

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Foreword</i>	x
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiii
1 Global and Local Televangelism: An Introduction <i>Pradip N. Thomas and Philip Lee</i>	1
Part I Islamic Televangelism: On Preachers and Prophets	
2 Storytelling, Sincerity, and Islamic Televangelism in Egypt <i>Yasmin Moll</i>	21
3 Islamic Televangelism in Changing Indonesia: Transmission, Authority, and the Politics of Ideas <i>Akh Muzakki</i>	45
4 Islamic Televangelism: The Salafi Window to Their Paradise <i>Ibrahim Saleh</i>	64
Part II Christian Televangelism: Branding the Global and the Local	
5 Preaching the Good News Glad: Joel Osteen's Tel-e-vangelism <i>Phillip Luke Sinitiere</i>	87
6 The Global in the Local: The Ambivalence and Ambition of Christian Televangelism in India <i>Jonathan D. James</i>	108
7 Hearing, Viewing, and Touched by the Spirit: Televangelism in Contemporary African Christianity <i>J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu</i>	126

Part III Hindu Televangelism: An Emerging Phenomenon

- 8 The Avatars of Baba Ramdev: The Politics, Economics, and Contradictions of an Indian Televangelist 149
Santanu Chakrabarti

Part IV Televangelism, Politics, and Popular Culture

- 9 From Televisuality to Social Activism: Nigerian Televangelists and Their Socio-Political Agenda 173
Walter C. Ihejirika
- 10 God's Politicians: Pentecostals, Media, and Politics in Guatemala and Brazil 200
Dennis A. Smith and Leonildo Silveira Campos
- 11 Urban Logic and Mass Meditation in Contemporary Thailand 219
Apinya Feungfusakul
- 12 Whither Televangelism: Opportunities, Trends, Challenges 234
Pradip Ninan Thomas
- Index* 247

1

Global and Local Televangelism: An Introduction

Pradip N. Thomas and Philip Lee

The salience of contemporary forms of televangelism can be gauged from a consideration of two broad trends:

1. the globalization of confessional identities;
2. the pivotal role played by television viewing as a leisure activity throughout the world.

Struggles over religious identity and intra-religious contestations have been marked features of late modernity, and televangelism can be seen as a site for these struggles. Deregulation, the proliferation of cable and satellite television, competition and, in the case of Tamil Nadu, India, a populist political project of gifting a television set to each low-income family in the state, have contributed to an increase in television viewing, and thus potentially to increased access to religious channels. In the context of convergence and the penetration of mobile phones in Africa, the Middle East, and most of Asia, televangelism is no longer a strictly televisual phenomenon available during set times but is accessible round the clock over a variety of platforms.

In other words, televangelism is no longer limited to television but is increasingly a new media phenomenon – amplified and shaped on social media sites and accessed by mobile technologies in ever more complex circuits of production, distribution, and consumption. In an effort to get the maximum mileage out of value-added services in India, mobile operators have attempted to segment the market on the basis of ABCD – Astrology, Bollywood, Cricket, and Devotion – and to customize services (see A.A.K. 2010). One can now start the day with a morning *aarti* (prayer), subscribe to daily quotes from the scriptures, get daily

2 *Global and Local Televangelism: An Introduction*

alerts on auspicious dates and on the time for *Namaaz*, and access and watch live audio prayers from key shrines.

The study of televangelism remains an important aspect of the study of media and religion. While the exploration of televangelism began in the 1970s in the USA with significant contributions from, among others, Stewart Hoover (1988) and Peter Horsfield (1984), today televangelism is a global, cross-religious phenomenon. One outcome of media liberalization throughout the world has been opportunities for new religious content distributed through cable and satellite channels. These channels have placed religion in the public eye and, in doing so, have provided new opportunities for the mediation of religion, for a public articulation of intra-faith tensions, and for packaging religion for consumption in a globalized world.

One of the issues highlighted by the chapters in this volume is that there isn't a singular way of 'doing' televangelism but that its expressions are always shaped in context. Televangelism is highly contested and, as such, elicits a range of responses from scholars, who, for example, in the context of Islamic television, might see televangelism as an opportunity for *da'wah* (Islamic mission) (see Chapter 3); as a vehicle for reinforcing the agenda of conservative Islam (see Chapter 4); and as an opportunity for the negotiation of popular Islam through the spaces provided by new authority figures such as Egyptian televangelist Amr Khalid (see Chapter 2). The editors of this volume have intentionally privileged this variety since it reflects the contested nature of religion and media in our world today. Today, the practice of televangelism is very different from what it was three decades ago. The reality of digital convergence, the marketing of religion, and branding in the context of the globalization of religions have resulted in multiple platforms for the mediation of religion. However, it would seem that, in spite of some competition from these platforms, televangelism continues to be a pre-eminent space and source for religious identification and religious storytelling. So while the preacher remains an enduring figure in contemporary televangelism, this platform has also become an important conduit for the marketing of products and programmes designed to broaden the reach of religion. It is also apparent from the chapters in this volume that in spite of clear correspondence between dominant politics and televangelism in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Guatemala, and Brazil (see chapters 7, 9, and 10), the fact of religious dominance in any given country is not automatically represented on screen. For example, the Hindu national project in India has not been accompanied by its strategic embrace of the televisual field, although

religious 'serials' did play a role in the ascendance of Hindu nationalist politics. Chapter 8 in this volume suggests that Hindu televangelist Baba Ramdev's agenda sits uneasily with that of the Hindu right wing. Why is this the case? Is it that the cause of *Hindutva* (the Hindu nation) is so widely accepted that Hindu television is no longer seen as a strategic means of extending the Hindu cause?

