious country.

Choice of Location

The identification of samples and sites for data collection, analyzing the demographic features, was done carefully. The state of Uttar Pradesh appeared to match the specifications required by this study. This Hindi-speaking state is considered to be the most politically volatile, mainly due to its religious and caste equations configured with the politics of the state. An Indian Express study which analyzed the recorded 'communal' incidents in the state in the ten weeks following the Parliament elections reveals that a third of them occurred in or around the twelve assembly constituencies that are scheduled to go to polls soon. Two hundred of the six hundred and five communal clashes were recorded in those twelve constituencies and another two hundred in the border region (Suresh A. E., 2014). Besides, for this study, the state of Uttar Pradesh has an advantage over other Hindi-speaking states as it has more homes with television (Krishnatray *et al*, 2010). At the same time, to fulfill the demands of this research, focus groups had to be formed in the diverse segments of the population. The urban samples (two each) were identified in Noida and Firozabad. Noida was found to be appropriate due to its proximity to the national capital city and its multi-cultural demographic nature. It was considered to be the right place to provide information about the interaction between news television and young adults. In view of its mixed communal fabric, Firozabad was considered for the other two urban samples. For rural samples, the villages around Firozabad were found to be ideal locations. These villages were learned to have strong religious and political affiliations and offered us participants who stayed at different levels on the socio-economic

scale. Three focus groups were formed in Firozabad district and one in Mathura district. The focus group in Mathura district was chosen due to its remote location with different social parameters.

Interviews: Media Professionals

The influence of the media on the audiences is to be studied from two different levels: from the level of the audiences with the help of a systematic audience research and from within the media organization. It is important to investigate the ways of media's functioning and the ideologies that drive the decisions which the journalists make in their profession.

The interviews with media professionals revealed the complexities involved in the working of the media and the configuration of various elements that have come to play a major role in the encoding of the media text. During the course of the field work in India, the following media professionals were interviewed - Mark Tully, world famous journalist and commentator and a former bureau chief of the BBC in Delhi, Vinod Sharma, the political editor of the *Hindustan Times* and a well-respected commentator on Indian politics; Radhakrishnan Nair, an executive editor of CNN-IBN, one of India's leading television networks and VekataVemuri Sharma, a broadcast journalist working with the TV Today group, owners of both Aaj Tak and Headlines Today news networks. These in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in New Delhi and the views and opinions of such veteran and perceptive observers of India's media scene were extremely useful for this project. Later, seeking to bring more clarity to the topic under discussion, two more journalist who work for Indian media were interviewed: Hasan Suroor, formerly of The Hindu news paper and Loveena Tandon, TV Today group's London correspondent. They were able to provide a valuable framework within which the researcher could contextualize the nature of contemporary journalism in India and the growing communalization of polity. The interviewees were generous with their time and advice and the encounter with them hugely benefitted the research work for this project.

Content Analysis – An Overview

Media content analysis, a well-established research methodology, is used to analyze and study a broad range of media text (Mcnamara, 2005). Media content analysis, introduced by Harold Lasswell in 1927, became increasingly popular as a research methodology and proliferated ‘with the arrival of television media content analysis’ (Macnamara, 2005: 1). Content analysis includes studying the news ideology and the news narrative. While ideology propels the narrative, news narrative shapes the ideology and gives expression to it (Cheng, 2012).

However, like all means of collecting and analyzing data it has limitations and disadvantages; it is limited to recorded information. Since materials are collected periodically over time, change may have occurred. The challenge of using the large amount of available data is pointed out as a major difficulty in content analysis (Cargan, 2007). Selecting the news items for examination is perhaps the ‘most exacting and tedious activity’ and might affect the decision-making process (Cargan, 2007: 62).

While some scholars have suggested that media content analysis is quantitative only (Nuendorf, 2002), some others have argued against it and discussed the possibility of qualitative content analysis (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These arguments might depend on the definition of the content. For Neuman, ‘the content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The ‘text’ is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication’ (Nueman, 1997: 272-273, cited in Macnamara, 2005). I have employed Nueman’s definition in this research project and in the process of analysis of the television news content and web analysis, consider narrative, pictures, and text - both written and spoken - as the content.

The content analysis of the selected news channel, along with the audience research, seeks to understand the possible ways of embedding ideologies in its narrative. The ways of describing events and their history reveal the

perspectives that promote and at times serve to be the carriers of certain ideology. Social movements, whether political or religious, in seeking to legitimize their ideology, deploy various means to appropriate wider social acceptability. According to the Glasgow University Media Group, ‘ideology which is defined as interest-linked perspective and the struggle for legitimacy go hand-in-hand’ (Philo, 2007: 107). Television news, given the popular perception that it is authoritative, is used by these movements in pursuit of social acceptability and wider recognition. Such interventions by various interest groups might lead to an ideological struggle which may be reflected in the news content. The content analysis is meant to aid the research to study the role of the media in the ‘ideological struggle and how the reporting of events can embody different ways of understanding’ (Philo, 2007: 107).

The language and the concepts in the narrative attempt to reinforce an ideology which seeks to take advantage of the social relation and caste-based interactions. There were occasions where anti-Christian views were put across in the speeches and comments made by the Hindutva leaders and those comments were later reported – and in some detail - by the news channels. Such news reportage does not always contain views of an aggressive nature or obvious endorsement of Hindutva ideology. However, Philo argues ‘the interests behind an ideology may remain the same, but its immediate content does not’ (Philo, 2007: 108). So arguing on the same lines, it is worth exploring whether these interest groups deploy such means: change the immediate content to fit in with the constantly altering social circumstances and the nature of the audience. This argument becomes important when investigating the possibility of the Hindutva groups’ connections with news television. The Hindutva political groups have shown such tendencies in the past by changing the language of their political discourse to fit in with the changing social demands. For example, the jingoistic rhetoric which seeks to indict arch-enemy Pakistan for the unrest on the border or the frequent terrorist attacks in the country, eventually gets directed towards the Muslim community in India. Similarly, in its defence of cultural nationalism, proselytization by the Western missionaries during the colonial period and their alleged ‘Indian followers’ contemporary India, is often portrayed to be an invasion to undermine Indian culture. This

argument, in fact, is meant to justify the Hindutva groups' attempt to exclude Christians from the cultural mainstream of the nation, as they are depicted as bearers of foreign cultural elements and a community with divided loyalty (Bauman, 2013). The news television often becomes a vehicle to transmit such views to the audience while they do not appear to be working hand in glove with these groups. The news channels, while favouring a particular ideology, are generally reluctant to be seen as the mouthpiece of any interest groups. Because 'the credibility of television news and the legitimacy which it seeks for itself depends upon its claim to be even-handed and 'fair' in controversial areas' (Philo, 2007: 112). The anti-proselytization and anti-Western discourse might often be part of the anti-Christian rhetoric.

The Path Followed in the Project

This research project employs a two dimensional approach: quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative methods have become increasingly popular and have been a tool for media research for over 50 years (Neuendorf, 2002). The traditional approaches to content analysis involved identifying a keyword and observing the frequency of its occurrence in a selected text or news bulletin for a specifically chosen period of time, often to measure media bias. According to Philo, such approaches, which draw conclusions by considering the time given to specific issues and the frequency of keywords, break-up the text, and in the process, the context becomes unclear and eventually this affects the meaning (Philo, 2007). If the amount of media coverage of an issue is used to measure the media bias the result may very well go wrong. For example, if the focus of the reportage is on the flaws and drawbacks of the system, it might create a negative impact or take the focus away from the real issue. So the time spent on an issue is not always directly proportional to the media leniency to the issue. Cumberbatch (1986), on the other hand, points out that 'the number of times an issue appeared on television news could be seen as an indicator of the priority given to it by broadcasters' (cited in Philo, 2007: 102). Such an indicator is a useful tool in understanding the policy of the organization and the approach which the broadcaster adopts towards an issue. This approach, when supported by qualitative analysis of the

media text, can provide useful information. Taking a cue from Philo's suggestion, and in order to maximize the usefulness of the available methods, this study employs a middle path involving discourse analysis – counting the number of news items published and aired on the issue and then analyzing the news qualitatively rather than breaking-up the text for keywords.

The content analysis of the news channels will focus on the specific news texts to identify and highlight the various perspectives and arguments related to this issue. The analysis also seeks to distinguish between the observations and comments by the news channels and the arguments by the interest groups. Philo points out that 'it is perfectly possible for a subject to be covered very extensively on the news, while journalists might also 'cue' the audience into seeing it as not very significant. So in this sense journalists are intervening and re-negotiating the significance of the event to reduce its importance. To reveal this requires a qualitative analysis of the text' (Philo, 2007: 103) which focuses on 'who says what, to whom the communication is applied, and to what effect' and in what context (Cargan, 2007: 62). A qualitative approach that studies the context and adequately explains the meaning of the text helps any systematic enquiry which seeks to understand the media's attempt to construct and manipulate news.

Case Study

The content analysis follows the topic chosen for case study. This study analyses and compares the reportage of the anti-Christian violence in Orissa in 2008 by the TV Today group's news channels, Aaj Tak and Headlines Today. It involves analysis of the television news content as well as the media text on the issue which was available on the news channel's website. Quantitative and qualitative content analyses have traditionally been employed to study the news content of newspapers and television, but they are rarely used to analyze the online news content (Sjovaag & Stavelin, 2012). Although web analysis is relatively new in this field of research, in this case it is found to be a useful method.

This two dimensional content analysis seeks to understand the news channel's approach towards the incident and how it was played out for public perception. The quantitative analysis is meant to measure the quantifiable media text on the incident and related issues and the qualitative analysis critically looks at the message conveyed through the media text. The comparison of the analyzed Hindi and English news content of the same media organization helps to understand the difference in approach by Hindi and English news channels. While the quantitative content analysis compares the popular Hindi and English news channels, the qualitative content analysis attempts to be more precise: it compares the news content of Aaj Tak and Headlines Today channels. This comparative study is used to make inference and the results of this study are taken to be the existing trends in Hindi and English new television.

Conclusion

The combination of methods used in this research project has proved very useful in understanding the influence of media text on the audiences. The audience research has shed light on the dynamics of the relationships between the people of various cultural and religious backgrounds and their engagement with the news television as individual viewers and communities. The information gathered from the media personnel brought clarity to the understating of the news television and mode of operation. The content analysis has helped the project hugely by providing objective and unbiased results.

Chapter 7

Facts from the Field: Measuring the Media Might

The revolution in electronic media, providing large number of channels to choose from, has transformed the life of Indians. The television revolution has triggered, along with other genres of television, the rise in popularity of news television with the public. The emergence of private news channels radically transformed the nature of television news (Athique, 2012). Private news providers, adopting a business oriented perspective and imitating American media (Thussu, 2007), found new ways of telling stories. The market-oriented approach of news TV, mainly through sensationalising, widened the 'quality gap' (Athique, 2012: 62) between print and television news. In a country where illiteracy is still high, the widening of the 'quality gap' is worrisome, as illiterate TV audiences are left with no choice but television's sensationalised and dramatised version. News television, with the entry of transnational media groups in a competitive media environment, has shown signs of being influenced by political and religious forces. According to Venkata Vemuri Sharma, senior editor of the TV Today group, 'religious bigotry is the mainstay in Indian media' and the Indian media has always been casteist (Interviewed on 09-03-2012 in his office in Delhi). In this context this study investigates whether news television might play a role, as a propaganda machine of the growing Hindu nationalist movement. The aim of the audience research is to examine the consequences of the television discourse on anti Christian activities in the country and to study how television includes certain groups and excludes some others in its discourse about nation and identity. It seeks to understand how television mediates the news of anti-Christian activity and the influence of such reportage on the audience.

Understanding the Audience

This research, in aiming to study the effect of television news text on society, requires the examination of the process of mediation of the message through the circulation of media text among audiences. Although media scholars have

discussed the need to examine the effects of media in society, there have been questions raised about the possibility of such empirical research. On the other hand there are studies that support viable empirical research that can investigate the distribution of meaning (Madianou, 2005).

This study requires an investigation into the details of audiences' participation with television. 'The ways people engage with media content, and the implication they have for the experience of citizenship and public life' (Nightingale, 2011: 1) are crucial in the study of the media's construction of identity. During the research, the relationship between audiences and the television text is examined, particularly how meaning is derived by the audiences from the text while engaging with it. The cultural differences of audiences, guiding and limiting the reading of the text, greatly influence the derivation of its meaning (Morley, 1992). While analysing the opinions of participants the cultural heterogeneity of the audiences and the ability to interpret the media text critically, are to be taken into account.

Audience Research: An Overview

The study explores the audience's understanding of the news media reportage of religious issues and communal conflicts and clashes, especially their understanding of the violence against the Christian community. To understand the perceptions of participants, the anti-Christian violence in Orissa was chosen to be the topic of case study. This incident, which took place in August-September 2008, is considered to be useful in identifying the underlying perceptions of the audiences.

The fieldwork, involving focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with senior media personnel, gave some understanding of the ways that the media interact with the audiences and the media's influence on them. This study provided valuable data to check if Hindu nationalists' views about India's minority religions are reinforced by the news television and if it consequently helps the Hindutva movement.

Focus Group Interviews

The study of television's influence on its audience demands an exploration of other related topics. These include how television is watched by Indians, both in urban and rural areas, how important television is as a source of information and how the Indian audience perceives politics, religion and media and the dynamics of their perception in a multi-cultural and multi-religious country. To understand the news television's influence a thorough understanding of the audience is necessary. The reading of the media text and the perception of the message are heavily influenced by the audience's cultural background, their interactions with religion, their understanding of caste and class related norms etc.

Organizing focus groups in distant remote rural areas in Uttar Pradesh, the most populous and one of India's poorest states, was a challenging job. Knowing the language of the place is very important when undertaking fieldwork and running focus groups. Proficiency in local language is important in the selection of participants for the focus groups and organising the groups for discussions. I feared that lack of proficiency in the Hindi language would be an impediment to doing fieldwork in northern India. So preparation was crucial, starting with getting the right people to help me to choose places and people for group discussions and to moderate the sessions. Regular visits to the proposed places of fieldwork helped in making acquaintances and meeting local persons, along with the help from friends and contacts living in those places.

Running focus groups in the urban samples was relatively easy as all the participants could follow and conduct discussions in English. However, they were encouraged to speak whichever language they were comfortable with. The language of the participants was given priority over that of the researcher's and the moderator's. The participants of all the four samples were friendly and cooperative and a good level of rapport was achieved through visits and frequent interactions. To avoid conformity, a tendency to be uniform in decision-making and expressions in group discussions, efforts were made to have a mix of ages (Stewart. *et al.*, 2007). These qualitative group discussions

were conducted over a period of one month during two separate field trips in February 2011 and February-March 2012. During this period 8 focus groups, with 58 participants in all, were conducted.

Two urban samples were formed in Noida and two in Firozabad town. Three rural focus groups were formed in Firozabad district and one in Mathura district.

Urban Samples

Place	Date	Time
Firozabad	27-02-2011	6 PM
Firozabad	05-03-2011	11 AM
Noida Sector 18	24-02-2012	5 PM
Noida Sector 24	29-02-2012	6.30 PM

Rural Samples

Place	Date	Time
Chandu ka Nagla (Mathura)	04.03.2011	11 AM
Shahpur (Firozabad)	06.03.2012	11 AM
Asan (Firozabad)	09.03.2012	4 PM
Tapa Khurd (Firozabad)	11.03.2012	12.Noon

(See Fig.1)



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

Fig.1

The facilitators have played a major role in forming and running of the focus group sessions. They were identified at the start of the fieldwork and it was with their help that the sites and participants were chosen. The focus groups in Firozabad district, both urban and rural, and the focus groups in Mathura were

conducted with the help of two of my friends who are living in those places. The advantage of having facilitators from the target group (Schensul, 1999) was reinforced by the contributions they made during their work. Although Saraswat (facilitator in Firozabad) was not a trained ethnographer he had a good rapport with the participants. In addition, Shaji's (facilitator in Mathura), experience as a trained social worker made him well suited for this role. Their enthusiasm and interest reflected how much they enjoyed working on this project. The participants were comfortable with the facilitators and the warm relationship they enjoyed made the work less difficult.

The knowledge imparted by the facilitators was crucial in the preparation of questions. The questions had to be constructed in the local language and 'consistent with local cultural beliefs and practices' (Schensul, 1999: 81). A structural plan was sketched out at the start of the fieldwork and further changes were made during regular meetings with the facilitators. They were good at engaging with the participants and encouraged each person to take part in the discussions. Their communication skills and familiarity with the participants helped them to redirect the discussion away from participants who showed the tendencies to dominate the session.

The success of the focus group sessions depends on the selection of sites for the sessions. According to Jean Schensul the most important factors that define a good site for focus group discussion are comfort, convenience, potential for interruption and noise level (1999). The nature of the topic suggested that the informal group interviews would be helpful. The sites for focus group sessions were decided, to ensure participants' comfort and convenience, in consultation with the participants or with the village head (on two occasions). Two urban focus groups and one rural focus group were conducted in a participant's home as suggested by them. The facilitators, who helped me with translations and leading the sessions, used their skills and contacts in the respective areas to identify sites for the sessions. In the villages, the participants looked comfortable sitting under the shade of trees where chairs were spread out. It was, for most of them, just another day of routine gathering and for me, an ideal setting for discussions.

It was with the help of the local guide and the facilitator the focus groups were organised in villages around Firozabad town. The facilitator, a schoolteacher by profession and a resident of the village Tapa Khurd, in Firozabad district, knew the religious, political and caste equations at work in the region. His political affiliations continuously change, depending on the party in power. He, with his political influence and social acceptability, made the work less difficult. During assembly elections political tensions made movement around the area potentially dangerous especially in a communally sensitive place like Firozabad. But I, though a south Indian, was confident and felt secure in the company of the facilitator, who always carried firearms. He not only helped me with translation whenever it was required but provided protection in this volatile area as well.

The researcher, along with the facilitator, met all the participants individually to learn about their ways of interaction with news television. The data collected from the participants include: the time they spent watching television news, their favourite news channel, main source of information and how they watched television – if they watched alone or with family and friends? These individual meetings were found to be helpful in collecting useful data including variables like age, religion and educational qualification. The decision to meet them individually was made considering the participants' tendency to conformity though it was a time consuming method. Initially, when the questionnaires were handed out to the participants to fill in, some of them were seen to be copying from others. In order to avoid such influence on the result it was found that they should be met individually.

Conducting the Sessions

The facilitator opened the sessions with an introduction of the topic, and explained its purpose to the participants. Audio recorders were used and notes were taken during all the sessions. Before the sessions were opened, the facilitator sought the group's permission to record. The facilitator also encouraged everyone to participate and told them of the need to respect

everyone's opinion as there is no right and wrong opinion. Often, the researcher's role, during the sessions, was to take notes and look after the audio recording. The recorded data was later transcribed and, where the discussion was in Hindi, translated. The willingness of facilitators to help with the transcription and translation helped the project enormously as they could transfer the non-verbal text, which they followed during the sessions, to the content. The non-verbal inputs by the participants, visible in the expressions of feelings based on their reactions, add meaning to their opinions.

With the help of the facilitators, the participants were selected in advance, in consultation with the contact persons. The information regarding the time and venue of the sessions was conveyed to all concerned. Each group consisted of six-to-eight participants. The participants were coded by sex and seating order (wherever possible as some of them were standing): for example, M 1 means male participant 1¹⁶. In most cases the participants looked relaxed throughout the sessions, even while discussing issues that are considered to be religiously sensitive. They extended whole-hearted support to the research process. However, caution was needed when the topics for discussion were introduced. Discussing religion was potentially difficult and the researcher felt it prudent to avoid revealing his personal standpoint as an 'outsider'. The researcher's religious and caste identity would certainly be probed into, though his south Indian identity had to be revealed. So in order to avoid such enquiries, the topic was introduced as 'the influence of television news on society and culture'. As the participants got into the discussion mood they were slowly led to the topics of 'religious harmony' and to the 'violence against religious groups' and finally 'violence against Christians'. Although the sessions were led by the facilitator, the researcher had to intervene, at times, to change the course of discussions by reminding him of the pre-planned procedure. The participants happily interacted with the researcher, though he was not fluent in their language. Their appreciation and air of encouragement inspired the researcher to participate in the discussions. Each session ran for 45 minutes to one hour and tea and snacks were provided to make the participants feel at ease. In the villages, they were

¹⁶The transcribed and translated field notes are given in the appendix I.

very happy to welcome and interact with a researcher from a university in London.

A Note on Rural Life

The nature of the focus groups (demographics) revealed the attitude of people in urban and rural India. Among four urban samples, three groups had men and women members. But the rural samples were all male because women do not sit with men for discussion. It was therefore impossible to have mixed groups in the rural areas and definitely not any women only groups organised by a stranger! In Shahpur village, after the discussions we were invited to Village Pradhan's¹⁷ house for tea and snacks. As we were moving into his house a woman was seen rushing inside after leaving tea and snacks for us. Later, the researcher learned that it was Village Pradhan's daughter-in-law. She was not allowed to stay where men gathered for an 'important meeting'. This incident gave a glimpse of the status of women in middle class communities in rural north India.

How India Watches Television

In India television viewing is mostly a communal activity-the whole family sit together, though children may not be allowed to watch more than certain prescribed hours owing to huge amount of homework given at school. This phenomenon is mostly seen in middle class and lower middle class families where excelling in education to get a high-income job is considered more important than anything else. Women do join the male members of the family, though only a few minutes in most cases, after they have finished their household chores like, cooking, washing cleaning etc. So generally speaking, the domestic television audience comprises of adult males in the family. This tendency is predominantly to be seen in India's rural populations, cutting across cultures, regions and religions.

The field research data from the four rural focus groups revealed that the majority of participants (26 of 28) enjoyed watching television as a group,

¹⁷ The Village Pradhan is head of the village, a democratically elected post.

mostly with their family. The study shows that more than 82 per cent of people watched television with parents, children, spouses and some with in-laws while nearly 11 per cent of them watched television with friends or neighbours and only just over 7 per cent watched alone. Since most families had only one television, the selection of programmes which are liked by the majority was a difficult one. However, in most cases, including urban areas, the decision to choose programmes is a prerogative of the senior male member of the family. The male domination in television viewing could be the reason behind the male-oriented advertising on Indian television as they are the major audience as well as key decision-makers in family affairs.

Television News: A Popular Genre?

India has a booming news television market with a staggering 188 round-the-clock channels. Considering the large number of 24-hour news channels one would imagine that the genre is very popular in India. However, the question is - is the number of channels a sign of its popularity? The data collected from the participants of the focus groups, both from urban and rural samples, revealed how people followed news television.

The constant flow of news is not indicative of its constant following by the audience. None of the participants followed non-stop news bulletins throughout the day on a normal day. However, most of them watch news at some point during the day, often in the evenings. The participants, in general, showed the tendency to consider 'watching news' as an important activity and included it in their list of favourite programmes. In some families, especially in urban middle class families, workingwomen who are busy doing household work in the evening, follow television programmes and their daily schedule simultaneously. During the peak hours of television viewing, entertainment programmes tend to be viewed more than news programmes. Most workingwomen participants choose to watch news, if they come across some news that interests them, while flicking through the channels. But most of the working men participants agreed that they do make deliberate decisions to watch news. They do have their

favourite news bulletins and news based panel discussions on their favourite channel.

The study has shown that participants had a tendency to put 'news' on top of the list of programmes they view on television, though the time spent on watching news is minimal. Most people consider viewing news as a status symbol, which would make them more important than others. Although there is no conclusive evidence which suggests that the middle class people are the target audiences of news television, the responses of participants show that the middle class audiences have a proclivity to the genre. The participants of three urban groups (one sample in Noida and two samples in Firozabad) and three rural groups, bearing the middle class tag, considered watching television news as important and informative.

The fieldwork adequately revealed the paradoxes audience, which accommodate in their engagement with television. Participants, invariably in every group, felt that news is often manipulated and not free from external influence. Despite following news daily 96 per cent of the participants agreed that they did not believe everything the news mediated, though they were more inclined to believe 'live news'. Nonetheless, they considered television news, as their major source of information and some of them preferred television to newspapers since television is quicker and punchy. For some, watching news is a habitual routine act, not a conscious decision which they make each time they watch news. For some, it could be due to their attraction towards certain anchors who conduct the discussions.

Most of the participants agreed that adult members of the family discussed important news of the day and issues that affected them. They also shared latest news and trends in current affairs with their friends and acquaintances for further discussion.

The personal experience of people with the media and journalists influence their opinion and approach towards the media. Two participants, in their respective focus groups, spoke about their personal encounter with journalists. Rohit, who

was part of the focus group in Noida, while recounting his experience, expressed bitterness towards news television. According to him anybody with a bit of imagination can become a journalist. He spoke about an Aaj Tak reporter with whom he shared his flat. Rohit quoted him as saying ‘I don’t find news, I create news’. He recalled, ‘he used to go anywhere and meet people and tell them what they should tell him when questions are asked’. Relating it to an incident where a girl was killed in a village, he continued ‘that reporter made shocking revelations about the girl’s father to create news value’. Rohit seemed to have a lot of experience with the TV journalists. During his college days he was interviewed a number of times (according to him, seven times) but had always been told what to say while recording. Ajay Kumar, a participant in the Tapakhurd focus group described his personal experience with a local television channel. He claimed that the reporter of Moon TV (a local channel in Firozabad) who was known to him, helped Azim Bhai, a Samajwadi Party candidate. Ajay Kumar believes that the wide coverage which the local television channels offered the Samajwadi Party candidate helped him win the election by a slim margin of 400 votes. When he narrated the incident others in the group agreed.

In rural India, television is considered the primary source of information and they tend to believe what they see on news channels. In three groups, in Shahpur, Tapakurd and Chandu Ka Nagla, participants believed that ‘live’ news could not be wrong or manipulated. When asked about live news one of the participants said: ‘Oh, live news! Then it must be true’ and other members joined in reinforcing this view. They obviously did not understand the influence of the verbal narrative offered by the reporter or the newsreader and the selection of visuals, even during the ‘live’ coverage of incidents, in shaping and giving a ‘twist’ to news. For most of them, the reporter who appears on the screen tells the truth always and what they see on television is a reflection of social and political reality.

Although participants associated a good amount of genuineness and honesty with television news, they thought that the media could be influenced by various factors like politics and money. One vociferous participant in Asan

village recounted what he had observed during the recently held Uttar Pradesh state assembly elections- a reporter of a regional news channel followed the Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav to all his public meetings and gave a positive coverage to the party. Two participants in Asan village firmly believed that the state-owned DD (Doordarshan) is government's propaganda machine. During the course of the discussion, all seven participants agreed that they did not trust DD news and preferred private channels like Aaj Tak. Most participants in all the groups believed that news could be biased at times due to political influence and the socio-cultural as well as economic affiliations of the news reporters and the media organisations they represent.

News Television and New Media

Not every section of the society found that viewing news was informative and an essential part of daily life. The focus group discussion conducted among the urban youth in Noida revealed their lack of interest in television news and how Internet based new media took over television's place. Although four of the eight participants agreed that television had some influence in society, none of them considered television as their source of information. They depended on Internet-based media and avoided television, as they believed that it was manipulated. It was a clear indication of their apathy towards the genre of television news itself, not just 'television bound viewing' as they did not choose to view the online version of the news channels. However, all but one participant spent a few minutes watching news. To my surprise, although they watched other programmes such as music, cartoon or spirituality, they preferred to put 'news' on top of everything else. Such a response by the young adults could signal the middle class mindset attached to news television. Their lack of interest does not give enough reason to believe that India's young people do not engage with television. Their association with new media in their work (all of them work with web developing companies) could explain their attraction to new media. Although they did not trust television news and had stopped watching it on a regular basis, five out of eight of them believed that television news has some influence on society and that it is a powerful tool in the hands of politicians. According to them, by exploiting the uneducated village population,

the Hindi news channels gain popularity (one of them was speaking about India TV which they thought was the most popular news channel in India). To these youth, Internet-based media offered reliable news and they believed that the websites, which give information, are less corrupt and free from external influence. The discussion with these working students gave the impression that their lack of interest in politics and other social issues detached them from a common man's world and they were not keen on following news and current affairs programmes.

Religion Still Matters

Religion plays a crucial role in India, particularly in rural areas. All participants in the eight groups, apart from one member of the urban group in Noida, acknowledged their deep belief in religion. Whenever the representations of religion on television were discussed the atmosphere changed and the participants looked uneasy. In Shahpur village, while discussing the frequent communal violence in India and especially in Uttar Pradesh, home to a large Muslim population, one of the focus group members tried to dilute it by saying: 'we live in harmony, taking part in the festivals of Muslims'. However, not all members of the group agreed with him, with some arguing that 'it is the Muslims who create problems for us' and 'they are the cause of the conflicts we had in the village'. Some of them were insistent that the researcher disclosed his religious affiliation. 'Tell us what religion you belong to', was a constant refrain. To respond to such queries would have been a difficult path to tread.

The main part of the fieldwork, conducted in February-March 2011 and February-March 2012 was in the district of Firozabad. During the field work the researcher stayed with a friend in Firozabad town and travelled to the villages where we had decided to run focus groups. During the visit in 2011, a few acquaintances were made in Firozabad. These contacts helped to identify proper samples and gave much needed help with translation. It was decided to have the third focus group interview in a village around 10 kilometers from Firozabad town on Sunday, 11th March. The meeting was scheduled to begin at 12 noon and the researcher along with the facilitator started off with great expectations.

As we drove through the village road, the vibrancy of the village was in full view. Sunday being a holiday, children were playing cricket in the fields and on the roads and the men who were sitting round in groups on the road reluctantly gave way to us. As we were nearing the village, the police stopped us and asked us to return to the town. The guide and facilitator, 'a well-known person' (in his own words) in the area, stopped the car on the road, left the author in the vehicle for a few minutes and talked to the locals to find out why we were not allowed to enter the village. After 'investigations' the guide came back remarking 'there was police firing in the village and one boy was killed'. It all began with a quarrel among children that had started while playing cricket, then it quickly flared into a Hindu–Muslim conflict, as the boys belonged to different religions, and then it led to a serious communal conflict in the village. Though the project for the day had to be cancelled, enough material, it seemed had already been collected.

Television Says It!

Studying the media connections of Hindu nationalism requires a better understanding of people's perceptions of other religions. The isolation of minority religions from the mainstream of social life helps the Hindutva movement - the creation of a Hinduized public sphere and public. In this context, it is crucial to know how news television can be a religious polariser. The communities or groups which are perceived to be working against the culture and practices that are understood to be the essential elements of being 'Indian', are easily labelled 'not eligible' to be children of the motherland. My objective is to study how the Christian community is being isolated, with the collusion of news television, in the process creating a Hindu public. So discussions were directed to measure what the participants in groups felt. Although most participants had limited first-hand experience of working with Christians, they had heard about them, and knew them through the media, especially through television and films. The general perception was that the Christians are good people, do social work and are involved in humanitarian activities. They were also aware that some sections of the Hindu community attacked them, despite their good work in areas such as health and education.

Most members of the focus groups also thought that the Christians try to convert non-Christians to Christianity, which they considered as something unacceptable. In one group, two of them related the communal violence in Orissa state in 2008 to acts of proselytization. Many of them consider proselytization to be an act of violence against the Hindu culture. However, none in the groups in rural areas knew any 'proselytizer' or 'proselytised' personally. But they all know that it takes place where Christian missionaries work and had seen or heard such stories from television.

The opinion of participants in the urban samples varied slightly, as they did not rule out the possibility of politicians' involvement in communal violence. Most of them thought that politicians, in the pursuit of power, divide people on communal lines and violence against minority communities is used as an instrument to create 'majority', 'minority' feelings. However, they too believed the 'proselytization' centred missionary activities were a cause of social unrest and that it could lead to violence against Christians, though they had no personal experience of such missionary activities. While discussing the reasons for anti-Christian feeling among people with the media professionals, four of those I interviewed pointed out 'religious conversion' as the main reason. Such views of media personnel reiterate the media text on anti-Christian violence.

The focus group interviews also revealed audience's preference for certain news channels and the reason for their liking. In all the groups, both in the urban and rural samples, Aaj Tak emerged as the most popular Hindi news channel. Thirty-two of 58 participants of both urban and rural groups follow the Aaj Tak news channel. Most participants agreed that Aaj Tak dramatised and sensationalised news. However, the general mood in the groups was that such news was more likeable than boring dry news. While one participant in Asan village, commenting on Aaj Tak, said 'they give genuine news', three participants from Shahpur claimed that Aaj Tak gave accurate news and no one in the group disagreed with them. A few participants in the urban groups watched English news regularly like NDTV 24x7, Times Now etc., but not Headlines Today, a sister channel of Aaj Tak.

Urban Youth and News Television

One of the urban groups consisted of eight young participants aged 18 to 26: two girls and six boys. The discussion indicated the superiority, for them, of new media over traditional media as a source of information as all considered Internet as the primary source of information. Most of them were aware of the media's political connections and television's power to polarise people on religious lines. They believed television was biased and often provided slanted coverage. According to them, news television sensationalises, and dramatizes. The creativity of the reporter plays an important role in the 'construction' of news.

It was predominantly in the rural, rather than the urban groups that the participants mostly believed what they saw on television and the comments and opinions that emerged in the discussions reflected their reluctance to believe that what they see and hear on television is not true. Most of them, if they are not introduced to the intricacies and complexities of the media, fail to understand the possibilities of censorship, media control and manipulation. This might explain the respectability and the power of television in rural India. Television is loved and has come to be seen as a figure of authority.

Case Study: Violence in Orissa

The discussions on the 'communal violence in Orissa', the incident under study, revealed the audiences' level of understanding of the incident. The participants were not directly involved or affected by this incident which took place in another state, hundreds of miles away. So their perception and the understanding of the incident and its implications are influenced by the mediated knowledge. Television, the major mediating agent for the participants, supposed to have played a major role in the formation of opinions.

The descriptions gathered during the group discussions 'provide understanding of social realities as they are subjectively perceived, experienced, and created by participants' (Mabry, 2008: 218). Although some participants were not able to comment on the case under study, their views on anti-Christian violence

revealed the societal imbalances and indicated that power struggle exists in class and caste structures.

While discussing about the communal conflicts, questions were raised and the participants were invited to express their opinions about the communal violence against Christians in Orissa. In all the groups, participants were familiar with the Hindu-Muslim communal riots in Gujarat in 2002 but participants in three groups have never heard about the incident in Orissa. Although the Orissa incident took place in the recent past they were not aware of it. However, they did speak about the violence against Christians in general as they had heard about it and acknowledged it as a problem.

Family Viewing

Family, the metonym of the nation, is the principal site where the discourses and the attempts to define identities and nationhood are played out. David Morley suggests that if we want to understand the concepts of nation and community, we need to start from the sitting room where the members of family gather to view television (Morley, 1991).

Television viewing, especially among the middle class and the poor, is a family activity in most homes - both in rural and urban India. Often, especially when there is a major law-and-order problem or incidents like a communal riot, the news is discussed amongst family members and friends. In rural areas, adult men gather in the evenings, after their work in the fields, and discuss what they had heard from the family or what they themselves had viewed. The opinions are shaped further in their engagement with the television news as groups and as individuals. They also, occasionally attempt to draw parallels between the events that have taken place elsewhere in the country and their own village or town.

Although perceptions are formed and opinions are shaped in the discussions outside the sphere of television viewing, it remains one of the primary sources of information and the discourse depends heavily on the viewer's engagement

with the television narrative. However, factors such as age and gender are crucial in deciding the degree of engagement with the television narrative.

Television, enabling the viewers to 'imaginatively connect with larger collectivities such as community and nation' (Mankekar, 1999: 101), reconfigured the familial relationships and further blurred its boundaries. Family as a social entity, going beyond the definition, which limits it to a cluster of biological relationships, has become a sphere where the local, national and global cultural flows intersect and new ideologies are shaped. Depending on the viewer's degree of engagement with the television's text, the connections with the nation and community are shaped. In rural north India, the involvement of women folk in political movements is rare and their role is dictated and controlled by the dominant male figure of the family. Women withdraw themselves from the world of discussions dominated by men, which are often charged with strong political views.

