

Leiden University

Christian Televangelism in India

Influence of Globalization and Technological Advancements on Religion

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1. Introduction

Recently there has been growing interest in the role of emerging technologies and media in relation to religion. There has been academic attention for the way in which technological advancements have provided opportunities for new spaces of religious practice. These spaces are referred to by some scholars as 'techno-religious spaces' and they describe the nexus between technology and religious practices.¹ These techno-religious spaces can be exemplified by radio or television broadcasts of religious preachings, online virtual rituals and websites with information related to religious teachings.² The relationship between technology and religion is complex as technology not only provides new opportunities but also brings about changes in religious practices in the process. These changing practices can be found in the techno-religious spaces and range from simply the ability to organize religious events and meetings to religious practices that are more interactive through technology such as online rituals, spiritual counseling and even simply communication with others who share the same faith.³ I will be exploring both the opportunities that are created by technology and the changes it has influenced in religion by examining techno-religious spaces.

The case that I will be using to explore one of these techno-religious spaces is Christian televangelism in India. Territorial displacements and other religious conflicts in India often relate back to colonialism, partition and several wars after the British colonial rule.⁴ In this way religious identity has been and continues to be central to the lives of the citizens of India. Christian televangelism specifically is an interesting case within the context of India because of the tensions that exist between Christian missionaries and Hindu militants who accuse foreign missionaries of being part of an 'international conspiracy' that aims to divide India.⁵ Despite of these tensions, Christian televangelism is flourishing in India as can be illustrated by the success and popularity of both indigenous and American preachers. The persistence and popularity of Christian televangelism and the changes it has undergone while adapting to the locally specific situations in India will be the focus of my research.

To explore Christian televangelism in India and relate it back to 'techno-religious spaces', I have posed the following research question: *How can Christian televangelism in India be understood in relation to the nexus between technology and religious practices?* This question will help me to

¹ Lily Kong, "Religion and technology: refiguring place, space, identity and community," *Area* 33-4 (2001): 405.

² Fazlul Rahman, "'Cyberising God": A Theo-Phenomenological Investigation of Religion Online and Online Religion," *Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 1-3 (2016): 292.

³ Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold, *Religion and Technology in India: Spaces, Practices and Authorities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 2.

⁴ Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 3.

⁵ Jonathan D. James and Brian P. Shoemith, "Masala McGospel: A Case Study of CBN's Solutions Programme in India," *Studies in World Christianity* 13-2 (2007): 170.

understand how Christian televangelism fits into the nexus between technology and religious practices. Three sub questions will be used to further break down the subject, the first one deals with globalization: *In what way can Christian televangelism be placed in the broader framework of globalization?* The second sub question relates to technology and its relationship with religious practices: *What changes have religious practices in India undergone in relation to technology?* The final sub question deals with modern styles of preaching and the localizing of global phenomena: *How have modern styles of preaching been adopted and localized by new religious leaders in India?* Next I will explain the three main concepts that I will be using for this master thesis and explain why and how I am going to use each one of them: globalization, technology and televangelism.

Globalization will be the first concept because I will be building upon its theories when dealing with the other two concepts. It is important to realize that globalization is not something self-evident, but rather a constructed concept that is constantly changing and it should therefore be both critically questioned and properly defined.⁶ I will do that through a discussion of the newness of the concept of globalization, the way in which the term emerged and its current use. While the concept itself is relatively new, I will also discuss older processes of globalization because even though the term globalization is new, that does not mean that the processes it describes are fundamentally new. Globalization often claims a global drive for homogenization, but it is important to look at local resistance against these processes aimed to preserve locally specific cultural values. The interaction between these two drives leads to a mix of universal and locally specific aspects that combines the global and the local.⁷

The second concept is technology, more specifically technological advancements and its relation to religious practices. This section will deal with the ways in which different forms of technology have historically been intertwined with religion in the context of India. Technology often provides opportunities for change in religious practices, challenging traditional leadership and presenting alternative religious authorities based on new forms of communication such as print, radio, and television.⁸ I will discuss the adaptation of these various forms of technology into religious practices in India. Television and media have a special place in this aspect as they relate to the subject of televangelism, linking religion and technology. Television and media have a place between the global and the local in India, programming and language are important themes in that aspect. Hybrid programming is used by both private and state-controlled television networks to address

⁶ Anna Tsing, "The Global Situation," in *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. Jonathan X. Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 68-69.

⁷ Thomas H. Eriksen, *Globalization: The Key Concepts* (New York and Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd, 2007), 107.