One of televangelism's strategic functions has been to provide a global platform for popular forms of religiosity. The Christian channel GOD TV has, for example, provided a platform for the legitimization of forms of gospel music previously viewed as 'satanic'. Eileen Luhr (2009, p. 200) has observed that, 'The youth activism pursued by metal bands and zine writers signalled that evangelicals were unwilling to cede even the farthest reaches of the music world to either secular or satanic control. Christian musicians also helped redefine evangelicals understanding of acceptable models of "Christian" behaviour.' That the gospel music business is a part of a highly lucrative market is well known (sales of US \$920 million in 2001, according to Luhr, p. 193). Religious quiz shows such as on Geo TV in Pakistan and children's shows such as CBN's *Khushi Ki Duniya* (*World of Happiness*) in India are some of the ways in which the secular is becoming 'sacralized'. In other words, television acts as a space for experimenting with change, with the form and delivery of religion and the politics of possibility. Pakistan's newest game show on Geo TV is *Alif, Laam, Meem*, an Islamic version of the popular game show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*. The host of this programme is a former pop singer named Jamshed, who turned to Islam. The prizes include 'a Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca for two' (Doherty 2011, p. 11). Religion delivered in the style and idioms of popular culture appeals to audiences that are either dissatisfied with traditional religious fare or who value the appeal of the visual in their own spiritual journeys.

As Echchaibi (2007, p. 17) has pointed out in an article on Islamic televangelism:

On satellite Islamic television the staid, bearded and turbaned sheikh has been replaced by young, stylish beardless men and colorfully veiled women, most of whom were formerly unveiled Egyptian film stars. The boring half-hour advice show by the government-ordained sheikh is ceding way to a sophisticated line of value-laden entertainment programming that ranges from engaging talk shows, cooking shows inspired by the prophet Muhammad's culinary habits, sleek game shows, intricate soap operas, to reality television contests where

young entrepreneurs devise plans without a budget to help charitable causes from Darfur to Kosovo.

Televangelism as the commodification of religion

What television has done to religion is an important aspect of the story of televangelism. Since television as a storyteller is intrinsically linked to television as a purveyor of goods and services, it is inevitable that it involves both these dimensions within a context characterized by globalization and competition. Contemporary forms of televangelism contribute to the shaping of the religious market in which religion as a discourse and as a brand – available in text, image, and audio formats, as an inherited body of knowledge, as cultural artefacts and practices, as ‘anointed’ products, the voice of authority and of contested authority, as an aid to ritual and belief, as embodied and material religion – is available to consumers as specific forms of religious commodities. These commodities – for example, CDs, DVDs, and books – are part of larger circuits of religious production, distribution, and consumption that are validated from pulpits and from other public religious events. While the commodity form has always been an aspect of ‘material’ religions, televangelism has provided a platform for the globalization of theologies of munificence and reinforced new spaces for religiosity in places of capital – the mall, the convention centre, sports stadia, and the mega-church. However, televangelism’s role in the commodification of religion remains contested.

One of the debates related to religion as a commodity is whether or not commodification encourages the ‘misrecognition’ of the spiritual, debases the spiritual, or whether it indeed enhances the spiritual in a situation where the relationship between ‘use’ value and ‘sign’ value (the utility value of a product as opposed to the status value of a product) is, for the most part, negotiated by the consumer (see Thomas 2008). Perhaps there is a case to be made when studying televangelism to distinguish the production-distribution-consumption circuit related to the branded products of individual televangelists and the circuits that involve non-branded products and services that are vital to the routines and practices of everyday religion. One of the more grounded explorations of religion and commodification is a study by Vineetha Sinha (2010) in which she explores the regional production-distribution-consumption circuit of Hindu ‘*puja*’ (sacred ritual) things between South India and South east Asia. She makes the point that ritual objects such as flowers and altars ‘enhance the spiritual domain as these

objects are actively utilised in the sustenance of everyday religiosity by practitioners' (Vineetha Sinha 2010, p. 203). Contesting the binary notion of the 'sacred and profane' as wholly distinct demarcations, she concludes with the following observations:

despite the commodification of religious objects, perhaps indeed because of it, goods and commodities as they feed back into the realm of religious practices with charged meanings, in effect support enchanted (by which I mean a religious, mystical, other-worldly) fields of practice rather than produce mindless consumerism or a disenchanting consciousness.

[p. 204]

In other words, commodification cannot be explained in black-and-white terms given that the creation of affective, emotive, even social value does at times, displace its economic value. Within the intensely commodified *Ganeshotsav* (Ganesh festival) in Mumbai, individual artisans do have the opportunity to reinterpret Lord Ganesh as the remover of obstacles within the contemporary world characterized by flux and conflict. Bella Jaisinghani (2011) writing in *The Times of India* (Mumbai Ed. 31 August 2011) on the *Ganeshotsav* in Mumbai refers to one such Ganesh pandal (tent):

Across the road lies Tejukaya, a small colony that chooses themes to reflect the reality of the middle class. This year, the theme of farmers' suicides has been crafted by idol-maker Rajan Zhad, showing a 22-foot Ganesh suspended in mid-air as a farmer sounds the drum beneath.

There is also a coconut worshipped as Ganesh and 'Green Ganpatis made from shadoo clay or silt from lakes and decorated with natural material such as haldi, Kumkum, gulal, sindur, bukka, rice flour' that are less toxic than the statues made from Plaster of Paris (see Mukherji 2011, p. 7). While Sinha's observations can also be extended to an understanding of religious consumerism in other traditions, we would make the point that irrespective of whether or not branded religious products sold by televangelists are aids to a re-enchantment, these are conscious efforts to use marketing techniques to extend brand value and wealth for the televangelist and his/her financial backers and require a political-economic-based understanding of commodified religion. In other words, while Joel Osteen's and Benny Hinn's sale of

‘anointed’ products and Baba Ramdev’s commodification of yoga may provide comfort and strength to individual consumers, these are also the means of expanding personal fortunes and spiritual empires.