Interviews: Media Professionals

While focus group sessions provided valuable information about the influence of the news media in society, the interviews with media professionals revealed the complexities involved in the working of the media and the configuration of various elements that have come to play a major role in the encoding of the media text. During the course of the field work in India, the following media professionals were interviewed - Mark Tully, veteran commentator on Indian issues and a former bureau chief of the BBC in Delhi, Vinod Sharma, the political editor of the *Hindustan Times*, Radhakrishnan Nair, an executive editor of CNN-IBN and Vekata Vemuri Sharma, a broadcast journalist working with the TV Today group. Later, to add clarity to the issues discussed in the thesis two London based journalists, Hasan Suroor, formerly of The Hindu and Loveena Tandon, London correspondent of TV Today group were interviewed.

What Makes News?

The media personnel, who were interviewed, candidly admitted that newsroom calls are often determined by the business interests of the media organisation.

During the focus group interviews, juxtaposing the anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 and the anti-Christian violence in Orissa in 2008, attempts were made to measure the scale of awareness of these two among the participants. The participants of three out of the eight focus groups were not aware of the communal violence in Orissa, while all of them knew of the riots in Gujarat in detail. On the other hand, the media attention in terms of the quantity of reportage on the anti-Christian violence was noticeably low compared to the incident in Gujarat. Vinod Sharma, Mark Tully and Radhakrishnan Nair did not think that this was due to the media's anti-Christian agenda or the influence of the BJP. Mark Tully described it as 'bad news judgement'. In the eyes of the media, he said 'Ayodhya and Gujarat are huge stories (...) but Christians are a small community... not a big story'.

Vinod Sharma thought, 'anything that happens in Gujarat which is hugely an industrialised state will get greater coverage than what is happening in Orissa which is not one of the developed states in India'. In his view, the stories of people who have buying capacity get more media attention than those who have lesser buying capacity. CNN-IBN's Radhakrishnan Nair thought that violence against Christians was a law-and-order problem, not a communal problem. It is because the media do not see a polarised reaction to incidents involving Christians. Secondly, in Gujarat, the alleged involvement of government in the anti-Muslim violence gave it an extraordinary prominence and news value.

News Television: Trends and Issues

The media professionals, during the interview, pointed out the issues and the existing trends in the news industry. Mark Tully, a very experienced and internationally respected broadcast journalist, stated that most of the inaccurate reporting during religious violence and conflicts are related to the religio-political demonstrations. According to him 'the old inhibitions about being sensational have broken down' and 'there is a lot of unfortunate speculation about what has happened'. Vekata Vemuri Sharma and Loveena Tandon of the TV Today Group contend that sensationalism is part of TRP (television rating points) led media business and in the process truth can be compromised.

According to Mark Tully, the major problems with the Indian news channels are the obsession with TRP and the so-called presenter-led concept. The news channels, including the BBC, rely on presenters who are considered to be popular. The general mood is ‘if we can get a powerful presenter that is more important than the content,’ says Tully. Vekata Vemuri Sharma and Loveena Tandon too agreed that the presenter led concept is a growing trend across the news channels. It is pointed out that India’s news television grew on the might and weight of personalities known for tough interviews or interrogations, which were capable of drawing the attention of the critical minds of Indian middle classes. But while triggering the growth of news channels they made themselves indispensable and news programmes seemed to be designed to suit their style.

In Indian television news media, the newsreaders and anchors are often seen getting emotionally involved with the topic under discussion. According to Mark Tully, this trend often leads to a greater problem- trial by television. In the recent past, there were cases where people had been found guilty by the media before any adequate investigation was done. Vekata Vemuri Sharma thinks that this trend is seen across the news channels and this TRP-led gimmick gives journalism an aggressive face. Television, which is visually appealing, encourages the reporters and anchors, who seek to be seen and heard, to employ such means.

News television’s affiliation to political parties has been pointed out as a major concern. Although mainstream news channels, according to Tully, do not show any religious affiliation, some of the channels, in their political reporting, take the side of one party or the other. The affiliation to ideologies, political or religious, has been part of media practice over the years. Commenting on the senior journalists who are involved in such aberration, Venkata Vemuri Sharma, observes that it is difficult to free the media from such affiliations as the ideology is conveyed skillfully and imperceptibly.

Interviewing media personnel in their offices gave some understanding of the way the media work. The working environment, which often called for

responses to colleagues' interventions, offered insight into the news organisation's style of working and policies. It was an opportunity to witness the competitive attitude and the zeal to be the first. The instruction in the newsroom 'we should be the reason for the story' echoed a growing trend in the news industry. In the competition to be prominent, the narrative is designed to portray channel's investigation as the focus of the story. They all pointed out the possibility of making mistakes and compromising the truth in the pursuit of being the first and making themselves the major player. Radhakrishnan Nair described the elaborate vetting and filtering procedure, which is in place to deal with the newsfeed from citizen journalists. Although there is a desk, which exclusively deals with such news, he admitted that errors do happen. While speaking about compromising the accuracy of news in the competition to be the first, he commented on another news channel (a rival channel) 'they are trying to do Fox News in India'. Loveena Tandon of TV Today group admitted that editorial judgments are often influenced by newsroom's craving for 'eye balls' and she described the competition among news channels, to be first as 'rat race'. According to her, this race is for survival as TRP is the deciding factor in getting more advertisement and money.

According to Mark Tully, one of the major problems that the news television faces is the pressure on journalists to be first. This pressure leads to speculations about what happened and such inaccurate speculations about the conflicts involving different communities can lead to communal riots. Emphasising the influence of media speculation in a communally charged society, he pointed out how media restraint in the recent past, while reporting the incidents involving different religious communities, avoided communal conflicts. Vinod Sharma and Radhakrishnan Nair also commented on the remarkable difference that the media restraint made after the court verdict on the controversial Ayodhya issue. In September 2010 the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and the Editors Guild of India (EGI) had given out advisories to the news channels to exercise restraint in the coverage of the court ruling on the disputed land, which was claimed by both the Hindus and the Muslims. No communal violence was reported in the aftermath of the verdict and the media in India received wide adulation for the restraint.

Is the Indian Media Anti-Christian?

The media reportage of the incidents of anti-Christian violence often seems to suggest that the media is anti-Christian. Although there are incidents involving attacks on Christians taking place often in different parts of India, the media tend to ignore such issues. The attacks on the Christian minority, even if large scale, do not draw as much media attention as incidents involving the Muslim community. Mark Tully, a keen observer of the Indian media, contends that it is not the anti-Christian attitude of media but poor news judgement. Although he admitted that he had noticed the influence of Hindu nationalists in local news media coverage, he believes that the national news media is free of such open endorsement of anti-Christian views. He pointed out two major reasons for such media behaviour-the media have the tendency to move from one story to another when the sensationalism dies out and, more importantly in this case, 'Christians are a small community...not a big story'. He did agree that the media have played a major role in creating the impression that violence against Christians is due to their conversion campaign, while pointing out that 'Christians have been involved in conversion, historically', though mainstream churches do not adopt such campaigns.

'We don't look at incidents through the prism of religion', said Radhakrishnan Nair of CNN-IBN. In his view, looking at the time dedicated for stories relating to the violence against Christians, a news channel cannot be considered 'anti-Christian' or 'pro-Hindutva'. Every news channel prioritises news and 'the prioritisation is not looking at stories as Christian story or Muslim story'. Although he did not elaborate on the scale used in prioritising the news, he did point out another major factor, which can affect the reportage- accessibility of the incident's location. While speaking about the Kandhamal incident (in Orissa), he agreed 'it was very difficult to report; it was a far away story'. Since Orissa is not a story-generating state, the news channels tend not to invest in building up facilities and deploying personnel in that area. The lack of a news gathering network, he thinks, affects the reporting of incidents that take place in remote places. In the case of the Kandhamal violence, although news channels

had to depend on stringers who work for all the channels, he argued that information was processed by their bureau in Bhubaneswar (Orissa's capital) and thus the possibility of stringer influence was reduced. He said 'we take footage from stringers; the footage is not Christian or Muslim but the information we gather from people who matter in the place'. In Kandhamal, he claimed that the news channel collected information from the district collector, the superintendent of police, the Christian bishop and people from the Hindutva groups, though, on another occasion during the interview, he commented that the 'police force is communalised'. However, he admitted that the incidents of violence against Christians are not treated as communal issues but as 'stray incidents'. On the other hand, the clashes between Hindu and Muslim groups are ongoing and treated as communal issues.

Vinod Sharma of *The Hindustan Times* thought the media did a commendable job in reporting the communal violence in Kandhamal and he was of the opinion that it was the media activism, which had brought about political change in Orissa. According to him, the media focus on Kandhamal forced the Orissa Chief Minister to break up his party's political alliance with the Hindutva groups, though he agreed that the communal violence in Gujarat was more prominent in the media than that in Orissa. On the other hand, Vekata Vemuri Sharma of TV Today was critical of the 'media bias' and described how the media reflects the communal frenzy in the society. Commenting on the journalists who make decisions, he said 'you may find people who come from abroad or from St. Stephen's or such institutions with some admirable experiences of left philosophy, but at heart everybody is a Hindu or a Muslim'.

English News Channels

The research, while trying to understand the impact of Hindi news channels on the audiences, has also attempted to be aware of trends within English news channels in terms of their difference in approach. According to the data from the audience measurement agency (TAM), in 2012 the viewership share of English news was barely 0.23 per cent while Hindi news accounted for 3.18 per cent (cited in FICCI-KPMG, 2013). Although seven of 52 participants of focus

groups who regularly watch television news follow English news daily, they all watch Hindi news too. These seven participants belonged to urban focus groups. The data collected from the focus groups indicate that the English news television has not yet penetrated rural India (see figure 2). The four media professionals who were interviewed are more familiar with English news media than Hindi, though two of them work with Hindi news too. Their opinions, which are discussed in this chapter, therefore, are undoubtedly influenced by their experience with English news media.

TV Viewership in Focus Groups

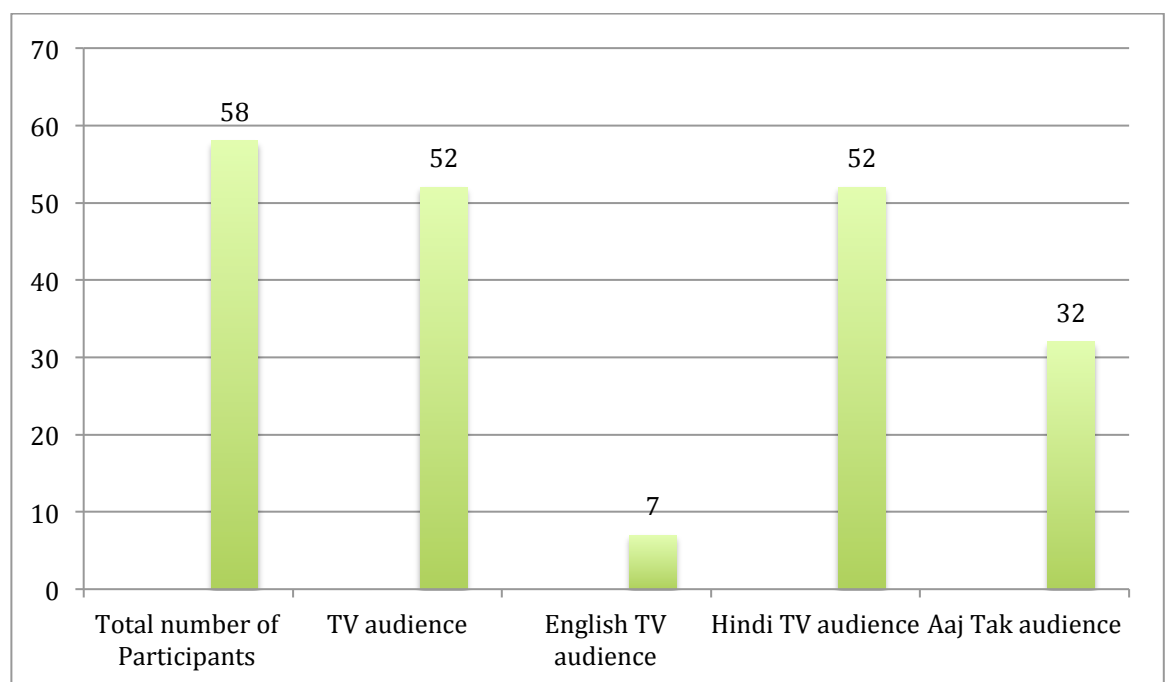


Fig.2

Although they cater to different language audiences who belong to different socioeconomic standards, the research reveals that the Hindi and English news television have a meeting ground where most of the deciding factors and influential elements are played out. The television of both the languages are led by the commercial interests and therefore not freed from sensationalism, emotional anchoring and the breaking news phenomenon driven by the competition to be the first. The media, regardless of the language, maintain affiliation to political parties in order to be in touch with the power, influence and economic dividends.

Middle Class and Caste

The fieldwork conducted in the Hindi heartland, often described as the miniature of real India, revealed how deeply embedded the caste and class equations are in modern rural India. Social respectability has traditionally been defined by the castes and India's attempt to liberate the society from the caste system through economic empowerment of the people of lower castes has affected the society adversely. The measures to improve their life such as job reservation and special financial grants further divided the society and the people have become more caste conscious. The hierarchical status defined by the caste system is still prevalent, particularly in rural India though not uncommon in urban areas. The caste-class equation adequately explains why 'being middle class was not just about acquiring financial security; it was also about attaining and maintaining respectability, sexual modesty, family honour' (Mankekar, 1999: 114). However, nothing prevents the undying aspirations of a lower caste Indian to become part of the most desired and much talked about India's burgeoning middle-class. Such passion, triggered by the media-induced consumerism, is reshaping the urban middle-class with a new composition of members from different castes (Sheth, 1999).

The social structure in rural Uttar Pradesh was observed to be exclusivist and eschews the lower castes from having aspirations to be on a higher notch in the class scale. The patriarchal high-caste Hindu society lay down the moral precepts and set the standard of living. The conduct of women being crucial in defining social respectability and family honour, it is strictly monitored, especially in respect of sexual modesty, movements and even speech patterns (Mankekar, 1999).

Interaction with the members of focus groups in the villages in the Firozabad district gave some insight into the notion of moral respectability, evidenced by the behaviour patterns of the members of the community. The women of the villages had no place in the focus groups that were formed in consultation with the village headmen. Women are not expected to express their opinion in public

and a woman's presence in a public forum where men dominate is considered a blemish on her modesty. Her presence is limited to roles defined by those in high moral echelons of the community.

The friendly participants were extremely generous and hospitable in their welcome even though the researcher's religious identity and caste were unknown to them. Although some tried to probe into the researcher's identity, most seemed happy to accept their visitor because he was accompanied by a high-caste guide who was known to them.

The social roles performed by women, their position in the society and the amount of visibility they enjoy in public space, are crucial in understanding the complexity of caste related issues involved in religious conversion. In two groups the participants were vocal about religious conversion to Christianity which they think is the reason behind the violence against Christians. The lower caste people and those outside the caste system, in their view, when converted to Christianity become caste free which enables them to take up any job and freely mingle with the upper caste people. The converted Christian women, who do away with the traditional norms of caste, become symbols of moral decadence and a bad example to their women. While discussing the reasons for anti Christian violence, someone was heard to say 'those who are meant to be sweepers grab better jobs'. Although grabbing the better jobs per se is not the problem, the social acceptability attached to it and the disappearance of the caste tag, which gives them a new identity is a problem. Rural India still grapples with its reluctance to engage with lower caste people. Their unwillingness to accept changes in the social structure which gives them security, leads to conflicts. Most of the participants did hear of the humanitarian works the Christians do and some even said 'they live their religion better than me'. However, they perceived Christianity as a religion of converts and converters and a threat to their culture and peaceful secure living as caste Hindus. The role of media in the formation of ideas and perceptions about others, especially if the group is not known to them, is to be studied. Their perceptions about Christians prompted further investigation into the social agents who form ideas and influence their interaction with people of other

communities. The unwillingness of those participants to share the middle class tag with the newly converted Christians whom they consider to be unworthy to interact with is symbolic of a prevalent trend in rural India.

Some of them who know converted Christians pointed out another reason behind the attacks on Christians which have not been reported by mainstream media. According to three participants in Shahpur, violence against Christians is due to the newly converted Christians' inability to follow the caste system. Since there is no caste system followed in Christianity, newly converted Christians, who are often from low castes, forget who they were and mingle with high caste Hindus. One of participants expressed his anger thus: 'if they become Christians on their own, it's OK, but they should still follow the caste they belonged to before they converted'. This is a clear indication of the deep-rooted caste system in rural India, particularly in north Indian villages.

Defining social roles for the members of the community and drawing out a framework for them to perform their duties, the community creates a class for themselves and exclude those groups who do not qualify as part of it. It is not claimed that a connection has been discovered between the Hindutva groups and the media in forming such perceptions in people. However, the role of news television in projecting Christians as converters has been investigated. Television news, creating negative impressions, which helps the audience to form perceptions of other religious communities, helps in the construction of a Hindu middle class.

The research in seeking to understand the role of news television in forming perceptions of communities and constructing identities in audiences, has to go beyond the point of contact between the media text and the audience. Considering the importance of audiences and the cultural forces in giving meaning to the media texts while consuming it, this research disagrees with the passive audience theories. The media text that comes into contact with the audiences of various levels produces effects at varying degrees depending on the circulation of media discourse. In this research, the analysis of the results has been greatly influenced by the 'encoding/decoding' model of Stuart Hall.

The meaning of the media text, according to Hall, is not offered by the producer but the receiver constructs the meaning of the media text while decoding it (Hall, 1980). I argue that both the producer and the audience play a role in offering meaning to the media text. The meaning offered by the producer does not necessarily have to be the meaning conceived by the receiver. The influence of the television text on a diversified and active audience depends on the negotiations it makes with the cultural forces. The audiences, engaging with the media text in a framework offered by the culture and through negotiations, appropriate the meaning of the text. The audiences, according to Hall, can also appropriate the proposed meaning as offered by the producer or completely deny the proposed meaning (ibid).

Conclusion

The focus group interviews conducted in both urban and rural areas have produced useful data which has given insights into the influence of the television news media in creating perception about minority religions, particularly Christians, among rural and urban populations and how news television's influence helps the Hindutva movement. By studying the views of participants, crucial information has been gathered which shows a difference in approach by Hindi and English news television regarding communal violence against Christians. The study also shows the difference in the levels of credibility of news channels in general.

The fieldwork, while not going deeply into the culture or the enormity of cultural changes in the society, with focus groups has corroborated the claim that the fast growing television industry has far-reaching influence over rural and urban India. The interpretation of popular news television narratives, (which is far more complex than the semiotics suggests) involving audience interaction at various levels helps us to understand the cultural and political significance of television (Mankekar, 1999). The consumption and conceptualisation of the audio-visual text depends on its interpretation, which takes place at individual and community level. Such interpretation is a crucial part of understanding television's influence in the formation of the communities

patronised by the Hindu nationalist movement. In rural India, where the influence of the new media is minimal, the limitations offered by caste, religion and language clearly define the community.

The divide between the north and the south is noticeably visible in India's villages and is articulated in ways that segregate the 'cultural other'. The tendency to perceive the north Indian middle class life style as 'Indian' and to reject the 'south Indian' or 'north-east Indian' ethos as incompatible with the national identity is widely articulated. The audience research conducted at various levels of audiences' interaction with news television provided useful information regarding their understanding about themselves, other cultural and religious groups and the news television.

Chapter 8

Content Analysis

The Hindutvisation of Indian politics, over the years, has been on display in diverse forms. As discussed in the previous chapters, many socio-cultural agents have served as the vehicles of such extreme views, which have impacted the socio-political life of the country. This research which seeks to investigate news television's involvement in providing a platform for the expression and propagation of Hindutva views, calls for a thorough examination of the news content. The violent form of Hindutva manifests itself in the movement's anti-minority rhetoric which often leads to communal violence. The television news content on the sporadic episodes of communal violence provides a source of data to study the role of news television in the Hindutvisation project. The Hindu-Muslim violence has been extensively analysed, perhaps due to the ubiquity of it. However, Hindu-Christian violence, which was rare until the last two decades, has not drawn much of academic interest (Bauman & Leech, 2012).

This research, aiming to bridge the gap, has chosen to concentrate on the Hindutva's anti-Christian rhetoric and the involvement of the news television in the discourse. Against this background, the study focuses on the news television's conduct during the anti-Christian violence in the eastern Indian state of Orissa in 2008. The objective analysis of the news content can reveal the editorial policies and the journalistic ideologies that lie beneath the periphery of the news. The treatment of the anti-Christian violence in Orissa is taken as an indicator and the inferences are drawn from the result obtained from the content analysis.

Case study

The violence against Christians in Orissa started on August 23, 2008 after the murder of a 90-year-old Hindu nationalist leader called Swami Laxmananda Saraswati. Although the Maoists, an extreme left-wing insurgent movement,

claimed responsibility for the killing, the Hindu nationalist groups blamed the Christian community and reacted violently. The violence went on for days, killing scores of people, destroying many churches, schools and houses (Bauman, 2013). Around 50,000 Christians were forced to flee to the forest and many took refuge in refugee-camps (Kanungo, 2008).

The content analysis involves analysing and comparing of the reportage of the above-mentioned anti-Christian violence by the TV Today group's news channels, Aaj Tak and Headlines Today. It entails analysing the television news content as well as the media text which was available on the news channel's website. This two dimensional content analysis seeks to understand the news channel's approach towards the incident and how it was played out for public perception. The quantitative content analysis compares the Aaj Tak and The Headlines Today news channels in terms of the number news items on the issue and the qualitative content analysis compares the content of each news item on the issue during the selected time frame.

Content analysis - quantitative

This research has relied on the data provided by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi, for the content analysis of the news footage of four leading news channels in Hindi and English. The news footage of these channels during the prime time (7.00 PM to 11.00 PM) from 24th August to 15th September 2008, has been analysed. The chosen time frame (24th August to 15th September) matches with the time frame of the communal violence in Orissa. Although the incidents of communal violence were reported even after 15th September, considering the media's tendency to shift their focus to other issues of human interest after a few days and assuming that the worst form of violence took place during the first three weeks, this time frame has been chosen. As the table given below shows, CMS has studied the prime time news footage under various titles. However, this research has excluded those categories which do not come under the scope of this study and paid attention to the footage under the title 'law and order' as the communal violence was treated as a law and order problem. During my visit to CMS, I learnt from the senior project

Manager, Prabhakar Kumar that the only law and order problem which the state of Orissa faced during the selected time frame was the violence against Christians. The analysed data shows the number of news items on the issue, the time dedicated to the issue and how prominent the issue was, in terms of the percentage of coverage, among other news items which originated from the state.

Table 1 Hindi news channels: Coverage originated from Orissa (7-11 PM coverage)

24 August to 15 Sep 2008	Aaj Tak				DD News			
	N	%	T	%	N	%	T	%
State politics	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Sports	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Accident & natural disaster	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
National security & defence	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Crime	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Legal	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Law & order	8	100.00	17	100.00	23	92.00	53	96.33
Total	8	100.00	17	100.00	25	100.00	55	100.00

N= Number of stories; T = Time in minutes

(Data source CMS, New Delhi)

Among the leading Hindi news channels, the state owned DD news aired 23 stories and dedicated 53 minutes to the issue. The channel under study, Aaj Tak aired eight stories and spent 17 minutes in all to the theme. All the news items on Aaj Tak during this time frame were related to the law and order problems. The other Hindi news channels like Star News and Zee News had four and three

stories with four and 17 minutes dedicated respectively (not shown in the table). However, focusing on the most popular channel of the time – namely Aaj Tak, this research excludes, DD News, Star News and Zee News.

Table 2 Popular English news channels

Coverage originated from Orissa (7-11 PM coverage)

24 August to 15 Sep. 2008	CNN-IBN				NDTV 24×7			
Classification	N	%	T	%	N	%	T	%
State politics	1	4.55	0	0.45	0	0.00	0	0.00
Sports	2	9.09	4	5.38	0	0.00	0	0.00
Accident & natural disaster	1	4.55	4	5.38	0	0.00	0	0.00
National security & Defence	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Crime	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	8.00	20	20.30
Legal	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	12.00	26	26.40
Law & order	18	81.82	66	88.79	20	80.00	53	53.30
Total	8	100.00	17	100.00	25	100.00	55	100.00

N= Number of stories; T = Time in minutes

(Data source CMS, New Delhi)

Comparing Hindi and English News Channels

The quantitative analysis of the leading English news channels helps this research to understand the approach of these channels. The number of stories appeared on television and the time dedicated to the event is indicative of the priority given to it by these broadcasters. The English news channels CNN-IBN and NDTV 24×7 dedicated 66 minutes and 53 minutes for 18 and 20 stories respectively to the issue.

Although the analysed data from Headlines Today is not available, the data collected from the popular English news channels can be used to study the nature of the approach of English news channels in general. In order to verify the assumption that all English channels are similar in their approach, the available data on CNN-IBN and NDTV 24×7 can be crosschecked with the data collected from Headlines Today website. The English news channels that are chosen for study, CNN-IBN and NDTV 24×7, dedicated a substantial amount of time to the issue and the difference in the number of stories and the time spent are minimal. However, this research does not claim that the English news channels, in general, spent more time on the issue than Hindi news channels, as the available data is not sufficient to make that claim. At the same time, this research has found enough data which shows that the English news channel of the TV Today group, Headlines Today, has spent nearly same amount of time, on the issue under examination, as these leading English channels. The content analysis of the Headlines Today website during the same time frame provides enough proof to substantiate such a claim (see table 5).

The original research plan proposed to study TV Today group's Hindi and English news channels and to compare the analysed data to understand the difference in approach. But the TV Today group's reluctance to provide access to the news content of both Aaj Tak and Headlines Today made such meticulous observation impossible. This was despite repeated and various attempts made to procure the data. While this research, regarding the Aaj Tak footage, makes use of the data provided by the Centre for Media Studies, the footage of Headlines Today is not available as the channel does not figure among the leading English channels. However, the web analysis of the both news channels and the comparison of the data have proved to be a useful method to study the difference in approach. The website of the news channel is believed to have carried largely the same news as the televised version.

Web Analysis

A web page contains text, still images, video clips and links to other pages and related stories. The method employed is meant to analyse all the available

content, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The news channels under close examination are linked and are part of the parent website www.Indiatoday.in. The user-friendly web design aided the research process. Although the web page gives the provision to search the news item under study, the researcher chose to go through the news content of all days from 24 August to 30 September 2008 and then the relevant stories were picked and collected for analysis. Such meticulous search was preferred because of the diverse nature of the topics and issues connected to the topic under study. The stories from both English and Hindi versions of the website were copied for a detailed semiotic analysis.

The web archives provide the news content of last five years. Although the content is categorised as 'news', 'video' and 'photos', the website handles mostly the text based news and the photos are hardly available. The number of stories with visuals available on the site is limited and the visuals on the Hindi version of the website, Aaj Tak is titled best of the day. However, the news channel does not explain the criteria adopted to select the 'best' news item of the day.

Qualitative Analysis

The content analysis of the news channels will focus on the specific news texts to identify and highlight the various perspectives and arguments related to this issue. The analysis also seeks to distinguish between the observations and comments by the news channels and the arguments by the interest groups.

This research project employs a two step analysis: first of all, during the given time frame, the Hindi news reports on the incident are gathered, analysed and compared with the corresponding English news. Secondly, the rest of the English news reports on the issue, during the given time frame are analysed. The table below (table 3) gives a brief account of the analysed news, namely, a date-wise account of the number of English and Hindi news published on the website, including the title of the news items, the length of each story (number of lines), the source of the news (news agency) and the place from where the news originated.

Table 3, Covering anti-Christian violence from 24.08.2008 to 30.09.2008

E = English and H = Hindi; PTI = Press Trust of India and IANS = Indo-Asian News Service

Date	Title	Source
24.08. E H	‘Thousands block roads in Orissa to protest killing of VHP leader’ (26 lines) ‘Orissa shuts down schools, colleges as protests spread’ (42 lines)	IANS IANS
25.08. E H	‘Woman burnt to death in Orissa violence’ (37 lines) Bhubaneswar: ‘VHP holds Naveen govt responsible for leader’s death’ (15 lines) Phulbani: ‘Protests turn violent in Orissa’ (29 lines)	IANS PTI PTI
26.08. E H	Bhubaneswar: ‘Orissa: 7 more killed, toll reaches 9’ (12 lines)	PTI
27.08. E H	Bhubaneswar: ‘Orissa: shoot-at-sight order issued in Kandhamal’ (16 lines) Bhubaneswar: ‘Orissa remains volatile despite shoot at sight order’ (29 lines) Bhubaneswar: ‘Christians demand CBI probe into Orissa violence’ (18 lines) Rome: ‘Pope condemns attack on Indian Christians’ (10 lines)	PTI IANS IANS IANS
28.08. E H	Bhubaneswar: ‘Fresh incidents of violence in Orissa; churches, houses torched’ (31 lines) Bhubaneswar: ‘Orissa: situation under control in Kandhamal’ (17 lines)	IANS PTI
29.08. E H	New Delhi: ‘PM terms Orissa violence a ‘national shame’ (25 lines) Bhubaneswar: ‘Violence continues in Orissa despite curfew’ (37 lines) Bhubaneswar: ‘Curfew relaxed as situation improves in Kandhamal’ (25 lines) New Delhi: ‘Orissa violence: 45,000 Christian institutes shut in protest’ (31 lines) Bhopal: ‘Stones pelted at Christian Schools, Churches in MP’ (28 lines) ‘Missionary educational institutions across the country to remain closed today’ (7 lines)	IANS IANS PTI IANS IANS
30.08. E H	Bhubaneswar: ‘Kandhamal toll rises to 14, 24 houses torched’ (21 lines) Koraput (Orissa): ‘Orissa violence: Curfew follows communal clash’ (14 lines) New Delhi: ‘PM briefs president on Bihar floods, Orissa violence’ (10 lines)	PTI PTI IANS

31.08. E H	Bhubaneswar: 'Additional security personnel deployed in Koraput' (32 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa hope additional central forces will arrive soon' (20 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'VHP demands STF to nab Saraswati killers' (16 lines)	PTI
01.09. E H	New Delhi: 'PM offers package to people hit by violence in Orissa' (14 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: '558 houses, 17 church/prayer houses torched during riot: Govt' (19 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: '12 Orissa districts in grip of communal violence' (29 lines)	IANS
	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa violence: Day curfew suspended in Kandhamal; toll rises to 16	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa government presents details of destruction' (12 lines)	
02.09. E H	New Delhi: 'Orissa violence: Archbishop approaches SC seeking CBI probe' (8 lines)	PTI
	New Delhi: 'Orissa: SC to hear plea seeking CBI probe on Wednesday' (10 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'Volatile situation in riot-hit Kandhamal' (18 lines)	PTI
	New Delhi: 'Paswan for ban on RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal' (36 lines)	PTI
	New Delhi: 'Kandhamal violence: Hearing about CBI enquiry tomorrow' (7 lines)	
03.09. E H	New Delhi: 'Shivraj Patil visits riot-hit Orissa' (14 lines)	Agenc -ies
	New Delhi: 'India tells Vatican it is capable of handling Orissa situation' (36 lines)	IANS
	Bhubaneswar: 'Normalcy returning to violence-hit Orissa' (12 lines)	IANS
	New Delhi: 'SC directs Orissa to submit report on Kandhamal by tomorrow' (23 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'Patil reviews communal situation in Kandhamal' (15 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'Shivaraj reviewed Kandhamal situation' (7 lines)	
04.09. E H	New Delhi: 'Orissa govt won't allow VHP yatra in state' (7 lines)	PTI
	New Delhi: 'No permission for Togadia's yatra in Orissa' (7 lines)	PTI
05.09. E H	Bhubaneswar: 'Value of human life varies in Orissa' (20 lines)	PTI
	'Swami Laxmananand feared for his life: NGO' (20 lines)	
	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa: Entry points to Kandhamal sealed' (17 lines)	PTI
06.09.	Bhubaneswar: 'prohibitory order ahead of Hindu groups' rallies in Orissa' (24	IANS

E	lines)	
H		
09.09	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa refuses to hand over Kandhamal riot case to CBI' (17 lines)	PTI
E		PTI
H	Bhubaneswar: 'No CBI probe in Kandhamal violence' (10 lines)	
10.09.	New Delhi: 'Violence will be met with violence, Togadia warn' (29 lines)	IANS
E	Bhubaneswar: 'Life limps back to normalcy in Orissa' (20 lines)	
H		
11.09.	New Delhi: 'Situation in Kandhamal fully under control, Orissa govt tells SC' (18 lines)	PTI
E	Bhubaneswar: 'Red tape puts Kandhamal violence inquiry on back burner' (24 lines)	PTI
H	New Delhi: 'Situation in Kandhamal fully under control, Orissa govt' (12 lines)	
12.09.	'A trip to the war zone' (web exclusive, 49 lines) - Farzand Ahmed	
E	Bhubaneswar: 'people reluctant to return home in Orissa's riot-hit district' (36 lines)	IANS
H		
13.09.	New Delhi: 'BJP creating religious divide ahead of elections: Sonia' (27 lines)	IANS
E		
H		
14.09.		PTI
E	Phulbani: 'Orissa: 2 killed in fresh arson in Kandhamal' (17 lines)	
H		
15.09.	Bangalore: 'Mangalore shut as Christians protest attack on prayer halls' (13 lines)	IANS
E	Kasargod: 'Church attacked in Kerala' (15 lines)	IANS
	Bhubaneswar: 'Death toll in Orissa religious violence rises to 24' (17 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa to change law relating to religious freedom' (14 lines)	PTI
	Bangalore: 'Karnataka CM asks missionaries not to go for forcible conversions' (10 lines)	PTI
	Bhubaneswar: 'PMO offers relief for Kandhamal riot-hit people' (18 lines)	PTI
	'Christians protest attacks in Karnataka' (video)	

H	Phulbani: 'Kandhamal: two killed in fresh violence' (10 lines) 'Mangalore protest attacks on Christians' (13 lines) Mangalore protest attacks on Christians (video)	
16.09. E	Ahmedabad: 'SIMI is also into conversion' (18 lines) Bhubaneswar: 'More violence in Orissa as mob kills cop, torches station' (20 lines) Bangalore: 'K'taka govt orders probe into funds for conversion' (25 lines)	IANS PTI IANS
H	Bhubaneswar: 'Four police men killed in Orissa's Kandhamal' (10 lines)	
17.09. E	Mangalore: 'Fresh incidents of attack on Churches in Karnataka' (28 lines) New Delhi: 'Attacks on Christians planned by BJP: Congress' (19 lines)	PTI IANS
H	'Violence continues in Kandhamal' (video)	
18.09. E	New Delhi: 'Death threats keep Orissa Archbishop in Delhi' (25 lines)	IANS
H	New Delhi: 'Attacks on Christians planned by BJP: Congress' (11 lines)	IANS
19.09. E	Bhopal: '150-year-old cathedral set afire in Madhya Pradesh' (15 lines) Bangalore: 'Retired judge to probe Karnataka church attacks' (29 lines) Bangalore: 'Fresh attacks on churches reported in Karnataka' (18 lines) Bhubaneswar: 'Warning to Orissa to stop violence unfortunate: Patnaik' (16 lines) Bhubaneswar: 'Modi, Patnaik flay govt advisory on Karnataka, Orissa' (29 lines) 'Church torched in Jabalpur' (video)	IANS IANS PTI IANS PTI
H	New Delhi: 'Centre warned Karnataka and Orissa' (5 lines) 'Church attack in Jabalpur: unrest in the city' (9 lines) Bangalore: 'Bajrang Dal not involved in church attacks' (9 lines) New Delhi: 'Ban Bajrang Dal and VHP: Congress' (8 lines) 'Church attack in Jabalpur: unrest in the city' (video)	IANS
20.09. E	Mangalore: 'Karnataka Bajrang Dal convenor held for church attacks' (18 lines) Bangalore: 'Karnataka govt not for ban on Bajrang Dal' (18 lines)	Agenc -ies PTI
H	Mangalore: 'Karnataka Bajrang Dal convenor arrested' (9 lines)	
21.09. E	Bangalore: 'Three more churches attacked in Karnataka' (16 lines)	PTI
H	Bangalore: 'Church was attacked again in Karnataka' (12 lines)	IANS

22.09.	Bangalore: 'Archbishop slams Karnataka Chief Minister' (18 lines)	
E	Bangalore: 'Karnataka CM accuses Centre of double standard' (17 lines)	PTI
	Bangalore: 'Karnataka decides to book church attackers under Goonda Act' (15 lines)	PTI
	New Delhi: 'High-level Home Ministry team to visit Karnataka tomorrow' (12 lines)	PTI
	Yeddiyurappa apologises for attacks (video)	
H	Bangalore: 'Chief Minister Yeddiyurappa met Archbishop' (9 lines)	
23.09	Bangalore: 'Karnataka violence: BJP points towards Congress' (28 lines)	
E	Bangalore: 'Central team reviews security in Karnataka' (14 lines)	
H		
24.09.	Bhubaneswar: 'Tension in Kandhamal after fresh clashes' (18 lines)	IANS
	Bangalore: Karnataka seers join anti-conversion bandwagon (22 lines)	
E	Bangalore: 'Karnataka govt. lashes out at Central team' (46 lines)	PTI
	Bangalore: 'Protest marches to condemn attack on Christians' (10 lines)	PTI
H	Bhubaneswar: 'Advani for national consensus on conversion' (10 lines)	
25.09.	Phulbani: 'Curfew clamped in sensitive areas of Kandhamal district' (33 lines)	PTI
E	New Delhi: 'Bajrang Dal involved in Karnataka communal violence: Home Ministry' (19 lines)	PTI
H	Bhubaneswar: 'Orissa: no end to violence in Kandhamal district' (11 lines)	IANS
26.09.	Erode (Tamil Nadu): 'Statue of Jesus damaged in Dharmapuram' (5 lines)	PTI
E		
H	New Delhi: 'Bajrang Dal involved in Karnataka communal violence: Home Ministry' (7 lines)	PTI
27.09.		
E	Phulbani: 'Fresh arson, violence in Kandhamal' (19 lines)	PTI
H		
29.09.	Thiruvananthapuram: 'Hindu-Christian leaders meet in Ernakulam today' (13 lines)	PTI
E	Phulbani: 'Serial blasts in Kandhamal, no causality reported' (12 lines)	PTI
	Marseilles (France): 'PM defends India's secular credentials' (22 lines)	PTI
	Shillong: 'I am secular: Advani' (16 lines)	
H		

30.09.	Bhubaneswar: ‘1 dead, several injured in fresh Orissa violence’ (18 lines)	IANS
E	Thiruvananthapuram: ‘Hindus, Christians join hands against atrocities’ (15 lines)	
H	Bhubaneswar: ‘Orissa: Fresh violence in Kandhamal, one dead (8 lines)	IANS

See news content in appendix III

The first news appeared on the Aaj Tak website on 29th August (but no video) which carried the story ‘Missionary educational institutions across the country to remain closed today’. This story, the first one regarding the communal violence on the channel’s website, was about an act of protest by the Christian community as they decide to shut all their educational institutions. The story goes on to say that there has been violence for the last five days since the killing of Swami Laxmananda Saraswati, a spiritual leader of the Hindutva organization Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). The seven lines-long report ends with the comment that the police failed to stop the violence.