⁸ Peter van der Veer, "Religions of India," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2015), 375.

consumers as both local and global actors and negotiate their identity.⁹ Language is an important theme as there are many different languages used within the country such as Hindi, Telegu and Tamil. The language used in programs can therefore be a strategy to either theme a program in a specific way or reach a certain audience.¹⁰ Religious broadcasts have to deal with similar issues of programming and language, which is why it is curious that only 5% of Christian televangelism programs in India are reconfigured to fit Indian audiences. In contrast, almost all imported secular television programs are “‘Indianised’, which entails dubbing and local hosting”.¹¹

Then finally we get to televangelism, a global phenomenon that originated in America. After discussing its rise in America and the way in which it has gone global, I will discuss the local adaptation of the phenomenon by exploring the ways in which it has changed moving into the local situation of India. This process has resulted in different forms of televangelism in India, Hadden (1990) identifies three strategies: the ‘transnational strategy’ is to simply broadcast programs from abroad into the country, ‘syndicated programming’ relies on a collaboration of globally established televangelist networks with local authorities, and lastly working with indigenous leaders. This last strategy is focused on simply supporting already established indigenous leaders with technological and financial support to broadcast their content.¹² I will discuss these different strategies for televangelism, which will lead to an analysis of indigenous Indian televangelist Dr. Paul Dhinakaran and American televangelist Benny Hinn, who broadcasts his programs to India.

The methodology for this master thesis is based upon video analysis and literature review; summarizing the academic debates around the three important topics described above. The focus of this study will be on Christian televangelism in India, which can include both Indian televangelists and foreign televangelists who broadcast their content into India. Both of these groups can provide an interesting standpoint in the debate between global forces and local communities, which will be further explored. While dealing with foreign televangelists,

I will be looking at Joel Osteen and Benny Hinn, American televangelists who broadcast their preachings worldwide. Hinn is especially important as he has been influential in the introduction of televangelism in India. Following that I will look at the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), an American televangelist organization that broadcasts in India through CBN India. Jonathan D. James

⁹ Divya C. McMillin, “Localizing the Global: Television and Hybrid Programming in India,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* Volume 4 (2001): 46.

¹⁰ Kalyani Chadha, “The Indian news media industry: Structural trends and journalistic implications,” *Global Media and Communication* 13-2 (2017): 143-144.

¹¹ James and Shoesmith, “Masala McGospel,” 170-171.

¹² Jeffrey K. Hadden, “Precursors to the Globalization of American Televangelism,” *Social Compass* 37-1 (1990): 164-165.

has done extensive research on this organization in India, which will be useful to relate to my own research. The reason for choosing both American televangelists and an American organization is the fact that televangelism originated in America in addition to the immense scale of televangelism still present in the country and its influence on an international scale. When researching Indian indigenous televangelists, I will look at 'Jesus Calls International' as an example. Its founder, Dr. D.G.S. Dhinakaran was one of the most influential televangelists in India. After his death his son Dr. Paul Dhinakaran took over 'Jesus Calls International' with help from multiple other members of the Dhinakaran family. The Dhinakaran family is seen as one of the most influential televangelist groups in India, which make them interesting subjects for my study. A comparison between preachings of Benny Hinn and Dr. Paul Dhinakaran will be used to examine the way in which televangelism has been 'Indianised', exploring the differences between 'Indianised' and 'non-Indianised' forms of televangelism, and finally looking at the way in which this American phenomenon has been localized according to the local context of India.

Like every other study, this study has several limitations to it. There were time restrictions which have limited my ability to analyze a wider variety of sources. Language is another limitation of this study, as I was only able to analyze English language sources. Televangelism in India is not only presented in English, but also in a variety of other languages such as Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil. Despite these limitations, I still believe this study to be valuable in its own right. While my conclusions might not be universally applicable, they can still be used to make a basic description of the way in which English televangelism has been localized in the context of India. Future studies could incorporate other language sources to look beyond my discussion of English televangelism. This could provide potential insights into the way in which televangelism changes when the language of the content is transformed into a local one.

After the introduction provided in this chapter, chapter two will discuss globalization and the assumptions that come along with that concept. Chapter three will discuss technological influences on religious practices, focusing on India and new media that can also be related to televangelism. Chapter four will deal with Christian televangelism, starting with the American phenomenon before discussing the localization of televangelism in India. In chapter five we will come back to the research question and sub questions posed in this introduction in an attempt to answer these questions.

2. Globalization and Televangelism as a Global Process

Christian televangelism is a worldwide phenomenon that can best be understood in the broader context of the process of globalization that combines technological, political, economic and cultural features. A combination of the increase in global satellites and the open airwaves policy of the Indian government made it possible for Christian televangelism to insert itself into Indian society since the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. While this process started with simple American programs that were being broadcast into India, it evolved into different forms of televangelism that were specifically adjusted to the local contexts of the country.¹³ I will deal with these localized forms of televangelism in chapter four, for now I would like to focus on the ways in which this phenomenon was able to spread across the globe. To accomplish this goal, I will start this chapter by discussing the newness of the concept of globalization, which often leads to thinking about the processes of globalization as new. After that I will consider the claim of homogenization that often comes with debates about globalization. This will lead to the interactions between the global and the local, creating specific localized situations as opposed to the homogenization claims. Finally, I will turn to religion and discuss the role globalization has played in the spread of Christianity across the globe, linking this to televangelism as a strategy of the globalization of religion. This last section will lead to a discussion on the role of technology, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