Branding and niche marketing

Television offers opportunities to both brand and re-brand faith, to offer a religious experience suited to individuals and communities living globalized lives delivered in the language and rhetoric of popular culture. It offers a myriad of possibilities for charismatic preachers to build personality cults through niche marketing of personalized products and services. Egyptian televangelist Amr Khaled, Indian televangelist Baba Ramdev, and US-based Joel Osteen are more than just preachers on television. They are nationally and globally recognized brands whose messages and products tap into the religious needs of the middle classes in particular, and whose ministries facilitate the communication of an accessible god, and offer a palatable, satisfying, religious experience through which the complexities of religion are reduced to a few principles of self help. Televised religion offers new ways to explore ‘salvation’ in this world through highlighting pathways to prosperity, success, and health. In the case of Baba Ramdev, yoga – a traditional Indian exercise for the mind and body – has become the basis for a multi-million-dollar health and well-being empire. Mara Einstein (2008, p. 122) describes the brand of Joel Osteen thus:

The brand of Joel Osteen is made up of a brand name (Joel Osteen), some key phrases (‘discover the champion in you’, ‘be a victor not a victim’) and a humanizing icon (‘the smiling preacher’ as he has been dubbed). Then there are ancillary elements that add to the brand mythology. These include Joel’s wife, Victoria, a tall Texas blonde who is included in most marketing materials, as well as other members of his family, particularly his children and his mother, Dodie, who miraculously recovered from liver cancer 25 years ago. But the brand itself is Joel Osteen: the web site is Joel Osteen; the television show is Joel Osteen; the ‘concerts’ are ‘an evening with Joel’.

[See also Lee & Sinitiere 2009, Chapter 2]

The re-invention of televangelism in the USA is an essential aspect of this genre and Razelle Frankl (1998) has written about the repackaging of Christian family values by televangelists following the fall from grace of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart.

Local televangelism

While televangelism, in its original form, began in the USA in the context of the decline of 'free' time for mainstream Christian denominations in a deregulated, competitive, commercial broadcast environment in the 1960s – and is synonymous with Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal broadcasting – today it is a global phenomenon, embraced by most, if not all, of the world's major religions. As such, there is a great diversity in contemporary traditions of televangelism, a diversity that has been highlighted in chapters in this volume. Although it would be fairly accurate to state that both Islamic and Hindu televangelism have, in some measure, been influenced by Western peddlers of 'self help and DIY salvation' and by Christian televangelism (see James 2010; Echchiabi 2007), the identities of contemporary forms of Islamic and Hindu television are nevertheless distinctive and reflect the hybrid localities of place and space. Echchiabi (2007, p. 18) explains the influence of self-help gurus on the Kuwaiti Islamic channel Al-Resalah:

Tareq Al-Suwaydan, a 46-year-old Kuwaiti television celebrity and a motivational speaker...teaches young Muslims how to become effective business leaders. During his 17 years in the United States as a student, Al-Suwaydan was heavily influenced by Western entrepreneurial literature on self-improvement such as Steven Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and religious literature such as Norman Peale's work on the power of positive thinking and faith. Upon his return to Kuwait, he adapted this literature by making Islam a success formula for spiritual self-fulfilment and material achievement. Through Al-Resalah, a private channel dubbed as the first Islamic entertainment television, Al-Suwaydan hopes to make the medium the message. Islam, he says, is not supposed to be dull and irrelevant. Islamic values of self-piety, hard work, filial piety, helping the poor can be embedded more effectively in reality TV shows, soap operas, game shows, cartoons, and even music videos. It is a marriage of tradition and modernity.

Despite such correspondence, and the fact that US-style televangelism remains the touchstone for the many local variants of Christian television found throughout the world, there is evidence that suggests that local traditions of televangelism have begun to forge their own hybrid identity. Marleen de Witte in an article on televangelism in Ghana in

the journal *Material Religion* (p. 323) explains both the correspondences and differences in this synergistic tradition:

While much of Charismatic-Pentecostalism on Ghanaian television is part of transnational Charismatic culture influenced mainly by the United States, it is also different from its US counterpart and specifically African in outlook. Examples are Mensa Otabil's elaborate African gown as kind of trademark, the African dress of choirs and of the congregations ... more subtle references to an African identity, such as Matthew Ashimolowo's *Kentie* tie and the use of traditional *adinkra* symbols and graphic maps of Ghana during the intro of Living Word. Other programs may have a 'Third World' appearance due to lack of professionalism, technical equipment, and funds, which distinguishes them from American televangelism.

One of the issues that requires further exploration is the precise nature of the term 'indigenous expression' and the markers and traditions of practice that clearly distinguish a 'local' tradition from dominant traditions of televangelism. While there certainly are differences in the dress of televangelists, as the quotation from Marleen de Witte's article clearly shows, are such traditions distinctive enough to be considered 'indigenous' when their rhetorical styles are heavily influenced by Western televangelists and when these programmes belong to and feed into transnational circuits? In other words, as some of the chapters in this volume reveal, the global and the local are intertwined in intricate ways and the local itself has become a form of the global. What is 'local' in a context in which the local has been contaminated by the global? Even if the 'aesthetics' of production are grounded in the local, the atmosphere provided by televangelism – the spatial feel, routines such as healing, use of testimonies, reliance on the spectacular along with, of course, the economics of televangelism – is universal.