The news in English gave a more detailed account of the protest than the Hindi version. It made an attempt to give a clearer picture by providing the number of closed educational institutes which indicated the extent of the protest. The title read ‘Orissa violence: 45,000 Christian institutes shut in protest’. The story carried the opinion of the Christian community leaders and reported on the protest march by various Christian groups across the country. The report, which contained quotes from school principals and students, also quoted the community’s spokesperson who spoke about the Prime Minister’s assurance to the community’s delegation, who had appraised him of the situation in Orissa that steps would be taken to bring peace and normality. According to the story, the trigger for the violence was the killing of Swami Laxmananda Saraswati, a ‘member’ of the VHP, along with four others.

The English and Hindi stories, reporting the same event, are different in approach and in the information they present. While the date-line of the Hindi version does not give the place of origin, the English version is out-sourced from the Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) and originated from New Delhi.

However, both the stories shared the common ground of linking the anti-Christian violence to the killing of Swami Saraswati. Although it is the first story on the Hindi section of the website, the information is limited and does not attempt to portray the reality of the situation. In the English story, Saraswati was just a member of the organisation and killed along with four others. But in the Hindi story, Saraswati was a leader of the organisation and there is no mention of any of his followers killed.

On 1st September, Aaj Tak carried a story, originating from Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa, with the title ‘Orissa government has presented the details of destruction’. The report detailed the information given out by the state’s Chief Secretary after a review meeting with the Chief Minister. According to the report, 558 houses and 17 places of worship were torched during the communal violence, of which 543 torched houses were in Kandhamal, the worst affected district, and 15 houses in the Gajapati district. The report quoting the Chief Secretary said that 35 people were injured in the Kandhamal district and all the torched places of worship were reported to be from Kandhamal. The report further described the situation by stating that the Chief Secretary did not say that how many people were killed in the violence, but according to the official sources, 16 people were killed so far. The story concludes by stating that the communal violence started after the killing of the VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati.

The English version of the website carried a story with the same dateline and detailed information but with a different title – ‘558 houses, 17 church/prayer houses torched during riot: Govt’. The first half of the story contained the same information as the Hindi version but the title highlighted the enormity of destruction rather than an empty statement as in Hindi. The headline seems to be punchy and able to attract the reader’s/viewer’s attention. In the second half of the story, unlike the Aaj Tak story, a detailed account of the government’s relief work in three affected districts was given. The report also quoted the Director General of Police who explained the police deployment in the affected areas. This story looks to be more balanced and informative than the Aaj Tak story.

On 2nd September the Aaj Tak website put out a news item titled ‘Kandhamal violence: Hearing about CBI enquiry tomorrow’. The report elaborated on the headline and then dealt with two related stories: the petitioner’s request to move the Rapid Action Force (a central government-mandated security unit specifically created to deal with communal violence) to the rural areas where the violence took the worst form and his request for compensation for those whose houses had been destroyed.

The story on the channel’s English website was not much different from the Hindi version of the story except, for one additional piece of information – the petitioner sought a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) enquiry to find out the organisations behind the violence or elements instigating communal hatred. Both stories contained the news about the Supreme Court’s hearing on the petition seeking a CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation – the nation’s premium federal intelligence agency) enquiry, the petitioner’s claim that the Rapid Action Force had been deployed only in urban areas and the need for them to be moved to the rural areas and the plea for compensation of Rs.400,000 each for those whose houses were destroyed in the violence. Both versions of the story are sourced from the PTI (Press Trust of India, the country’s leading news agency) and originated from New Delhi. Although the stories might give the impression that they are similar, the approach seems to be different. The English title, ‘Orissa: SC to hear plea seeking CBI probe on Wednesday’ seems to be conveying news that affects the whole state of Orissa. But the Hindi title, which refers to Kandhamal, indicates a localised issue. While the headline in English does not speak about the ongoing violence, the headline in Hindi mentions violence in Kandhamal. Did the Hindi channel communicate anything new when it decided not to speak about the plea for NHRC enquiry into the violence? Is the story in Hindi more engaging than the story in English? It perhaps depends on the interests of the audience.

On 3rd September, the English and the Hindi editions of the channels carried a news report with the headlines, ‘Patil reviews communal situation in Kandhamal’ and ‘Shivraj reviewed Kandhamal situation’, respectively. Both

stories speak about the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil's, visit to the riot-hit Kandhamal district and the meetings he held with the Chief Minister of the state, other political party leaders and the state officials. However, the report in English is a more detailed one than the Hindi story. The story in English is padded with comments from the opposition party leader and the state's Chief Secretary and Home Secretary. The story in English has made an attempt to inform the audience about the measures taken by the state government to control the communal violence in the state. Both the stories are sourced from PTI and originated from Bhubaneswar, the state capital.

On 4th September, the website published a story in English and Hindi about the VHP's attempt to have a demonstration in Orissa. The English story with the headline 'Orissa govt won't allow VHP yatra¹⁸ in state' and the Hindi story with the headline 'No permission for Togadia yatra in Orissa' contain precisely the same news. These stories, sourced from the PTI and originating from New Delhi, speak about the assurance, which the Orissa government gave to the Supreme Court of India that the VHP leader and a divisive figure Praveen Togadia would not be allowed to conduct a yatra carrying the ashes of the slain VHP leader, Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati through the state. These stories also contain information regarding the Supreme Court directives to maintain peace in the state and the state government affidavit giving details about the deployment of paramilitary forces and state police to protect the lives and properties in the areas affected by the communal clashes.

After a gap of five days, on 9th September, both the channels carried news on the issue with an English headline 'Orissa refuses to hand over Kandhamal riot case to CBI', and a Hindi headline 'No CBI probe in Kandhamal violence'. While reporting the government stand on the CBI probe into the communal violence in Kandhamal, the news quoted a government minister. The first part of the story in Hindi and English are similar in content: the minister accuses the Congress government of giving political colour to the issue and says that the state police are effectively investigating the killing of the VHP leader and the

¹⁸A procession, normally associated with religious festivals.

communal violence thereafter. He further stated that the CBI is not a credible investigating agency as it colludes with the ruling Congress Party at the centre. The story in Hindi ends with the minister's comment on the Congress Party's role in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the Indian capital, as the aftermath of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination by her two bodyguards belonging to the Sikh minority. However, the story in English quotes the minister who said, 'One bride is burnt in every 12 hours and a woman is raped every 30 minutes in Delhi' and 'Delhi and Hyderabad, both Congress-ruled cities, have reported high rate of crimes against women'. Although both the versions of the story are sourced from the PTI and deal with the same news, the English version chose to include those comments. The inclusion of these comments on the crimes against women, in the English version of the story, perhaps indicates the news channel's attempt to play down such crimes during the communal violence in Orissa.

The English and Hindi stories published on 11th September dealt with the Orissa government's submission before the Supreme Court that they had taken steps to maintain law and order in the state and the state's claim that the situation in Kandhamal is fully under control. Both the versions, sourced from the PTI, contained the same information. These stories also spoke about the Supreme Court directives to the state government and the petitioner to join together and resolve the remaining issues.

The Aaj Tak website published a news report on 15 September with the headline 'Kandhamal: two killed in fresh violence'. However, the English version did not have a report with the same or similar headline on the same day. But there was a similar story on 14 September with the headline 'Orissa: 2 killed in fresh arson in Kandhamal'. Although both the stories are narrated around the main news that two persons were killed in fresh violence, the focus in the details is different. The story in English elaborates on the preventative measures employed by the police forces and how the violence is being spread in other villages. The story in Hindi is narrated in three parts – the news about the death of two people, police action in the affected places and the details of the dead rioter and the wounded policeman. The details of the rioter, who was

killed in the police firing, and of the wounded policeman, have not found a place in the report in English. The story in English chose to give priority to the details of spreading violence and the security measures taken by the police.

On the same day, the Aaj Tak website published yet another story, with a video, on the violence against Christians spreading to other parts of the country, including to southern state of Karnataka. The Headlines Today also had a video coverage of the incident besides the story published on the website. The stories with the headlines, ‘Mangalore shut as Christians protest attack on prayer halls’ (English) and, ‘Mangalore protest attacks on Christians’ (Hindi), are very similar in content. These stories speak about the ‘bandh’¹⁹ organised by the Christians in Mangalore to protest against the attacks on churches and prayer halls in various parts of the state. The stories, while describing the conflicting situation, tried to bring in the views of Hindutva groups who accused the Christian groups of campaigning against Hindu gods in their attempts to proselytise. Interestingly, it is the first time since the communal violence against Christians began that both the news channels published a news report prepared by their own reporters.

On 16 September the website published a news report on the growing violence in Orissa in English and Hindi. Both the channels had taken the original story from IANS (Indo-Asian News Service). Although the story seems to be dwelling upon the same incident they give different statistics. While the headline of the story in English claims that one policeman died in the violence, the headline of the Hindi version is more sensational which claims that four police personnel were killed. However, both the stories speak about the same incident where the rioters attacked a police station. The story in Hindi is shorter than the English and omitted the details given in the English version which speaks about the attacks on Christians and missionaries in the past years. Both the stories speak about the murder of the VHP leader Swami Saraswati which led to the communal violence. The Aaj Tak story (Hindi) which speaks about

¹⁹A form of protest by political parties, which involves a general strike i.e., no work, business or transport. It can be national, territorial or local in nature.

the death of four police personnel could invite further investigation into the motive of the channel.

The next news on violence against Christians, published on the Aaj Tak website, was on September 18th with the headline, ‘Attacks on Christians, a strategy by the BJP’: Congress’. The news about the views of the Congress Party on the attacks on the Christian community in the BJP-ruled Karnataka state does not have a parallel on the same day on the channel’s English version of the website. But a similar story, a detailed version, was published on September 17th with the headline, ‘Attacks on Christians planned by BJP: Congress’. This news item, sourced from IANS, gives the Congress Party’s view on the communal violence against Christians - a political blame game in which the ruling party accuses the principal opposition party, the BJP, of colluding with other Hindutva groups for political gain. However, on September 18th, the English version of the website published a story related to the violence against Christians in Orissa. The story titled ‘Death threats keep Orissa Archbishop in Delhi’, speaks about the death threat the Archbishop received from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and narrates the Christian leader’s version of the story wherein he speaks about the Christian delegation’s meeting with the Prime Minister, the Hindutva group’s allegations that the Christians were involved in religious conversion. This story, as in many other stories related to the incident, concludes by referring to the murder of Hindutva leader and the history of religious violence in Orissa.

The Aaj Tak website, on September 19th, published four stories related to communal violence against the Christian community and one of the stories had a video link. On the other hand the English version of the website carried five stories related to anti-Christian violence and a story in video titled ‘Church torched in Jabalpur’. However, the Aaj Tak and the Headlines Today channels dealt with different issues related to the communal violence, except for the story on the church attack in Jabalpur. Although the video link seems to lead to a similar content, the textual analysis of the news stories in Hindi and English proves otherwise – they differ in details and focus. The story in Hindi titled, ‘Church attack in Jabalpur: unrest in the city’ seems to suggest that following

the burning incident inside the church the angry Christian community members protested on the road and destroyed vehicles. According to this report, in order to disperse the crowd the police had to use force. The report is concluded by stating that it was not the first attack on the Christian community in the state and, under the BJP regime, the number of such reported incidents had more than doubled.

The English version of the story, sourced from IANS and originating from Bhopal, with the headline ‘150-year-old cathedral set afire in Madhya Pradesh’, suggests that the church was set on fire by two unidentified men, unlike the story in Hindi which says that the statues of the saints were set on fire by the two unidentified men who broke into the church. The story in English gives details of the damage – ‘the altar, statues of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the carpet were damaged’. According to the Hindi news, the people alleged that two unidentified people attacked the church. But the English news presents the incident graphically by quoting the police and stating that fire fighters were called in to douse the fire. The story, which quotes the Jabalpur District Collector and the priests, also speaks about two incidents of attacks on Christians in the state over the past week. The date line of the story in Hindi does not say whether it is sourced from a news agency or from where it was reported. These stories, by Aaj Tak and the Headlines Today, have taken different angles and focused on different issues, as the headlines suggest. The Aaj Tak story gives the impression that a minor attack on a church in Jabalpur caused tension in the town and that the Christians resorted to violent protest and destruction of public property. The story also speaks about the on-going communal violence against Christians in Orissa and Karnataka states. The story, which lacks any official statement from the police or any state authority, in fact gives a different narrative to that of the English version.

The story in Hindi with the headline, ‘Centre warned Karnataka and Orissa’, speaks about the Central government warning to the Karnataka and Orissa governments as the violence against Christians was continuing. The central government asked the state governments to take measures to stop violence against the minority communities and their churches. It is a five-line story

sourced from IANS. On the other hand, the website did not carry any news in English about the Centre government's warning to the states of Orissa and Karnataka. But two stories describing the reaction to the Centre's move by the affected parties were published on the same day with the titles, 'Warning to Orissa to stop violence unfortunate: Patnaik' and 'Modi, Patnaik flay govt. advisory on Karnataka, Orissa'. These stories, sourced from IANS and the PTI, deal with the same news and the second story provides an elaborate political narrative, padded with comments from the hard-line Hindutva leader Narendra Modi. The stories were quoting the Orissa Chief Minister and Narendra Modi of the BJP who attributed political motives to the instructions given by the Congress-led Centre government.

The Aaj Tak story with the title 'Ban Bajrang Dal and VHP: Congress' speaks about the accusations made by the Congress Party against the Hindu right-wing organisations Bajrang Dal and VHP. The Congress Party General Secretary alleged that the Hindu right-wing organisations were involved in the anti-Christian violence in Orissa and Karnataka and demanded that these BJP-supported organisations be banned. This news report from New Delhi ends with a comment that on the issue of the communal violence against Christians, the Central government has already given warnings to the Orissa and Karnataka governments under Article 355 of the Indian Constitution, which allows the central government to take over the affected regions in the case of a failed law-and-order situation.

The Aaj Tak story titled, 'Bajrang Dal not involved in church attacks', carries the claims made by the Karnataka Bajrang Dal leader that the organisation was not involved in the recent attacks on churches in the states. However, according to the report, he said that he would make 'any sacrifice for the sake of Hindu religion' and he explained that, 'the attacks were due to the activities of religious conversion', and, he 'will support those who are trying to stop such activities'.

Although, on the same day there were two stories on the Headlines Today website, reported from Bangalore, they did not even mention the news about the

Bajrang Dal leader's claims which could flare-up further communal unrest. As the title suggests, the focus of the story is the declaration of the government decision by the Chief Minister to order a judicial enquiry by a retired High Court judge – 'Retired judge to probe Karnataka church attacks'. This detailed report contains a short account of the attacks on the Christian community in the state, the Central government's warning to the state, the claim of the right-wing Hindus that the attacks were a fallout from the activities of religious conversion and the attempts to insult the Hindu religion, counter claims by the Christian groups, and finally the assertion by the Chief Minister and the state BJP leaders that 'large-scale conversion is on in Karnataka, particularly in coastal areas'. The second story from Bangalore with the title, 'Fresh attacks on churches reported in Karnataka', speaks about the attacks on churches that had been taking place across the state amidst the government claims that normality has been restored. The story ends with the statement that, 'the state government has ordered a judicial probe into the past eighteen incidents occurred since Sunday last besides investigations by the Corps of Detectives'. All the five stories in English are sourced from other news agencies (3 from IANS and 2 from PTI).

On September 20th, the website published two stories in English and one in Hindi. The story in Hindi titled 'Karnataka Bajrang Dal convenor arrested' has a parallel story in English, though there are discrepancies in the details – 'Karnataka Bajrang Dal convenor held for church attacks'. It is a report about the arrest of the leader of Bajrang Dal, a Hindutva organisation which took responsibility for the attacks on churches in certain parts of the state, claiming that the incidents of religious conversion prompted them to act. The story in Hindi, presenting the context, ends with the statement that the attacks on minorities in the state prompted the Central government to issue advisory to the state government under article 355 of the Constitution. In contrast, according to the story in English, 'the advisory was, however, not sent under the emergency provisions of the Constitution (Article 355)'. The story also speaks about the Karnataka government's disagreement with the Central government advisory and the fact that the state Home Minister called it a 'hasty step' while claiming that they had already brought the situation under control.

The stories in Hindi and English on September 21st speak about the attack on churches on the previous day. According to these stories, three churches in the state are attacked. However, they do not speak about the same churches – the story in English speaks about three churches in Bangalore, but the story in Hindi speaks of three churches in the state of Karnataka. The story in Hindi gives a positive impression of the measures taken by the Karnataka government. Both the stories do mention about the Central government advisory to the state.

On September 22nd the website published five stories in English and one story in Hindi. All the stories on violence against the Christian community originated from Karnataka. One of the five stories in English is a video showing the apologies by Karnataka Chief Minister for the attacks on Christians in the state – ‘Yeddiyurappa apologises for attacks’. The sole Hindi story is about the Chief Minister’s meeting with the Archbishop of Bangalore and there is a parallel English story on the website. Although these stories deal with the same incident their titles seem to suggest that their focus is different. The story in English ‘Archbishop slams Karnataka Chief Minister’, portrays a stronger reaction from the Christian leader than the title of the Hindi story suggests, ‘Chief Minister Yeddiyurappa met Archbishop’.

On September 24th, the only story related to the incident on Aaj Tak was the report from Bhubaneswar about the senior BJP leader and a former Deputy Prime Minister of India, Lal Krishna Advani’s comments on religious conversion – ‘Make national consensus on proselytization: Advani’. According to the report Advani, during his visit to Orissa, sought national consensus on proselytization and stressed the need to have a debate at the national level in order to create a strong political consensus on the issue. He also condemned the killing of the VHP leader, Swami Saraswati, and the attacks on churches in Orissa. The website, on the same day, published four stories in English related to the incident including one about the fresh violence in the Kandhamal district. But the comments made by the senior leader of the BJP were not reported. While the Aaj Tak found these comments about proselytization the only newsworthy item which took place in the violence-hit Orissa, the English section of the organisation decided to ignore the news.

On September 25th the Aaj Tak website published a report on the ongoing violence in the Kandhamal district of Orissa. The report briefly outlined the incidents of arson, the road blockade and the police action against the widespread violence. This story, sourced from IANS, concluded by stating that the killing of the VHP leader caused the widespread violence which led to the destruction of churches, and the houses of Christians. According to the report, 25 people lost their lives in the violence. In contrast to the story in Hindi, the Headlines Today story gave a detailed account of the violence and police action. However, the story did not mention the killing of the VHP leader.

On September 25th the website published a story in English which spoke about the Home Ministry's assertion that Bajrang Dal was involved in the Karnataka communal violence. The report also quoted the Home Ministry officials who pointed out the mishandling of the situation by the authorities and the police. Aaj Tak, on the following day, published the Hindi version of the same story which was less descriptive in nature. Both the stories were sourced from the PTI.

On September 30th the Aaj Tak and the Headlines Today websites published a story with the report that one person was killed in fresh violence in Kandhamal district. Both the stories quoted the Inspector General of Police while narrating the story and they gave the same information. Although the news had been sourced from IANS, the approach by both channels is noticeably different. The story in Hindi which is very short (8 lines), does not give a detailed account of the violence except stating that clashes between the communities started after the Hindutva leader was killed. The story in English, at the start as well as in the final paragraph, says that 30 people lost their lives so far. The Headlines Today story spoke of the history of communal violence between Hindus and Christians in the state and mentioned the incident in which the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were burnt alive by a Hindu mob in 1999. Although the English and Hindi stories are different in many respects, both the stories speak about the 'clashes between Hindus and Christians'. The narrative implicates all Hindus and Christians in Orissa in the communal violence while,

in reality, only a few Hindus who are members of certain Hindutva groups were involved in it.

Web analysis – Quantitative

The quantitative analysis of the Aaj Tak and the Headlines Today websites gives the number of stories which these channels published on the anti-Christian violence in Orissa and the related stories from 24th August to 30th September, 2008. The communal violence in Orissa sparked off communal clashes involving Christians and Hindu groups in other parts of the country and the news of such incidents started appearing on news channels from the first week of September. This research has categorised such news and the news about the comments made by the political party leaders on the issue under the title ‘related stories’.

Table 4 Covering communal violence from 24.08.2008 to 30.09.2008

Number of stories	Aaj Tak (24 th August to 30 th September)	Headlines Today (24 th August to 30 th September)
On Orissa violence	12	59
Related stories	13	34
Total	25	93

Although this analysis gives an account of the news reportage by Aaj Tak and Headlines Today channels over a period of 38 days, a further division of the time frame is understood to be useful in comparing with the television news footage (see Table 1 & 2). So following a corresponding time frame to that of the television news footage analysis, the news items published on the websites of these news channels from 24th August, 2008 to 15th September, 2008 were analysed.

Table 5 Covering communal violence from 24.08.2008 to 15.09.2008

Number of Stories	Aaj Tak (24 th August to 15 th September)	Headlines Today (24 th August to 15 th September)
On Orissa violence	08	50
Related stories	02	07
Total	10	57

Tables 4 and 5 show the extent of the coverage of the incident by the Hindi and English news channels, Aaj Tak and Headlines Today of the TV Today media group. The web analysis of Aaj Tak channel shows that the website published the same number of news items on the issue as the number of news items appeared on the televised version of the channel (eight stories on television and the website). The web analysis of the selected time frame substantiates the assumption that the number stories published on the website is an indicator of the number of stories appeared on the television channel. The web analysis of the news channels of the selected time frames (from 24th August, 2008 to 30th September, 2008 and 24th August 2008 to 15th September 2008) proves the assumption that the news channels shifted their focus from the issue after two weeks to other issues.

Photo Analysis

While no photos related to the incident were available under the category, 'photo' during the selected time frame (24-8-2008 to 30-09-2008), a search on Google for 'India Today photos of Orissa violence' gave access to the India Today group web site's photo gallery where four photos related to the incident are available.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/gallery/Orissa+violence:+Christian+institutes+shut+in+protest/4/180.html> (See photos in appendix IV)

The photo gallery is titled 'Orissa violence: Christian institutes shut in protest'

1. *A photo showing the protest of hundreds of people carrying banners and placards with the caption 'Christians protest attacks on their community outside Orissa Bhavan in New Delhi'*

Although the photo gives the impression to the audience that the gathering organised to protest about the violence against Christians was well attended, the location of those gatherings indicates that such protests were organised only in certain 'pockets' in India, such as major cities where affluent Christians live.

2. *A photo showing five people protesting, including the archbishop of New Delhi with the caption 'Delhi Archbishop Vincent Concessao along with a child protesting recent attacks on Christian community in Orissa'*

Does this photograph speak about the nature of protest? The photograph perhaps tries to capture and present the mood of grief and frustration of the community but lacks urgency and does not call for immediate action from the authorities. However, it might be argued that the media group, by choosing to publish the pictures of such 'peaceful' protests, has attempted to portray the Christian community as peace-loving people. But does this picture reflect the nature of a protest that matches the severity of violence in Orissa and draw public attention?

3. *A photo of eight people including two children and one foreigner holding lit-up candles with the caption 'People light candles at Christ Church in Shimla'*

The photo showing eight people holding lit-up candles is part of the protest against the violence in Orissa. It is not clear to the audience if 'Christ Church' is a place name in Shimla or the name of a Church. In any case the photo remains an icon of the foreign connection of India's Christians. The white young woman, a foreigner, among the eight protestors adds gravity to the Western colour of India's Christianity. Does the choice of this picture convey a message which is in line with the Hindutva ideology?

4. *A photo of school children standing in front of lit-up candles with the caption 'Children light candles during a prayer, held for the victims of attack on Christians in Orissa'.*

The photo does not seem to agree with the caption as seven children in school uniform are seen standing in front of lit-up candles, looking unattached and perhaps unaffected by the incident. First of all, these seven to eight year old students are not able to understand the gravity of the incident: this is evidenced by their smiling faces. The photo gives the impression that it was a photo shoot for the news, possibly from a school run by Christian management.

The four photos available are not dated and they have been sourced from the Press Trust of India. According to the India Today website 45,000 Christian institutes, mostly educational institutions were shut down on August 28, 2008. These photos do not suggest the real nature of the protest or the gravity of the incident and do not seem to be in accord with the title of the photo gallery, which seems to suggest that all Christian institutes across the country are shut down. The photo gallery, which does not include a picture showing the true nature of the problem, is insufficient to explain the reason for the protest and it raises the question: do the photos help the audience understand the gravity of the problem? The violence which caused the protest and the demonstration of protest are interconnected and not to be seen as separate events. In Mabry's opinion, 'Relationships between contexts and cases are interdependent and reciprocal' (Mabry, 2008: 217). The protest is meaningful when the picture is viewed in the context. So the separation of these related events constructs a narrative which is independent of the other and could be understood as an attempt to manipulate the news.

The TV today group, both broadcaster and printer, has linked their television news channels and magazine on the website. This helps them use the same news content for the print and television media, though the English channel, Headlines Today takes most advantage. That does not mean that the information was generated originally for the print or the broadcast media and later shared with the others. It is likely that the news channel uses the same story as in some

instances, the same people are employed to prepare the stories for both formats. However, the print edition (*India Today* magazine) did not dedicate a substantial amount of space to the incident, though any incident of that scale has traditionally been treated as a cover story and more detailed news is given on many inside pages.

Conclusion

In the light of the quantitative analysis of the television news footage, qualitative and quantitative web analysis and the analysis of the photographs available on the website, this study attempts to understand how the news channels of TV Today group, Aaj Tak and Headlines Today, dealt with the anti-Christian violence in Orissa and other related issues that took place across the country in August-September 2008.

The analyses show that the Hindi news channel, Aaj Tak chose to withhold a lot of information regarding the Orissa violence and the related incidents that took place in different parts of the country. On the other hand, the English news channel, Headlines Today, though belonging to the same media organisation, offered a substantial amount of time and space to the issue. The stories published on the Aaj Tak website were comparatively short too. While Aaj Tak published just 12 stories on Orissa violence, Headlines Today published 59 stories on the issue during the same time frame (see Table 4). Both the news channels made attempts to connect the incidents of violence to that of the killing of the VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati. Headlines Today, in their approach, appeared to be graphical and attempted to give detailed information on the issue. Aaj Tak news reportage appeared to have sensationalised the news which perhaps led to compromising the facts. While the narrative of Aaj Tak contained suggestions that would give the impression that there were communal clashes involving the Hindu groups and the Christians, the Headlines Today narrative suggested a 'one side' attack on the Christian community. In the final analysis it may be understood that the Hindi news channel Aaj Tak has shown tendencies that could be seen favourable to the Hindutva ideologues. Philo's argument, 'the textual strategies are used to 'frame' a description in accordance

with the underlying assumption' may be useful in understanding such media behaviour (Philo, 2007:116). However, further investigations are to be made with the help of audience research to confirm such framing activity by the Aaj Tak news channel. The ideological stance and the editorial approach shown by the Headlines Today are emblematic of the existing trends among the English news channels. It also indicates the presence of India's divided audience with a different set of cultural values which direct their interest in news consumption. On the other hand, audience's interests and cultural predilections and prejudices play a crucial role in the shaping of the news ideology.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Analysis

Communal conflicts are not unfamiliar in India. Many researches have been conducted to explain and explore this phenomenon – in its economic, political and cultural contexts - and a plethora of reasons have been given for its existence. However, there is an area which has been left fairly unattended - the role of news television in exacerbating communal discord in a multi-faith and multi-lingual nation, which despite robust economic growth in recent decades still remains one of the most unequal societies on the planet, divided on the basis of caste, creed and class. What does the news television have to do with the growing social unrest and the communal riots that keep on erupting in different parts of the country? Does it incite violence or bring people together for communal clashes? This research makes an attempt to explore the possibilities of the involvement of television news media – given the primacy of television as a medium for information and entertainment in a country where nearly 30 per cent of the population is still illiterate, potentially opening up a new avenue and a trajectory for research.

This research project, studying the relationship between television news media and Hindu nationalism, has tried to understand news television's engagement with the Hindutva movement from different levels. This work has drawn conclusions by systematically looking at the Hindutva groups' engagement with the news television, while involving in the democratic structures and discursive processes. The study, in order to understand the covert strategy, has also looked at Hindutva's rendezvous with the other members of the mass media family - print media as well as the film industry. While investigating the news television's behaviour, this study has drawn a comparison between mainstream Hindi and English television 24/7 news channels in their approach to the Hindutva movement.

Live News: Making the Trivial Important

Although most of the participants of focus groups did not think that news content is free of manipulation or biased, there is a high amount of believability attached to live news. There is a tendency among the audiences to treat live news as more reliable than normal news reports. Such reliability is due to the perception that live transmission does not give room for manipulation and external influence. According to Madianou, it adds a new dimension to the 'live' news - 'real' (Madianou, 2005). News channels thrive on such audience perception and they are keen to include more and more 'live news' in news programmes. The immediacy and urgency they offer, give them an edge over the news channels that are not able to offer real time reportage. The news television has, over the years of its growth, invented new ways of constructing news value and attributing importance to news that fit in with their interests. 'By reporting an event 'live' (...), television is attributing importance to (rather uneventful) event' (Madianou, 2005: 97). The audiences perceive a news item as very important when they notice that the live reportage takes over other popular programmes of the day like normal news bulletins, current affairs and talk shows. Some news channels have started using 3G and 4G technology in order to bypass the cable operators who might at times follow government restrictions to black out certain live events that might affect the social harmony. When there is a tragic incident, the Hindi news channels that are considered to be sensational in approach, tend to choose live broadcasting over the normal news programmes.

Screening Hindutva

While the explicit manifestation of the Hindutva ideology has remained in the spheres of religion and politics the movement has been making attempts to penetrate the social and cultural life of citizenry by influencing other areas of public engagement. The mass media, starting with the films, have been a natural choice for them to implement their agenda. Influencing and manipulating the concept of nation-ness and family values the Hindutva groups sought to exclude those who do not fit in with the value system prescribed by them. In India, cinema has been a popular medium and the Hindutva ideologues have exploited

the power of cinema in their attempt to construct the picture of nation-ness. The powerful audiovisual narratives, which carry the veiled Hindutva agenda, seek to isolate minority communities. The analysis of Hindi films provides sufficient proofs of the efforts that have been made over the years to construct a new national identity. This research claims that in their attempt to reconstruct national identity, the Hindi films and the contemporary Bollywood films, have shown tendencies to portray Christians as cultural aliens. The Christian characters are often portrayed as culturally more affiliated to the West than to India. The cultural alienation through films is done by carefully picking characters from the minority groups of Christian community such as Anglo-Indians and Goan Christians who are known for their Western influence. The impact of this trend is far-reaching as Hindi cinema has a large audience base, covering most of India except a few south Indian states. The Hindutvisation of the television cannot be seen independently of Hindutvisation of cinema because they are part of one agenda and the both industries function complementing and supporting each other.

Hindutva Public sphere

In a deliberative democracy the media play a crucial role in enabling and equipping the citizens to participate in the discursive processes. In India over the last two decades the news television, supported by the fast emerging Internet, has been instrumental in the creation of new fora for political discussions and action. The news television's role in creating such spaces is on display on two levels - national and transnational. The trans-nationalisation of news television, aimed at the Indian audiences living abroad, helped the creation of transnational public spheres and the publics. The Hindu nationalist movement has utilised the scope of such facilities and made attempts to create many support groups. While the main focus is on the formation of Hindutva public sphere and public at the national level, the creation of such powerful fora of transnational nature is meant to enhance their support at the international level, such as political lobbying, financial support for their work at home away from home - in India. The Hindutva public sphere in India and abroad is crucial for the movement as it gives ideological support and helps the formation of

Hindutva public. The news television, often providing a forum, act as public sphere and acting as a conduit for the supply of information which helps the formation of public sphere. In the light of the discussions on the Hindutva public sphere, I argue that the Hindutva public sphere is responsible to a large extent for the creation of Hindutva public. Hindutvisation of Hindus is a complex process which involves manipulating the socio-cultural bases and the religious experiences of mainstream Hindu population. The public sphere, manipulating the socio-cultural environment of viewers and providing ideological supplement, helps the construction of Hindutva public which often resort to violent means to execute the hegemonic Hindutva agenda. Although this role of news television is to be seen as a pan-linguistic phenomenon, the Hindi news television is believed to have made huge contribution and is considered to be more significant than others, given that Hindi is the most widely-spoken language in India and among the Indian diaspora, members of which speak some version of the language, thanks largely due to popularity of Bollywood films among overseas Indian communities.