The global spread of televangelism and its introduction in Indian society can be exemplified by the case of Benny Hinn, an American televangelist who broadcast his programs in over 200 countries. In February 2004 Hinn held a three-day event called the 'Festival of Blessing' in Mumbai. Even though this was the first time Hinn had visited India, the event was very successful with around 4.2 million people attending the festival.¹⁴ The success of his event can be explained by several aforementioned elements such as the increasing availability of global satellites and the willingness of the Indian government to make global programs available in the country, which can be seen in their open airwaves policy in the mid-1990s.¹⁵ Hinn's programs had been broadcast in India for five years before he came to the country and through these broadcasts he had built up a local community around himself in a country that he had never been to before. This phenomenon can be explored through globalization, that is characterized by the balance between its push for homogenization and local resistances in order to preserve locally specific cultural values. The balance between these two forces will be explored later on in this chapter. Before we get into that however, we should explain the concept of globalization and argue its importance in the case of Christian televangelism in India.

¹³ James and Shoesmith, "Masala McGospel," 187.

¹⁴ Jonathan D. James and Brian P. Shoesmith, "The Anointing of the Airwaves: Charismatic Televangelism's Impact on the Church and Community in Urban India," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 18-1 (2008): 2.

¹⁵ James and Shoesmith, "The Anointing of the Airwaves," 8.

An analysis of the Christian Broadcasting Network will be the main focus of this discussion, as their Indian branch broadcasts programs in India which have been adjusted to the specific local settings, demonstrating a combination of global and local in the Indian context.

2.1 Pre-Modernization Processes of Globalization

Processes of globalization are often portrayed as fundamentally different and new in the modern world with modernization in the 19th century often seen as its starting point. Some scholars have claimed that decreases in transport costs, monopolies and governmental restrictions on imports during modernization have brought about the beginning of globalization worldwide.¹⁶ This argument makes it convincing to consider the starting point of globalization to be modernization through its increasing global interconnectedness and increased long-distance trade. However, I will argue that even though some of the processes have changed in the modern era, globalization is not a fundamentally new and unique phenomenon that emerged with modernization. The dangers of the concept lie in its emergence in academic literature around the 1990s when it was used as a defining characteristic of the contemporary era. Globalization began to represent international free trade, the end of protected and domesticated economies and the overcoming of boundaries, restrictions and borders to create a more interconnected and fairer world.¹⁷ This representation of globalization blurs the lines with modernization, making the two concepts almost indistinguishable. Another problem that the connection with modernization creates is the vision of globalization as something that happened everywhere at the same time, instantly creating an era of globalization.

It is critical to consider the political weight the concept of globalization brings with it and to question the concept instead of simply considering it to be a given fact. Globalization is not something that is simply there, it is a politically charged, man-made construct that should be questioned and properly defined. Processes of globalization were already ongoing, centuries before being given the label of globalization. Time-space compression has made transnational trade, travel and other global actions easier; it is however important to consider that many people had already maintained close ties across borders centuries before the concept of globalization came into use.¹⁸ While transnational communication, travels and actions have been made easier since modernization, this does not mean processes of globalization emerged along with it. The processes itself are much older, even if it has undergone several changes in recent history. It is important to consider this

¹⁶ Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "When Did Globalisation Begin?," *European Review of Economic History* 6 (2002): 26.

¹⁷ Tsing, "The Global Situation," 457.

¹⁸ Alan Smart and Josephine Smart, "Urbanization and the Global Perspective," *Annual review of Anthropology* 32 (2003): 278.

historic perspective and realize that globalization is not a fundamentally new system. Globalization in this sense is not new, it is rather a changed process that has a much longer history and can be traced much further back than just modernity. When we do not acknowledge this longer history, we pass by and ignore certain international historical ties.¹⁹ Additionally, when talking about globalization, much like modernity it is easy to get drawn into the European notion and history of the concept.

“it is of some importance ... to delink the notion of ‘modernity’ from a particular European trajectory ... and to argue that it represents a more-or-less global shift, with many different sources and roots, and – inevitably – many different forms and meanings depending on which society we look at it from.”²⁰

When considering Asia, instead of looking exclusively from a European trajectory that describes modernity through classical Rome, the Renaissance and colonization, we have to consider histories of Asia as well. Chinggis Khan and Timur both conquered vast empires that lasted for significant amounts of time.²¹ The experience of modernity involves “complex forms of subjectivity, agency, pleasure, and embodied experience.”²² Looking at modernity solely from a Euro-American point of view ignores the experiences of modernity that other societies have. An example of this is the Bay of Bengal which was an important area in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where networks of commercial exchange developed, but it is almost never talked about when considering the modernization of Asia.²³ The legacies of such indigenous histories are often omitted when people talk about modernization and history, limiting modernization to an Euro-American experience. The extent to which a country is modernized is often analyzed, but such analyses miss important aspects of modernity.