'Authority' and televangelism

What seems immediately apparent in the exploration of televangelism is the fact that these expressions of televised religion, while reinforcing traditional forms of religion, also contest religious authority inclusive of its religious leaders, doctrines, schools of thought, and sources of religious power. In other words, televangelism provides opportunities to 'disintermediate' religious authority as well as 'reintermediate' new sources of mediatory power, both liberal and conservative. Dorothea Schulz (2003) in an article on the Muslim movement *Ansar Dine* in Mali highlights the

extraordinary fecundity of public discourse around Islam that is mediated through radio programmes and audio recordings. The popularity of the founder of this movement, Sharif Haidara, is to a large extent the outcome of his focused criticisms of traditional Islamic authority, and in particular, the erudite, literate but 'hypocritical' representatives of Arab Islam. Haidara's critique is an example of disintermediation that has been aided by the winds of change – 'the public confrontations illustrate the struggle over the authoritative use of "Islam", a struggle that is exacerbated by shifts in the social foundations of religious authority' (p. 157), although Schulz also observes that, 'The unifying message Haidara proposes fits the newly emerging "marketplace of ideas" and its neo-liberal ideology' (p. 158). What is important to note is that this critique of authority is accompanied by a discourse that enables his audiences to reconnect to a message suitable to lives lived in the context of change, be it in the urban Mali or in India where Baba Ramdev has used the medium of yoga to connect to a national audience through popularizing a Hindu discourse for the times.

At the same time it can be argued that televangelism reflects a crisis in mainstream religious mediations, as traditional sources of religious authority – especially in the context of Judaic faiths – struggle to communicate their message to audiences that seem inclined to engage with a religion for the times. However, in the context of Hinduism the proliferation of new sources for Hinduism, including godmen and godwomen, and televangelists, is not seen as a threat but as vital expressions that are critical to the renewal of Hinduism. This is not to say that Baba Ramdev lacks critics within the Hindu fold. There are many who are opposed to his commercialization of yoga and his political ambitions, although his attempts to popularize Hinduism for the times is seen as an important means of reinforcing the message of Hinduism. Similarly, Egyptian televangelist Amr Khaled's message is to the middle and upper-middle classes who are supportive of capitalism and who desire a version of Islam that is not opposed to globalization and secularization and that is certainly different from fundamentalist Islam. Moez Mahmud, also an Egyptian, uses his flagship show *The Right Path* to deal with a number of issues facing Islamic youth and offers a platform for the renewal of Islamic music and aesthetics. Yasmin Moll's (2010) observations on new genres of Islamic television point to what clearly is a ferment in the field in which television has become a battle ground for various shades of 'Islamic reform':

For appropriating such Western cultural forms – albeit to new moral ends – Islamic media producers have been attacked by an older

generation of Islamists highly suspicious of televised entertainment and prone to issuing blanket condemnations of music, drama, and dance. By contrast, far from exhibiting anxieties about the ‘corrupting’ influence of mass entertainment media, new Islamic media producers do not see entertainment as an object of prohibition, but rather as an object of regulation. The new Islamic media project does not ask if art and entertainment are permissible, but rather what kind of art and entertainment should be allowed, and what evaluative criteria should be marshalled in making these decisions. In the process, channels such as *4 Shbab* and others are redefining what counts as Islamic television – not just overt preaching, but also good music and compelling drama, it seems – and why. Firmly rooted in popular culture, such efforts will likely play an increasingly significant role in shaping the place of Islam in the Egyptian public sphere and beyond in the years to come. Blogging and social media too, as is clear from the upheavals in the Middle East, also now play a role in contesting religious authority.

Both Amr Khaled and Moez Mahmud are, however, an emerging phenomenon within the context of the 280-plus Islamic satellite channels that for the most part depend on the more conservative or radical televangelists such as Mumbai-based Zakir Naik on Peace TV. The crisis facing mainstream Christianity throughout the world – illustrated by declining audiences, incomes and vocational options, increasing denominationalism, and the decline of ecumenism – has been furthered by the proliferation of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches and their new theologies for a globalizing world. Flamboyant Nigerian Sunday Adelaja’s 25,000 strong Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations church in Kiev, Ukraine, is one example of a new church movement that has become global in its mission and ambitions. To theorize the success of a black preacher leading a predominantly white congregation in the centre of Russian Orthodox territory remains to be done, although it is clear that this church’s pastoral mission to the wealthy and powerful as well as the dispossessed has contributed to its success. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2006, p. 74), after experiencing a Sunday service in Kiev, comments on the reinforcement role that mediation plays:

In addition to whatever spiritual achievements may have been accomplished, the color, pomp, and size of the crowd forces the society, including those watching the proceedings on TV, to take notice

of this new revival movement. Pastor Sunday Adelaja's success symbolically reverses the 'traditional' direction of mission, proving that God indeed uses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

Televangelism, in this sense, is the site for attempts to re-negotiate religion with audiences, many of whom no longer owe allegiance to traditional religion. To an extent this is also true of Islam, a religion that is often described as 'conservative' although Islamic televangelism offers evidence of competition, ferment, even contestation.

Having said that, and in the context of India, Hindu televangelism, which we have alluded to, is not a threat to traditional Hinduism but an opportunity for another efflorescence of Hinduism within a tradition characterized by extraordinary plurality in the apprehending of the divine. Godmen and godwomen on and off television merely add to the diversity that is a mark of Hinduism. In stark contrast, Christian televangelism in India, primarily supported by Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal interests, is an aspect of intra-Protestant competition for souls, identity, and power. There is an added issue related to Christian televangelism in India. The 'Great Commission' to go forth and preach the gospel to the ends of the earth is not viewed merely as a core necessity tied up with being 'Christian' but as the means to engage with the practical task of saving souls and bringing people to Christ, of making India Christian. Rather inevitably, this accent on bringing people to Christ, has, in the context of heightened religious nationalism, pitted an aggressive Christianity against an equally aggressive Hinduism that is committed to the project of keeping India 'Hindu' (see Thomas 2008).