Audience Response and Content Analysis

The field research, in pursuit of exploring the complex behaviour pattern of the news television, has deployed methods that are proven to be useful – case study supported by content analysis and focus group interviews and interviews with leading media personnel. The research has raised a number questions in the process and has collected sufficient data to adequately explain them. The data collected from the audience research helped the researcher to understand news television's influence on the audiences in urban and rural north India. The focus group interviews revealed the complex links between the audiovisual texts and the viewers' interpretation of the media text, which is mostly based on their life experiences. The approach towards the issue and the interpretation of the news is connected to the viewers' personal experience (Madianou, 2005). The acknowledgment of audiences' ability to understand and interpret the media text critically is not meant to undervalue the power of the media text produced by the collaborative efforts at the media institutions but that any model of media

influence must be complex and must account for people being active interpreters (Balnaves, Donald & Shoemith, 2009).

The anti-Christian rhetoric of the Hindutva movement being one of the main foci of this study, the news reportage of the anti-Christian violence in Orissa in 2008 was chosen for content analysis. The comparison between two leading Hindi and English news channels, Aaj Tak and Headlines Today (both belonging to the same media group – TV Today), in terms of their approach towards the activities involving the Hindutva groups, was made by closely looking at the news content of a selected time frame. This research does not claim that the comparison of all the other Hindi and English news channels will provide the same result as the one obtained from the comparison between the Hindi and English news channels of TV Today Group. However, this result is considered as indicative of dominant trends among many Hindi and English news channels in India.

Categories of Viewers

Mirca Madianou has identified a few categories while researching the Greek audience (2005). I found that the classification Madianou provided is relevant in the Indian context too and I have borrowed the concept to understand the audience for my project. The viewer's interpretation of the media text plays a crucial role in understanding the news and providing meaning to it. So no study seeking to understand the influence of the media can be complete without attempting to understand the audience.

Analytic Viewers

The audiences have shown tendencies to analyse the news and identify the reasons why anti-Christian violence take place. These attempts to identify the reasons and provide explanations always do not produce the same effects as the media's attempts to rationalise the events. Audience also have shown the ability to go back to the previously reported events which they believe may be connected to the presently reported event. In the case of anti-Christian violence, a section of the audience related it to proseletyization by Christian missionaries

and the socio-economic problems that might have inflamed or even caused the conflict.

Critical Viewers

The participants who are critical viewers often questioned the objectivity in the news. They explained how the news can be biased and how content can be influenced by political considerations, thus affecting the news agenda and framing of issues. As Madianou has suggested, ‘the more people watch, the more critical they become towards media practices’ (Madianou, 2005: 116). In India, where 188 round-the-clock news channels exist, a viewer is inundated by news – much of it driven by infotainment content. In my experience during the research for this project, those who are critical about the media practices, except the group of young participants in Noida, were in fact spending more time watching television. Like Madianou, I too have noticed that even the participants who were critical of the reporting and other journalistic practices, regularly watched news and often agreed with the contents of the news. So their critical approach is not to be considered as rejection of news media but signals their dissatisfaction with the news.

Emotional Viewers

While most of the participants were found to be critical in their approach to journalistic practices and the media text, they were emotionally involved with the media text especially when they perceived that the news was pertaining to their own lifestyle. Their emotional involvement was noticeably visible while discussing issues of religious conversion and violence against minority religious communities. In India, especially in the villages, religion is powerful enough to influence the social and political views of people and can be an agent of polarisation.

Case Study

Case study has been employed to aid the researcher’s attempt to study the media discourse around the issues related to Christian community that are in the public domain. For case study, the anti-Christian violence in Orissa in 2008,

considered to be the largest such event in the modern history involving Christian community, has been chosen. This study has been undertaken cautiously, as Mabry suggests, with ‘a profound respect for the complexity of social phenomena’ (Mabry, 2008: 217).

Such extreme care and attention is given to the minute details of the issue because of the complex nature of the issues related to the socio-cultural environment in which it took place. The content analysis has been carried out solely to study the chosen case. The approach of the Hindi and the English news channels, Aaj Tak and Headlines Today, has been studied and conclusions have been drawn. Besides, to bring more clarity to the understanding of the approach and the influence on the audience, discussions on the incident have been conducted in all the focus groups. As has been suggested ‘interpretivist methodology encourages the case study researcher to be alert to patterns of activities and the variety of meanings participants ascribe to their experiences’ (ibid). The focus group interviews revealed that the participants’ views are shaped by their many contexts - historical, social, political, ideological, cultural, linguistic, and so on. The participants’ opinion about Christians and the conflicts involving Christians provided crucial information regarding the influence of news television, as television remains the primary source of information for most of them.

Application of Theories

For the final analysis, the empirical research data have been seeped through theoretical points to check the coherence of the arguments. In the process, various theories, which have been employed to define and understand the media behaviour, are placed against the results obtained through the focus group interviews, interviews with media personnel and content analysis of the television news. The research uses pluralistic method in order to obtain high rate of accuracy.

Textual analysis, given the limitations involved, alone cannot explain the media proclivity, influence of the media text on the audience and the prevailing trends

in the news television. It is imperative for the study to include the gate-keeping process, which involves the selection of news and its content and the cultural features of the target audience. As Philo has argued it is essential that while studying the interaction between news television and various interest groups, the content analysis is to be supported with the understanding of the factors involved in news production – the sources which the journalists depend upon, market pressures and the policy of the media organisation (Philo, 2007). The policy of the organisation might include the decisions taken in line with the pressure from various quarters like government, corporations, political parties and the interest of the audience. The individual texts are linked to ‘the wider systems of ideologies which informed them and the production processes which structured their representation’ (Philo, 2007: 115). So, for a clearer understanding of the issues, a simultaneous study of the audience reception and the perspectives of the journalists were conducted for this project.

The interviews with media professionals and a close look at the delicate structures of the news industry helped me to understand the intricacies of media engagement with the audiences. With the arrival of transnational media groups into the news industry the compulsions among the news channels have become intense. Due to these compulsions arising from excessive competition in a crowded news market, the news channels, to expand their viewership adopt new ways of engaging with the audiences. It is not uncommon among the news channels in India, in the pursuit of alluring audiences, often resort to sensationalism. Such TRP-driven attempts to be appealing to the audiences often adversely affect the quality of news (Thussu, 2007). In such a scenario it is possible that along with sensationalism, religious nationalist elements creep into the media dialogues.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis involves systematic description of what people say or write. Such descriptive analysis which exposes the ‘structures and strategies of text or talk’ (Van Dijk, 2000: 35) treats discourse as a ‘social action made visible in language’ (Antaki, 2007: 431). As Fairclough has argued, ‘discourses are

perspectives on the world' and these perspectives are often linked to ideologies that are meant to promote the interests of various groups (Fairclough, 2003: 124). Even when the broadcasters claim 'objectivity and impartiality', for Philo, news can be the reproduction of 'the assumptions of the powerful about what was necessary and possible in our society' (Philo, 2007: 105). Media discourse is recognised as one of the main sources of 'people's knowledge, attitude and ideologies' (Van Dijk, 2000: 36). Media discourse, initiating and aiding the discursive processes in which the members of the audience act as citizens, influences the policy makers and the government. Such levels of media discourse' influence on the various structures of the society makes the discourse analysis crucial for this study. The discourse analysis of the news channels under study is carried out in the content analysis of the Aaj Tak and Headlines Today websites.

For Foucault, discourse is a social practice which defines how people should live and can be considered as expressions of the language of hegemony (Foucault, 1994). For example, the television discourse which links communal violence with 'religious conversion' defines how people should practice their religion and the possible violent consequences if the suggested social norm is broken. Although the news content of both the channels contained such discourse, Aaj Tak appeared to have made attempts to follow the Hindutva line.

Direct Audience and Indirect Audience

The fieldwork for audience research offered further scope for defining the audience, which includes both the direct and the indirect audience. The participants, invariably in all the groups, tended to discuss the decoded message with their friends or significant others. The people who involved in the discussions with the television viewers did not always have direct contact with the media text under discussion. Although they had no direct contact with the media text, through their discussions with the primary audience, they indirectly became the audience too. This indirect audience by participating in the discussions contributes to the further interpretation and understanding of the television text. The contribution of both the direct and indirect audience is

relevant in the circulation of the meaning and in the longevity of a news item in the public domain. If a news story is perceived as germane to their social life, it gets spread quickly and it stays alive in the public consciousness for a longer period of time.

At least some participants, although they highlighted the positive aspect of news, criticised journalists for their affiliations and biases. The participants of the urban focus groups in particular were not happy with the repeated telecast of news items with disturbing visuals and sensitive commentaries. Although some women participants admitted that they found the dramatisation of news appealing, as a whole they thought that the news value was reduced by sensationalist tactics.

Semiotics of Silence

Silence can be a meaningful expression in communication. According to Sartre, silence is significant when it is the absence of a discourse, pronouncement or gesture. Silence has a significant value whenever the absent facts or discourse is anticipated (1949). So the possibility of anticipating a discourse is a necessary condition to make silence meaningful. 'If the discourse has not been anticipated, the relational contrast is lost' and silence becomes insignificant (De Behar, 1995: 7).

The quantitative content analysis shows Aaj Tak's approach towards the violence against Christians in Orissa. During the selected time frame (24 August to 30 September 2008) Aaj Tak published 25 stories, while Headlines Today, its sister channel in English, published 93 stories during the same time frame. Aaj Tak's silence on the issue becomes significant when its discourse on the violence was expected. Every news channel, as it was a major incident of violence, was expected to dedicate a substantial amount of time and space to the issue during the selected time. Aaj Tak's silence becomes significant when the contrast is drawn with its English version, Headlines Today. When Headlines Today chose to provide space and time for an extensive discourse on the issue, Aaj Tak seemed to have made a deliberate choice to observe silence. The

silence of the news channel could be interpreted as an attempt to trivialise the issue which in effect helped the Hindutva groups. While attributing salience to issues and topics media make them the focus of public attention. Aaj Tak's reluctance to give a regular coverage on the anti-Christian violence was an indication of its reluctance to give salience to the topic.

Forming the Hindutva Public

The news television's multifarious ways of interaction 'generate new publics and new segregation, new modes of association and new modes of violence' (Holsten, 2012: xi). Spectacle attracts audiences to form part of it. So television offers the possibility for the members of the audience to be part of the spectacle, though they are 'scattered spectators of television' initially (Kennedy, 2009: 7). The members of the audience when drawn by an ideology and repeatedly fed with the ideological support and the information which helps the further formation of ideology become part of a public – television public. The news coverage of communal violence with explicit videos of the scenes of violence might attract more people and trigger further conflicts. The television public along with the members of the general public, coming together with the intention of giving visibility to public opinions, make public spectacles which have the potential to influence and persuade public authorities and other non-participating members of the public. The role of television is two way - feeding the public with the views of the public sphere and giving visibility to the public demonstrations. Such public demonstrations turning into spectacles are often considered as the expressions of strong public opinion.

Spectator can be a member of the public and a participant in the spectacle. It is important, while investigating the role of television news in the growth of a movement, to understand what 'unites' the members of the television audience. Kennedy asks, 'what is an audience? When spectators congregate in public for a performance, live or recorded, does anything unite them?' (Kennedy, 2009:13). While attempting to discover the uniting factor in audience he speaks about 'the universal'. To him nothing universal happens to the assembled spectators' except the 'gathering'. His argument is valid in the case of theatre shows or

even tele-dramas or cinemas where people assemble to see a spectacle. However, I propose that in the case of a spectacle on news television the universal exists in the understanding of the message conveyed by the television narrative. The universal or the 'commonness' is the perceived message which is adequately powerful to lead the spectator to action.

However, spectators respond to it differently - some become part of the public sphere, some public and then part of the spectacle. The caste and class conscience audiences who consider proselytization as the cause of the imbalance in the society or a corruption of the culture, tend to react against such groups which are supposedly involved in proselytization. They might be united against anything that corrupts the culture dear to them. Even those members of the audiences who do not subscribe to Hindutva's violent means but are concerned about the moral decadence and corruption of culture, get united by the media message on proselytization. Public demonstrations and protest marches are spectacles and they are given a pan-Indian nature by news television, given its reach and influence. Such spectacles are capable of drawing masses towards it and eventually to the Hindutva groups that organise them. Aaj Tak has made attempts to make the news emotionally appealing to the audiences. The news channel related four out of the eight stories (24 August to 15 September 2008) to the killing of the Hindutva leader Swami Saraswati. The connection made by the news media between the killing of the Hindutva leader and the anti-Christian violence has been emotionally powerful to influence the audience perception. When one act of violence is presented as the response to the other, the audiences, even those who do not support the violent means of Hindutva, consider the retaliatory act as justifiable. Such sensationalist approach of the news channels helps the formation of Hindutva public and Hindutva sympathisers.

Media Effects

Empirical researchers suggest that, to certain extent, media influence the attitude and behaviour of members of the audience (Balnaves, Donald & Shoosmith, 2009). The social schemata and agenda-setting theories explain the

persuasive power of media. The public opinion constructed by the media forces the people who hold the minority view to suppress their opinion because of their desire to conform to majority views (Noelle-Neumann, 1977). The silence of minority views in public debates helps the media in the formation of public opinion in line with the majority views. Although these models deal with the persuasive power of media, they do not claim that audiences are passive. However, these theories point out that audiences can be manipulated or persuaded.

Agenda Setting

The news media which brings the world to our living rooms influence the pictures we form about the world outside which in fact constructs a pseudo-environment. Such power of the news media is adequately defined by the agenda-setting theory. Most of the studies based on agenda-setting theory deal with ‘the effects of media agendas on the agendas of the public and the agendas of the decision makers, as well as the public’s effect on decision makers’ (Brosius & Weimann, 1996: 562). McCombs claims that ‘the agenda of the news media becomes, to a considerable degree, the agenda of the public’ (McCombs, 2003: 2). This theory, which supports moderate effects of media influence, argues that the process of selection of content by media professionals and organisations meant that some things would be made salient and others not (Balnaves, Donald & Shoemith, 2009). The role of gatekeepers in the organisation is crucial in the decisions regarding news values of events. According to Shoemaker and Vos, ‘the media are most likely to accept news events that have close cultural relevance for the intended audience’ (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009: 57). The journalists, who act as gatekeepers, while deciding the news for broadcasting, tend to choose news events that are culturally relevant to the audience. Journalists select real-world situation and conditions in certain ways, frame them and allocate media space or time based on their assessment of the story’s importance and timeliness, among other things.

The salience of news story is assessed on the basis of a few things - the opening story on the newscast, length of time devoted to the story and the frequency of

the reception of the story day after day. Radhakrishnan Nair, executive editor of CNN–IBN, while speaking about the priority of news, emphasised on the ‘conscious newsroom call’ which decides what news goes for broadcasting. Such tendencies of the journalists might explain the importance given to proselytization by the Hindi news channel Aaj Tak.

Proselytization, for the Hindus in north India, seems to be a culturally relevant topic of discussion which evokes interest in the audience. The research revealed that most people, including the media professionals, associate proselytization with Christians and they believe that proselytization causes social unrest and violence against Christians. Although the journalists across the channels and languages hold the same opinion about proselytization, the topic has been featured more in the Hindi news channel Aaj Tak’s stories (four out of twenty five during the selected time frame). The analysed data shows that Aaj Tak news channel attempted to make connection between the violence against Christians and the missionary activities of the Christians which involves proselytization.

Construction of Public Opinion

McCombs has suggested that ‘what we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us’ (McCombs, 2003: 2). The media also influence an understanding and perspective on the topics in the news by changing the salience of the news through a selective transmission of news: media mediate items for the public agenda. According to Philo, political speeches convert non-existing facts or ‘desires’ into existing realities (Philo, 2007). Philo’s observation is found useful in the context of this research. The analyzed news content contains statements made by Hindutva leaders, politicians and news channels’ reporters. Even while assuming that the influence of the comments made by the Hindutva leaders is limited to the Hindutva audience, such a formulation offers enough room to argue that the comments made by politicians and news media help in the creation of public opinion on the discussed issues.

The complexity of agenda-setting function of the media is described in detail by McCombs and in his view the ‘objects’ play an important role. ‘The objects are the things on which the attention of the media and the public are focused’ and ‘for each object there also is an agenda of attributes because when the media and the public think and talk about an object, some attributes are emphasised, others are given less attention, and many receive no attention at all. This agenda of attributes is another aspect of the agenda-setting role of the news media’ (McCombs, 2003: 5). News media, through repeated reporting, reinforce what is already conveyed to the audience. This media practice is crucial in the consumption of the message and the audience perception of the idea conveyed by the media text. If the media choose to convey a selected message, they have the power to reinforce the same by choosing to mediate appropriate contextual knowledge.

The media text carrying the message ‘religious conversion is the primary reason for anti-Christian violence’ is read and interpreted by the audiences depending on their views on religious conversion. If the audiences perceive that religious conversion can create socio-economic problems, the media text carrying such message will have the potential to create an anti-Christian environment. The Hindus in general, even those who are impassionate about religious affairs, do not consider conversion to another religion as socially acceptable. They view such ‘change of side’ as an indictment on their religious belief and lifestyle. Analyzing the data collected from focus groups, I argue that television news have created an impression in audiences that violence against Christian community is due to the proselytization they are involved in. The premise ‘religious conversion is the cause of violence’ indirectly informs the audiences that ‘Christians are involved in proselytization’ or reinforces the general perception that ‘Christians are converters’. Such media discourse helps the creation of anti-Christian environment. However, it is important to emphasise that such an argument does not support the view that the audiences are passive and do not play a role in the perception of news. On the contrary, I argue that viewers’ interpretation is crucial in the perception of news and thus the perception of television news. I agree with the scholars who argue that ‘to make sense of a news item, viewers restructure it in their minds, elaborate or simplify

it, and integrate parts of it into their stock of knowledge, while other parts are seemingly discarded' (Schaap *et al*, 2009: 61). The viewers' cultural connections, belief system and political affiliations, seem to play a key role in the elaboration and the simplification of the news. Because of such complex processes involved in the interpretation, the impact of television news cannot be measured by asking the audiences to recall any particular news item. Some participants in the focus groups were unable to recall the news on the violence against Christians in Orissa. However, they believed that proselytization by Christians damage the religious and cultural composition of the state.

The news channel's approach, though perhaps an attempt to provide the audiences with what interests them, helps the Hindutva discourse which seeks to isolate the minority communities. This research does not claim that the Hindi news channels are anti-Christian in their approach, as the study has not gathered sufficient evidence to prove it. However, this research, which sought to study and understand the contribution of Hindi television news in the growth of the Hindutva movement, after looking at the collected data carefully, claims that Hindi news channels play an important role in creating a favourable environment for the Hindu nationalist movement. It can be suggested that Aaj Tak's role is emblematic of the existing trend among popular Hindi news channels in India, and this inference is drawn scientifically from the data collected through content analysis and audience research undertaken for this project. While this study has made a modest contribution to the academic discourse on the dynamics between television news and politics in a complex situation such as the one prevalent in contemporary India, there is ample need to expand and deepen research in this fast-evolving arena.

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APPENDIX I

Focus group Interviews

Chandu ka Nagla (Mathura Dt.)

Name	Age	Educa tion	Religion	Occupati on	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	Favorit e channel	Believe TV	Main source of Inform.
Dalchand	52	BA	Hindu	Farmer	Not regular	Drama, serial &news	Some time	Alone &with family	No specific channel	Yes	TV
Chudhari Dhanpal Singh	58	12 th	Hindu	Social work	Approx. 1 hr.	News &other programmes	Few minutes	With family	India TV, Aaj Tak	Yes	TV
Gangadhar Singh	48	10 th	Hindu	Farmer	3 hrs.	News drama &	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV
Kishore	19	BA	Hindu	Student	Few hours	Cricket match	NA	With family and alone	NA	Yes	Word of mouth
Pradeep Singh	20	N/A	Hindu	Student	2hrs	News, entertainme nt & match	1hr.	Alone & with family	Aaj Tak& Local news	NA	TV
Rajkumar	40	N/A	Hindu	Gas dealer	30 minutes.	News	1hr	Alone & with family	DD	Yes	TV
Tejveer Singh	38	N/A	Hindu	Farmer	3 hrs.	Films& news	30 minutes	With family	DD	Yes	TV
Raghuveer Singh	48	N/A	Hindu	Farmer	2 hrs.	Religion news &	Few minutes	With family	Local news	Yes	TV

(F= Facilitator/Moderator, M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8 =Male Participants 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 (according to the sitting order), R =Researcher)

Participants: Yes, as you had told us we have gathered here.

F: OK, thanks for your coming. You can call all of them inside so that we can discuss together.

One of them: Yes, I will call them inside. You will ask us about TV only?

F: Yes, it is only about TV. It's a study on the influence of news in villages.

F: All fine?

M 1: Yes, all is well.

F: We thank you all for gathering here in spite of your busy work. (Researcher and facilitator sit on the ground along with the participants, a gesture which was highly appreciated by all)

M 2: That's good, No sir, there is no difference between us.

F: Yes, we are all humans.

Man 1: Yes, you are correct. We all are sitting on chairs, then where is the difference?

F: OK, thanks. We have told you the aim of this discussion. We are Indians, live according to ethics, give and take respect. Today things are changing very fast. One person does not understand the other person these days. A lot of changes are taking place. So we are making a survey of how many people watch news, who are educated, etc. So we will discuss about news channels today. Most of us are educated here. It is a village, it has a school also. A lot of changes are taking place. For example, our dress, our environment, style of speaking, etc. Our relationship with others is changing. We have called you all to discuss about it. You can tell what the reason behind is.

M 2: Yes, surely we will share with you. Main reason behind this is the gap between each other.

M 1: Yes, I agree.

M 3: That is money.

M 2: Today people want to have more money and power. It does not matter if we lose any of our family members. All we need is money. Everyone's needs are increasing. All need more money. Since the needs are increasing there is a need for more money. How to get more money? Today's man does not want to work hard, so

he steals or borrows from others. This way his needs are fulfilled. This is the root cause.

M 1: But nobody can eat money. Money is earned for food. What will we do with the more money he earns? There is no extra gain besides that.

M 4: There is no gain as such. For example, very rich people have deposited their money in other countries. What is the use of it? Nothing.

F: So there is a connection with news. We get all this information through news channels. Are you influenced by this news?

M 2: Yes it influences us. We get all information about our country through news channel.

F: Good.

M 5: News is good. Through that we get to know what happens in the world, what is right or wrong, etc.

F: Ok, when you watch television, there is scrolling news at the bottom. Do you read it?

M 1: Yes, I do watch. It is repeated so that we can understand it properly. Elderly people watch such news. They don't watch what the youngsters watch.

M 3: See, when there are more channels and more political parties it happens that one channel focuses full attention and showing only good things about a particular party and creating a good image on the public. Sometimes they speak ill of other party.

F: What do you think about this? Is it true what they say? Do you believe what they show?

M 2: We don't believe it. Because 80% of the news is false.

F: Can you give an example for this?

M 5: Yes, there was recruitment for ITP in Bareilly. Around 500 people were killed. But it was shown on TV just 12.

F: Just 12?

M 5: Yes. In 1994 there was recruitment in Lucknow. It was during Mr. Mulayam Singh's time (95-96). Around 2000 people were killed. It was shown just 17 persons. So it was 100% false news. Suppose 10000 people are killed here, they will only show just 10 people. Similarly many were killed in railway accident. But they showed only 150 people. So there are matters which I don't believe in.

M 3: No, I agree with this. Suppose there is some incident in a village. The reporter shows only one part of it repeatedly.

F: So according to your opinion the reporter is wrong.

M 3: Yes, they give wrong report. They exaggerate small news. Just because of this I don't even feel like watching even good news. It seems that also may be wrong news.

F: I see. There is right news and wrong news also on TV. Taken together what is your opinion? Is it good to watch news channel or not?

M 6: No not like that. Watching news channel is good. But most of the time stories of impossible things are shown on TV.

F: Oh I see! Impossible things?

M 3: No, no. some times real news also comes. People understand and support it also. For example the arrest of Raja Bhaiya (a wealthy Samaj wadi politician) and taken to jail. So sometimes they show the reality also.

F: so news is good?

M 5: Yes, news is true. The government gives the news of people who do right and wrong. E.g. some people lodge a false complaint in the police station. Afterwards the government enquires if it is true or false. But if the political parties are involved in the case then justice is not done. Thus the news is shown as right or wrong.

F: News channels broadcast the news about the public, not about the political leaders. What is the reason?

M 1: They do give the news about the political leaders. They have given even more than about the public.

F: What do you think is reason behind crime and immorality in the society?

M 3: The reason may be money and lack of education.

M 1: Our country's population is high. It has a deep effect on our society.

M 4: Yes, they show it on TV whatever happens in foreign countries. Now such incidents take place in India also.

M 1: TV has a high effect on the society. It affects our society, our children, and our manner of talking.eg. Earlier a child called his father 'papa' now he calls him 'dad', mother as 'mom'. This change has taken place because of TV.

M 5: Actually our culture is good. Comparing with other countries, Indian culture is the best.

F: But in our society there are problems due to caste, religious intolerance etc. So people fight among themselves. In earlier times people used to respect the people of other religions. But not these days. They feel jealous of each other, doubt each other, etc. can you give us the reason for this?

M 2: Political issue.

F: Political issue? I see.

M 5: It means vote. Politicians have divided us base on our religion and caste for getting our votes. Politicians are more selfish and talk false.

M 1: Our morality is dying out. There must be some reason for it.

M 2: In our morality, custom and culture, teacher is equal to God.

F: Yes, teacher is above all, but such respect is not shown in the present time, why?

M 5: I have already told you that the custom of Vedic period is diminishing day-by-day and foreign culture is creeping in India.

F: Do you think that the western culture is spreading in India because of TV and news channels?

M 3: Yes, mostly (3 others join in)

F: More through TV?

M 2: Yes it is true, through TV and movies.

F: You have already told us about political issues. Do you think it is because of TV? or because of people around us?

M 3: Mostly through TV only.

F: And?

M 6: And, suppose there is an SP. His son is not afraid of anybody. He can steal anybody's goods, can murder anyone, can fight with anybody. Because he is not bothered about any police.

M 5: I give you an example of this. Our country is a cheating country. It is very good in duplicating. Similarly people also duplicate others. They duplicate in behavior and way of speaking. For example, if a child in the neighbourhood is wearing a short dress then our child also will ask for the same dress and he will do anything for that. Children imitate our behavior. They learn what we teach them. So it is partly our mistake also.

M 5: The quality of education in the cities is not available in the villages. But you won't get respect in the city, but you will get it in villages. Indian culture can be seen only in villages.

F: You told that people are changing due to duplicity. Do you think that TV is responsible for it?

M 2: Yes, it is because of TV.

F: Now we discuss about violence in our society, like Ram Mandir for Hindus, and even Muslims were attacked, Christians were attacked in Orissa. Why did they kill Christians? What is the reason for that?

M 1 & 3: Sorry, we don't know about it.

F: O.K. but there is religious violence. What do you think is the reason?

M 3: It is because of incivility.

M 5: Suppose you run a school here. I don't want your school to run here; otherwise you will make this place yours. Sometime back policemen lived here because a few Christians were killed at Mathura. People think of Christians as foreigners and they don't allow them to live here.

F: Ok, it is because of their thinking that Christians are foreigners. But I would like to ask you about the incident in Orissa.

M 1: People here don't know what happened in Orissa. That had a political background.

F: You say Christians are foreigners. So do you think if they live here they will convert others also to Christianity? Was this incident because of such thinking or something else?

M 2: No, that had a different reason. That was due to some political issue. One party wanted to come up so it showed people that the other party is doing this kind of violence among people.

F: Ok, then what about Ram Mandir (temple)? Many people were killed. What was the reason for that? Does it have political connection also?

M 2: Yes, that also had a political link.

F: you have just told us that 80% news is wrong. You told who got how much land in Ram Mandir and it was shown on TV so as Orissa riot. Do you think that was false news?

M 1: No that had a political link. It was almost true.

F: But you told us earlier that 80% of news is false. What should we consider about news, true or false?

M 4: No, actually we accept that news is true. As he told us earlier about the incidents where 1000 people were killed but they showed just 15 on TV. They show it less because people will forget 15 people but they won't easily forget 1000 people. That's why TV channels hide some truth in news. So that people are not tensed.

F: There are discussions on television, have you seen such programmes?

M 1: People discuss in the channels.

F: Yes, discussion.

M 1, 2, & 4: It is discussed very well.

M 4: When the reporter asks the questions he does not even spare the Prime minister. He is free to ask anyone about what happened, how it happened, etc. sometimes even he talks ill of the Prime minister also. The other day they were showing that Prime minister has made a new caste called JPC (JPC is in fact not a caste, but Joint parliamentary Committee set up to enquire a major scam involving politicians). So the reporter was asking him, why this caste was not there earlier, why he made the caste now. What answer can he give for this?

M 2: There won't be any answer for this question.

M 1: We won't get any information if there is no new channel. So news channels and TV are doing some kind of developmental work for the society.

M 3: It is good. But it should be a broad network in the villages also.

M 1: Some people say that they don't have time to watch news. They ask others about the news. But common people will come to know through TV only. So it is useful for them.

M 5: It does not matter if the number of TV sets increase or not. They should reduce the number of movies they telecast on TV.

M 2: But you have not written anything. How can we go and tell them?

F: He is recording it. (The man did not know how I was recording, though it was told at the start of the session) He is from Kerala. He does not know much Hindi. He is studying abroad about news channels. So wants to know how much interest people like you take in news channels and what people gain from news channels. Therefore he is here. You all have come here and spent time with us. We thank you all.

M 5: Let me tell you one thing. The root cause of these is that our country has been an intelligent and strong among others. India is a guru in the field of knowledge. There is no other country equal to India, even in the field of religions. Where has the religion come from? Paramatma gave the knowledge to Rishi. They made the Vedas. Vedas gave knowledge to our country. As long as there was Vedas there was no fight among people, there was no sorrow among people. Ram accepted Vedas as religion. When Vedas disappeared, racism, violence, etc. came to existence.

M 2: Respect, love and custom, etc. are India's culture.

M 1: Yes, that culture has disappeared in India. Foreign culture has entered India

Asan (Firozabad Dt.)

Name	Age	Education	Religion	Occupation	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	News channel	Believe TV?	Main source of Information
Ranvir Singh	40	High school	Hindu	Agriculture	2 hr.	News	1hr.	With family	Aaj Tak, Sakshi	Yes	TV, newspaper, word of mouth
Sushil kumar Saraswat	47	High School	Hindu	Agriculture	2hr.	News	1hr.	With family	Aaj Tak, ZeeTV	Yes	TV, newspaper
Bhagat Singh	38	BA	Hindu	Laborer	Not regular	News, films	30 minutes	With family	India TV, Aaj Tak Zee	Yes	TV
Krishnakant h Sharma	26	BA	Hindu	Agriculture	3hrs	News, songs	2 hrs.	With family	Zee, Aaj Tak	Yes	Newspaper, TV
Hari Shankar Sharma	55	MA, Bed.	Hindu	Agriculture	1hr	News & serials	30 minutes	With family	India TV	Yes	Newspaper, TV, radio
Ashok kumar Upadhyay	37	MA	Hindu	Agriculture	3hrs	News	3 hrs.	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV & newspaper
Rajiv Dwivedi	35	MA, LLB	Hindu	Lawyer	1 hr.	News, historical &religious	10 minutes	With family	N/A	Yes	TV, newspaper and radio

F: He wants to make an enquiry about the village. He wants to know how villagers live, what they think, what kind of people live here, why they think so. We have a few questions here. You answer them appropriately.

F: Advocate Sir, we ask you the first question. We should have religious tolerance in our country. How should it be? What do you think about it?

M 7: Our religion is based on Indian social culture. About 2000 years ago they tried to bring change in religion. Even now also they try to bring change in religion. In future also there should be attempts to make changes.

F: You mean we should have religious tolerance.

M 2: Yes, we should have. We cannot live without it. Our society will not be able to function harmoniously without it.

F: You mean social change is not possible without religious tolerance.

M 2: Yes, there are other things also. There is no assembly without elderly people. There is no elderly person who does not know about his religion. There is no religion without any truth in it. Truth cannot be obtained by cheating others. So social change is not possible without religious tolerance.

F: Ok, please tell me how many religions are found in your village.

M 1: People of two religions live here.

M 3: Hindu and Muslim

F: Do they participate in each other's celebration?

M 6: Yes they do. Sometimes they don't.

F: What about Holi and Diwali?

M 2: Earlier they used to play. Now you know there is a feeling of bitterness among them. There are only 5% of people who mingle with other religious people.

F: It means religious harmony is diminishing these days.

M 5: Yes, even in villages also

F: What is the reason for that?

M 1: The reason is feeling of bitterness. This feeling has increased among the Muslims. They tell others that Holi is not their festival and they should not play with the Hindus.

M 6: So it means it depends on their religious leaders who educate them. They are taught that colours are not used by Muslims to throw on each other. Hindus

use it as a symbol of love to throw on each other. So the leaders tell their people not to celebrate Holi with Hindus.

F: Is there any other reason for this?

M 3: Nothing, except feeling of bitterness.

F: That means the feeling of religious intolerance will affect the growth of your village. How do the leaders distribute the aids received from the government? Is it on the basis of religion? Suppose you are the village president. You get fund for development. Will you distribute on the basis of religion?

M 5: No, I would distribute on the basis of political party.

F: Ok. There are no Christians among you. But you might know who Christians are. Can you tell us about them?

M 2: Christians are Christians, what is there to say?

M 7: No, Christians follow a religion and live a in society. Are they to be looked down upon in the society?

M 1: No, majority of the people think so. But according to my opinion our country had been controlled by the power of Christians. When we hoist our national flag twice a year, we feel angry about Christians and they are inferior.

F: OK. Why do you have that ill feeling toward Christians? Is it because of political issue or they convert Hindus to Christianity?

M 6: Yes, they do convert. That is also a reason.

F: OK, why are they attacked? Please tell us openly and clearly.

M 6: OK. We try to forget feeling of hatred towards Christians, but the public makes us to feel it the other way.

M 1: They made our country a slave country and the thought of conversion of Hindus to Christianity is the reason.

F: I see, that is the reason why so many Christians are attacked. How do you come to know about this?

M 2: Through Hindu organizations, newspapers, TV, etc.

F: OK, you come to know through TV?

M 6: Please tell us, the questions you ask us are related to TV or religion?

F: this is related to a research work on television and religion.

M 2: I see... he is doing his PhD. Please ask him what his religion is.

F: No, he has no relation with religion. He has got 5 to 6 questions to discuss about and gather people's opinion.

M 4: But there is no religion as such. It is our foolishness.

M 5: OK, it is our religious views. He just wants to know why there is no religious harmony, what the reasons are.

M 1: There is only one reason that I have already told you, bitterness. Everyone is interested to bring up his religion.

M 5: It means religious intolerance is found in villages also. We are becoming enemy to each other. It means feeling very special about one's own religion. Suppose I am a Hindu and then I don't like other religions at all.

F: OK. What is your opinion about television news channels? Is it 100 % true?

M 7: It is not 100% true. But people find out the truth after watching the news. But we get genuine news from the newspaper.

F: Is newspaper any better?

M 4: Sometimes when we see news on TV we feel it may not be true fully. But when we read it on the newspaper we think it is true. Sometimes particular news is in our mind even after watching it.

F: Has every one of you in your village got a TV?

M 2, M3 &M4: Yes, each house has got one.

F: Just a TV or with a dish connection?

M 6: Yes all got dish connection.

F: Ok, which channel do you watch most and which channels are good according to you?

M 3: Only news channel.

M 6: It means Star News, Aaj Tak, India TV, DD news, etc. but we watch India TV the most.

F: Why do you watch India TV the most?

M 2: Because we get the news about selling tractors.

F: OK, what about AajTak channel? Do you like it?

M 3: Yes. We do

F: Why do you like it?

M 7: Because they give genuine news.

F: That means DD News is not as good as Aaj Tak.

M 6: No. DD news is about what the government wants to tell the public, which we don't like. Unlike other channels DD news is very short.

M: Do you believe what you see on the news channels?