“The new forms of specificity that characterize sites in today’s world are prismatic and interdependent, and they involve unique configurations of knowledge, history, and discourse, in the realm we have called “public culture.” In this view, what is distinctive about any particular society is not the fact or extent of its modernity, but rather its distinctive debates *about* modernity, the historical and cultural trajectories that shape its appropriation of the means of modernity, and the cultural sociology (principally of class and state) that determines who gets to play with modernity and what defines the rules of the game.”²⁴

While the extent to which countries or regions are modernized is often up for debate, looking at indigenous debates about modernity in combination with their historical and cultural trajectories of modernity will give a more relevant overview of modernity.

¹⁹ Eriksen, *Globalization: The Key Concepts*, 3-4.

²⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31-3 (1997): 737.

²¹ Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories,” 749.

²² Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge, “Public Modernity in India,” In *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), 4.

²³ Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories,” 745-746.

²⁴ Appadurai and Breckenridge, “Public Modernity in India,” 16.

While there are many different suggested starting points for globalization, let us stay with the aforementioned example of modernization as the starting point simply to see how it works out in that case. If globalization processes only started with modernization, we are passing by global connections through early colonialism, for example. While trade relations were unequal during that time, there were still global connections that should be considered when discussing processes of globalization. “[Globalization] has a history that stretches thousands of years, starting with [...] primitive hunter-gatherers trading with the next village, and eventually developing into the globally interconnected societies of today.”²⁵ The development into a global interconnected world also brings certain biases with it. Both concepts of globalization and modernization make it seem like processes that just happen, self-propelled and undeniable. The problem with this is that it discourages crucial questions, because something self-evident cannot be questioned.²⁶ Increasing global connections are often related to global homogenization, bringing the world closer together and the fading away of cultural differences. The next section will be concerned with discussing the claims of homogenization, as well as responding to it and explaining why cultural differences do not seem to be disappearing in a world that is becoming more interconnected.

2.2 The Assumption of Homogenization

Besides the assumption of newness, there is also an assumption of homogenization that comes along with the concept of globalization. The assumption here is that global differences will disappear with the rise and development of globalization. Homogenization is portrayed as a deterministic force that disintegrates difference and diversity, resulting in global uniformity, similarity and a general sameness of the global population.²⁷ While there is no doubt a degree of unification and homogenization at play in these processes of globalization, that does not mean that we are moving towards a single, homogenous global culture.²⁸ This vision is shortsighted and does not attribute any agency to local communities. It describes globalization as a global stream that flows through local situations. In this sense only ‘the global’ has agency while local people and cultures do not have any agency. This vision of a global stream ignores the way in which cultures and people interact with each other and while of course there is influence, it comes from both sides. “What [arguments of

²⁵ The Economist, “When Did Globalisation Start? Global Market Integration is Almost As Old As Humanity,” September 23, 2013, <https://www.economist.com/free-exchange/2013/09/23/when-did-globalisation-start>.

²⁶ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 97.

²⁷ Vida Bajc, “Homogenization,” In *Encyclopedia of Global Studies*, ed. Helmut K. Anheier and Mark Juergensmeyer (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2012), 811.

²⁸ Allan Bird and Michael J. Stevens, “Towards an Emergent Global Culture and the Effects of Globalization on Obsolescing National Cultures,” *Journal of International Management* 9 (2003): 406.

homogenization] fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way”²⁹ There is no global culture that dictates what happens and changes everything into one homogenous culture, but rather various local cultures that interact with each other and influence each other in a variety of ways. There are several different ways in which cultures can interact with one another. This diversity of approaches emphasizes the agency of the local, as local communities are not simply subject to global streams, but they rather negotiate their place in the system. While cultures and groups of people certainly have influence on each other, there is no complete homogenization of the world, but rather a balance for individuals who negotiate a place between various global cultures and their own background.³⁰ This balance may not be equal, think for example about colonial relations where the colonizer has most of the power. Still, local populations that have been colonized have the power to make certain decisions, to decide whether to appropriate certain parts of the colonizer’s culture or reject them. While it is clear that homogenization plays a role in processes of globalization, this role is largely attributed to the increased way in which cultures are able to interact with each other due to the compression of time and space in the modern era.