The political economy of televangelism

While one can argue that it is necessary to study the everyday consumption of televangelism – a project that has become complex in the context of the availability of such content across multiple platforms and the increased branding of televangelists – it is equally important to study the specific political economies that contribute to and are reinforced by specific types of televangelism. The embrace of Christian television by Pentecostal evangelists in India is to some extent a response to the editing out of minority religions on state broadcasting. A variety of local and global projects related to religious nationalism, the manufacture of religious capital, and intra- and inter-religious competition contribute to the specific form that televangelism takes in a given country.

Thus, for example, in India, where there are close to 27 cable and satellite channels that are exclusively religious, the most watched Hindu channel is Aastha, owned and operated by a trust belonging to Baba Ramdev. Ramdev's Vedic Broadcasting Limited owns both Aastha Movies and Aastha Entertainment along with Aastha TV and is part of an empire that includes non-media ventures (see Chapter 8). A report on Ramdev by Pandey and Rawat in *Tehelka* (18 June 2011) reveals that his flagship enterprise, Patanjali Yogpeetha, 'is like a thriving MNC [multi-national corporation]. There are 34 companies incorporated between 2006 and 2011, dealing in medicine, construction, real estate, and energy. The 2009–2010 turnover was 1,100 crores' – although many believe that that is a just the tip of an extremely well resourced empire. His trust runs 15 yoga and medicine centres in the USA and an ashram in Houston. An island off the west coast of Scotland, Little Cumbrae, is owned by his trust and is a centre for yoga. Ramdev is the first Hindu televangelist whose message is not only spiritual but also linked to physical well-being via yoga-based exercises:

Swami Ramdev's pitch is that pranayama, the ancient Indian art of breath control, can cure a bewildering array of diseases. 'Asthma, arthritis, sickle-cell anaemia, kidney problems, thyroid disease, hepatitis, slipped discs – and it will unblock any fallopian tubes', he tells his audience in the yoga village, who line up to have their blood tested and receive herbal remedies.

[Ramesh 2008]

He is also of the view that homosexuality is an addiction that can be cured by yoga.

The Aastha website offers a number of yoga/health products including a yoga DVD for childless couples and a yoga DVD for cancer. While there is certainly a case to be made for the revitalization of traditional medicine in the context of the corporatization of allopathic medicine in India, Ramdev seems to be corporatizing traditional medicine – a trend that has not gone unnoticed by purveyors of traditional medicine whose values have remained unconnected to big business. This link between politics and broadcasting needs to be explored precisely because low-intensity and high-intensity religious nationalism are an ever present reality in India. In the case of Aastha, broadcasting has been used to propagate Hindu Indian values, products and processes, and yoga-based health solutions via a variety of products.

One of the characteristics shared by many televangelists, irrespective of their religion, is an openness to televangelism's business potential.

It is often the case that their personal lifestyles are closer to that of celebrities. Al-Sayed Zaied (2008), in a critical piece on televangelists in Egypt, contrasts their lifestyle with an older generation of preachers:

Khaled al-Gendy's view of money is radically different from that of preachers from the older generation. Sheikh Abdel Hameed Keshk, for example, who in his day was the most famous and influential preacher in Egypt, refused to accept money for his work and died in poverty in 1996. Among the new preachers, however, al-Gendy hardly stands out for his material concerns. The preachers Mohammed Hussein Yaqoub, Mohammed Hassan, Safwat Hegazi, Mahmoud al-Masri, Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini and others each make more than LE 100,000 [Egyptian pounds] ([US] \$17,000) a month. Those who sign up with the religious al-Nas satellite channel make even more, since the channel spends heavily to secure the most famous and popular stars. The pricey advertising offered during these Islamic programs is for products ranging from Islamic clothing for women to natural aphrodisiacs like white honey.

Such lifestyle choices have not gone unnoticed. In early 2011 congressional investigations into six, top televangelists and their ministries in the USA carried out by R-Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley rather ironically ended up supporting their status as non-profit entities deserving tax exemption. Nevertheless, the investigation began as a response to perceived concerns linked to the ministry of televangelists. In the words of Marrapodi (2011):

At issue was compensation for the pastors and ministry leaders who openly led lavish lifestyles while their ministries received tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. The review by the committee did not impose new rules on the religious organizations or suggest they be stripped of their tax-exempt status. But it did bring to light compensation practices that may raise eyebrows in the non-profit community and lead to a discussion of new tax policies for religious organizations.

Consuming televangelism

An important element in televangelism is the role played by audiences and in particular their engagement with meaning and content. There are, as far as we are aware, few dedicated studies on the reception of televangelism, although Stewart Hoover's *Religion in the Media Age*

(2006) deals with household media consumption of religious fare in the USA and includes interviews with the 'Milliken' and 'Callahan' families who are evangelicals who watch televangelism. What is interesting from these interviews is that both families are cautious consumers of televangelism. In Hoover's words, 'when televangelism did occur in our interviews, it was most often Trinity Broadcasting or Benny Hinn that were mentioned. Neither Robertson nor Falwell figured in any of our interviews with "born-again" or "dogmatist" interviewees...' (p. 274). What is also clear from Hoover's account is that 'apprehending the divine' in secular societies such as the USA, home to a vast religious market, is a complex process given that the choices available for audiences, who often live lives that are not strictly religious, are immense.

The fact that US audiences apprehend religious meanings in secular popular culture and programmes such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The Simpsons* is interesting, although it is not clear whether these are 'deep', abiding, life-affirming meanings that audiences constantly turn to or whether they are the fleeting sort. The US reality certainly cannot be applied to understanding the mediation of religion in India, which is constitutionally secular but is nevertheless deeply religious both in public and private, and where religiosity is a pervasive aspect of everyday life. In a context characterized by strong religious and cross-religious affiliations, any singular representation of religion on television may not garner huge audiences. In a study of the reception of religious broadcasting by the Mar Thoma community in Kerala, Thomas and Mitchell (2005) have observed that Mar Thoma audiences are cautious consumers of televangelism although they do not see religion *in* the secular.