M 5: We don't believe everything. Whatever news seems to be genuine we believe in.

M 3: We believe... 80% is true.

F: Do you discuss the news with others?

M 2: Yes we do surely.

F: How many of you read newspaper?

M 7: All the literate people read it. We get around 50 newspapers in our village.

F: You told earlier that DD news is controlled by the government. What about the other channels? Are they connected to political parties?

Man 7: Yes they are connected.

F: How?

M 7: Suppose you read both Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagran newspaper. Dainik Jagran gives more news about BJP and Amar Ujala gives more news about Samajwadi party and Congress Party.

F: Ok newspapers are connected to political parties. What about the TV channels?

M 7: Yes they have a deal with news channels.

M: Do you have any knowledge about such things? Can you give an example?

M 6: Suppose there is an election to take place. The channels start showing news about the political parties and discussing about it in detail. Now Akhilesh's party won the election with the help of news channels.

M3: Let me tell you about a local channel, Moon News. Ashok Yadav had taken the support of Moon Channel. He told them that one reporter would be with them always in helicopter. Mohit was always with them. What is the result now? They had a good coverage and the party won. The channel is highly favoured. So it means political leaders have influence on channels.

F: OK, what is the effect of Anna Hazare? How many of you know about him?

M 4: We know about him that he destroyed everyone's image in the country.

F: What is his thinking about the country?

M 6: Some of his views are wrong. He challenged the constitution and said that all black money in foreign countries should be brought back to India.

M 7: But Baba Ram Dev also told the same.

M6: Yes, but Anna Hazare's main issue was this. Suppose a common man goes and tells the village president about how to manage the things, will he accept it? He will not.

M7: But Ram Dev talked about it even before Anna Hazare.

M: How do you come to know about Anna Hazare and his policy?

M 2: Came to know through newspaper and TV channels.

F: Do you think political parties use the news channel to get power?

M 6: Yes, they do.

(Somebody who is important in the community comes into the group and Mr. Saraswat introduces me to him)

F: OK. This is Roji studying in England and doing a research work on religious harmony in villages and the influence of news channels on people.

F: Sir, would you tell us your opinion about religious harmony.

M 5: Everyone can see it that religion and caste is developing now. Political parties are the main reason for the caste problems in our country.

F: Why do the politicians do so?

M 2: For getting votes.

M 6: If a community is strong in a certain place, someone from that community stands as a candidate to be elected. For example, Muslim candidate for Muslims. In UP, this time all Muslims voted for Mulayam Singh as revenge to Mayawati's government.

F: Advocate Sir, You please tell us about Anna Hazare. What is his work? How do you come to know about him?

M 7: I came to know about him through newspapers and TV news channels and through discussion among people. Because of his presence in public life vote percentage has increased.

F: Whose vote has increased?

M 7: All parties' votes increased except BJP.

F: What was Anna's main theme?

M 7: He wanted sincere politicians to run the government. He fought against corruption. But it did not happen this time. Corruption was involved in the last election.

F: That means he could not get success. What is the main reason for that?

Man 5: It was a problem of caste and lawlessness. We feel that whoever Mayawati removed, Mulayam Singh took them in his party.

F: Yes

M 4: It is like, one party makes the rule and the other party comes and changes it. If it happens in the Parliament no bill will be passed.

F: Advocate Sir, we feel that there is still corruption in our society. Is it because of television? Our Indian culture is vanishing now. Is it because of TV?

M7: Yes it is because of TV.

M 2: Boys and girls start loving each other as they watch in movies.

F: Good, please share like this.

M 1: Because of movie girls make new hairstyle, wear fashionable dress.

M 3: Yes, you are correct, and...

M 5: There is no feeling of shame these days. There is no restriction at all. Youngsters don't respect the elders at all.

M: It means that younger generation is following TV culture.

M 5: Yes, for example, I have TV in my house. Wife, daughters and sons watch it. Sometimes scenes are not good to be watched as a family together.

M 7: feeling of self-respect is missing and people are not ashamed of anything.

M 6: Yes, suppose if I put on news channel no one will watch TV. But if I put on a movie channel all will be watching it.

M 5: Youngsters are spoiling themselves because of mobile also. We cannot make out to whom they talk on the mobile.

M 4: Many news channels are just time pass. They tell us about Hollywood news, food culture, etc.

M 6: It is good as per the news channels.

M 5: In 1979, Minister Chaudhari Charan Singh came to Agra. He told us that insincere people can be counted on fingers. But now we can count only sincere people. It means insincere people were less at that time. Now it is the opposite.

F: OK. He wants to know from you should there be some kind of control on news channels?

M 7: Yes, there should be.

M 3: They are useful too. During Ram Leela festival there used to be nude dance in Firozabad. This year people objected it. So there was no nude dance. Similarly it could be stopped in Agra also. This is because of mobile and TV.

There are advantages and disadvantage also.

M 1: Sir, we would like to know why you asked all these questions.

Me: I am doing it for a research. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Tapakurd, Sriram Colony (Firozabad Dt.)

Name	Age	Education	Religion	Occupation	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	News Channel	Believe TV	Main source of Inform.
Ajay Kumar Vasishth	50	BA	Hindu	Agriculture	4 hrs.	Comedy, News, films	1hr.	With family	Sakshi	Yes	TV& newspaper
Vinod Kumar Srivastav	35	PUC (12th)	Hindu	Agriculture	4hr.	Cricket, films & News	1hr.	With family	Aaj Tak, Sakshi	Yes	From others (Mobile phone)& TV
O.P Singh Khan	64	BA	Hindu	Agriculture	Not regular	Cricket, serial &News	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV, newspaper & radio
Rajendra Pachauri	45	Illiterate	Muslim	Laborer	1hr	Films & News	30minutes	With family	Zee	Yes	Word of mouth, mobile
Surendra Singh	40	High school	Hindu	Agriculture	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Word of mouth
	38	PUC	Hindu	Agriculture	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Newspaper

F: Should man live together with people of other religion?

M 1: Yes, should live together.

M 2: Why?

M 1: Because every religion is good.

F: You please say...

M 2: All religions teach us to live in love. But what I see in our religion I don't see in other religion. Like Muslim religion it is violent, we are non-violent. So I have more faith in my religion.

F: Thakurji, you please speak...

M 3: All religions are good; speak about the way for salvation. But the stream of thinking of people differs. So all identify themselves belonging to different religion. I am born in a Hindu family so my faith is in Hindu religion.

F: how many religions have you heard about in the world?

M 4: Many religions are there, like Muslims, Hindus, Christians, etc.

M: Ok, what do you know about Christians?

M 3: I have never had any relationship with Christians. But they follow their religion better than me.

F: if Christians follow their religion well, we read in the news papers that certain priest is killed, we heard about a priest burned alive in Orissa, why does this happen?

M 5: because everyone wants his religion to flourish more than other religions, and if anyone hampers with our religion we naturally get violent. If a thief enters our house we will surely beat him...

F: suppose a Muslim converts a Hindu to Muslim then can we beat him back to Hinduism?

M2: Many people have been brought back.

F: That means the reason for religious violence or discrimination is religious conversion. So why don't you kill the converted? Why do you kill those who convert?

M 2: Converted ones are innocent. They are attracted by their preaching. But the one who converts is very clever.

F: so it is better to cut the root than cutting the branches... Anyway it is not in the question... I just asked... When a religious attack takes place how do you

come to know? What influence do you have when you hear about such attacks?

M 5: In local be we come to know by the people shouting and when we talk to others... newspapers, news channels, radio, all spread the news.

F: ok, can we say that everything the news channels show is correct?

M 2: we can say that only we see such news, if it is 100% or 80% or 50% correct.

F: What about live news? Is live news 100% true?

M 2, M 4 & M 5: Yes Live news has to be true. It is.

F: Do politicians have influence over the news channels?

All: Yes, 100%.

F: that means when politicians have influence over the news channels they cannot give correct news...

All: yes, it is right.

F: Can you give us an example?

M 1: Example of Shri Ashokji on Moon TV. Star News on Azim Bhai's election that he won it by 400 votes.

F: OK, any other example... in our state SP won the election on 224 seats on majority. This is after ND Tiwari's winning of 306 seats in the past. Do TV channels have contributed to this?

M 3: Yes. Channels highlighted on the leaders who joined SP...

F: can you say it is because of only Yadavs that these 224 seats have been won? In U.P. Yadavs are 7 %, Pandits 24%, Thakurs 27%, Vaish 15%, Jhatavs 40%. Government is not formed from 40% but 7% category won the election. What does it mean?

Most of them: all categories have voted for it...

F: that means all news channels are influenced by politicians. Now let us speak about Godhra incident. Was it good?

M 1, 4 & 5: no, not at all good.

F: then where is religious harmony? Don't people want to have it or politicians don't allow people to have religious harmony?

Men (one supported by other): politicians don't allow. Suppose if something happens with me other people may convince me that it has happened unintentionally and I may accept it. But when a politician comes he will start asking 'Why did this happen? We want an answer.

F: OK, let us speak about conversion. I am a Hindu, Brahmin. Suppose I become a Christian, or a Muslim then what will be the society's view about me?

M 1: We will ask you what is wrong with our religion. Give us the reason why you are converted to that religion. If we find it good we also will come along with you.

M 2: Converting to another religion is like challenging the 'Parmatma'

M 1: In village, people think that Christians are of low caste.

M 6: No, no... they converted the low caste people into Christians. Therefore we think that way...

F: Do they think that political parties are related to religion?

M 5: Yes, surely. For example, Mulayam Singh's meeting with Imam thinking that Muslims would listen to him and vote accordingly ...BJP talk about the issue of 'Ram Mandir' and want to win Hindus' votes. It means politicians have a major role in religion.

F: Do politicians have connection with television channels, especially with news channels? How do they influence people with the help of news channels?

M 2: Yes. National channels are under the government. Local channels are influence by small local politicians.

F: Can you give an example?

M 5: Now congress is ruling in the centre. News channels speak well about congress. They will not speak anything about other party leaders who do good work.

F: Have you heard about Anna Hazare? What do you know about him?

M 5: Yes. He is against corruption in our government and corrupt leaders. He should fight election and bring back black money to our country.

F: What policy of Anna was not good? He wanted to bring a strong lokpal. What is the guarantee that that lokpal will not be corrupt?

M 6: That is personal thinking. So far his program is good. We believe that by a strong lokpal at least 60% to 70% corruption will vanish.

F: O.K .how do you know about Anna Hazare?

M1, 3 & 4: TV and newspapers.

F: Which TV channel do you mostly watch?

M 2: IBN 7, Star News, Aaj Tak, Zee News, Sahara

F: What about those who cannot read and write? How do they come to know

about him?

M 4 &5 (two of them): We sit and discuss after watching TV.

F: Why do they watch only these news channels, not others?

M 1: Only these channels are available on dish.

F: Among these channels what do you like most?

M 1, 3 &5 (three): Aaj Tak.

F: Why is Aaj Tak better?

M 2: It gives the accurate news in time.

F: Do you think that news is sensationalized, like adding some masala to it?

M 1: Yes, they do.

F: Like...

M 3: The world will come to an end in 2012, there will be a flood, and it was on news channel. Till now nothing happened.

F: So religious harmony is going down in our society. So what do they think that these news channels can do about it?

M 2: Indian culture is vanishing. Like... ladies wearing just top and skirt... people want to be just naked... that means TV is having a great influence in our society?

Man: yes, surely it has influenced our culture and society. People follow what the heroes and heroines do in the film, example is Gajni movie, and Amir Khan's baldhead has become a fashion for most of the youth.

Shahpur (Firozabad Dt.)

Name	Age	Education	Religion	Occupation	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	Favourite channel	Believe TV	Main source of Inform.
Hardayal Singh	65	BA; Bed.	Hindu	Teacher	1-3 hrs.	News, spirituality	1-2 hrs.	With family	Aaj Tak, Zee	Yes	TV, newspaper, radio
Sandeep Kumar	31	BA; LLB	Hindu	Lawyer	Not regular.	Cricket, serials & News	30 minutes	Alone & with family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV, newspaper & radio
Amar Deep	32	BA; LLB	Hindu	Lawyer	Not regular	News, cricket serials and	30 minutes	Alone & With family	India TV	Yes	TV, newspaper and radio
Umang Sharma	19	BA	Hindu	Student	4hrs	Cricket, serials & News	30 minutes.	Alone & With family	India TV	Yes	Newspaper, TV & radio
Dharendra Kumar	19	BA	Hindu	Student	3hrs	Cricket, News serials &	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	Newspaper, TV, radio
Ravish Kumar	18	BA	Hindu	Student	3hrs	Cricket, serials & News	30min.- 1 hrs.	Alone & With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV & newspaper
Kamalesh Kumar	21	BA	Hindu	Agriculture	3 hrs.	Cricket, songs & news	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV, newspaper and radio

F: How many religions are there in your village?

M 1: Hindu and Muslim

F: There are attacks on Muslims, sometimes on Christians...

M 2: It has never happened in our village.

F: Why does it happen? What is your opinion? For example Godhra incident, Christians killed in Orissa. Such incidents are common in villages. Why does it happen always?

M 3: In Villages people are not educated.

M 4: Villagers are not educated. So they do as they are told.

F: In Firozabad, there was a chance of riot between Hindus and Muslims during Azija's time. What is your opinion about it?

M 5: For fifteen years Muslim leader was in charge. After 15 years for the first time a Hindu leader got a seat, so naturally clashes...

F: OK, In Orissa Christians were attacked badly. Some days back we read in the newspaper that people put petrol on a priest in Koshi and people of different community beat him. What is the main cause for this? Do we think that Christians convert others or any other reason?

M 1: Nothing happens like this in villages. This all happens by the influence of the politicians. In villages people have feelings for the people of other religions. You see in Firozabad, the riot between Hindus and Muslims was caused by somebody else, not by people themselves...

F: So all these are works of the politicians?

M 5: Yes...

F: You see in villages people respect other's religions and celebrate all the festivals together

M 1: Actually festivals of Hindus and Muslims are entirely different. But here when Hindus celebrate a festival Hindus meet them and vice versa.

M 6: Jains also live with us. They celebrate our festival and we participate with them. For instance when a Jain Muni comes, it is not that only the Jain goes to see him, but also the Hindus. You please tell us about your daily routine

M 1: Since 1992 I don't take food after the Sun set. I watch channels Sanskar, Aastha, Paraswi. I profited from them. I profited by leaving the habit of taking breakfast. I have no stomach problem now.

F: see, we are talking about different religions. Absolutely there are no problems in the villages. If it is so where are the problems in villages against a particular religion? Or conflicts on the basis of a religion? It is taking place in different parts of our country. So what could be the reasons behind these conflicts?

M 3: it is all planned action. The root of our religions is the same. In our area there was no fight among Muslims and Hindus.

F: That means only the religious leaders are responsible for such fights.

M 5: Politicians cause the fight in cities. There are no riots in the villages. Small fights are settled by the elders or panchayat (Village governing body) leaders.

F: A lot of fund comes from the government for the development of the villages. Does the village Pradhan distribute the fund based on religion?

M 6: They distribute according to the caste, not based on the religion.

F: suppose some fight takes place among different religions in other parts of our country, do they watch it on TV and discuss about it?

M 1: There is no fight outwardly. But there may be some feelings with the minds of the people.

F: do they watch such news?

M 1: yes they do watch.

F: Do they discuss about it?

M 3: No we don't discuss about it. When such thing happens in a particular village, we call them, compromise with each other and advise them not to fight.

M 4: Actually in villages people are very busy. They don't have time for such things.

F: Do you watch news channel?

(Most of them answer): Yes we do.

F: What are the channels you watch?

Man 3: Aaj Tak, NDTV, IBN7, Star News, local channels Moon...

F: Do you believe what you watch on the news channels?

M 1: We don't believe it fully. We believe it to some extent.

M 2: Media people exaggerate the matter. So our atmosphere is disturbed.

M 1: actually most people don't understand that the news shown on TV is not correct for 100%. Suppose 10 people die, they say on TV that 90 died. So people are disturbed. Therefore people in the villages don't believe the TV news

for 100%.

F: What do you think of live news? Is it always true?

M 1, M5&M6: Oh, yes. It is. We do believe that.

F: Does the TV news influence our culture?

M 4: Yes, TV news influences our culture. It influences in the field of education, cleanliness, etc.

M 1: how many people are involved in your research?

R: I am alone now. There is a department at the university.

M 2: which University?

R: University of Westminster, in London

F: What do you understand by religious harmony? Why should there be religious harmony?

M 1: people talk about their religions. The goal of all religions is same. Every person finds his own way to approach God. No religion teaches us to fight. But misunderstandings cause some conflicts.

F: What is the root cause of religious conflicts? What is the main reason?

M 3: Everyone says his religion is good, so naturally conflicts.

M 2: So you are a south Indian (asking the researcher, he is clearing his doubt)

R: Yes ...I am

F: What is your opinion about Christians?

M 2: Villagers don't have enough knowledge about other religions. They know only about their religion. They don't bother about what other religious people do in the village. What is the time duration for your research?

F: Discussion is for 40 to 45 minutes. What comes to your mind when we talk about Christians?

M 3: Christians have only two festivals, Good Friday and 25 December (Christmas).

F: What do you say about the attacks on Christians in the different parts of India? Is it because of conversion? Do they convert?

M 4: We read it only on the paper and hear it on the TV.

F: So it is because of conversion that they are attacked. Do you all watch Aaj Tak channel?

(Three of them answer together): Yes we do.

F: Why do you watch only Aaj Tak, there are so many channels.

M 3: Because whatever news we get through Aaj Tak, it is correct and accurate. Other channels exaggerate the matter and telecast. Sometimes they don't show the actual news.

F: Not India TV, Zee TV, etc.? So Aaj Tak is better than other channels?

M 5: Aaj Tak channel shows news from India. Other channels show the news from other countries also. We don't understand that news. So we watch those channels very rarely. We watch local channel Moon TV also.

F: Do you think if there is relationship between politicians and news channels?

M 2: Sometimes politicians influence news channels.

F: why are the Christians attacked? Is it because of conversion?

M 3: We think that only the sweepers' caste is Christians. Once they become Christians then they understand that they are equals to Brahmins, Jains, etc.

M 5: So sweepers are converted and given equal status in the society. This cannot be accepted by others. So there is a fight.

Firozabad I

Name	Age	Education	Religion	Occupation	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	Favourite channel	Believe TV	Main source of Inform.
Rajiv Deekshit	45	BA	Hindu	Teacher	1 hr.	Serial & News	30 minutes.	With family	Zee, NDTV	Not always	TV & Newspaper
Rajesh Kumar	46	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	1hr.	Discussion & News	1hr.	With family	Times Now, NDTV Hindi	Not always	TV & Newspaper
Archana	44	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	2 hrs.	Reality show & News	1hr	With husband	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV & Newspaper
Surabhi	48	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	2-3hrs	News, discussion & cartoon	1hr	With husband	Aaj Tak	Not always	TV & Newspaper
Nidhisha	42	BA	Hindu	Teacher	1hr	Serials & news	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV
Srivastav	44	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	2hrs	News & discussions	1hr	With family	IBN 7, Aaj Tak	Not always	Newspaper & TV
Sunil	47	MSc	Hindu	Teacher	1hr	News & national geographic	1/2-1hr	With wife	Aaj Tak, STAR	Not always	TV & Newspaper
Preeti Jain	46	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	1 hr.	Serials & news	1/2-1 hr.	With family	Aaj Tak, CNN-IBN	Not always	TV & newspaper

(W 1, W 2, W 3, W 4, W 5, W 6 & W 7 = Woman 1, 2, 3,4, 5, 6 & 7 according to the sitting order)

F: Thank you very much for coming together for the discussion. Glad that all you watch television news at least some time each day. During this discussion we will deal with cultural transformation and the role of television news.

Culture is in the process of evolution. News channels adopt different styles to attract audiences but all these impact our culture. What do you say?

M1: Definitely culture is transforming, coming to the television news...some of the news they show are fabricated.

F: Is it same with all the channels or...

M 3: Not any particular news channel... but 'India TV' always cooks up news.

M 2: I think it has transformed a lot. Earlier we had BBC, Doordarshan. In 21st century media has changed a lot. We have many channels, even foreign channels. We are well informed now. Children are more informed. We get a quick report of what is happening. So we are more informed.

W 1: Moreover, we come to know about the celebrities and all. Because they are on channels always. We are aware of actors and actresses and political leaders, a few years ago we did not know anything about them. Even the children know now.

W 2: If we talk about news channels, then there is positive effect on society. But children imitate what they see on television especially what is taking place in foreign countries. They know what is taking place in our country and all over the world. Western culture is bad, western dance. At the same time they come to India- they want sari... so both parties gain.

F: Culture is the way we think, eat, treat others etc. When we see what the celebrities do what kind of effect you think it has on people?

M 2: our children watch news with us. They get information and sometimes it is positive like celebrations.... (W 3 interferes) but most of the time negative effect... due to negative news. Some times news channels touching the personal lives of people, like celebrities, and show what they shouldn't show. For example, Rakhi Sawant incident, then during a fashion show a model dropped her clothes, they repeatedly showed it. Such news has negative impact.

M 1: Arushi case; they are discussing the personal life.

M 2: But there are a lot of positive things too. I would say certain points- the media has evoked a kind of sensitivity among common people. People have raised their voice along with the media. There are so many instances, like Mumbai Bomb blast case, Jessica Lal case, Rathore case even Arushi murder case; they have shown how CBI has utterly failed in investigating these. All these are good effects of media.

W 4: the corruption in common wealth

M 3: corruption was exposed

F: Democracy is also part of culture...

M 4: Media is the fourth pillar of democracy

M 2: earlier that much of money was not invested in media sector. Only DD was there, funded by the government. Now there are fifty odd news channels are there. Now a lot of money is pumped and they are all after TRP, they want to grab the money. So they will add certain things ...because it is big money game.

W 2: Aaj Tak does a lot...

F: Before 1991... There was only DD, now we have a number of channels...

W 4: these days, channels show that they are the first one to break a story

M 1: exclusive...

W 2: Das sal se No.1...Aaj Tak (sarcastically... and others join in too)

F: Religious harmony is part of culture too, respect for other religions.... see two years ago Christians were attacked in Orissa,...then the Godhra incident in Gujarat and Ayodhya incident... what do you think is the reason for attacks in Godhra?

W 4: One community burned people in train and then the other community took revenge.

F: Is it what we got from TV news?

All: yes

(W 4 starts and W2 continues) the main thing is political issue. Political party leaders are behind, they don't come in front. It is same in all the cases... in Godhra...the naxalite cases, in Singur etc. leaders are behind the curtain ...most of the time.

M 2: Maoist problem is due to system failure. We have a steel plant in Kosikalan...they pump a lot of water and due to lack of water villagers had to move to city...villagers moved to city and mad slums there. Then the government bulldozed them... this is how problems arise. The Maoists are discontent people.

F: where do you get such information?

All: from news

W1 & W4: (very vocal about media's role to tell people what is right and wrong)

M 2: But media's responsibility is to give free information ...not biased information.

W 4: As India is a developing country and people are not educated, media has to say what is right.

M 3: media's job is to expose things...like corruption.

F: What do you say about media's role in educating people about the values we have?

W 4: There are so many discussions especially during exams...about exam system...

M 1: about various festivals ...like Deewali, Xmas etc. It helps us understand how different religions celebrate their festivals etc.

F: Christians who are considered as peace loving people or appear to be so. But occasionally they are attacked like the one in Orissa. What do you think is the reason behind such atrocities? If they are peace loving people why are they attacked?

M 3 and W 2: These problems are created by political parties to increase their vote bank. To increase their vote bank they attack minorities... So such incidents take place.

M 2: I think there is a misunderstanding between both communities at certain level. Christian missionaries spread the message of Jesus, missionaries feel and other communities like Hindus, not all but certain pockets...they feel, they feel, they are in the process of converting... so that will cause problems. In fact whole Indian society is moderate.

That could be the reason for the conflicts... it is seen in remote areas like Chatisgarh, Jharkand, Bihar or Orissa. So certain pockets are there ...they

believe this is taking place. I think responsible people from both sides can sort out the problem. But when political people get involved they add fuel to it.

F: Where do you get this information, like some Christians do conversion?

M1, M2, M4, W1& W3: news channels....

W1: we cannot be there, you are not there... so they say...

F: I too heard some say these atrocities are due to conversion and disrespectful towards other religions. So how can media bring harmony among them?

M 3: Media can help...forming groups of intellectuals of different groups, sit together discuss and clear the misunderstanding.

W1, W4 and a M4: There are problems... Because...when all are friendly then why do the media re-open the cases? So many times they re-open the cases...saying you are right...you are wrong ...etc. why?

M 2: In a free democracy media has to be free. From many bindings.... whether it is from the government or from any other side. So what the media is doing ...media has a responsibility to deliver the right thing...so it is doing. But sometimes certain news channels for TRP exaggerate things. There are certain Hindi news channels- they exaggerate things and it adds to that kind of anarchy, during communal harmony.

F: can you give some examples?

M 2: like Gujarat case (referring to Godhra incident) ...riot after Godhra. At that time media added fuel to whole episode and media has to restrain from such things.

F: How did media add fuel to it?

M 3: Actually showing the incident, some of the pictures show that a particular religion has done, so while showing that...(another interfered) they have to restrain ...like actually when the Ayodhya verdict came the government has told the media very specifically to restrain...yes...that has happened...and another ...media restrained and nothing happened...very smooth.

F: In today's news paper too I saw about Godhra incident...already there are discussions on some news channels...they also show visuals...

W4 (joins in): the moment they say Hindu killed Muslims and Muslims killed Hindus, they start violence again.

M 4: Neither you nor we were there; we were informed by the media that a particular religion has burned Hindus on train. We have seen it and when they say we will retaliate -it is a problem.

W1: But intentionally media is not doing it. (Many speak)

M 1: some may be doing it too.

W 1: Due to competition, to show that we are the best they speculate.

W 3: they do it with news about common people too.

F: what do you say about investigative journalism?

M 2: they are helping the common people

W 2: Their presentation is very good.

M4: Now media has become the voice of the people, especially regarding corruption. It is the 4th pillar of democracy representing common people. As the government has utterly failed in corruption like for example, common wealth games, it is the voice of the common people. It has evolved the sensibility of the people.

F: May I ask you something related to that...when we speak about our culture, what do you understand by Indianans? For example, a person from the south (I come from south) and most of you are from the north, though I don't speak Hindi well, there is something common in all Indians? How do you explain that?

W 3: Simplicity and high thinking, respect for elders, brotherhood. Dressing - proper dress

M 2: I would like to sum up one or two things are prominent in our culture. 1, religions in our country 2, Sensitivity towards our culture, everywhere with the unique fabric of Indian-ness, that is there everywhere - North or South anywhere. This is the culture which the world appreciates

W 4: we are Indians ...that is the main thing.

F: As you are discussing about faith, let me ask you about religious harmony which is part of our culture. At the same time we see people who create problems for other religious communities too. Do you think news channels contribute to religious harmony?

M 1: I have seen reports on television RSS groups visiting Muslim homes and relating with them as friends. I think I saw on Times now channel.

M 2: NDTV is good, they never fabricate news.

M 3: Television does help.... culture is in the process of evolution and television plays an important role in this process.

F: Thank you very much for your valuable time. You have been a great help.

Firozabad II

Name	Age	Education	Religion	Occupation	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	Favourite channel	Believe TV	Main source of Inform.
Shaily Agarwal	42	DGO	Hindu	Doctor	30 minutes	News & cartoons	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Not always	TV
Sunita Mittal	41	MA	Hindu	House wife	4hrs	Religion & News	1hr.	With family	Aaj Tak, STAR	Not always	TV & newspaper
Varsha	44	MA	Hindu	House wife	2 hrs.	News, comedy	1hr	With family	Aaj Tak, Sakshi	Yes	TV & newspaper
Madhu Agarwal	38	BA	Hindu	House wife	1 hr.	Religion & news	30 minutes	With husband	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV
Manju Arora	43	MA	Hindu	House wife	30 minutes	News	30 minutes	With family	STAR, Aaj Tak	Not always	TV
Kalpana Agarwal	41	MPhil	Hindu	House wife	15 -30 minutes	News	15 minutes	With family	No specific channel	Not always	TV & news paper
Vinod Kalra	54	PhD	Hindu	College lecturer	1hr	News	30 minutes	With wife	Aaj Tak, Zee	Not always	TV & newspaper
Meena Kalra	51	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	1 hr.	Comedy & news	30 minutes- 1 hr. approx.	With husband	Aaj Tak, Zee	Yes	TV

F: The news channels' style of presentation has changed a lot. You know, earlier, on DD National one or two people used to read the news, usually one man and a lady. I still remember that Mrs. Sarla Maheswary who used to read Hindi news. But now the presentation style of the news has changed entirely. Earlier they used to read out the news quickly, one news after the other, a small break, then sports news, weather forecast and finished. But these days everything has changed. Now they give detailed news.

W 7: and whole time is spent on that news

M1: One small incident is taken up and investigation goes on and on. It has created a lot of influence on the minds of the people. Sometimes channels have some attachment to some political parties. So they support that party more.

W 2: Now some channels are after Baba Ramdev. They want a topic whether it happened or not, that is not their concern. They spend the whole day on that.

M 1: Yes, recently one child fell into a well and that was the only news for whole day

W 7: Now just one news and then detailed discussion takes place.

F: in this situation, these channels can influence the culture of our society. Don't you feel that our culture has changed a lot? You know in your younger days what was the atmosphere and how is it now? Was it same as today?

W 6: Yes it is not the same.

F: So, please tell, what is the influence these channels, especially of the news channels on the changing culture of people? You give your personal opinion only. You are free to talk. There is nothing formal about it. You don't have to follow any order or anything like that. ...we will have a very free discussion.

M 1: means one can express his views

F: you don't have to agree at all ... we know what is Indianness... Indianness or Indian culture. Perhaps we can begin from there.

F: some people like western style more. There is nothing wrong with that. That is my opinion. But some people do not like western style. They say, we are Indians. We have our own culture, we have to live according to that. We should speak according to that culture. We should dress according to that culture. I say both opinions are right. There is no problem all can freely express their views.

W 3: Our Indian culture is very good. We have our own dress style, we have our own customs. But western... in the west... but the children are learning it. They

are learning from whatever is shown on TV. They are adapting the style of talking... yes there is a lot of influence of TV.

W1: Yes there is.

W 5: these types of things should not be shown on TV. Children ask their parents, why, you are not watching what all things are shown in the TV.

W 2: There are many things that should not be allowed to be shown in the TV.

W 3: when the children question us on certain things we are not able to give them proper answer.

W 5: but... there is a serial, in that a lady is appearing with western style of dress. What shall we do then? Shall we tell the children to put off the TV?

W 6: today we are going according to the Indian culture. There are people who tell their children to wear Salwar Kameez, but when they go to the society, they are looked with contempt. There is a sense of contempt among other children that these are uncivilized. They are made fun of. The problem is that there is no one to speak for our own culture. Only then the children will stop scorning at our culture and accept our own culture.

F: that means, you mean to say that there is a great influence of fashion because of TV Channels?

W 1: Yes very much.

F: But in the news channels it is very less. Mostly they wear either saree or salwar- suit. I don't think there is so much fashion on news channels. But it is just not about presenters they also show visuals.

M 1: These things happen only in India. When there is an accident everything is shown. Whole scene is shown. But there was a major plane crash recently. But not a single dead body was shown. But when there are some small events they are shown again and again.

F: so what do you feel? It should be shown or not?

W 5: There is a lot of dramatization in news channels.

F: Dramatization?

W5: Yes dramatization or acting. When these things are shown another criminal is born. The children are seeing this and they are learning how these things are done. They try to imitate.

F: That is very important. After watching these things children and youngsters are picking up new tricks to become criminals. New criminals are born because of the TV shows that dramatize criminal activities.

W 6: yes a new generation criminal is formed because such TV shows.

F: Someone mentioned about Godhra Incident.

W 3: I was just mentioning about that.

M1: she was telling about that.

F: See communal issues. They are very sensitive. They are very sensitive in India. In Godhra the issue was between Muslims and Hindus. Recently ... not recently, a few years back ... In Orissa, Pastor Graham Steins and his sons were killed. After that, a few years later a Hindu sage was killed. After that there was the case of the gang rape of a Christian nun. Do you remember any of these incidents?

M1: Yes, he was killed inside a van...?

F: These become some of the communal issues. How do you come to know these incidents? Did any of you watch the news about these incidents on TV, on Hindi news channels? She said about the Godhra incident. Have you seen the news about the Orissa incident or any other communal issues on TV?

(All keep silence and the moderator/felicitor continues)

F: In our country we have many religions and people live together peacefully mostly. But occasionally there are some incidents of communal violence. What do you think; I mean how do the news channels report such incidents? Do they sensationalize it? What is your opinion? Do the news channels exaggerate the news?

W 7: They are exaggerating. No doubt.

W2: Yes, they are exaggerating a lot.

F: Do they give too much importance to the sensitive issues like communal violence or racial problems? Do you like to throw some light on these things?

M1: These channels do not work in public interest. They try to create interest among their people. So they exaggerate a lot. Look at the news channels, there is a competition among them. I mean one channel shows something, the other adds more to it. But it is not meant for the public interest. Just because of this, there is a lot of conflicts among people. There are many cases which should not

be shown on the TV. For example, some case about Muslims is shown...if it happened in one city, definitely there will be influences in other cities.

W 6: now what happened? What happened in Ayodhya?

F: I remember now, you also may be remembering about the Gomti Express incident. It all happened just because of a local newspaper. Now that newspaper is banned. Just because of this there was riot in Aligarh. When I was studying in Aligarh, a person came from a NGO in Delhi. He wanted to meet people to find the details of this incident. He conducted interviews with many people. I too was with him to help him. Some people cried during the interview. One lady told that she was in the same train and in front of her own eyes people were killed. The rumor that was spread by the local newspaper was that in Aligarh Medical College Muslim doctors were deliberately killing the Hindu patients. Just because of this rumor many lost their lives. It was that time the RAF (Rapid Action Force) unit was established in Aligarh. So sometimes it happens that newspapers or news channels sensationalize the incidents.

W 4: Sometimes news channels say that the price of onion has gone up to Rs. 50. Actually it has not happened. But surely it will go up one or two days after the news.

W 2: When the verdict of Ayodhya incident was about to come we were very frightened that the same things will take place in Firozabad also. We were frightened by the fear created by the news channels. But nothing happened. They give importance to these things and create panic.

: I have seen a channel, I think it is India TV, every evening a type of news will come that world is going to end. Some catastrophe is going to strike the planet and so on.

W 5: Yes. In 2012

W 1: They say that there are more disasters talking place in our country.

F: Do you watch Aaj Tak?

W1, W2 & W5: Yes.

F: If most of you watch Aaj Tak, then what do you feel. Their presentation, their influence... whether they are influencing positively or negatively... how do you feel?

M1: If you see... there are some plus points. Any way these problems are not going to end.

W 3: repetition is happening in all channels, including Aaj Tak. But other channels are very bad. Aaj Tak is much better.

W 5: Yes, she is right.

W 1: Yes this channel is much better.

M 1: I mean today it is all right. I don't know about tomorrow.

W 2: Yes we don't know about future.

M 1: there are other channels too...

F: what do you feel? Are they biased? Biased to some political parties or some particular religion? I mean are they leaning too much towards some particular party or religion?

W 4: No, nothing like that in Aaj Tak.

F: You mean they are impartial?

W 4: Yes.

M 1: If we are talking about the influence of the western culture, the people from the west are coming to us. They are coming to Haridwar in big numbers. They are adopting our culture. And we are going towards western culture.

W 6: Yes it is right. It is happening.

M 1: Tell me it is right or not, there is a person who has hardly anything to eat. But he surely has a mobile phone and will be going on talking over the mobile so much. We are going towards a mobile culture.

F: Let us come back to the sensationalism in news, we were talking about the Godhra incident...what do you think the reason behind it? about Godhra incident which took place about ten years back...