The vision of local cultures disappearing, merging and becoming homogenous is flawed, much more interesting is a positive way to look at the homogenization of culture, which considers the readily availability of cultures, meaning that culture are easily accessed on a global scale, which in turn allows individuals and groups to interact with other cultures adding a level of functionality in a globalized world.³¹ In this vision globalization allows for a closer interaction between cultures, which results in certain changes in cultures as they adapt to each other, but will not result in a single, homogenous global culture. “[T]here has been no global cultural convergence at all. On the contrary, there is evidence of divergence between the values of some rich and poor nations”.³² While I believe Minkov (2011) takes his statement too far in claiming that there has been no global cultural convergence at all, he does underline my main point; while homogenization may be present to a certain level, cultural differences have not and will not disappear. People do not simply undergo cultural influence, but they rather sift out the different influences and decide which ones to reject and which ones to accept. Even when people accept certain influences, they can decide how far they are willing to integrate them which further underlines the capacity of people’s subjectivity which is

²⁹ Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference,” In *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. Jonathan X. Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2002), 50.

³⁰ Eriksen, *Globalization*, 110-112.

³¹ Ino Rossi, “Global Interaction and Identity in Structuralist and Dialectic Perspectives: Toward a Typology of Psycho-cultural Identities,” In *Globalizing Cultures: Theories, Paradigms, Actions*, ed. Vincenzo Mele and Marina Vujnovic (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2016), 60.

³² Michael Minkov, *Cultural Differences in a Globalizing World* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2011), 43.

often overlooked by anti-globalization advocates.³³ It is important to note that people do not always have a choice, sometimes unequal relations between cultures allows the dominant culture to override another culture. However, more often than not we see different cultures adapt to each other rather than completely replace each other. We can take McDonalds as an example here as its spread across the globe may seem like an example of homogenization. However, when we look closer at the specific local contexts we can see clear differences between the American popularity of McDonalds and its introduction in India, where it was only affordable for the rich. In this way, McDonalds became a status symbol, which is entirely different from its function in the American context.³⁴ The rhetoric of homogenization brings with it another problem, which is the separation between global and local. By thinking of the world in this way, a divide is created between 'global forces' and 'local situations'. This artificial divide makes it tempting and logical to think of local situations as simply subject to global forces, without any agency of themselves.

2.3 Interactions Between the Global and the Local

When discussing globalization, there are often two separate entities used; the global and the local. The global is often associated with agency, while the local is described as simply the subject of this agency, with no other role than just taking in the flow of globalization. The United States is often seen as a big part of those global forces, but "the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes".³⁵ What is important is the way in which various local communities deal with each other, not the way in which global forces sweep over local communities. The global and the local are intertwined and should never be viewed as two separate, isolated entities. Global powers can only be understood in relation to local situations and local situations can only be understood when viewed in relation to global powers. "[G]lobalizing processes exist in the context of, and must come to terms with, the realities of particular societies, with their accumulated – that is to say historical – cultures and ways of life".³⁶ The ways in which subjects interact with processes of globalization is defined by their historical backgrounds, their ways of life, and their everyday practices. The main point here is that globalizing processes have influence on local communities in various ways, these processes do not homogenize everything they come in contact with. It is rather the local population

³³ Yi Wang, "Globalization Enhances Cultural Identity," *Intercultural Communication Studies* 16-1 (2007): 84.

³⁴ Yi Wang, "Globalization Enhances Cultural Identity," 85.

³⁵ Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference," 49.

³⁶ Jonathan X. Inda and Renato Rosaldo. "Introduction: A World in Motion," In *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. Jonathan X. Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), 4.

who interact with it in specific ways, creating different and new ways of interacting with global forces. This process of mixing global and local is also referred to as localization.

An example of localized ways of dealing with globalizing processes can be identified when looking at television networks in India, and more specifically Bangalore, around 2000. While the Indian government had tried to control popular imagination through the use of television to promote nationalism, this approach never really worked out for them. This failure to promote national identity through television can be underlined by the emergence of private transnational and regional networks in the country. "This leads to an assessment of the diminishing role of the state in the context of emerging regional networks with their alternate constructions of community identity".³⁷ Let us consider the standpoint at the beginning of this section; local situations that undergo global forces without any agency of themselves. If we apply this vision to the example of television networks in India, we would see the emergence of global shows with influence from America and Europe as a direct result of globalization. Global forces control the television programs in the local situation of India. This is however too bluntly put as there are more specific processes at play. Certain globalized programs were rejected by the Indian audience as they demanded "programs that were specific in dialect and cultural context to their particular viewing contexts".³⁸ This exemplifies the way in which local people do not simply undergo global forces and changes, but they deal with them in locally specific ways which creates difference and does not lead to one global, homogenized culture.