In other words, what people make of religion on television is bound to vary from context to context and is shaped by the prevailing strength of religion in people's lives, their denominational affiliations, and the nature of religious competition. During a field study conducted by Thomas (2008), Christian consumers of televangelism in Chennai also expressed a cautious appreciation of televangelism – there were those who were appreciative of Joyce Meyers' 'practical' homilies while critical of Sarah Hughes' (Miracle Net) perceived histrionics and Benny Hinn's lifestyle. Similarly the religious experience of watching television serials such as *Ramayanam* and *Mahabarat* and offering *aarthi* before the commencement of an episode is reserved for explicitly religious television in which the 'auratic' specificity of Krishna and Arjuna and other gods and goddesses are a recognized aspect of a common religiosity shared by Hindu audiences. In the context of Islamic televangelism, it is clear that audiences do have the choice of the traditional *Ulema* and the

tele-preacher as a source of information on religion, although it would seem to be the case that class, mobility, and other factors play a role in the relative influence ascribed to old and new religious sources.

Both transnational and local forms of televangelism are aspects of global television today. While such channels are ubiquitous, taking into account the growth of global 'religiosity' today it is clear that official audience figures for dedicated religious channels are nevertheless disappointing, although this is frequently contested with claims and counter-figures from these broadcasting houses. In other words, there are, at best, niche audiences for these channels, and their influence correlates with shifting circumstances such as the relative influence of the religious right in the USA and the nature of support for an Islamic televisual public sphere in countries such as Egypt and Indonesia. Furthermore, it would seem to be the case that the 'aura' attributed to televangelism is really conditioned by the nature and strength of religion in a given country. Its relative influence may not be as strong as it once was in North America, although there is certainly evidence that suggests that televangelism is not in decline.

Conclusions

Televangelism is an aspect of the contemporary global mediascape. While it has been a focus for academic study in the USA, Ghana, and Brazil, it is only of late that studies have begun to emerge of the cultures and practices of televangelism in the Middle East, India, and elsewhere. We believe that there is a need for more studies on the production-circulation-consumption aspects of televangelism and hope that the chapters in this book contribute towards illuminating the contextual nature of 'televangelistic' practices in different parts of the world. To conclude, televangelism has become an important visual means to enhance the efficacy and spread of material religions. In the words of Tamar Gordon (2005, p. 309):

Religious media exert narrative influence upon lives and situations, shape and activate realms of social action, confer power upon those in religious authority and empower those who are not. . . . TV broadcasts, prosyletic videos, billboards, handbills and print tabloids as visual artefacts do more than publicize how the spirit operates in everyday life. They also propel audiences into imagined communities where there is tangible evidence of the spirit operating through people, villages, neighbourhoods, cities, nations and the world.

References

- A.A.K. (2010). Religion and mobile phones in India: Nearer my God to thee. *The Economist*, May 26. Available at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2010/05/religion_and_mobile_phones_india (accessed 12 September 2011).
- Asamoah-Gyadu, K. (2006). African initiated Christianity in Eastern Europe: Church of the 'Embassy of God' in Ukraine. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 30(2), 73–75.
- De Witte, M. (2005). The spectacular and the spirits: Charismatics and neo-traditionalists on Ghanaian television. *Material Religion*, 1(3), 314–335.
- Doherty, B. (2011). Islamic game show's Mecca prizes for the devout. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 12, p. 11.
- Echchaibi, N. (2007). From the pulpit to the studio: Islam's internal battle. *Media Development*, 1, 16–19.
- Einstein, M. (2008). *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge.
- Frankl, R. (1998). Transformation of televangelism: Repackaging Christian family values. In L. Kintz and J. Lesage (Eds.), *Media, Culture and the Religious Right* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press), 163–189.
- Gordon, T. (2005). Introduction: Visual cultures of Pentecostalism. *Material Religion*, 1(3), 308–313.
- Hoover, S. (1988). *Mass Media Religion: Social Sources of the Electronic Church*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hoover, S. (2006). *Religion in the Media Age*. London: Routledge.
- Horsfield, P. (1984). *Religious Television: The American Experience*. New York: Longman Press.
- Jaisinghani, B. (2011). 10 faces of Ganesha. *The Times of India*, Online Mumbai Ed., August 31. Available at: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-08-31/mumbai/29949189_1_mallikarjun-jyotirling-ganesh-idol-ganeshotsav-pandals.
- James, J.D. (2010). *McDonaldisation, Masala McGospel & Om Economics: Televangelism in Contemporary India*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Lee, S. and Sinitiere, P. (2009). *Holy Mavericks: Evangelical Innovators and the Spiritual Marketplace*. New York: New York University Press.
- Luhr, E. (2009). *Witnessing Suburbia: Conservatives and Christian Youth Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Marrapodi, E. (2011). Government review of televangelists' finances released. CNN belief blog co-editor. Available at: <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/07/government-review-of-televangelists-finances-released/>
- Moll, Y. (2010). Islamic satellite channels and the ethics of entertainment in Egypt. *Arab Reform Bulletin*. Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2010/04/21/islamic-satellite-channels-and-ethics-of-entertainment-in-egypt/6bpg> (accessed 11 March 2012).
- Mukerji, A. (2011). Is your Ganpati truly eco-friendly? *The Times of India*, Mumbai Ed., September 7, p. 7.
- Pandey, B. and Rawat, M. (2011). Baba's black sheep and the golden fleece. *Teelka*, 8(24), June 18. Available at: http://www.tehelka.com/story_main49.asp?filename=Ne180611Coverstory2.asp (accessed 22 July 2011).