M 1: nine years back

F: yes nine years back, what could be the possible reason behind it? We are focusing on the media. What could be the reason?

(Facilitator repeats, as the participants did not comment)

F: what could be the possible reason?

W 3: Look in the media only. Whatever they showed us we agreed and accepted them that this is the right thing. We got together with them. People think a little less with their own intelligence.

M 1: No, the main cause is emotional and due to political reasons. I will tell you what happened at that time. Some people were making advantage of the situation. It was just that. Some people just think that they have to do something

when there is communal tension. They want to take advantage of the situation. But what happened there is purely political.

F: Political?

M 1: Yes political. Because of those situations and environment, people who do wrong things took advantage. The verdict has come out no? Of Godhra incident?

W 4: Yes it has come, of Godhra incident.

M 1: It has now become clear. They have given the statement also, who were the people involved and from where they purchased petrol. How they planned everything. Everything happened according to their planning only.

F: But the media also showed some pictures.... Is it right to show those pictures of violence?

W 6: Mainly it was political. Now what Raj Thackray has done in Maharashtra? How many people from U.P. were chased out from the interview and exams for job in Maharashtra? All these things happen because of politics.

M 1: What was shown in the media did not affect much.

F: During the Godhra violence the media especially television carried the news along with the burnt bodies of victims. Is it right to do that?

W 5: No, no

W 2: If one Muslim is burnt alive, and that burnt body is shown on TV, it will trigger the feelings of other Muslims.

W 4: Surely

W 1: It should not be shown. This is to instigate problems only. So it should not be shown at all. The matter has to be left there itself to make the situation peaceful.

F: So your opinion is that just give the news and finish the matter there itself. Do not make it to sensationalize.

W 1 & W4: Yes.

F: But you believe that ...

M 1: they should totally stop.

F: because that is sensational news?

W 7: No, they should give news to inform people about what happened. They should not exaggerate and not to say how many were burnt; showing one by one, repeatedly, how many bodies are recovered etc. What benefit comes out of

that? What is the benefit of telling how many Hindus were in it? How many Muslims were in it etc. Four bodies are taken out and it is shown three times in a minute. Again telling that there were so many Hindus, so many Muslims etc. this is clearly promoting religious fundamentalism. After seeing all these we also get frightened in our minds. This is creating tensions among religions. Media is giving encouragement to this.

F: Someone mentioned about Godhra Incident.

W 3: I was just mentioning about that.

M1: she was telling about that.

F: See communal issues. They are very sensitive. They are very sensitive in India. In Godhra the issue was between Muslims and Hindus. Recently ... not recently, a few years back ... In Orissa, Pastor Graham Steins and his sons were killed. After that, a few years later a Hindu sage was killed. After that there was the case of the gang rape of a Christian nun. Do you remember any of these incidents?

M1: Yes, he was killed inside a van...?

F: These become some of the communal issues. How do you come to know these incidents? Did any of you watch the news about these incidents on TV, on Hindi news channels? She said about the Godhra incident. Have you seen the news about the Orissa incident or any other communal issues on TV?

(All keep silence and the moderator/felicitor continues)

F: In our country we have many religions and people live together peacefully mostly. But occasionally there are some incidents of communal violence. What do you think; I mean how do the news channels report such incidents? Do they sensationalize it? What is your opinion? Do the news channels exaggerate the news?

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W 1 & W4: Yes.

F: But you believe that ...

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Lady: let us make it clear one by one.

F: OK... What do you think, what could have been the reason behind Godhra Incident? As you have seen about it on TV what did you feel after watching the news channels? What did you feel about it?

W 3: These are all politics. Once the result is out we come to know that it was all about politics. Everything was pre planned.

F: So, Do you feel that what you have seen on the news channels were part of political game?

W 5: Everything was preplanned and it was propagated through the media by the political leaders, so that there could be communal riots and violence. All these happened through the news and politics.

F: Do you think the news channels show us what they want us to see? What news channels shows us, what do you think, are they just showing us what they want us to watch or are they showing what we want to watch?

W 1: They show us what they want us to see. What they feel good for them is shown. That's how they present the news.

F: Do all news channels are same?

M 1: No there is a little difference.

F: Yes come on...

M 1: If they show us what they want us to see, then these channels would have been closed down long back.

W 6: There is a mixture. A mixture of both - what they want us to see and what we want to see; our interest is also taken care of.

M 1: They know how it can attract the public.

W 2: yes they try to attract the public.

M 1: There are things shown at times, which should not have been shown at all. But people like to see such things. We, educated people don't like to see such things. But the uneducated people like to watch all these stuff.

W 8: Some people might like to see things like that. That is why...

M 1: What viewers like is shown more. We who criticize may be 10% but 90%... are appreciating it. Then whose interest will be respected? of 10% or of 90%?

F: Still you think that they don't show what is right?

W 5: If there is something interesting it should be watched. Shouldn't we? But we should not watch what we believe is not right, still we are watching the same thing. Burnt bodies are shown. We are all watching it even when it is repeated over and again. And we go on watching it and go on criticizing it.

M 1: Why don't you change the channel then?

W 5: It is not like that. Some of them are true too. It is not that everything wrong.

W 7: What is right is shown after making it appealing.

W 2: The news shown is basically true. If it is wrong it will not be shown. If wrong news is shown people will get agitated and question the news channels.

W 5: Yesterday Baba Ramdev was shown...

W 6: some things are right and some things are wrong.

F: Do you think that what they are doing is right?

M 1: No, no, they are not right. They are totally wrong.

F: OK, do you believe what they show ...at least a portion of it?

W 3: Some things happen actually.

M 1: But same thing will be shown ten times a day, the whole day...

W 4: If you think about it, will get headache

W 2: Till they get a proper reaction, they will go on showing it. They don't stop.

F: It might be possible that you watch news at 9.30; others watch news at a different time. All have to see. It should be shown to all. That is why it is being repeated. Let us move to another topic. These days we hear a lot about scams, new models of scams. These things are coming on the TV. Earlier the scams were of a few thousands of rupees, then it came to be in millions and now it has gone up to billions of rupees. What do you think? Is it right?

M 1: There is no doubt about it that it is wrong.

W 7: Yes, it is wrong, surely

F: Is it right to show these things again and again on TV?

M 1: Yes it is right. Are they not showing what is true? Earlier these things were not shown much. But now they have started.

F: So, you think that what is shown on TV about scams is right and necessary as it is to make people aware of the problems. What do you think when they discuss about new methods of corruption?

W 5: Yes. It will happen. The greed among the people will increase. People would think they also have to earn quick money and try to imitate.

W 6: Every day new criminals are born. How they are formed?

W 7: When someone watches a movie on these things the same things are happening somewhere. People imitate the tricks.

M 1: This is happening from top to bottom. Not from bottom to top.

F: what do you think, there are so many MLAs and MPs involved in many scams. How many are sent to jail-hardly one or two?

W 6: Nobody will be there.

M 1: Who is there to put them into jail?

(Tea and snacks are distributed and people are having a lighter moment)

F: Let us discuss about what happened in Orissa. There was some problem between the Hindus and the Christians. There were fights, murders etc. many people were chased away from their villages. What must have been the role of the TV in these issues?

M 1: I had seen it on the TV.

F: I too saw on the TV. What do you feel about the way the media presented the issue? What conclusion you derived from it? Why did this problem take place?

W 2: It happened some time back?

M 1: It seems it happened long back.

F: Yes it happened three years back. The continuation took place last year too. Some groups said that they would not permit the Christians to celebrate Christmas. Even in Agra such threats were there. But nothing serious happened in Agra.

F: Would you say what conclusions you derived from the media?

M 1: No problem.

F: it's all about religious harmony...do you think it is affecting the religious harmony of the people?

M 1: Media gave us the information

(Telephone rings)

W 6: I have to go.

F: OK...we will finish it fast.... (W 6 leaves the room)

F: We all, people of different religions have to live together. How do you think the media is helping to create harmony in the society?

W 1: Let there be any reason, media should not propel the issue saying these many Hindus or Christians or Muslims died, but these many humans died, the total of human beings died...

W 2: We people belong to many religions; we go to the temple, Masjid, Gurudwara and church so on and so forth.

M: We all want religious harmony. Those who are real Hindus will never ask anyone to kill a person of another religion. A true Muslim also will not say like that.

W1, 3&4: All are one.

M: You call God in one name, we call him another name. That's all.

W 3: Whether it is Masjid or temple or church, in our country it is built one near to the other in many places. Why? There was love among people of different religions.

W1: Then politics comes in between.

F: Do you mean to say that politics in the religion spoils everything?

W 4: Yes, surely. It spoils.

F: I have heard from many Hindus in inter faith meetings that it is not a religious problem. It is the politicization of the religion that creates the problems.

M1: Now there are SC, ST, OBC, general caste and so on. Who knew about it before? Nobody knew about it. Now even children know about it.

W 4: Even the admission forms in the hospitals require us to write whether one is SC, ST or OBC. If one is SC, ST or OBC, they are treated in a different way. If the people belonging to the SC/ST category are not treated differently, the officers are afraid that they will be sent to jail.

F: In government hospitals as well as private?

W 4: In Government hospitals.

F: Only in UP (Uttar Pradesh)?

W 4: I don't know. Those who do not do this will be charged with SC Act and be put into prison. If it is not done, it will be asked why it was not done and at the end if the patient died, the doctors would be held responsible for it saying that it is the negligence of the doctors. Now the children also ask what is SC, ST, OBC etc. we have to explain to them all these now a days.

F: I remember there was a Hindu religious leader in the South called Shri Narayana Guru. He said, 'don't ask anyone his caste'. The sect he belonged has now followers in thousands. I always hesitate to ask anyone of their caste. Anyway, let us come back to our subject. Media has to help maintaining religious harmony. What do you think, is the media doing anything to create religious harmony?

W1: Nothing

F: Is there any television channel which does something for religious harmony?

M1: Aastha channel?

F: For religious harmony?

W5: I don't know.

M1: They do for Indian culture

F: I mean ...is there anything for religious harmony?

M1: They are doing for the religious harmony ...

F: How do they do it? Not just for Indian culture but what have they done to maintain religious harmony? Any special programmes?

M1: They do it for religious harmony only...

F: Can you specify any programmes? Perhaps one or two of them?

M1: Nothing specifically on religious harmony.

F: Let me make it clear... to maintain religious harmony, to maintain the feelings between the people of different religions in a peaceful way, has any channel done something through some specific programmes?

M1: To maintain unity only they are doing it. Aastha channel.

W5: Ram Kathas are there, Sanskar also is there. They also show. And there are many other channels.

F: Do any news channels show?

W 2: News channels? No.

F: Perhaps, finally... now in all the channels it is not just reading the news. But they also have some talk shows. Sometimes they invite some film stars or as you have said some celebrities. They are very fashionable people. Their way of dressing, and their expressions, how they ... they have some talk shows. What is your opinion about that? They have some special programmes on film stars. Involving very ...very glamorous people. Do you think that it affects our culture?

F (continuing): ...For example, recently there was news, a new law which allows gay marriage.... Permitted in our country... which is purely western...

M1: Yes between man and man marriage has become legal...

W 2: It's a new law.

W 4 & W6: Yes ...Yes.

F: Do you think TV has an influence on that?

W 4: Who knew before when and where... there were gays and gay marriages? It was shown on the TV that such things are possible, in the foreign countries. People are living like that...they are living happily...They are enjoying their lives...so... here... it is OK... even if it is not happening also OK

M 1: one day there was a discussion on this topic on TV. I did not see the whole programme... almost all religious representatives were called for the discussion. Almost all the religious leaders spoke against it. But...

W 2: But public like it...

M 1: But the anchor, one who was anchoring the programme, I felt he was mostly supporting it. Here the Christian religion will never support that. As far as I know, the Hindus also will never support that. Muslims...it's beyond their thinking...still the anchor of that programme, one who was moderating the discussions. My views are very clear. It does not matter what is being discussed. But I felt, those who are watching it will start at least think what is wrong in it.

F: We will wind up now. It is already ten O' clock. Some of you are coming from far.

W 5: Yes, we are all coming from Vibhav Nagar.

F: Thank you so much

W 2: If you had called early we could have given more time.

F: It is ok. Thank you very much for your time.

Noida, Sector- 24

Name	Age	Education	Religion	Occupation	Time spent	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	Favourite channel	Believe TV	Main source of Information
Lakhmi Joshi	19	Degree	Hindu	Working student	Not regular	News, music & cartoon	30-50mins.	Alone & with family	Aaj Tak, CNN-IBN	Not always	Internet
Rohit Parmer	26	MCA	Hindu	Web designing	Not regular	News & Discovery	Few minutes	Alone	No specific channel	Not always	Internet
Nandita	23	Degree	Hindu	Web designing	Approx. 1 hr.	News	20-30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Not always	Internet
Mathew Thomas	21	12 th	Christian	Marketing	Not regular	News & Music	10 minutes	With family	No specific channel	Not always	Internet
Sameer Ahmed	19	10 th	Muslim	Shuffle.com	Not regular	News & music	1hr.	Alone	N/A	Yes	Newspaper
Animesh Mishra	22	B.Tech	Hindu	Web designing	Don't watch	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Internet
Akashdeep Tanwar	24	Degree	Positivity	Practical research	Not regular	News & Spirituality	Few minutes	Alone & with family	N/A	Partially	Internet
Haredra Singh Dhavre	26	MCA	Hindu	Web developer	Not regular	News	20 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak, NDTV	Not always	Internet

F: This discussion is about the influence of television, in particular television news on our cultural life. So if you look at our society it is quite diverse: people from different states, speaking different languages, people belong to different religion, people from different cultural background. We live together as a society. On such a society what kind of influence is television news making? That is what we will discuss about.

F: What do you think? How much is the influence of television news on us?

M 1: Can you repeat the question please?

M: See, there are many news channels like DD news, Zee News, India TV, BBC News, CNN News, etc. All these channels have some sort of influence on our personal life. So what is your opinion about it? Suppose a person watches television news he will have some influence on the way he thinks. He deals with people, how he relates with others, his perception, the influence due to what he sees, as we are influenced by what we read, what we hear, in the same way... so what do you think about it? How television influences the people around? There are so many people who watch television. In every household they have a television.

W1: Many times news channels give useless news; sometime they give useful news...

M 2: Please give a direct answer

F: It is not an answer we can discuss. Go ahead...

W1: Some news channels show news in which we don't have interest at all. It is not useful also. Some news channels give perfect news time-to-time in which we get interested. People spend less time watching India TV and more time in watching Zee News. Because news on Zee News is very good and people know it very well. India TV is not very good. Zee News shows all kinds of news like national and international. Some news is good and some not good, of no use for students. For example when a student commits suicide they keep on telecasting the same news for the whole day. This will have bad effect on students' mind also. It has both positive and negative effect.

F: See, there are different institutions in our society, like judiciary, democracy, executive, also in the same way various religions, we have different ways of living. How do you think our way of life is affected? You said some of the news channels are not good in their approach. So what do you think is the kind

of influence it will have?

M 1: it is mostly observed in metropolitan cities that rape cases are common. It has some effect on females. They become scared even when a man comes on their way while walking on the road.

W 2: Still it is positive, but a negative thought comes in that this man may hurt me...

M 3: A negative thinking naturally comes in mind due to this rape case news...

F: Do you believe that these news channels are giving accurate news on a general basis? You said Zee News give good news...

M 2: every corner has two walls. Similarly media also has two parts. One part is that of positive side. Another one is the dark side of media. That is, all the editors, cameramen, technicians, reporters, etc. are fully corrupt. 98% of media persons are corrupt, just 2% are sincere. News channels like India TV, NDTV, Zee News, etc. showing what? They show to the public what they want to show. Suppose if you have a lot of money, like 15 hundred crores, you can invest it on the media field and become a powerful person in India. A 100% success is there in media.

F: you said TV people show what they want. So do you think it is manipulated?

M 3: if you analyze the news channels, there is a lot of difference in the way they show news in comparison with NDTV and other channels. This analysis is the major factor of their revenue. They are the major things that decide TRP. On an average way you can say that they are doing it in every filed like Bollywood, politics, science, debates, surveys, advertisements, interviews, researches, gadgets, everything is there. They are doing one-to-one communication. So to define media in one sentence, 'It is the power that rule India'.

F: So we are discussing about a few channels like NDTV, India TV & Aaj Tak etc. What is your opinion about these three channels? Can you speak a little more about these channels?

M 2: Boss I can say in one word, all right? This is all b*****it. Be it NDTV, Aaj Tak, or India TV. Why do I call it b*****it? Because I don't gain any kind of thing that can help me in any way of my life. News is something which is happening, rape cases, murder cases, etc. Ok? How will it affect my life? It cannot. Second point is that news does not give any kind of knowledge. Third

point is it is all manipulated, b*****it, ok? I shall share with you my experience before two years. In my college when I was in B.Tech. There was a case of some nonsense a year back. I was leading a group. There were two three people who were leading a group. I was one of them against the college rule and no one should be put into year back system. Because this is not followed in IIT's or NIITS's or anywhere else. We had a plan, we did something, and there were two suicide attempts, all right? Around 200 people were involved in that. All the media channels came. They recorded everything and took an interview with me I said it perfectly and clearly. Amity University is nothing but money. You give money and take degree and get lost. The next day I was watching TV at home. What I found was that not even a single interview, where truth was spoken, was shown. Then I realized what had happened. Mr. Ashok Chauhan, Chairman of Amity University and his people paid these news channels not to show the interview. Why did they pay these people? Because they don't want their university to be defamed. They just showed on the scrolling sticker that there was a suicide attempt. That's all, no interview, nothing. I have experienced it many times in my life. Be it any news channel CNN-IBN, etc. all looking for money. I don't think that news channels affect our cultural life. How can it affect our cultural life? If it were to be movie it can affect my life. People smoke because Sharukh Khan smokes. Nobody will smoke because he saw it on the news channel. It is not relevant to our lives. It cannot affect in any way, my lifestyle. One more thing I want to tell you, I may be harsh on it. The more number of hours you watch TV the more useless you are, and specially about news, because according to me only those people watch news channels who don't have anything to do in their lives. We never needed a news channel. Even 50 or 100 years back world used to be perfect. News channels are not entertaining at all, so you cut the entertainment portion, cut the knowledge portion, it is not showing the truth, so cut the truth portion, and it is nothing. All are non-sense. What I think is all the news channels should be banned.

F: Yes, I respect your opinion. But it is a fact that there are so many people watching news channels.

M 2: If you are talking about India TV, it is no.1 channel in India. I tell you how. The number of people living in rural area is about 80% to 85%. They don't know anything about the world, they don't have knowledge. So when

someone does not have any knowledge about anything. You give them information they don't know what is right and what is wrong. How can this information be beneficial? The kind of news that they show... two dogs got married, a bitch married a cow. These are all non-sense. All are scrap. How can this news going to help me in my life? No way. People watch it for fun or because they don't have anything to do. So it is not even a thing to discuss.

F: What is your opinion? There are so many people watching news channels, and it is a fact that they get information from that. Some people believe that it is true also.

M 3: Yes, it is true. I will speak for the next two minutes. The way you are taking the news in your life, it depends on you. The thing you like it depends, what type of things you want, from that type to this type, positive or negative it depends upon you. Out of 24 hrs, if you want to watch Sachin Tendulkar on news channel for interview. Then watch it, go for it. If you can apply his creativity into your life, your field, that would be great. It is also necessary that what type of news you want to watch, fix that criteria.

F: Yes, but unless you watch how will you know that?

M 3: yes unless we watch we cannot ... so watch it and decide...

F: Yes we respect your opinions; (turning to others) what is your opinion?

W2: sometimes it is right, and sometimes not. So it depends how much you want to follow and what you want to ignore. So it depends on person to person.

M 2: I had given 10 to 12 interviews in my life. Before actual interview they will come with a list of questions and even answers to those questions. What the f***k is this? I cannot even express my views. It is a drama. It happens everywhere. I have been stopped on the roadside and people come with camera and mike. They will tell what they ask and what I have to say...

F: Do they tell you what answer you should give?

M 2: Yea, they don't care about f***ing my opinion. What they want is they want to know if what they asked has been answered as expected. That's all. They record it dramatically and show it.

W1: yea their work is done. It is obvious and everybody knows it.

M 2: They have made a mockery of journalism.

F: So why do you think that they do it? What should be the reason behind this kind of behavior?

M 2: Money, that matters.

F: so if they show wrong or faulty news how can they increase their TRP? How will more people watch if it is wrong?

M 2: How will more people watch? I will tell you one thing, the basic thing behind TRP, all right? What they try to show is, what they try to project is that you do whatever study you want to become a journalist, anybody can become a journalist. That is what I can say. You show something that has no boundaries, you do whatever you want. There was a reporter with me. I lived with him. What that fellow used to tell me... it is a simple thing, you know, he used to tell me... He is Ayush Pandit, working for Aaj Tak. He worked in Star News, ok? He told me – I don't find news, so I create news. Then I asked him, yar, how do you create news? He told me, I just go anywhere and meet people; tell them what they should tell me to my questions.

It happened once. It was a planned game. There was a murder case. I cannot tell you the whole history because I cannot remember it. I don't find anything interesting in it. The murder of a girl was in a village. He made a story about her murder saying that her dad killed her. It is all creativity. If you show something to people that does not happen regularly, people will watch. They will be shocked. That's what they do. They create things, and increased the TRP. So this is what happens in news channels in India. In my personal experiences if I am interviewed for seven times all the seven times I have been told what to say. So I don't think this is useful.

F: so perhaps we will move to one of the social evils in our society, communalism. People are polarized on the basis of religion. There has been a problem in our society for so many years, affecting the growth of our country. Do you think the television news and the problem of communalism has some connection?

M 2: No, it does not have any connection. I told you news is b*****it. It does not have any connection with anything. How can it connect to any religion or anything? There is no knowledge, it is just information.

F: How can they polarize the society?

M 3: yes, they can polarize the society. Even if they can't polarize they can control the one segment of religion. I know it is b*****it. But what can I do? It is happening in front of me.

F: Enlightened people like you will know. But there are so many people in the villages. Do you think they are affected by this?

M 3: yes,

F: See, there are so many religions, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Christians, and so many channels. A particular incident may be it is a riot in Gujarat, or what happened with Christians in Orissa. Some channels always have a soft corner for a particular religion.

Boy 3: Channels don't have any soft corner. What they want is money.

M: what you feel you say (to another).

Boy 4: I watch NDTV.

M 2: As far as I have read it, India is a secular state, all right? So being a secular state, if u can prove that a particular channel is supporting Christianity or Muslim community that news channel will be banned.

F: But we are not saying that way. Unfortunately communalism is a big threat to our society. It is a reality. What we are discussing is while reporting these incidents do they manipulate the news and give wrong information to people, and that can eventually polarize the society on the basis of religion.

W 1: See, we have two societies, one middle class and another top class, poor and rich. Similarly news is also different. News for the poor will be different from the news for the rich. News channels do not focus on the problems in details. News is entirely different for high-class people. So we have two religions, no Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc. we don't have such religions. We have two religions – poor & rich.

F: Yes that is true. There are so many people in our country who don't care about any religion. But it is a fact that there are people in our country who care about religion. We are speaking about such people.

M 2: I don't think this question is relevant. I tell you why. If you talk about movies, yes they have effect on people's mind, all right, whether I am a Hindu, Muslim if you watch those kinds of movies. They have the story, background, things happen there and you see the live picture. Once you see the news channel, they just show you what has happened, which actually they are not. Ok? That is a different thing, but as such news cannot in any way polarize the society. I will give you an example. Suppose I am watching a news channel, a boy raped a girl. That does not mean that I am motivated to rape a girl. So how

did it polarize me? One should know what is right and what is wrong. If you are wrong, irrespective of whatever news channel I am watching I will go out and rape a girl. Ok? So that is about my character. That news cannot influence my character. Ok? May be some movies, which can affect my character. That depends on each person. But news, I don't think, this is a relevant question.

M 4: It can affect you in different ways, no? If a rapist is posted on channels he becomes a national shame. So it can be different for people. Suppose an occasion comes a man getting attracted to a woman. So why should he do it? His image also will be spoiled, because news channels are there.

M 2: I don't think so that people are scared about news channels. I tell you. It is all up to you. What you are and what your character is.

F: We had done a survey. You must have heard about Gomti express incident. There was a big massacre in Gomti Express somewhere in early 90's reaction to Ayodhya incident. There was news that in Aligarh medical college that the doctors are purposely killing the Hindu patients.

M 3: The effect of media on basis of the news channels on different segments of life, on the different religions influence is there. We can see that. We cannot ignore the data in front of us. I read an article and saw it on discovery channel, if that can happen according to me, only that I am going to believe that. That is my perspective, just 'Me'. Just the same thing arises in the society. This 'Me' is attracted towards the media and that is a normal human behavior. That's why we watch TV. If 100 people watch TV we cannot say so many people are like this, and so many people are like that. Because it has a regional effect. Some believe in faith, some in normal beliefs,

F: So let us be specific. Let us take three examples of the past. Ayodhya Ram Mandir incident, Godhra incident and attack on Christians in Orissa. How do you think the news on these incidents influenced people? Whether it affected our society in any way? These three incidents were widely reported. Do you think it affected our society at all?

M 4: I think each of the news affected every person. Every person has mind, so everyone perceives the environment. It depends on how he got the news. Right news or wrong news? But I think that 80% of the people are educated. All know what is media about, back end, front end, all they have seen. Regarding Ayodhya Incident earlier also they showed in the news that forces are sent, this

and that, but people know what all about it is. Suppose I say something against Muslims and it is telecasted on news channels then surely there will be a riot. If we speak about any religion, there will be riot, burn vehicles, this and that. So certainly news channels affect all people.

So it is up to the media people that how much they can fool the people having little knowledge. I saw in Noida, Sonia Gandhi's effigy was burnt. There were hardly 5 to 10 people. Gathered the crowd by compelling others and shown in the news. It will be shown in news. People will see how many are against Sonia. Educated people will think, look back old records, etc. and then take a decision. But people who cannot think so much will believe the news. They should show what is real.

I too had gone to Ayodhya after the last judgment. The security was so tight that it took 4 and half hours to reach the place. As per my opinion, government must be spending around 4 to 5 crores a year for Ayodhya's security. All waste of money. All these because of news channels. This should not be.

F: Yes, when the verdict was given on Ayodhya, clear instructions were given to all news channels that they should not be telecasting any provoking news. And we did not find any problem at all. So it shows, I don't know, you can decide by yourself where it has influenced or not. But in the past, the issues or incidents spread all over the country. So would you speak about it?

W 2: See we have such people here who are not watching news at all. They are not interested at all in news.

F: Would you tell me what is the reason behind this aversion to news? Why don't you watch news?

M 4: There is one more thing about it. I watch only cricket.

F: Would you like to speak about these three incidents? You have not spoken anything about it. Why I am asking about these three incidents, we have three religions, how it affected the society in our country, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. There are so many incidents that took place. So would you speak about these three incidents?

W 1: You know the main work is to hide the particular situation, and when our generation watches it they change the personal view accordingly. Suppose an incident took place, it is shown in TV, people watch it, they don't have any knowledge about the incident, they just sit at home and watch what the media

shows them and record in their mind whether positive or negative. Younger generation watches it accordingly and forgets it. Some people just watch for being aware of what is happening around. Some people get involved more and curious about what happened after the incident, like the criminal got punishment or not. If he got punishment then it is ok. Otherwise people think that they also can do such things and not get punished. It all depends on who show the news and the people who watch it, on what situation they telecast and in what condition the people implement it.

F: Do you think that politics is related to religion?

M 3: Minority, majority.

M 2: It is related. Everyone knows it. How it is related, I give you an example. I had been to Gujarat when the Godhra incident took place. Around 5 to 7 months back people came to know what actually had happened in Godhra. It was all the big game plan of Mr. Modi. I know what he did, because I was there that time. Basically in Gujarat there are 80% of Hindus & 20 % of Muslims. So what he did was trying to give support Hinduism instead of the other party and it is a simple logic. I tell you what. What Mayawati did is, if you get out of religion then you have caste system. What she did was gathered all the dalits and made a group. So politics is related to religion. Out of religions politics is created. It will be related forever. Specially, if you talk about India it is like this. Because in USA, Canada, where people are Christians and the other point is that people are educated, they don't think about these kinds of nonsense things. But in India 80% people are not educated. So whatever you say to the people who are not educated they will learn that only. Whatever you teach they will do the same.

F: So you say that religion is a major force in our society.

M 2: Yes, it is a major force in our society. Not only here it is everywhere. It is all because of politics things are created. You cannot blame the news channels. If you want to blame, blame the politicians and the big people who have the motives behind whatever they say and whatever they do. If you see, politicians direct those news channels go in a different way, and they pay for it. One more thing as others have said it, that it helps to spread information. May be it helps, but it is not the only source of information. People have lived without the media in the past. It is now that media has come in. so it does not matter much. Right now I think we don't need news channels.

F: so you think that political parties influence the news channels.

M 2: yes, it is the truth...

F: ...that they influence?

M 2: They do...

M 3: Out of 100%, 80% is influenced by the politicians.

F: So when we talk about these three incidents do you think politicians influenced the news channels?

M 2: Yes, obviously they did it. I have a personal experience with what happened in Gujarat.

F: What about the Ram Mandir Issue, and Orissa incident?

M 4: Yes, everywhere. If it can happen in Gujarat, it can happen anywhere.

F: So what do you think about television news?

M 4: TV news, I don't know, I swear. No literally, I don't see any news channels.

F: tomorrow you will see the news, up election results to be out.

M 4: Sorry, I am not at all interested.

M 5: Shall I speak whatever comes in mind?

M 2: Yes, speak anything about cricket... who is the fastest bowler?

M 5: Sohieb Aktar is the fastest bowler, then second is Lee

M 4: All these I don't know.

M 5: Leading run scorer is Sachin Tendulkar, second is Ricky Ponting, already retired from cricket.

F: Where did you get all these news? From the news channel is it?

M 5: Yes, by watching the matches...

F: When you watch cricket matches, do you see below the screen, something breaking news? Will you see that? You don't look at that? See the match is going on and underneath there is breaking news, don't you see that?

W 2: On cricket channels we get advertisements, not news.

F: See sports channels are only for cricket, like Ten Sports, Neo Sports, Star Cricket...

W 1: I already told you. It all depends on what you see in news channels and in what manner you take it. If good news, ...then OK. Bad news, ignore it. Because all know what news is, it is all exaggerated and published in the market. They make small news as big news and spend more time on bad news

in comparison with goods news where they spend a very little time. Regarding religion, all gods are good. Every religion says the same thing – live good, and do good. As for me doing a good work is a religion. It is not spending hours in idols worshiping and go out and abuse others. That is not the part of worship. It is a fake. Do well, don't hurt others.

W 2: If you want to talk about media, in today's generation they don't pay more attention but 80% of the people are aware through media. So we cannot neglect it and talk about negatively so much. So it is a source of reaching information to people. There is positive side as well as little bit of negative side. But it all matters what we learn from it.

M 1: So when people of different religion living together for generation to generation then why should media come in and create problems based on religions? News channels should see that what and how they show. All get information either directly or indirectly. If the news reaches correctly good, if it reaches wrongly then there would be bad result also. Let them do their work dedicatedly, give the news as it is, don't mix up with unnecessary news like creating story or imaginary news and make it famous. Because media creates it famous whether good or bad.

M 2: For me news on TV channels, in a simple word, does not exist. It is all useless, crab, b*****it. I don't waste my time watching television specially news. If I have to be aware of other things that are around the world, there are other sources, like Internet, books that are reliable sources where I get different perspectives of what already happened.

M 2: It depends on your thinking, what you have. As for me media influences the whole world by means of communication. I thank you for the wonderful chance of interaction like this. I appreciate your controlled pitch throughout our interaction. I am a great fan of you.

F: Thank you, thank you very much.

Atta Market, BHEL Colony, Noida

Name	Age	Educati on	Religio n	Occupation	Time spent on TV	TV Genre	Time on news	Alone or with family	Favourite channel	Believe TV	Main source of Inform.
Minakshi Negi	32	BA	Hindu	House wife	1 hr.	Serial & News	30 minutes.	With family	Aaj Tak	75%	TV
Sudha Awasthi	50	B.Ed.	Hindu	Teacher	3hrs	News & entertain ment	1hr.	With family	India TV	80%	TV
Georgina	35	Matricu lation	Christia n	House wife	1 hrs	Serials & news	30 minutes	With family	Aaj Tak	Yes	TV
Mary Jose	46	B.Ed.	Christia n	Teacher	15 minut es	News,	15 minutes	With family	Zee, NDTV	Not always	TV & newspap er
Poonam	30	Matricu lation	Christia n	House wife	30 minut es	Serial	30 minutes	With family	India TV	Yes	TV
Omana Maria	43	B.Ed.	Christia n	Teacher	90 minut es	News & serials	30 minutes	With family	Zee	Not always	TV

F: We will discuss about the influence of TV. (Explains to others in Hindi) when we see something on the TV we have our own opinion, different opinions, like when we watch a serial or any other programme, we have different opinions. You may say what you feel and think about it, not getting influenced by others opinion...

W 3: we always get news from the TV no? All types of news from the TV.

W 3: sometimes we don't watch news. Even then when we go out we speak about things we ourselves haven't heard. Some one sees or hears shares news with us.

W 2: Yeah... we get information like that.

F: In India we have many religions and we give a lot of importance to religions. But outside India, people do not give much importance to the religions. All are there, but hardly anyone bothers about the religion.

W 1: Yes....

F: What do you think about Christians based on what you watch in TV?

W 6: Christians are persecuted for doing good things for others. They are persecuted or tortured. When we hear about Orissa, they do a lot of good works, but they are accused of converting people to Christianity. That is the only thing they are blamed for across India.

F: But then if there are no conversions why these things are happening?

W 6: (interrupting) without having evidences how can one belief?

F: perhaps conversions are taking place...

W 4: (interrupting) whether it is right or wrong...but news is coming like that..

W 1: not just conversion issue alone.

F: Can you tell if there is some reason for that...? How do you come to know about such attacks? Is it from the news? Especially about what happened in Orissa

W1: Sorry I have not heard any news about Orissa...but this ...

W 2: I think ... these things are happening in all religions... among Muslims and Hindus not just about Christians. But what is happening among the minorities is being exposed more...people come to know more about those things. More stress is given on those...

W 4: Christians mainly help people to become aware of their rights and make them literate, study something and to become aware of their rights...

F: hum...

W6: Missionaries are doing a lot of work and trying to do something for the poor people.

F: If that is the case only a few people can be offended by that...

W 6: Why are these people going to the convent schools? For example there are schools named after Christian saints or convent schools run by people of other religions. That is not fair.

F: OK

W 6: They are accepting...

W 2: All teachers are going to the church...

W 5: (interrupting) Going to the temple also

W 1: we don't know whether all are going to the temple. But all teachers go to the church.

W1: Actually caste culture you know is there among the Hindus from the very beginning. In India it is there everywhere...

W 3: Yes everywhere...

W 2: Actually seeing the developmental work by the missionaries these may be happening... because of caste...here among the Hindus, you know it is there, you see there is big and small... that could be a reason... especially if you say...

F: Ok you say...

W 2: If we lift our finger against any particular religion...it is not right...in every religion there is something good and there is something not so good. No religion can say that everything is good with them...

W 4: Yes no one can say that...

F: what do you think is the reason behind the attacks?

W 1: Mainly it is political... political party leaders... they want to get the uneducated people... they threaten them that if they don't do what they ask them to, they would punish them.

W4: The same thing will go on ...where there is power...even educated people are there...Why Sr. Rani Maria was dead? Murdered?

W 6: Why Rani Maria was killed? And one more sister was killed recently ... what was her name? She was also killed like that (trying to recollect the name of the slain nun). What did she do? She went to the village and helped them to

become aware of their rights. They say she saved them from the landlords... those who were cheating them... taught them how to work... formed self help groups, NGOs ... they are educating them...through the camps they were giving awareness... that was not liked by the ...Hindus... not only Hindu ... mainly the ...here it is...