2.4 The Localization of Christianity

While some religions have historically primarily belonged to a certain area, other religions have spread throughout the world, be it in different forms. With the rise of colonialism, the Protestant Christian religion became dominant in the empires of the British and the Americans, often mixing or clashing with pre-existing forms of Christianity in these regions. The Christian world dominated the world, or was at least one of the dominating forces in the world, starting at the turn of the 19th century. Local communities dealt with this influx of Christian beliefs, concepts, values and notions in different ways, interpreting and domesticating them in a localized way into their own religions. "Communities that converted to Christianity would necessarily adapt new concepts to an existing worldview, and this meant that the understanding of even the most basic Christian concepts ... varied a great deal between different cultures".³⁹ We see here the localized way in which local communities

³⁷ McMillin, "Localizing the Global," 48.

³⁸ McMillin, "Localizing the Global," 63.

³⁹ Torkel Brekke, *Fundamentalism: Prophecy and Protest in an Age of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 46.

deal with certain influences from the outside. Most communities did not convert to Christianity and, even when they did, it ended up being a local adaptation of the Christian religion. It is however important to note that the influence coming from Christianity was strong, even after colonialism. This continuing influence of Christianity was mostly due to its missionary activities. While Christianity was changed by local communities, this simultaneously led to the rise of local missionaries.⁴⁰ The differences between 'original' Christian missionaries and their local counterparts are interesting to examine as they underline the localized differences within the religion itself.

The specific adaptation of Christianity by local communities leads to questions about the differences between local and global televangelists. Chapter four will deal with these questions by discussing the characteristics of both local Indian televangelists and global, often American, televangelists whose programs are being broadcast and watched in India. First we turn to the role of technology and media in both Indian society and more specifically its system of religion. We will explore the ways in which technology was introduced and incorporated by the Indian population before turning to the influence technology has had on certain religious practices in India.

⁴⁰ Brekke, *Fundamentalism*, 50.

3. Technological Influences on Religious Practices

In this chapter I will explore the historical context of the relationship between technology and religion in India. The technologies that I am concerned with relate to new forms of communication such as the gramophone, radio and television. These technologies were introduced into Indian society during the British colonial rule of India, which makes the colonial period an interesting starting point for this chapter. These new forms of communication have proved to be vital for the broadcasting of religious content, which I am concerned with in this thesis. After discussing the situation during the British colonial rule, I will consider the role of television and media in India, both because this is a special case in the country and to move closer towards the case of televangelism. After describing the rise of television and media I will turn to the ways in which religions have changed in their interaction with technologies. Finally, I will focus more specifically on technology in the Christian tradition to serve as a transition towards Christian televangelism. A historical approach will be useful to see the introduction of technology into the country and the ways in which people have dealt with them. Additionally, this approach will give us a good overview of the historical usage of technology in religion. Gramophones in temples, radio broadcasts and televised preaching can all be used as example of the way in which technology is used for religious purposes. The introduction of such technologies is not neutral, which has certain consequences that will be discussed too. Technologies often bring about changes in religious practices, allowing for the challenging of existing leadership through the presentation of alternative religious authorities based on new forms of communication such as print, radio and television.⁴¹

The introduction of the gramophone into South Asia around the end of the 19th century is an interesting example of such a form of new communication. While the gramophone did not become a household object for most people, it did become widely used in broader communities for popular theatre, performance and religious preaching. “The *bana* (preachings) of Buddhist priests could now be heard in remote interior villages and people assembled around a common gramophone to listen to plays of a religious, historical or satirical nature”.⁴² This example shows the openness and acceptance of the population in colonial Sri Lanka towards new technologies, embracing them and incorporating them, even in what is often seen as exclusively traditional Buddhist religious practices. Following this example, I will talk about technology during the British colonial rule of South Asia and the implications this had for South Asian society and the development of their technological sector.

⁴¹ Van der Veer, “Religions of India,” 375.

⁴² Nira Wickramasinghe, *Metallic Modern: Everyday Machines in Colonial Sri Lanka* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 88.

3.1 Technology During British Colonial Rule

Colonization has brought various technological advancements with it, either introducing them into Indian society or popularizing them among a bigger part of the population. During colonization, Indian industrialists had fairly easy access to British technological innovations due to their imperial connections. In addition, the colonial regime set up agencies for scientific and technological research, which further increased their involvement with emerging technologies.⁴³ While these agencies were set up, not much came out of them as colonized India relied mostly on the technological advancements of their British colonizers. Other institutions who were not focused on technological advancements but rather on the use of that technology were more successful. Irrigation projects, the building of railways, the introduction of the telegraph and the improvement of the postal system were all carried out in pursuit of social improvements.⁴⁴ In broad lines we can say that there were two different effects the British colonial regime had on technological advancements in India; a positive one and a negative one. “[A] welcome, though unintended, by-product of the British ruling presence was the emergence of a better climate, though not commensurate with the country’s potential, for industrial entrepreneurship in India”.⁴⁵ The positive effect was the emergence of a favorable climate for industrial entrepreneurship in India. On the other hand, there was a reliance on British innovation that continued into post-colonial times, which has caused a lack of innovation in India itself. While premodern India was a frontrunner on science, its reliance on British innovation meant that it had a lack of innovation in technologies. Post-colonial Indian scientists tried to develop indigenous technology in order to rely less on imports, but they were met with various struggles along the way such as exclusive licensing which limited companies in the development of export-oriented technology.⁴⁶