- Ramesh, R. (2008). Hindutva's television Swami offers a cure for all ills. *Super Hindus Around the Globe*, August 27. Available at: <http://superhindus.wordpress.com/2008/08/27/hindutvas-television-swami-offers-a-cure-for-all-ills/> (accessed 22 July 2011).
- Schulz, D.E. (2003). 'Charisma and brotherhood' revisited: Mass-mediated forms of spirituality in Mali. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 33(2), 146–171.
- Sinha, V. (2010). *Religion and Commodification*. Florence, KY: Routledge.
- Thomas, P.N. (2008). *Strong Religion, Zealous Media: Christian Fundamentalism and Communications in India*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Thomas, S. and Mitchell, J.P. (2005). Understanding television and christianity in MarThoma homes, South India. *Studies in World Christianity*, 11(1), 29–48.
- Zaied, A.-S. (2008). Da'wa for dollars: A new wave of Muslim televangelists. *Emerging Social and Religious Trends* (Washington, DC: World Security Institute), 21–27. Available at: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=96193>.

Index

- Aarti*, 1
al duah, al gudud, 21, 23, 37, 78
 Al Jazeera, x
Ansar Dine, 8
 Anti-secularism, xi
 Arab Spring, 65
 Ashimolowo, 133–4
 Assemblies of God church in Brazil,
 210–13
 Astrology, 1
Athmeeya Yatra, 119–21
 Azuza Street, 130
- Baig, Khaled, 235–6
 Bauman, R, 110–11
 Believer's Church, 118
 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), 150
Boko haram, 181–2
 Bollywood, 1
 Branding, 87–104
 Buddhism
 online, 225
 popular, televised, 229
 rationalised, 220, 222
 and self-contemplation, 223
 socially engaged, 226
 and the state, 231
 and the supernatural, 228–9
 Theravada, 220
 Business Blessing Plan, 116
- Cabelleros, Harold, 208–9
 charisma, 128–9
 charismatic, x, 110
 heavyweights from Nigeria, 127
 ministry, 94
 Christian
 behaviour, 3
 evangelism, 130
 musicians, 3
 preaching, 132
- Christianity
 African, 144
 crisis facing, 10
 as a media phenomenon, 134
 and Pentecostalization, 143
 commodification, xii, 5
 of religion, 3, 239–40
 competition
 intra-religious, 12
 confessional storytelling, 24, 33
- Daa'wah*, 2, 64, 67
 devotion, 1
 de Witte, Marlene, 7–8
Dhammakaya Movement, 230
 Dhinakaran
 and Benny Hinn, 115
 Brother, 112–17
 and Oral Roberts, 114–16
 Paul, 112–17
 and politics, 117
 as storyteller, 113
 disintermediation, 8, 225, 244
Duah, 24, 30–3
- Echchaibi, Nabil, 3, 23
 Egyptian
 dialect, 35
 mass culture, 35
 Electronic church, 133, 203
 Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of
 God for all Nations church, 10
 Evangelicals, 206
 in Brazil and the public sphere, 215
 and politics in Guatemala, 205–9
 and public policy, 216
- Fatawa*, 23, 67
- Ganeshotsav*, 5
 Geo TV, 3

- Global
 media ministry, 87
 televangelism, x, xi, 110
- God market, 151, 152, 239
- God TV, 3
- Gospel for Asia*, 117–21
- Gospel music, 3
- ‘Great Commission’, 11, 127
- Gym, Aa, 50–3
- healing, 137
- Hindu
 mythological serials, 152
 nation, 150
 nationalism, 155, 161
 revivalism, 152
 televangelism, 11
- Hinduism, 9, 154
 new sources for, 9
- Hindus, x
- Hindutva*, 3, 152, 158
- Hinn, Benny, 5
- Hoover, Stewart, 2, 13, 14, 56, 58, 234
- Horsfield, Peter, 2, 130, 234
- India, x
- Indonesia
 post-authoritarian, 50
- Iqraa, x
- Islamic
 content, 37
 media producers, 9, 76
 media project, 10
 media workers, 22
 mini-series, 48–9
 programmes, 75
 televangelists, 65
 values, 7
- Islamic televangelism, 12, 46, 48, 54, 60, 75
 outreach capacity of, 55
 representation of, 76
 on-screen discourse of, 22
- Islamic television, 14
 new genres of, 9
 Salafi, 64–80
- Islamic transmission, 46
- Jesus Calls*, 113, 115
- Joshua, T.B., 136–7
- Khaled, Amr, x, 21–44, 75
- Lakewood Church, 87
- Luhr, Eileen, 3
- Macedo, Edir, 213–14
- Masoud, Moez, 34–5
- Mass media ministries
 investments in, 181
- material religion, 15
- Media
 liberalisation, 2
- meditation
 cultural logic of mass, 221
 insight, 220
 mass, 219–32
 online, 225
- Meera, Nanda, 152
- Meyer, B, 138, 141, 239
- Middle East, xi
- Moll, Yasmin, 9
- Montt, Effrian Rios, 205–8
- Muslim
 brotherhood, 65, 72–4
 public sphere, 27
- Namaaz*, 2
- Neo-Pentecostal, 7
 preaching networks, 90, 91
 televangelists, 76
- Obasanjo, O, 189
- One to One*, x
- Oritsejafar, Pastor Ayo, 183–6
 and anti-Islamic rhetoric, 185
- Osteen, Joel, 5, 6, 87–104
 as a brand, 6
 and distinctive marketing strategies, 88, 98
 and glossolalia, 90
 personal crisis, 89–90, 92–3
 popularity of, 88
- Otabil, Mensa, 133