F: Hindus? That's what you were about say... say...

W 6: It is not like that. (All laugh) No, no, not Hindus, the political leaders. Mainly they are...

F: Why the political....

W 4: they want to become leaders... they want to become leaders... they want to get power.

W 2: Yes... to draw attention. In the case of a RSS leader, though he does nothing, no body will speak about him. He will come to the front by speaking against other religions. Then he will be interviewed by the news channels. See every where RSS party is ...they are stopping Christianity. Wherever we go they are there...now in Faridabad also. They are against it. Threatening and attacking the people those who are going to that ashram...

F: What is the public opinion?

W 3: You say...

W 2: Shall I say... my opinion is that when I was small one Christian family was living in our building on rent. My mother had left me free. She did not say that their food was different, drink was different...means, whatever they gave me to eat and drink I ate and drank, OK. I consider that was good. I like to go to the church...it is not that you are a Christian, I will not speak to you or I will not take you to my home or will not give you food. What I mean is that I will eat at their home and I myself will feed them at my home also. My opinion is like this...I am not saying that I am a Muslim and others are not welcome.

W 5: In which locality you live...we should not find any difficulty

F: I am not speaking about the difficulty...

W 1: What you think about them or what is there in our heart about them...or what image we have within ourselves about them...whatever it is... however it is... wherever we go we feel good. We see a sister (nun)...I mean... I used to go with my friends ...to the church for a long while. I used to say that we have to meet the sister there...I mean...we have to meet them.

W 3: They are understanding...

W 2: Yeah

W 5: They are understanding...

W 1: I will give you an example. In our homes we wear Salwar suits. Suppose a Christian comes wearing western dress it is very clear that we will feel a little awkward...I agree that we might feel something like that...a sort of uncomfortable.

W 4: There is nothing like that now. More than Christians others are following the western style. There is no restriction on the basis of dress

W 1: I was giving only an example....

W 2: OK... OK

F: Valentine's Day ... let's take the example of Valentine's Day. It is celebrated now as an Indian festival. I think so. Greeting, cards and gifts like and Diwali and Christmas

W 3: Flowers are also given ...

W 6: Food is accepted, dress is accepted...what is it about that junk food? Burger.

W 4: Mostly Christians eat non-vegetarian food

W 5: That is a known thing.

W 3: They eat ice cream also.

W 1: The youth is running after the drinks.

W 4: What was there before it is not there now.

W 6: Now children are also doing it. Teenagers, what are they doing? Party...drinking

W 5: The western culture is adopted.

W 6: It is not only Christians ... all the children.

F: Yes, but....

W 4: about Christians, their percentage is less

W 6: if we see generally, now what is happening in the church...in youth it is there, all are there... all are involved. Boys and girls everyone is there. Which is not found among others.

W 5: Very less

W 4: Yes Very less. Means it is there...

W 2: But there is a difference.

F: Let us move on a bit. Now.... How do you expect television to present Christians?

W 4: If you are speaking about serials, it depends on the characters in the serial.

W 3: We cannot say how to do, what to do etc. take any programme, one particular thing is liked by one, others not.

W 1: Religious serials always portray the victory of good, the victory of good over evil.

W 4: It is a male dominated society. Never will they allow anyone to come above their level.

W 2: There is also the caste problem.

W 1: In the cities, not so much. But in the villages caste system is still a problem. When you go to the villages you will find it very different. When you meet the common people they will tell you how they are treated. Here all are busy.

W 4: We are always busy no? So we don't have time to spend for these things.

W 6: If your neighbour in the lower flat comes to ask you about my husband and child you will not be able to answer. But if you ask a person in a village the same question, he will give you all the details, such and such time; such and such place and all details. But here it is different.

W 3: We don't have so much contact with each other.

F: Let us see how Christians are portrayed on television

W 4: About the attacks on Christians, very rarely they show on TV. They hide many things. The truth is never presented.

F: But how do you know about it?

W 5: Because our own people will give us the news.

F: Your own people?

W 6: People go to visit those places where some incident took place. After meeting the people they come and tell us about what happened. Whatever we see on TV is only half of the things. If 100 people died, they show only 10. If there are 100 families, in the same way. In Orissa also it happened. Many things were hidden. Only a few things were known and we did not take them seriously. When it was narrated by the people who went there personally, including some journalists who explored it we came to know. We knew about

their struggle and how they were hidden... tortured... killed... then only the eyes were opened.

F: But don't you think that could ...

W 4: Biased news... we don't know. Biased only for some people, like those who do politics with religion. Like Ayodhya temple... Ram temple etc.

W 2: Politicians just want to provoke the public. People here get provoked if religion issues are discussed. So if the other reasons don't work, they resort to religion and people will surely get agitated

W 3: Yes. It is true.

F: So do you think conversion is one of the reasons for attacks on Christians?

W 3: Because of changing religion?

W 2: I did not follow it

W 1: Hindus become Christians. When they are enticed to become Christians or become Muslims. This is conversion.

W2: See, if one wants to change his religion on his own what is the problem? Unless someone forces him to change his religion or when he has no interest at all to change his religion. What is the problem if I want to change my religion?

W 4: See, only when you feel good you change your faith.

W 6: Yes, only when I feel good I change my religion. There may be many who are not happy about his religion from within.

F: See, that is fine...But many people say that the attack on Christians are taking place because of this reason. What do you think? Do attacks take place only because of this or are there any other reasons?

W 5: It is possible. We don't feel it here.

F: Because people think differently...

W 2: There can be problems if you force others to convert their religions.

W 6: The main thing is when we think about India, what comes to our mind first is there were Hindus in India. If you look into history we can see that others came from outside the country. What was already here nobody will say that they are converting. But the religions that are less in number are blamed. You are less in number, so you want to convert others and get more numbers. So Christians are easily blamed.

W 3: I think there is more hatred towards Muslims because of the terrorist activities and bomb blasts etc.

W 1: But nothing like that is seen among the Christians.

F: But how do you get such opinion...

W 2: Christians generally love peace. It is their lifestyle.

W 6: Their main aim is peace and love.

F: But there are different types of Christians...

W 4: In every religion there is. Even among Hindus there are good and bad people.

W 6: Hindus are also doing conversion. They are here from the beginning. So they are not blamed. But Muslims and Christians have come from outside. So they are easily blamed. Others easily accept this allegation.

W 3: It is possible.

F: Now about watching TV...

W 1: Mostly the news... they don't show the proper news. Not showing the truth, but exaggerated news.

W 5: Exaggerated news?

W1: So many murders, so many robberies. These are the things shown, all criminal activities. If we look in an objective manner, we don't get any proper news. That is why we don't watch the news these days together in the family.

W 4: That's right.

W 2: If children are there with us, and these types of news can spoil them.

F: Would you tell me which are the news channels you often watch?

W 3: SAB TV, entertainment

W 1: Sony... SAB TV

W 2: Star plus and Sony

F: What about AajTak?

W 2: That's a news channel.

W 5: AajTak and Zee news.

F: How many of you watch AajTak? Two of them (W1 and W3) raised their hands up)

W 5: It has been a long time. Since the time children are born there is hardly any time left to watch TV news. Both the children will be watching cartoon. One will go to school and the other will be busy with cartoon. Once in a while India TV or if I get time I read newspaper.

F: What do you think about the way television is?

W 3: There is plenty of masala

W 6: They do some sort of replay. If it is direct telecast they cannot put any kind of masala.

W 2: You cannot do it when it is live telecast

W 2: When it is shown afterwards there is some sort of exaggeration. Afterwards if we ask someone, about an incident what knowledge that person will have about that incident?

F: Do you believe whatever you see on TV?

W 4: yes, live telecast.

F: Can you believe that?

W 1: Yes.

W 6: If it is live telecast we believe it.

W 5: Like... when a cricket match is going on... some incident... some bomb blast or some kind of quarrel.

W 2: There was a terrorist attack recently in Mumbai. That was shown live.

W 1: There was in Delhi also. Patel Nagar, Malviya Nagar, Pahar Ganj, in the city.

W 4: Muslims were blamed and they are crying. So many Muslims were killed too.

F: What about the commentary given during the live news?

W 1: There can be exaggeration in the commentary.

W 6: But what we see with our own eyes cannot be disbelieved. What is being said is different.

F: Do you think the commentary is always true?

W 1: Sometimes.

W 3: Nobody speaks that much truth these days.

F: Overall, what is your opinion?

W 2: Overall it is good. We see worldwide news. We get knowledge. We get news from abroad. Recently we got news from Australia. Indians who went to Australia were attacked. There was no religious motive in it. Just because of being Indian they were attacked. Did you not see about the students who went to study in Australia were attacked?

W 4: There was no religion. Just because they were Indians.

W 1: There is employment problem over there already. Then outsiders are coming. That is why they are doing it.

W 6: Now, there were similar attacks in Maharashtra also. In Maharashtra, Film city there was attack. They were attacking even UP people. They were telling that they were taking all their jobs. They were not getting any jobs. So they were not allowing them to write the tests.

W 3: Marathi is compulsory in Mumbai

F: Do you discuss with others after watching news?

W 2: Yes, if it is affecting the family we discuss it with the children.

F: Suppose there was a bomb blast?

W 1: Yes we do it if there was a bomb blast or a religious problem..

W 4: We do it over the phone, face to face. There should be some topic to discuss no?

W 5: No, not just for topics.

W 6: When there was bomb blasts recently, we contacted our brothers and sisters.

W 6: Our relatives and friends are spread all over the world. If we don't contact them they contact us. When there was some problem recently, our people contacted us to know how we were.

W 2: We all do it.

F: Recently there was election. Was religion used by the political parties?

W 3: Religion was not used.

W 4: No, it was used. Someone from Garwal did some programme. But we vote for whom we like.

W 5: In the election campaign, it development of the state was highlighted.

W 6: Only promises.

W 2: There was some campaign based on religion. Regarding reservation for Muslims

W 4: Yes religion was used

F: I think we will wind up the session. Thank you very much

Appendix II

INTERVIEWS

Radhakrishan Nair

(Executive editor of CNN-IBN)

Q. As a media person what do you think is the reason behind the violence against people of minority religions, especially Christians?

Christians...the problem is due to the fear of conversion. I think there are no two opinions about that being the trigger. Because ...otherwise, this is a community, which has done a lot in the field of education and social uplift. If you see the example of Kerala, it played a constructive role. We didn't find any problem like this. In places like Orissa, Chatisgarh, and in tribal belt we find this problem. The fear among the majority community is that they are converting people into that religion. If you ask Christian missionaries, they say they don't convert but people willingly come...follow their way of life. There is an economic aspect to it. Somebody who is coming to save you is your God. Because there are people who don't have any means for livelihood. One who provides livelihood becomes their God. There is misunderstanding among Hindus about this thing and the extreme elements among Hindus also become active. Suddenly, they see everything as manipulating their religion. It happened with resurgence of BJP in this country actually. It is when it really sparked off an issue; they formed groups and the moral police of the Hindus suddenly thought how their people have been taken away. Even though they say that this is largely an all-consuming religion, which cannot put boundaries. But in reality there is an extreme element, and there is 'saffron terror' which is now visibly out and they can no longer deny that. Primarily, when these things happen when there is a small church is burnt down in around Delhi or somewhere else; in some cases we find that there is a property issue. And it is couched in the garb of religion. But largely the central issue is places that matter, Maoists take control of the place, in some cases due to missionary work,

in reality they may be involved in conversion. I don't have any concrete evidence to show that they do it. You see...in society there are different types of people, even among Christian missionaries there may be people who do it. Then there is generalisation that Christians are there to annex.

Q. How do the media deal with such issues? Looking at the kind of coverage of the Gujarat violence against Muslims in 2002, which the media follow even now, the media activism regarding the violence against Christians in Orissa is much less.

We have to understand the issue. In Gujarat, the ruler of the state was involved. In Orissa, the ruling party might not have been doing that. In Gujarat, chief minister led the whole thing. Within a society there will be different elements, there will be extremists, terrorists etc. but if the state is on one side it is different. So the scale of Gujarat cannot be compared with the scale of Kandhamal in Orissa. We give a scale to anything that is happening. Because you know, we want to give a signal that however powerful one cannot play with the minorities. We go after Modi to give a message to everybody who is in some sort of position. The courts are there, the democracy is there. There are a lot of admirers for Modi in this country and he knows that. We cannot question the developmental work he is doing in the state. I think compared to other states he does a lot of good work in his state. It is media's job to ensure that questions are asked about him, when the question of him being the prime minister comes up that he does not rule this country because there is a fascist in him. So I think that the comparison is not correct. Because if you look at the scale and the intensity and the extent power that played along in Gujarat riots, compared to here the state was not a full hand player. See the police force is communalised; we cannot do anything about that. I think the Christian community is intelligent in their response to such incidents too. They didn't take the terrorism angle at all. They didn't become terrorists in the process. Here, now in this community we are looking at the Muslim terrorists and an upcoming Hindu terrorism. The Christians were never seen as extremists. When there is an attack on Christians, we don't see a polarised reaction and it has to be treated like a law and order problem. It is not really a communal problem. But a law and order one. So the comparison is not correct.

Q. Perhaps that is the basis of my question, as it is a peaceful community compared to the communities, they don't retaliate. So do you think that is the reason why they don't get enough attention?

I don't think that is the reason. But after the Gujarat incident there were so many incidents but violence against Christians-there may be a stray incident. Stray incidents are not to be treated as a generality. There is always problem between Hindus and Muslims. It is an ongoing thing.

Q. Considering the sensationalism and new style of presentation how does the business oriented trend affect the media?

When it comes to religious news, there are channels run by religious groups. If you look at the national mainstream media, there was never our intention to ... look at the incidents through the prism of religion, like; this is a Christian story or a Muslim story etc. We don't look at it that way. I've been a practising journalist for 20 years, 15 years in television now, taking decisions on what should be news and what should not be news. I can tell you that there is a lot of confidence ... and I know a lot of people who work in other news channels and other organisations. There is never actually in English and in Hindi too, there isn't such a tendency that Christian is to be looked at differently or Muslim is to be looked at differently. There are so many issues, there is terrorism, Maoism, we have other issues like corruption...so many issues to handle, may be if you look at how much do we cover, how much we don't cover, why, that is not because there is a mindset. Considering the time we have, we prioritise. Prioritisation is not looking at stories, because it is a Christian story or a Muslim story. It's like a fire engine call. We grade news like fire what a fireman will do to fire. That's a very conscious newsroom call... I can tell you. May be Kandhamal, it was very difficult to report; it is a far away story. We have a bureau in Bhubaneswar; most of the news for the last five years is from Kandhamal. In Orissa, there is not much story. It is not a story-generating place like Kerala, Mumbai or Delhi. We also do not require to report a small thing that is happening in Orissa. Orissa comes in when there is Maoist attack or Christian missionaries are attacked.

Q. You said you have a bureau in Bhubaneswar; do you depend on stringers for news inputs from interior places?

I shall tell you. In television, the information is taken by us directly from the police officers of that area. The issues will come to us from the stringers; the stringers send visuals. The information is always processed by our bureau in Bhubaneswar. If the story is big enough we travel to the place. So the control of information is always with us. We do not blindly go by stringer information. Because he might look at it through the prism of religion. So we have our checks and balances. We take footage, the footage is not Christian or Muslim but the information we take from the people who matter in the place. In Kandhamal we talked to the SP, district collector. So we get correct information –the reason why it happened and all that. When we go to the ground report we get both sides of the story. We speak to the bishop, the cops, and people from the other side because their fears are also to be addressed. We never give a one sided opinion. Mistakes can happen. If mistakes happen we immediately withdraw that story and put out the correct version. In 24-hour television sometimes we end up making mistakes in the process of collecting information.

Q. These days we have the facility to send news by anybody, I mean citizen journalism...How do you deal with this?

Yes, that goes through a process. When I report, my faith shouldn't come in the way. Personally I may have a belief but in the report that should not come, then it affects journalism. In Kashmir, people get obsessed with issues in Kashmir. If you come to Delhi, things are different. That is the reason I came to Delhi after working one and half years in Kerala, not that I cannot be successful there but in Delhi we get open ideas.

(Reading the news his colleague brought and edits it. He also gave interesting but not surprising instructions to her 'our investigation is the focus of the story and we should be the reason for the story, let us be a player here')

Q. How do you know the information you receive from 'citizen journalists are correct?

All information is checked by the system. There is a desk especially for that, it is called input desk. All information comes into the channel will be checked. Once it is put out, it means it is vetted and checked by the channel. Nobody else can just suddenly come and put anything here. It is done by the desk that is assigned to do the work. All the inputs are channelized to one place, they check it and cross check it by somebody else (even if it is a story from other channels).

It is always checked and verified but sometimes there can be mistakes, but it is very rarely. We do wait for confirmation; nobody is watching ten televisions at home.

Q. Do you think, due to competition mainly 'breaking news' accuracy is compromised?

Yes, I think. In *Times Now*, the verification system, I think is compromised there. It is the way they work, they are trying to do *Fox news* in India. Sometimes we flash news and they too flash the same. When we realise that we have made a mistake, we withdraw the news. But they still continue. Because they think since we put it on air it is OK for them to do the same. That is wrong for a news channels to do. But we, even if get information from the channels, we verify it.

Q. So there is a possibility of compromising the truth?

Yes, there is a possibility. There is a foolish compromise that is possible, because of this competition. But now I look at it in a slightly positive way because this tendency is coming down. There is some sort of self-regulatory mechanism we have put in place within the industry. There is an association headed by the former chief justice of this country. One is free to write to him about any problem and he comes back to us for explanation.

Q. Do you get such issues at all?

We do get. India is a democracy and people have issues. I remember one case in which there was an accident near India gate in the middle of the night, involving the death of three people-two boys and one girl. Police gave us the information that all of them were drunk. Later on the post-mortem report revealed that the girl was not drunk. The girl's family went to NBA (News Broadcasting Association) saying that the family's reputation is put at stake by the news channel by reporting that the girl was drunk. But we have no facility to check it by ourselves; we go by the information police give. The moment new information came, we changed it. Though we were not obliged, considering the sensitivity of the case, we issued an apology. So the system is good. There is now an increased responsibility, in the last six to nine months. The game changer was the reporting of the Ayodhya verdict. All the news channels decided that they will do certain things- will not sensationalise, will not analyse the verdict before it comes, and will not speculate on which way the verdict will

go. It was the first thing we did across the industry and languages. We had an understanding and first time media also realised that ratings are not a function of sensationalism. Government also wanting us to be responsible but the industry on its own has done it. When the Gujarat verdict came too we did the same thing.

So that's it

Thank you very much, it was very informative.

(It was an interview stopped many times due to interventions by people with whom he works)

Vinod Sharma

(Political Editor, Hindustan Times and National minority commission member)

Q. There has been violence against Muslims even in the pre independent India. But violence against Christians in some parts of India is a new development, though they are widely considered as peace loving people. What do you think is the reason behind such attacks on Christians?

Well, I think one of the reasons is, there are political forces in this country that have divisive agenda. It is in pursuit of that agenda to widen their support among the tribals, you see this phenomenon happening. Because in the tribal areas there have been Christian missionaries who are active and there are people who, out of free will embrace Christianity which is not to the liking of certain other forces, which have the agenda of Hindutva. So the clash occurs. That has happened in Orissa, happened in Dangs in Gujarat and there are suggestions of such in Mangalore. Whether it is just a coincidence that all these three states, the BJP has been in power or having a share in power especially in Orissa they were sharing power with BJD (Biju Janata Dal). Now BJD is all by itself in Orissa and ever since that alliance broke there has been no incident of violence against Christians in Orissa at least. And similarly in Dangs, there was a public outrage across India and consequent to that I would say that various civil liberty groups, various NGOs could manage to put this issue on the national agenda. And that perhaps was a deterrent for these people. The case of Graham Stains in which life imprisonment to the main accused by the Supreme Court would have come to public notice and wouldn't have got the international prominence that it got but for the media activism and civil liberty groups brought this issue to the fore. So I think that despite these contradictions, there is enough scope in the Indian political space, the secular space and the social space that the minorities, their voice is heard and their rights are protected. There is the national commission for minorities whose main task is to minimise and check incidents of exploitation, harassment and violence against minorities. There are also state level commissions for minorities, not all states have commission for minorities though. But quite a few states have commission for minorities, which are doing an OK job. I think much more can be done but still, you know, it's a long tug of

war that happens on the ground. So I think that the five notified minorities that we have in this country- the Muslims, the Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and the Parsis, they have certain rights for which the government is proactively working. There is this 15-point programme of the prime minister for the emancipation and welfare of minorities, which is being very proactively monitored and sought to be implemented on the ground, though there are problems. But still I think that it's not that it is something, which is strong on paper, a lot is being done to take the benefits to people. And I think that by and by we are, India is moving towards the kind of polity where the decisive agendas will not work. The young India, most of India is young today, is aspirational and at the end of the day identity is defined largely by aspiration. So when it comes to voting for a political party, the impulse is not depending on one's identity, by language or by religion. The impulse is that you need a quality life, you are looking for a quality life that you want to bequeath to your coming generations a life that is not determined by who is what by way of birth, or religion or language but who is what by way of achievement, by way of his contribution to the society and what he gets out of the society on a quid pro quo, positive quid pro quo. So I think that we are moving towards that situation and we shall reach there very soon.

Q. Let us move to media, media activism has been appreciated very much in bringing the perpetrators of anti Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002, even now the media is after them. But looking at the violence against Christians in Orissa, the media especially the television news channels did not follow the story as they did in Gujarat. What do say about it?

(Intervenes) I disagree with you, when the Dangs happened there was a lot of media focus on what happened there. When Kandhamal happened there was a big media focus on Kandhamal and that moved the chief minister of Orissa Mr. Navin Patnaik into, you know, whatever was within his reach to stop the pernicious kind of politics and the stage came where he thought that the BJP was using ...organisations like Bajrangdal, VHP and all these Hindu zealots, the fringe elements that they were using their alliance with BJD to pursue the pernicious agenda. So he broke his alliance with them. I think that was.... for the so-called Sangh Parivar. They cannot be riding on their shoulders of secular parties to pursue their agenda that is something very contrary. Yes of course,

you may say that, in relative terms that Gujarat was more pronounced than Kandhamal by media. But you know much what media does; it is also determined by business interests. Say for instance, anything that happens in Gujarat which is hugely an industrialised state will get greater coverage than what is happening in Orissa which is not one of the developed states in India. It is sad but it is a reality. That is one down side of an open economy of the market place of fools where you tend to tell stories in a more detailed way about people who have buying capacity than you tell stories in a shorter way about people who have lesser buying capacity. It is a reality but it's not that it's done consciously, it just happens. There is a debate whether Indian media is providing forum between two elections to the people who are on the weaker side of the divide. This is being discussed by people who are sensitive and I think by and by we will manage to strike the balance. But I can assure you if there is a major loss of life anywhere, if there is a blatant violation of the law anywhere, if there is persecution of a lot of people in any part of India it can't escape the eyes of the media. You may disagree regarding the time dedicated or the length of the stories told but you can't accuse the media for ignoring it altogether. If there are hundred channels twenty channels give good coverage if the issue is there in public domain and people will be made accountable.

Q. At the same time when we speak about television news media, the way they present too matters a lot, meaning they can sensationalise, and in the case of Orissa violence they linked it with the murder of swami Laxmananda Saraswati. So that the audience get the impression that it followed from the other.

Look people had that impression. Mr. Navin Patnaik's decision to expel BJP, to dump it, made matters clear and Mr. Patnaik won without BJP after that in Orissa. So I think the people of Orissa perhaps corrected the wrong done to the Christians of that state. I think in democracy checks and balances are in built. All that we need to do is to activate them. Media does their bit, courts do their bit, and the parliament does their bit. Because in parliament these issues do figure and there are debates held on these issues. As I told you Indian is a huge country and there are areas where we do well and there are areas where still we need to do better. I mean it is not that these forces are going to get away with cold-blooded murder, no. I don't think so. Even someone like Narendra Modi is forced to pretend that he is secular, but actually he is not doing that. Because he

knows that there are limits to sectarian politics in India, that you cannot rule India by pursuing sectarian politics. Look at Mayawati, she initially had sectarian appeal that she was mobilising the lower and the backward class against the forward caste. Today her slogan is *hathi nahi Ganesh hai*. Similarly in Samajwadi party his was the Muslim Yadav base and he tried to reach out to Kshatriyas in order to expand his base. BSP is reaching out to the Brahmins. Similarly today Modi is saying that Muslims are best placed in Gujarat; in terms of quality of life and opportunities to make wealth. He may not be meaning it but he is speaking that language. Until some years back his was a hugely divisive agenda. Today at least he is making pretense of the inclusive. This is the magic of Indian secularism, this is the magic of the resilience of the people of India and this is the magic of certain checks and balances built into the system that you cannot do a pogrom and get away with or if you do a pogrom it will take a life time to live it down. Even if you don't get penalised by a court of law you will be penalised by the people of this country. Take for example the problems Modi has to face, if he ever wants to be the prime minister of this country. His party BJP is averse to projecting him as the prime ministerial candidate because in this era of coalition politics nobody will support him as the prime ministerial candidate. Isn't it a good enough punishment for him? In the same way many people who were involved in 1984 Delhi riots had to resign from their government and party posts and the congress party did not give them the party tickets for contesting in the election. Whatever politically could be done has been done. So I think that we are on the right track.

Q. so you say violence against Christians was a political ploy?

Yes, it was. Because the RSS is wanting to create a base of itself in the tribal area. It is a tussle for the tribal vote and they approach tribals as part of Hindus and they think that if tribals embrace Christianity it doesn't suit their politics. Of course, there is this bias against religions that haven't emanated from India like Islam and Christianity and it is out of this bias that they do many things. But we as a state, do not have a religion and every religion in India has equal space that is why we have heard comments, prime minister at least one point, that caused quite controversy, when he said that the minorities have the first right in India's resources, he said it at least. So even if they don't have the first right, there could be a debate on the first right-whether to minorities or the people of

weaker sections across various religions. But nobody says that minorities are to be kept out of the development process that they have to be denied their rights. There is a great emphasis on reaching them the benefits of first and second-generation reforms and to make growth inclusive. To make growth inclusive we have to take extra care of the minorities.

Q. Though media did a commendable job during communal violence, very interestingly one of the riot accused contested and won the election and an MLA now. What do you say about that?

Yes, we have these aberrations. In a democracy these aberrations are there. Kindly treat them as aberration; they are exceptions rather than rules. And the Indian voter has the great resilience to teach such characters a lesson. As I told you that we are moving to a situation where electoral politics will be done as how much work you have done by way of work and service of the people and not how much we have done by way of dividing the society. No young Indian voter wants a divided society, nobody is going to come and invest in a market where the society is divided, where there is violence in the air. When there was major riot in Gujarat in 2002 the big debate was whether Gujarat was a right place for investment. The information revolution has done a lot of good to us. So we are not living in secluded chambers. We are now today part of one big world, we see good things and the bad things and we can discern what is good or bad for us. So I think that India needs to be given the benefit of doubt. There are some such incidents and the intention is very clear and there is a broad political consensus behind it. There is no protest held against prime minister's fifteen-point programme for minorities. Sachar commission did cause some controversy but the Muslims of this country accept the report that has been produced, as their second book today. In the future when different governments come they can measure what has been done for them on the strength of the data entailed by the Sachar commission report. It is report done by a non- Muslim about Muslims and one of the first documents that India can think of about minorities and the largest minority and its current socio-economic education status. We have education institutions specifically for minorities. There has been a lot done for the minorities.

Q. Something about political communication...When the media report extreme views, fundamentalists of any group, do you think that media is helping them to get their message across the masses?

You see media is a beast. If you say that you want to control it then you are creating another controversy. I think that it is a weapon that cuts either way and I can assure that Indian people are not that foolish to be misled by a television channel or an irresponsible newspaper editor. They know what is good and bad. Of course I think there has to be an innate balance in the coverage of these events and we should not end up causing disaffection between communities because that is not good for our society and in fact it is a criminal offence in India that if you consciously cause disaffection between communities in India and the media is aware of it. When the Ayodhya judgement came recently the media coverage was very restraint and I think we are learning from the past experience. There are times when experience is comb when we go bald (He laughs).

Q. About the involvement of multinational companies and rich spiritual leaders in media business. Do you think that such involvement affects media's performance?

Of course, these are the realities of the times but I don't think that the religious channels are doing so, may be they are provoking one religion or the other.

Q. I'm not speaking about religious channels, but speaking about some of the mainstream channels

I don't think, definitely I can't place finger on any channel. Of course big corporations have stakes in various media organisations and that reflects some times in the coverage of cooperate and inter cooperate rivalries and that's an issue under debate in this country and in fact it is pending before the Supreme Court, a case filed by Ratan Tata.

Thank you very much for your great help.

Venkata Vemuri Sharma

(Broadcast journalist working with the TV Today group)

Q: Do you think the growth of religious nationalism is related to politics in India?

The question is both vague and too general, you know? If you go with the premise that Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life, so religion provides all aspects of living in India... therefore naturally politics. But where it is different in India is unlike in Semitic religions where temporality becomes part and parcel of day today politics. Sharia law for example...OK... I mean, that element is not there in India... primarily because of the kind of constitution we followed, the traditional class hierarchy, which is prevalent in this country, which subsumes religious aspects, ok...and more emphasis on the aspect of caste and creed, ok... in social movement. To that respect the answer is both 'yes' and 'no', it depends on which perspective you hold...

Q: Yes, perhaps if you could give your views on how Hindu nationalism is related to politics in India.

In fact, I won't go into the so-called beginning of Hindu nationalism in politics. Ok but if you take 1947 as cut off period when India became independent with the partition of Pakistan, the violence which spread in Punjab, ... that has remained as a burning scar among the remnants of Hindus who came as refugees from Pakistan, ok... and to a large extent the politics with relation to minorities in India has largely been influenced by this scar. Even though this scar actually, if you look at India has a federal prospect, you know, where two regions don't match, two languages don't match, ok? It is predominantly and basically the Hindus Punjabis who were affected by this, ok... But that eventually turned into a national affectation, whether it is Kerala, Bombay or Northeast etc.... it is called national contour. Since independence the national politics and subsequently the state level politics has been primarily ruled by this kind of political dispensation where minorities were considered, first of all vote bank,

and then an asset, ok... the back lash of this invariably is and was Hindu nationalism.

Q: Recently we saw it in U.P. where different political parties playing on vote bank, like offering new things to minority communities and trying to get their votes. So it has been used always in Indian politics. Now why some parties try to woo the minority communities? Hindu nationalists perhaps try to tell the majority community about a kind of feeling of insecurity. Because when the minority communities are wooed what happens is that the majority community is sidelined. So do you think, there is a connection ...how Hindu nationalist make use of or what we call, how Hindu nationalists create such a kind of feeling in the majority community? A kind of moral panic...

Q: Yes...

Like Obama created, not a panic, a distinctive appeal to the African-Americans, last time when he won. Like Merkel talked the way she addressed the Turkish voters in Germany...I mean this is happening all over the world, nothing new to India. But what is interesting in India is that there is a backlash against even Hindu nationalism now. Ok, that is something which is not happening anywhere in the world, ok... and this is something which we can see entirely in the Indian subcontinent and the current elections in Uttar Pradesh, the biggest state in India. It is the biggest change that is taking place in India. For example if you look at late 80's and early 90's when Bharatiya Janata Party started this kind of program of building the temple in Ayodhya which led to the demolition of the mosque. There was a kind of resurgence of Hindu nationalism, if you use the term nationalism loosely. Ok, and that was directed against the Muslims. But over the years ...that is largely now remains confined to the western state of Gujarat. In Uttar Pradesh where all these happened, the biggest riots in this country happened in Uttar Pradesh. The biggest vestige of communal passions is only seen in this state. Here you got the situation where the Hindu extreme right party was decimated in the polls. Not only decimated but also made to look irrelevant, in the north for the first time along with the congress party which started the vote bank politics in this country. I personally feel that, it does mean neither Muslims nor Hindus suddenly become either irreligious or less religious. But the difference today is that their social and economical

aspirations, the demand for social and economic empowerment and therefore political empowerment... has become a primary objective than securing a temple or mosque, or settling scores religiously. That is the critical difference that has taken place in these elections.

Q: Yes, perhaps going back to that creating the feeling of insecurity...creating such feeling perhaps helped the growth of Hindu nationalist movement in India. Do you think the growth of Hindu Nationalism Movement in any way connected to growing media in India?

Let us clear one of the things. You did not tell any external factor for the growth of Hindu Nationalism. Hindus are always called nationalists, you know? Which I describe it as inclusive. Primarily a very close division ...frogs in the well kind of community the Hindus are about the being. What you can say is, you know, over the period of time and centuries, whether earlier when we talk about so called reformers whether it is Sankaracharya, ok? Or so called new liberal thinkers like Vivekananda and down to this RSS and these a*****le. They only encouraged this nationalism to grow Hindu ideals across the non-Hindu sections of the society and when it comes to the media, see the media in India is essentially has always been casteist and bigoted. Religious bigotry is probably the biggest mainstay of the Indian press, which nobody acknowledges. Most of the editors, higher echelons of the Indian media...you may find people who come from abroad or from Stephen's or such institutions with some admirable experiences of left philosophy, but at heart everybody is a Hindu, or a Muslim. To that extent the Indian media largely reflects the society and at times of communal frenzy where sobriety is required. The Indian media has failed, definitely failed. It has been hypocritical. Like for example, in the 80's where there were communal riots in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, later in Andhra Pradesh & Maharashtra, the internal debate within the Indian media was whether to name the communities. Look at the stupidity of the situation; every idiot knows that only the two communities have grown up is Hindus and Muslims. And how do you couch it? Refer to Hindus as the majority community and Muslims as a minority community then nobody will know about if talk about Muslims or Hindus. So you have papers like Times of India, Deccan Herald or even Hindustan Times or even The Statesmen, The Hindu, all respected papers, the

moment there is a riot in Moradabad, the correspondent says, members of the majority community clashed with the members of the minority community, killing 31 people of the former today. What non-sense? So the thing is that who are they trying to fool, not the people? I personally feel, that shows that the hypocrisy in media is worse. And the attempt to shroud the media's own bias about communal relations in this country. I don't know, you can take any example, even the way national media behaved when LK Advani of the BJP went on his *rath yatra*, which ultimately led to the demolition of mosque. You just go through the chronicles, forget the reportage, look at the editorial content, the Lead. They were totally prohibitively exhibitionist of Hindu passion or Muslim passion. It was never an impassionate coverage at all.

Q: so you find a strong link between Hindu nationalist movement and news media in India.

Yes, to a large extent, yes. You know we use the word national, nationalism quite loosely. I will not go into it in academic terms; I will not like to use it even in general terms. For the primary reason that India is not a homogeneous society unlike the west. It doesn't have a single language; it doesn't have a single creed or a religion.

Q: it cannot be called even as a nation.

It is not a nation, that's my personal opinion. To bridle it within the contours of a nation or nationalist spirit... I personally think it is wrong. Secondly, when we talk about the media, first of all there is nothing called so-called national media, for it to have a national appeal. To give a brief history, before independence most of the papers were printed in the national capital of India, Delhi, or before from Calcutta, started calling themselves as national media as opposite vernacular media. After independence Hindi became the national language and English, the language. So the publications from Delhi in these two languages came to be known as a national media. It's not that they represent the country other than the multi editions perspective. Secondly, media works at various levels and how it exposes religious cause. I mean right down the stringer network of public and regional broadcast channel.

Q: would you specifically speak about television news channels?