This system of Indian reliance on British innovations can also be found in post-colonial missionary activities in the country, where missionaries started to use increasingly advanced technologies in their international activities. Due to this reliance, contemporary missionary activities are often interpreted as a new form of colonialism or imperialism and Western dominance. In the case of Christianity, Indian citizens are paid by American organizations to be trained as missionaries in America. Additionally, these organizations “use the airwaves to transmit evangelical radio

⁴³ Dwijendra Tripathi, “Colonialism and Technology Choices in India: A Historical Overview,” *The Developing Economies* 34-1 (1996): 94.

⁴⁴ Zaheer Baber, “Colonizing Nature: Scientific Knowledge, Colonial Power and the Incorporation of India into the Modern World-system,” *British Journal of Sociology* 52-1 (2001): 51.

⁴⁵ Tripathi, “Colonialism and Technology Choices in India,” 95.

⁴⁶ Shiv Visvanathan, “From Laboratory to Industry: A Case Study of the Transfer of Technology,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 11-1 (1977): 122.

programs written in America and broadcast in local Indian languages”.⁴⁷ Modern technologies have been employed to continue traditional missionary activities in India. These changing missionary practices have attracted a lot of attention from Hindu fundamentalists who oppose these practices. Western missionaries view their own practices as valid, emerging from a simple religious freedom and the right to convert. Hindus who oppose these practices see missionary activity as a continuation of colonialism and Western-style domination of the rest of the world. Christian converts are usually from marginal tribal groups or untouchables who have much to gain by converting to Christianity and abandoning Hinduism in the process. Critique of the caste system often follows when untouchables leave Hinduism.⁴⁸ Christian missionaries are therefore being accused by Hindu fundamentalists of “preying on the most susceptible in Indian society and “buying” their souls with education, medical aid, and economic assistance”.⁴⁹ This vision of missionary activity equates contemporary missionary activity to colonialism and conversion through development, which ‘forces’ people to convert if they want to make use of certain developmental aid. While foreign forms and influences of Christianity played an important role during and after colonial times, it is also important to consider local churches, such as ‘The Church of South India’ which was created shortly after Indian independence and unified churches of various backgrounds such as the Anglican, Methodist and Reformed traditions.⁵⁰ This coming together of different traditions was aimed against the Western missionary style of religion and meant to present a local alternative to these international activities.

Besides radio programs, television programs also play a big role in Christian missionary activities. In the next section I will discuss the historical importance of television and media in India, focusing on its emergence and the way in which the Indian government has dealt with foreign broadcasts and policies about opening or closing of airwaves to international broadcasters.

3.2 Television and Media in India

Before we talk about the role of technology in religion and eventually televangelism, I want to briefly discuss the role of television and more general the media in India. In 1991 there was the implementation of the economic liberalization policy in India’s television industry, which boosted the rise of private television networks in the country. Government officials along with national elites tried to maintain boundaries and keep a static definition of state, citizenship, and national identity.

⁴⁷ Peter Harnetty, “The Famine That Never Was: Christian Missionaries in India, 1918-1919,” *The Historian* 63-3 (2001): 575.

⁴⁸ Michael Northcott, “Christianity in Asia,” In *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, edited by James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2015), 531.

⁴⁹ Harnetty, “The Famine That Never Was,” 555.

⁵⁰ Kevin Ward, “Christianity, Colonialism and Missions,” In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Hugh McLeod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83.

This proved hard to maintain as private television networks “draw on both global and local, allowing consumers to glide among local, national and international identities”.⁵¹ While it may be compelling to blame international, global television networks for such shifts, we have seen in the previous chapter that it is important to look at the interaction between the global and the local and not simply see the global as a wave that comes over local communities. In this case the interaction between global and local can be seen best in indigenous, regional television networks who negotiate both a role in the global order and the local situation in which they broadcast their programs.

Moving into the 21st century, there is a predominantly celebratory portrayal of India’s media sector and its development as growing and dynamic. The number of households who own televisions in the country grew from an already impressive 30 million in 2000 to 161 million in 2015 in part due to the 1991 economic liberalization policy. This positive view of the developments in the first two decades of the 21st century completely passes by the negative aspects of the sector’s development. Certain problems arise in the commercialization of the industry and the expansion of the control of politicians and industrialists over the media. These developments have various implications for the media industry in the country, increasing commercialism for example forces news agencies to keep their content ‘advertiser-friendly’. This trend has contributed to a ‘thematic reorientation’ of many news institutions towards entertainment, sports and similar themes that interest urban audiences, instead of focusing on critical analyses of businesses and politics.⁵² These processes of sensationalism lead the media to blur the lines between ‘genuine stories’ and advertorials for the purpose of accumulating more viewers for commercials and in turn more revenue. Various news agencies have also received funds for the broadcasting of information in favor of certain individuals, corporations, political parties and candidates during elections, disguising this paid information as news.⁵³ Thomas (2010) exemplifies the ways in which political actors have influence on the media.