- Peasantren*, 45, 46, 47, 54
- Pentecostalism, 128, 192
- African, 131–3, 173
 - as an emerging force in Latin America, 202
 - and the charismatic, 131
 - and global evangelical aspirations, 129
 - in Guatemala, 204–9
 - and Healing, 129
 - impact on mainstream churches, 143
 - and mega-churches in Latin America, 204
 - Nigerian, 176
 - and the Nigerian public sphere, 182
 - in Nigeria and partisan politics, 188
 - and the power of the Holy Spirit, 128
 - and re-branding, 179
 - and tele-visual cultures, 238
- Pentecostals, x, xi
- and their lack of political experience, 217
- Perez, Rolando, 216
- positive confession, 97
- Positive thinking
- power of, 97, 99, 103
 - see also* Osteen, Joel
- pranayam*, 156–7
- see also* Yoga
- Preacher, 2
- Smiling, 88, 94
- Preaching
- styles, xi
- production-circulation-consumption, 4, 5, 15
- Prosperity gospel, 78, 139, 191
- Qu'ran, 26
- Qur'anic, 27
- stories, 26, 30, 31
 - storytelling, 25, 29
 - verses, 29, 31, 37
- Ramdev, Baba, 3, 6, 149–67
- and anti-colonialist discourse, 162, 165
 - and the anti-corruption campaign, 163–4
 - and the Divya Yoga Trust, 151
 - and DVDs, 239
 - as e-vangelist, 153
 - and the Hindu Right, 158
 - and Muslims, 160
 - and a new politics, 167
 - and *sampradya*, 155
 - as television performer, 159
 - and yoga, 156–7
- Recognising Islam*, 21–2
- Redeemed Christian Church of God, 178
- Religion in the Media Age*, 13–14
- Religious
- broadcasting, xi
 - dominance, 2
 - globalisation, 126
 - identification, 2, 234
 - marketplace, 56
 - storytelling, 2
- religious authority
- fragmentation of, 22, 34
 - reduction in, 57
- Resurrection Power and New Generation Church, 137
- Roberts, Oral, 91, 114, 124
- Russian Orthodox, 10
- Salafi
- preachers, 32, 37
 - televangelists, 76
- Salafism, 64, 66, 69
- satellite television channels, 72
- scriptural authority, 95
- self-sacrifice, xi
- sinetron religi*, 47–8
- spiritual
- economies, 70
 - edification, x
 - entrepreneurship, x
 - seekers, x
- Stories of the Qu'ran*, 27
- Sufi, x
- Swaggart, Jimmy, 6, 205
- Synagogue Church of All Nations, 136

- Tahrir Square, 39
 Tamilnadu, 1
Teletaujih, 53–5
 Televangelism, x, xi
 aura attributed to, 15
 cautious appreciation of, 14
 Christian consumers of, 14
 and delivery from bondage, 136
 and direct recruitment, 136
 economics of, 8
 financial support for, 139
 global, 2, 109
 and healing, 137
 Islamic, 2, 3
 and liberalization of African airwaves, 180
 local, 7, 109, 110, 123
 as McDonaldisation, 107
 politicisation of, 48
 and re-enchantment, 5
 and Satan, 137–41
 and taking territories, 140
 tradition and change, 141
 Televangelist/s
 in Africa, 127–8
 Hindu, 2, 150, 158
 new generation of, 76
 Nigerian, 173–91
 in Nigeria and New Media, 181
 Salafi, 64
 Television
 mini-series, 47, 48
 as a purveyor of goods and services, 3
 as a story teller, 3, 4
 theologies
 of munificence, 3
 theology
 dominion, 132, 139, 141
 of end times, 140, 238
 prosperity, 132
 transnational strategies, 109
 Ulama, 47, 57–9
Umma, 71
 Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, 213–14
 Verbal performance, 111
 Vineetha, Sinha, 4
Vipassanā, 220–5
 as ambivalent practice, 227–8
 and/on television, 227–8
 see also meditation
 Wahhabism, 64, 66, 69
 and hegemony, 69
The Window to Paradise, 64
 Word of Faith Movement, 91
Words from the Heart, 21, 24
 Yoga, 9
 commodification of, 6
 see also Ramdev, Baba
 Yohanan, K. P., 117–21
 and ordination as Bishop, 121
 and politics, 121

8 Famous Islamic Preachers. Being an Islamic preacher or scholar requires great patience and deep understanding of the religion. It is not an easy task, and only those with true faith would be able to stand firm and on the right path. We must always respect these great men. He claims to have derived his inspiration from Ahmed Deedat (an Islamic preacher) and thus was given the title Deedat. Naik is unique for his ability to memorize the Quran and hadith in various languages. He has held many debates and lectures around the world on comparative religion which has earned numerous awards and recognition, some of which include 2013 personality of the year, 2015 International prize for service to Islam, and listed among 500 most influential Muslims. Islam is the same message given to all the prophets Islam is the same religion which was revealed by God Almighty (ALLAH) to Adam, Jesus (Eesa/Isa), Abraham (Ibrahim), Lot (Lut), Moses (Musa), Aaron (Harun), Noah (Nuh), Jacob (Yakub), Yusuf (Joseph), Ayyub (Job), Dawood (David). It is indeed the final part/revelation after the Bible revealed on Jesus & the Torah revealed on Moses, unlike the previous revelations from GOD Almighty This holy revelation will remain Authentic & Preserved till day of Judgement, even till Eternity and it is for the Entire MANKIND not only for a particular group of people. This category is on: Beliefs of Islam - Stories of the Prophets. This website is for people of various faiths who seek to understand Islam and Muslims. It contains a lot of brief, yet informative articles about different aspects of Islam. New articles are added every week. Also, it features Live Help through chat. This part explores the verses of the Holy Quran that talk about God's protection of Jesus, his followers, his second coming in this world and what will happen to him on the day of resurrection. By IslamReligion.com. Published on 2007-09-03 00:00:00.