See, television news channels are not as evident as the print. Ok, the simple reason is that journalist is less accountable in print, is hidden behind his byline, and is not viewable. Whereas in television you can see me, I can be identified and can be made accountable from my actions. That is the primary reason why you will rarely find the media directly exposing the cause of a particular religion or a religious minded particular party. But what happens in television is a very subtle attempt to systematize an operation of imposing a particular channel's extreme views, ok? Like for example I tell you, I won't name the channel, because it is the India's biggest channel and very respective channel. Before the recent elections in Uttar Pradesh this channel carried a series of reports on issue of how the Muslims would vote in U.P. this time. They started getting vox populi from Muslims across the country. The first question was, "Are you still unhappy that the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992?" Now I would ask, as a journalist I would have asked "How is that question germane to the elections right now? How subtly you have made a premise, you opened a particular line of thinking alone, and it generalized. Now you know the entire coverage is going to take a particular direction. It does not matter what he has asked subsequently. The channel has already made up its mind that it is going to portray a particular school of thought. That is the clearest example...I mean this is happening since 1994, 1995, etc. The BJP itself in this campaign never mentioned Ayodhya except a few times just as rhetoric. Because they have realized that it is not going to work, because it boomeranged on them. It is engrained in many of the main line channels, they won't admit to you. They will say we are not communal we are secular representative; we try to go overboard doing this and that. But you see the programming there is a very clear hint. For example, you are in the 21st century. You talk about equanimity, equality, etc..... when something happens for example *Holi*, the producer asks the correspondence here or the reporter somewhere, "yar I need a picture or visual of a Muslim playing *Holi*." I think that's non-sense? Muslims have played *Holi* in this country for centuries. Since when *Holi* has been associated as a Hindu festival? Other than the religious aspect of it, I can understand that there is part of it as it is part of Hindu tradition. But the various flavor of playing color has been pan India. The Christians play, Sardars play. Then why do you want to

isolate one particular religion? How does it embellish your secular credentials? So these subtle tactics which I think are more dangerous. See in print you can get away with saying something. But how many people are reading newspapers? And people who read newspaper have already been informed. Even otherwise they are informed public, and majority of them have, their own ideologies, their own belief, they are hardly swayed by the papers. In any case after 24 hours a paper becomes rubbish. But television image is sensitive. The moment you see something... the picture is mightier than thousand words. In television you have to be more subtle, even the most subtlest thing can come across conveying a very powerful message. Ok? And that is what is happening.

Q: what you are saying is they speak about something which even does not exist.

I am not saying it doesn't exist. It exists. I am talking about the relevance of that particular picture. What is your objective? Your objective is to draw TRPs by showing colours all over the world I mean all over the country. Suddenly why show this? Why isolate one guy? Do you say that Hindus in Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu or Bihar celebrate *Holi*? But you say that Muslims celebrate Holi. Muslims have been celebrating Holi for centuries. So what are you trying to establish, are you trying to establish that you are secular? Because you are the only channel showing the Muslim? Or do you have a much more ulterior or what I call a dangerous motive, or consciously showing that there are divisions in this country? In either case what are you achieving? Do you get TRP with this? as far as your TRP is concerned Muslims don't matter, unless they are upper middle class. Ok? Then why are you showing it? I think you have a particular ideology as a media, that's is my opinion.

Q: and also earlier speaking about polarizing the community on the basis of religion, especially when we speak about Muslims, there is the feeling about 'enemy within'. So Muslims here in India are looked at as enemies. So do you think that media helps anyway at all in the growth of such a trend in our society?

See, as far as terrorism is concerned I think Indian media has largely played a responsible role, definitely as compare to what I was talking about earlier. See

when it comes to terrorism the Indian media has been much more responsible than even the western press put together. For example, if you look at the 2006, 2007 and 2008 phase where the British media actually created a moral panic on the issue of linking Muslims to jihad. That never happened in this country. Primarily because, I mean since my interaction with the editors...I was here during that period... and I have been interacting with people ...what they say is while there are many differences among the Muslims and the Hindus in this country, when it comes to the issue of national security there is a belief within the media largely that you need to project a united stand. So to that extent whether you call media subjectively nationalistic or simply nationalistic that is up to you. But the editors do take care both in print and television that terrorism is not construed to apply it on to Muslims. Having said that shouldn't they translate it to real action, often times it doesn't. It slips in through simple things which are possibly mistakes, but then mistakes do not happen every day that it shouldn't happen. For example whenever there is a terroristic strike or talking about LET or Mujahidins, there are so many things, when you describe unidentified chap, you know, who left and who could have kept bomb, suddenly you tend to say it is not known whether he had a beard. Ok? Now why use that sentence? Or for an example if something like this happens and there is a police search in Delhi, ok? It is quite possible that the television channels or the print media, the newspapers may choose photographs showing police searching connecting searches in Muslim localities, and such other kinds. These are again indications, they don't create panic consciously. Now I can't say that they are actually doing these things consciously either. But they shouldn't be doing such things even unconsciously, because you are socially responsible media. But if you are doing that either you should say it is wrong or I would personally think that you do have a certain kind of motive even if you are not saying it explicitly in so many words. So there is no definite answer but largely, yes. It is in India that the media definitely has been much more proactive. Take the example when the attacks took place in Bombay, twice, the latest the Kasab thing, the media did go berserk, terrorism in India, bla, bla, bla, ok? That was never directed to Muslims, ok? That distinction has to be made and it has to be admitted.

Q: While speaking about political communication, in news channels it has been pointed out that when the leaders of political parties speak about various things, like Hindutva leaders who express their views, sometimes extreme views, do you think, when news channels telecast such news, in a way they are propagating their views. It is a kind of counter effect. It is not purposely done perhaps. While reporting there is a danger of reporting the wrong thing to people.

This is in more in the case of possibly language channels where the interest of the channel owners or the journalists are much more sharper, and the differences are much more sharper. It is possible it happens there. But when you see that at a broader level I don't see these things actually happening, you know? Because all channels are when it comes to gender politics or the empowerment of the kids or religion and terrorism they go out of the way to ensure that both the sides of the coin is represented. If you hear a Hindu activist, then you get it countered by a Muslim activist, if evidences available they say. There is an element of censorship where editors take a decision especially now a days not to air extreme views at all, which is very interesting, given the fact that they generally die for TRP's. Earlier they used to do this. Now there is a very clear change on this, there is a very clear-cut regulation in place on not airing such sensitive views. That change has come about in this country.

Q: That is possible in the case of news telecast. But when you have the talk show or a panel discussion conducted by a news channel. While having the discussion they get the representatives of different groups. While doing this program if they express their extreme views, don't you think that views get communicated?

They can, yes, but then care is first taken. There is a three tire vetting done before you choose a person to be a guest on a show, for example very clearly people who are known to be extreme and extremely vocal about the views are not considered for such shows at all. You have to have a moderate view, you may be an extremist, whatever, but you need to be a very responsible person when you come on the channel show. Because you will be inserting something

else. For example when I decide who come on my show I do my vetting, I do my home work ...extreme guys don't come on my show.

Q: That could be true with your news channel, but do you think it is practiced across all the news channels, national news channels in India?

National news channels mostly yes, but you still have some cases where these things definitely slip through and these are much more prevalent in the language channels where the issues are sharper and the biases are much more prevalent. What is happening is in India news television is barely two decades old and in two decades it just had to take a giant leap from socialism to capitalism through a mixed economy. It just has to do that. I mean, that causes a lot of inaccuracies, inadequacies and failures to creep in television journalism which definitely maligned journalism per say in this country, and rightly so to a certain extent. Because primarily none of us including the management is aware of the television market, how do you watch an audience, still I don't know who my audience is. In the newspaper I know who reads it. But definitely know which program will earn revenue and which will not. So lots of experimentations took place in the last five, six, seven, ten years. Now a level of maturity is slowly coming into the Indian television media. Number two, when we talk of issues I have raised not only in the context of religion or terrorism, in terms of ideology in India, especially broadcast journalism, we have not yet reached the state where we can be like the West. See for example, in the US the media is not quite active, it is activist, you have right wing media, liberal media, democratic media, this media, that media, ok? And the ideology comes down the line from the proprietor, the publisher then to the editorial and then the last guy on this earth, and if you don't like it leave it, ok? Look at what happened to Trever Phillips one of the great journalists, what happened to Christiana Lamb....So media is part of the dominant group, it is the intrinsic part of the dominant group. But here in this country the proprietors who are industrialists, etc. these magnets have not yet reached that level of political sophistication where they can afford to have an ideology and communicate that ideology through their media outlets, and it is going to take quite a long time... because of the primary reason that profit continues to be the biggest motive, ok? The proprietor needs to make money to survive in the media market. It is as simple as that. Now once

you survive then comes the next stage of staying there and domination and then expand your area of domination where you start taking decisions or you start aiding the government in taking decisions, all bla, bla, bla... so we have not yet reached that stage. So I would definitely say that all the media proprietors have their political interests. They do not necessarily and effectively tickle down on a day today basis in daily bulletins but when it directly affects the interests of the proprietor then the editorial board may get certain guidelines or certain hints, you know, don't touch that thing, but there is no direct saying that you should not do this, ok? That kind of situation has not yet come about in this bigger media groups which locally deals in regional media conducts, like ETV or Jaya TV, I mean talk about any that are under regional political parties, that are caste based parties and they expose caste ideology, they expose political ideology, so that is not the situation at the national level.

Q: now citizen journalism is a growing phenomenon. What do you say about that? Because anyone can be a journalist now. They can send their news to TV channels, so how do you screen those news you get before you air those news? especially the breaking use?

Firstly, citizen journalism is an inane; very dump articulation of the media academics in the west. In the west they make a hype of anything and everything that is going on. You have a history of journalism; and journalism has survived the thrust of technology all these years. If something happens in your house, one of your neighbors has been murdered and you know everything about what happened. Why is there a desire in you to see it on the TV on the next day? Or read about it in the newspapers? Isn't that the natural reaction you have? Or are you satisfied, ok, since I have seen this murder take place I don't need to know anything about it. And next day when you read the story in the newspaper you criticize that story if there is a factual error. Why do you watch any particular news on a particular channel or read it on a particular newspaper? There is an element of individual trust or belief in that newspaper or channel. And what is that trust based on? It could be fairness. Why do you talk about accuracy and fairness? Because of the simple fact that anything that happens to you and if you alone are the medium, you yourself communicate that information there is no question of you being believed. That's why this information is sieved through a

channel or filter a catalyst, called the media, which you believe will communicate it in all fairness and with all objectivity so that it is believed by the people. That is functioning of communication as far as I understand it. And if I am wrong then there is nothing called journalism in this world. Now citizen journalism is what I call it a source, a new source for journalists. To consider such sources as a general history is stupid. How do you verify what some body says? Are you verifying it?

Q: perhaps I was talking about one of the drawbacks of it. Suppose I am sending a SMS to your news channel. I can be a biased person and giving my own version of news. It may not be true. But when it is displayed my view is published across the country you see. So he or I get an opportunity to communicate my views. It may or may not be true. So if there is a proper screening of what I sent to this news channel it won't be aired perhaps.

No, on the other hand... might be aired ...but what I am saying is you are citizen and you want to communicate your views on whatever is happening in front of you and if there is a means of you communicating effectively, neutrally etc. etc. then you are a journalist. So it depends, either you want to be yourself and be subjective. Nothing wrong in being subjective or leave to an organization. That's why I say it is dump; it is a mistake of the western academics, which I have personally experienced from the western academics. They don't know anything that happens outside the UK or America; there is a big world out there. You have to decide, are you the part of the media or are you part of the people. Your perspective changes accordingly. You cannot afford to be subjective, if you are a journalist. You may call it the old school tradition, yes. I am also part of the old school. This is what I inculcate in my kids and juniors as well. If you want to be a subjective, be subjective then don't be a journalist. You are not a journalist. What is objective journalism? It is ensuring that the subjectivity is not tainted in any way. That's your view is aired with respect without changing the context, etc. etc. but at the same time allowing the counter view also to be aired with all such respect, that's it. Ok? Objectivity is being fair with subjectivity, that's all.

Q: the moment the reporter tries to be objective he becomes subjective?

Yes, no doubt. The problem is you know, much of the media, today in India, ... I mean they won't report, they analyze the bias are more important than the information they carry. Their sources have become more important than the information they carry. Whenever they have a sting operation or an expose, etc.etc. The moment you know who has done this you know why he or she has done this. Because, journalistic community is small, and you know this guy is basically affiliated to that party or that person. So therefore if something has come out about somebody, 9 out of 10 the guy who is the victim has problems with his political friend and same with the government etc. This at the level of media channels of national or Transnational in nature and the big media houses who think that they can dictate policy. But otherwise, in the lower level in those organizations as well, journalism is suddenly becoming a bit vibrant primarily because of the new kids who are coming into the profession. They don't carry the kind of baggage that you and I have carried over the last century. They don't know what a Muslim is, they don't have time to talk about Babri Masjid. They are into texting, etc. and take life as it comes; they are not into the saving mentality. Primarily they are of the inquisitive mentality, they want to ask questions and get answers, and I am very happy whenever my kids are coming up with a story where they ask questions which normally I don't ask or maybe I may feel embarrassed asking. They don't have these problems. See it is the spirit of youth. It is a major turning point in Indian journalism. It will take time. I don't know.

Q: when there are panel discussions on channels, sometimes we see anchors they actively get involved in discussions, especially when they ask questions, it may be a telephonic conversation with a political party leader or any activist. Sometimes they try to give their own version, they are perhaps biased or they are prejudiced, they try to express their views, meaning they get emotionally involved into it rather than giving an impassionate view. Do you think that there is a danger in it? Because they have already taken side.

See, the problem is, it is not some of the journalists do it, all do it, quite argumentative in nature. See in the last two, three years in India, it is again TRP led unfortunately. Indian journalism is aggressive journalism. It all started with Arnab, it's all rant...it's meaningless...he doesn't need it as well. He just

shouts and shouts like...I don't know what...and that's the trend which is picked up. Journalists, particularly anchors, who like to be seen than heard, they try to imitate this trend and that's why in the last couple of years suddenly this trend has come about. Don't give it a serious thought. 90 percent of them are too stupid to carry any ideology or ideological beliefs. What they are doing is, if they are doing so it foolishness or naivety. There is no conscious effort to communicate a particular ideology. But it is done by some guys; there are some people who do it. But then it is very difficult to catch them, very...very sophisticated. There are journalists here, senior journalists who do convey a particular kind of line without seeming to. But as to most them do is primarily an infatuation, nothing more to it until they find the next fad.

Q: thank you very much. It was very informative.

Mark Tully

(Former bureau chief, BBC. New Delhi)

I can't say that I have studied this particularly. But I would say that if we look at ...if we look at the whole issue of Ayodhya, Gujarat, my only impression is that on the whole the media were not communal... support or come down on one side or the other side. There has been a long tradition in the media of this country not to flare up communal riots through media coverage. The tradition is effected in the fact that they always used to say there has been a clash between two communities...they wouldn't name the community.

My only impression is that ... (sharing his experience while reporting the Ayodhya incident) the Ayodhya issue which I covered ... there were media which supported BJP, but the bigger problem was sensationalism. A Classic example of sensationalism.... After the attempt to storm Ayodhya which Mulayam Singh 1990, where there was exaggeration of the number of people who have been killed by the U P (Uttar Pradesh) news papers.

We were talking in terms of 30s but never in terms of more than 100. But I wouldn't call it communal but it is sensationalism. I may be wrong or I am too kind....

On Gujarat a lot of the media have been good in keeping up the pressure on the government to keep up the investigation and keep the court cases going and that sort of thing. I do believe that some Gujarat newspapers were pretty communal at that time.

Q. Like *Sandesh*?

Yes and Gujarat Samachar etc... But you will have to look into the records on that.

I think the problem quite some times for the media is a lot with all these breaking news and the pressure. ... Fresh news ... the old inhibitions about being sensational have broken down and say you do get situations now where there is unfortunate speculation about what has happened. There has been a lot of criticism on the attack of Bombay hotels ...but that was not communal...not anti Muslim campaign ...really it was more sensationalism giving speculations.

I just remember one incident; I can't remember the year now...

There was a bomb explosion in Varanasi, in one big Hanuman temple; there was whole lot of inaccurate speculation, which could lead to communal riots. But fortunately the leading Hindus and leading Muslims in the city got together and did whatever they could to stop spreading such news.

Again that is sensationalism rather than communalism...that will be my view but this not something that I studied carefully and I'm sure you would find people particularly Muslims who would have other impressions.

Q. Atrocities involving Muslims usually get good coverage but riots and violence against Christians does not get such wide coverage, for example the Kandhamal incident in Orissa. What is your opinion?

Again you see, I don't think it is anti Christian...but I would say it is bad news judgement. I don't think it shows the influence of the BJP on the press. I think it is basic, common phenomenon all over the world; particularly it does happen here ...the newspapers here tend to move very quickly from one story to another story when the sensational element dies out, then you know it is forgotten. This is why for instance the courts are allowed to function so badly and slowly everything gets confused and they don't follow things up. And the best example I can give you is the *Tehelka* scam ...if you look back you will find Vajpayee said there will be an enquiry which would have findings within six months, but I don't think there was one but it certainly didn't find any in six months and the press didn't follow up on that. The press did not say anything on the financial persecution of the person who invested money in *Tehelka*. This is the problem ...you see...Ayodhya, Gujarat –huge stories, sadly, I am not saying that it is the right judgement but ...it is the way they look at it ...Christians are a small community...not a big story.

Q. There is a general impression that Christians are widely involved in conversion, and there are attempts from some segments to show that they are attacked due to their conversion campaign. Do you think that the media play a role in creating such an impression?

There have been occasions. Yes, equally we have to say that Christians have been involved in conversion, historically. Now I am pretty sure main stream

churches do not have conversion campaigns but there are quite a lot like Pentecostal cult who get money from foreign countries and equally it has to be said that BJP, I would say VHP organisations, RSS who do 'khar vapasi' campaign which is another description of conversion to Hinduism campaign.

Q. But we don't find such news about khar vapasi campaign in any of news channels?

Well, we do ...some of this 'khar vapasi' news was mentioned during Orissa violence. In some place it was mentioned as a factor and the very clear was- among Hinduised, Christianised tribals- so it wasn't entirely ignored.

Q. Do you see a kind of difference in approach by English and Hindi news channels regarding such news?

I don't know, to be honest, I don't watch Hindi news channels, so I wouldn't be able to answer that. I do think that local press has communal lineage, some local TV channels too.

Q. Looking at the national news media, what is your opinion about the lack of trained journalists?

Well, I think the problem in India is not so much that. I don't have the old fashioned view that people are to be trained by the people they work for... journalism is something which we have to learn all through our life. But I think the problem lies with the management themselves, don't want give people proper contract, don't want to have any one on board who is going to make any trouble, any suggestions or anything like that and I'm not frankly adequately and choosy and critical of the performance. The problem largely is, especially with big English channels, there are two things, first of all the obsession with TRP an inaccurate form of measure --secondly, I think this is the problem also with BBC, people here think if we can get a presenter that is more important than the content. You know... that I think is the presenter led concept, I am not saying anything.... but you rely on the presenter much more than on the content, I would put it. That ...I think is the problem.

Q. It has become very common among newsreaders to get emotionally involved with the topic they discuss. What is your opinion?

Yes...yes...I say it isn't right but a lot of people say it is right. We had a huge phenomenal trail by television, Kalmadi is a classic example. He was found guilty by the television long before any adequate investigation was done. But on the one hand you could argue if not by media nothing would have happened or ...there would be a formal enquiry and it would have been forgotten. But yes, and I think that some of the channels when it comes to political reporting, take the side of one party or the other, and I leave it to you to discern.

Q. What do you think of the role of MNC' and Babas etc who have share in media organisations? Do they have any influence on the media content?

I don't think any MNC's; all Indian news channels have some foreign connection etc.

You mean, Baba Ramdev, and in the south we have Mata Amritanandamayi etc. Well, you know in America you have Christian channels, provided nobody is going to object, in the same way provided Babas are not going to preach communalism, then it is OK. Ramdev is a yoga guru; I have visited him, he is not like BJP or VHP Babas. His criticism is of the government and corruption... that sort of thing, not communal. You watch these channels, if you are not a devout Hindu, then you can get bored by that.

You know...I got myself into a lot of trouble ... but I have again written now...I think in this country ...if you say that Babas cannot broadcast at all, then you are playing into the hands of the worst elements in the RSS, and VHP, ...you are giving them a cause ...that this country doesn't even allow its own religious leaders to go on television.

On the other had it is important that we don't allow the Babas to preach religious hatred against Christians or Muslims. And it is very difficult to know whether that balance is rightly held. I don't personally find that he (Ramdev) is preaching religious hatred.

Q. Politics and religion are interconnected. News channels keep covering political leaders and religious leaders who make controversial remarks against other communities. If they get wide coverage, are they not getting an opportunity to put their ideas across masses?

Well, you are right in a way, it is a problem...there should be line is drawn between... yes I mean there is a problem but of course it has to be said that we

have huge respect for election commission. And things are much better that respect, I think.

Q. Varun Gandhi, during election campaign tried to incite people and there was wide media coverage, what do you think of that?

You see, the good thing about it is that it caused a national outcry about it. But it would have been better if Varun Gandhi had been arrested. But it's not entirely a negative picture.

Q. People who subscribe to English channels, who are considered to be sober, may not be influenced but Hindi audience in the villages may be influenced by that, what is your opinion?

Then you will have to prove that Hindi news channels were broadcasting radically different stuff to the English news channels. I don't get that impression. But I can assure you that plenty of English speaking people who subscribe to VHP type views. In fact, I think the backbone of VHP comes from middle classes. On the whole in the villages people are much more interested in caste and try to grab some thing to grab of all the government money. There is much hatred between castes as much as between Hindus and Muslims. I think you would have to verify that local channels are communal.

Q. Christians are accused of westernisation. - Hindi films stereotyping?

I think the image of Christians as converters, and some communities among Christians are immoral, I think, to be fare, there are plenty of Hindu villains and Muslim villains too. Because, after all, there are criminals in all the communities. I don't think Christians are particularly picked out.

It is true that some people believe that Christians have come from somewhere else. But I don't think that television news channels give such an impression. I am a practicing Christian, I go to church and we have a community. But we don't feel that Christians are seen that way. But there is a deliberate campaign against Christians of VHP I have heard and written in my book 'India's unending journey', in that I have described Togadia's speech in Raipur. So there is deliberate propagation of misleading pictures of Christians. But I don't really think, I mean, I think Christians have a bigger problem over Dalit Christians, huge problem over there. Tolerating caste within Christianity is a bigger

problem and problem with corruption and the problem with VHP and certainly in rural areas like tribal in Orissa and so on problem from VHP. But I don't think media presents Christians as outsiders. Even BJP, in the case of Sonia Gandhi, were targeting her foreign origin rather than Christian.

Thank you very much for your help.

Hasan Suroor

(Former London correspondent of *The Hindu*)

Q. How does news media contribute to the growth of Hindu nationalism in India?

I don't know whether media is responsible for the rise of Hindu nationalism. But you know, after all, journalists are part of the society and media is part of the society as well. Basically, media reflect what is happening around you. Indian media, unlike the western media, traditionally has been very unquestioning.

The basic problem is with television. In the past, in the 80s the national newspapers like Times of India, The Hindu, these newspapers were very liberal and they had a reputation, but the language press, I mean Hindi, Urdu etc., they have always been a sort of right wing. Urdu newspapers, which are mostly read by Muslims, support Muslim sectarianism and Hindi newspapers, which mostly cater to the Hindu chauvinists or Hindu nationalists.

But the English newspapers (national), they were broadly liberal. But later Indian Express became right wing because its editor Arun Shouri joined BJP and later became a minister. Times of India, liberal but more commercial, Hindustan Times, ... traditionally been Congress. The Hindu in the South has always been left'. But in last 20 or 30 years, with television coming in, the whole atmosphere changed due to the rating war, I mean TRP. Now they try to sensationalize, even NDTV which is basically liberal in approach (both owners and journalists) is caught up in the ratings war.

Advertising is another problem. For example, the rise of Narendra Modi is basically because of the cooperate world. They rallied behind him, also the media, in the sense that one of India's biggest network called CNN-IBN, they have been taken over by Ambanis, who actually funded Modi's campaign. And the journalists like Rajdeep Sardesai who were critical of Modi had to leave the news organization. It is because of the pressure from owners and so on. The problem is India has turned 'right'. The Indian middle class turned 'right' and a lot of journalist came from the middle class. That is the case, but I don't think Indian media is manufacturing Hindu nationalism.

Q. I didn't mean that they are primarily responsible but whether they are contributing to the growth of Hindu nationalism?

Yes, they are contributing, in the sense, by amplifying voices, but it is same with Muslim extremists or Muslim sectarianism whenever any controversy arose. We don't always have moderate voice on Indian television. We always have extreme voices because that creates sensationalism and create TRP as well. Extreme voices get a lot of exposure.

Q. What do you think of Hindi television news? You were speaking about NDTV and CNN-IBN; do the Hindi channels have political affiliation?

Both CNN-IBN and NDTV have got their own Hindi news channels too. I don't watch much of Hindi news. But I believe apart from this, and you know, in India television channels are mushrooming and many of them are owned by Hindi newspapers and so on. As I told you some of the Hindi newspapers are quite sectarian, obviously their television news channels are also sectarian. They are run by politicians who have a lot of black money, which they now put into television.

There is no such thing as independent television; all have some kind of political affiliation. Rajat Sharma of India T.V has always been a BJP man. He was BJP student leader and the news channel always had BJP slant. Aaj Tak is owned by TV Today group and they have India Today magazine and the English Channel Headlines Today. They are also very close to, I have a feeling, ... I'm not sure, some BJP people have some stake in it.

Q. It is interesting to note that Hindu nationalism is growing in North India where Hindi is widely spoken. Do you find any relationship between the Hindi language media and this phenomenon?

The Hindi language press has always been sectarian. They cater to people in small towns who are mostly BJP supporters. BJP started as a party of small shopkeepers; they were the ones who used to vote for it. They were lower middle class people, not English speaking. So the Hindi newspapers cater to them. It is same with Urdu newspapers- they cater to middle class Muslims.

The division between English and Hindi has always been there. I think now the problem is, I don't know whether there is Hindu nationalism, and it depends how you define it. But they are all pro-Modi; they are all his cheerleaders, not necessarily pro BJP or RSS. That's not very clear.

Q. As a journalist, you probably have reported on religious conflicts and riots. Would you share some of your experience?

You know, as a journalist, I used to cover riots and conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in small towns in North India like Aligarh and other places. The language press and the provincial English press used to be very inflammatory. Hindi and language newspapers used to support the Hindus and the Urdu newspapers support Muslims.

Q. Don't they have to follow the press council of India guidelines while reporting?

First of all, somebody has to report it to the press council of India. They don't take notice on their own. In small towns no body is bothered. Because everybody is reading their own newspaper. So who is going to complain? So it never had a definitive power. At the most it can ask them to carry an apology or a clarification and Indian libel law has always been very poor. Level of consciousness is not there. First of all people are not aware of these rights. But TV sets the agenda now, what TV does newspapers follow. But here (UK) print media sets the agenda and television follows. In India it is other way around.

Even liberal newspapers used to send Muslim correspondents along with Hindu correspondents to report issues related to Muslims to places where they have majority. So that no one could accuse bias. They made sure that a kind of balance was maintained.

Q. Would you comment on the role of language press during the communal conflicts in Gujarat in 2002?

I'm sure the Hindi language media and the local newspapers supported the Hindu nationalists because they cater to the supporters of BJP, that must have been the case. That is same with Urdu press too. That happens even now. Recently, some Urdu newspapers carried news praising ISIS leaders. They tell

lies and half-truths. There is Muslim nationalist press as well. Except the newspapers in the south there has always been a division between English and the language media. Now sadly, media lost its credibility. I mean whole Indian media has been taken over by television. Agenda is set by television and their agenda is set by their masters. In the agenda setting process, the corporate and political interference is obvious and such interference brought media's credibility down.

Q. What is your opinion about the new trends in news television like breaking news?

In Hindi it is worse. Because some of their anchors come from lower middle class and they are prone to subscribe to this new trend. But it is slightly different in English language television. The English TV journalists belong to the upper middle class and they are exposed to the western world and there is a difference in their approach. Besides their target audience is different. If the newspaper caters to the lower middle class they use inflammatory language and when the same journalists come on television for panel discussions they appear to be moderate.

Q. How this phenomenon is prevalent in Hindi news TV?

I think the Hindi TV channels are very aggressive. They even dramatize a normal story, which has nothing to do with politics. They have a different way of presentation. Television always reflects what is happening outside. There is media opportunism and some of them are ideologically communal too. In the case of Hindu nationalism, there is a new generation of intellectuals coming up. That is a good area to look at. Now the BJP has strong RSS backing. It is in fact an RSS government. I know it, because when I was in India I covered elections extensively. I know when BJP lost; the RSS did not come out and vote. This time RSS made sure that all of them voted and worked for Modi. So, television follows what is happening outside. That's it.

Thank you very much. Thank you for your help.

Loveena Tandon

(London correspondent of *TV Today* group)

Q. India has seen an exponential growth in TV industry and it has become part of everyday life. Would you throw some light on how news television helps the shaping of the democratic process in India?

There is a lot to do with market as well. When we started with Doordarshan, not every channel had the license to operate. Slowly the market has opened up and new private players have come in. Now with DTH and various other platforms and with better technology slowly and steadily the industry grew, with so many channels. Now there is a hunger for twenty-four hour news, now everything is happening in the public domain.

Q. There are around 400 news channels in India. Obviously there is a competition between those news channels. How do these news channels cop with it?

By living with it (laughs). He who gets the news first can say something different about it. So who can get it first, it is a complete rat race. Aaj Tak has survived because it has been the number one channel from its inception. As they say in the punch line 'sab se tej' they try and get something 'sab se tej' and the pressure that is on the editors or us, reporters to get things first is something that is immense. So all the channels, I think is same, if you talk about news.

There are national channels and regional channels...

Q. Yes I am speaking about national channels...

National news channels, amongst all of them... I think only a handful of them would make main channels, rest of them, ... I don't know how they survive. If you ask me which are these news channels I won't even know; very small channels. Survival is very tough for these channels. Even the top channels like ours, not all the channels we have make profit. We have three channels, not all of them make profit, it's only Aaj Tak that makes profit.

How do they survive? It's basically TRP. Who has got the best TRP will decide a lot on who will advertise with them. Subscription and advertising bring

money. If you don't have money you don't survive. In order to get a lot of TRP, people try to get the news first. To get more, I wouldn't say sensational, but it is sensational, to get something different or to be first. This is how they try and get TRP, also with their programming with the help of journalists who can get eyeballs. It's all about the game of eyeballs, on the basis of eyeballs getting more advertisers and being on top of the cable network.

Q. When you try to be the first or to have the breaking news do you think there is a possibility of compromise on truth?

Me as a news gatherer, I have a different set of ethics. But if you speak of the whole channel, I am sure, sometime, somewhere things ...when you say compromise, what do you mean?

Q. I am asking about the possibility of airing news that are not true especially when there is an urge to be the first.

I wouldn't say that, I don't think it would be somewhere we lie about news. But there can be sensationalisation of news. It happens in news, also dragging the news is something that happens a lot, for example, Bollywood, if something happened to Amitabh Bachan. Recently something happened to Sanjay Dutt and that news took over the soldiers who died on the border. So if you compare both news, editorially it is shameful that we concentrated more on Sanjay Dutt. One follows and the other one has to follow to a certain extend... first three stories to Sanjay Dutt. But we have to give the first story to him because every one is thinking that they are expecting. See, it is a rat race. You don't know what you are running for but you are running. And since people have no other option, I personally, feel that I should have run for the soldier's who is survived by two kids and left no money has to be the first story rather than of Sanjay Dutt. But that is not an easy decision for an editor to take sometimes, it is not possible because he has many other complications- his entire job- if doesn't get that right, depends on that as well. I think how news is chosen and how they are dealt with is sometimes compromised because we need eyeballs. I wouldn't say we have lied and I don't think that happens.

Q. Advertising is very important for the survival of news channels as you said. When you depend on corporate sector do you think that their influence could affect the news content?

Yes it happens, a lot of the time. There are certain times, especially in international bureaus. I would say now that I am in an international bureau and I understand it better. Survival depends on marketing and I do understand that. Because I understand that I respect if something has to be done because of marketing needs. For example, if some one is advertising with us and there is something which they need coverage for; we help them to give the coverage. But that doesn't necessarily mean that I am going to be for them. I do it in a balanced way, if you ask me about it. I do a lot of marketing related stories. Because, I think marketing and editorial have to go hand in hand. Without compromising on each other's ethics ... and that can happen. I do a lot of the time here that's why I said if I have been working only in India, would have just said, marketing puts a lot of pressure some times. But only can put pressure they cannot make us do it. Editorial, still is the boss. Unless our own organization attached to the news. If it is an India Today conclave and it is the biggest thing of India Today as a group and that would be covered more. They have all the right to do it. But if you say that my marketing head will ask me to do something that I don't think, editorially right, I will say 'no'. But a lot of the time, I also work with them so to tell them straight away is really a difficult job. Because I have myself seen it.

Q. What about the influence of politicians, some times the news organizations do get some favours from politicians. Do you think that they influence the running of the news industry?

See whether it is a politician or whether it is Indian High Commission for me here, when I was working in India, I was not working so closely with every politician. I used to do shows; I was in touch with various departments not just with the BJP or congress. But I never got opportunity to work with any one of them very closely. But I can still give you an overview from my point of view. You have to work in tandem. See, here Indian high commission has a lot of problems. I did a whole show on OCI situation and the problems. They did feel very uncomfortable about what I did. At the same time I did something good

about what they do – about *pravasi bharatiya* initiative. So I balanced it. I think what is really required is: we have to work with them and they have to work with us. Most of the time we keep a relationship which can be workable and that doesn't mean... at least for me, that there is something for which I have to pull up someone, I won't do it because they are good friends with me. If there is a real issue, then I will take it up with a lot of caution and I will go to do a lot of finding out of facts, some digging in and confirming from one, two, three sources to make sure that it is true because we would not want to defame somebody but it is always a symbiotic relationship between any politician or high commission and us. It is same with PR companies. Having said that there have been situations and we have read in the media and it has happened with people with whom I have worked who have taken bribes or have gone and blackmailed. That always happens. It happens in every profession and it happens in this profession as well. But if you speak on a general perspective, especially of mine, I would say it is symbiotic relationship.

Q. Moving on to another topic – communal conflicts are not uncommon in India. As a journalist, probably you have reported on many such incidents. Would you throw some light on this? Would you tell me how these stories get reported?

I haven't covered any communal conflict in India. So I wouldn't be the right person to answer that. What do you mean by asking 'how do they get reported?'

Q. Meaning, there are guidelines given by the press council of India, I am asking whether the reporters or correspondents always follow those guidelines or they will be forced to go by the taste of the audience, I mean ...whether it is made inflammatory?

When we say communal, it's something like the Bakery case. Well I personally haven't experienced that in India. So I wouldn't be able to answer that. But in the UK, for example, Syria happened, we do get guidelines from the foreign office or from the high commission saying that it would be good. Foreign office is very forthright in saying that it will be nice if you don't report on Alan Henning because of their family. So by and large you would respect that - what

they mean is there would be some security concerns. I have to say that in everything these are just requests and some times they are very strong requests. If you want to have a good relationship with foreign office you want to respect that as much as you can. But if there was a situation where you felt that that request was a hindrance in your reporting or if your editorial judgment says ‘no, I need to do something’, then I will go and do it. But that situation has never come in where I have been asked not to report. And I respected what foreign office said about Syria and we did that.

Q. Do the owners of news organizers ask the reporters or correspondents to follow certain line?

No I haven’t been ever told that. No ... my channel has never said that – do more BJP stories or do more Congress stories, to me personally. I don’t know what guidelines have been given to the editor. If that would happen, it would happen at the very highest level, level of the editor. I haven’t come across that.

Q. If we look at the Indian news television, we see that anchors and reporters get involved emotionally in the news. They give an impression that they are part of one group or another. They are quite argumentative too in their style of presentation. What is your opinion?

I don’t think it is a good thing. I don’t think such aggressive style in which we don’t let the other person speak is good. I do not subscribe to that kind of intimidating style of journalism. But I have no control over it or changing that. I personally think that that is not objective journalism. But it is the sort of television we have in India. We are still evolving. We are still in the tabloid zone.

Thank you very much. Thank you for sharing your journalistic experience with me.