“Given the synergies between the media and politics, there are examples of conflicts of interest between politics and the media in all states in India. These include political favouritism related to the allocation of cellular phone licensing, the awarding of DTH platforms and, last but not least, the allocation of real estate to this sector”.⁵⁴

When news agencies rely so extensively on political actors, it is reasonable to believe that media reports will also be used in their favor, which negatively impacts the quality and reliability of said news agency. It is important to realize these deep connections that run between the government and

⁵¹ McMillin, “Localizing the Global,” 46.

⁵² Ursula Rao, *News as Culture: Journalistic Practices and the Remaking of Indian Leadership Traditions* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 3.

⁵³ Chadha, “The Indian News Media Industry,” 150.

⁵⁴ Pradip N. Thomas, *Political Economy of Communications in India: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2010), 78.

media agencies. Religion has an important role to play in this balance between political actors and media agencies, as religious broadcasts often have political motives as well. We will look into these political motives later, as we now turn to the way religions have changed with technology.

3.3 Changing Religions and the Role of Technology

Religions are often portrayed as old and traditional, basing themselves on ancient scriptures on which they build their philosophies, rituals and lifestyles. However, practices of religions are changing over time and certain technologies, especially new forms of communication, play a major role in these changing practices. There is evidence of such changes in most, if not all, religions worldwide. Van der Veer (2015) explains the general pattern which these changes follow.

“The general pattern is an attack on traditional priestly leadership, on ‘backward,’ popular religion and an emphasis on free, lay access to scripture and to religious debate. In this way, the foundation of religious authority changes and becomes mediated by education and new forms of communication, such as print, and later radio and television”.⁵⁵

The shift in religious authority that this has caused emphasizes new forms of communication, of which Christian televangelism is an example, which I will discuss more in depth in the next chapter. These patterns are however not limited to Christianity, as they are also emerging in Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Religious groups use technology to change their old practices, reshaping their communities as they adapt to new technologies.⁵⁶ Religions flourish through the use of radio, television and the internet in particular. These new media have played a big role in the reshaping of religions as they have allowed preachers to reach people instantly, no matter where they are.⁵⁷ While these processes can help religions to flourish, it can also create problems through the uneven distribution of the access to technology on a global scale. Critics claim that religious broadcasts act as a new form of cultural imperialism through religion.⁵⁸ This critical view of technological advancement is most visible in Christianity where international broadcasts are primarily from America, where televangelism originated.

Technological advancements are not always looked at with a critical eye, most of the time they are accepted and integrated into various parts of society including religion. An example of this is a study by DeNapoli (2017) in which she shows the changing attitudes of Hindu *sadhus* towards technology in the North of India over a period of ten years. In 2001 the majority of these Hindu *sadhus* stayed away from modern technology and this seemed to fit well with their ideal of a “radical

⁵⁵ Van der Veer, “Religions of India,” 375.

⁵⁶ Kong, “Religion and Technology,” 409-410.

⁵⁷ Jacobsen and Myrvold, *Religion and Technology in India*, 2.

⁵⁸ Kong, “Religion and Technology,” 406.

separation from the illusionary world and its purported material trappings.”⁵⁹ In 2011 this had changed completely as most *sadhus* now owned mobile phones, televisions and many other forms of technology.⁶⁰ This fast emergence of technology underlines the importance of technological advancements for religions and exemplifies the ways in which local communities can change due to global developments. When such technological advancements are integrated into society, it becomes important to study “the technologization of religion and the religiosity of technology”⁶¹ and look at the ways in which technology is both worshipped and becoming intertwined with religion. Stolow (2013) describes this study as considering “the many hybrids that lie beneath this semantic divide, each awaiting its own opportunity to be made visible as a god *in* the machine”.⁶² In India, Vishwakarma appears to be not only the god *in* the machine, but also the god *of* the machine, according to Narayan and George (2018).

“His historical association with the simple technology of hand tools has extended towards the complex technology of machines and building projects more generally, as well as the expansion of infrastructures. Vishwakarma, then, offers a valuable prism to view a spectrum of approaches in the interface between technology and religion in India”.⁶³

This view of Vishwakarma portrays him as the god of technology in both Hinduism and Buddhism. With technological advancement so too has religion undergone changes. Local people are crediting Vishwakarma for bringing them technology, as he is no longer just associated with artisans, their tools and their crafts. Instead Vishwakarma has moved to workshops, factories, infrastructure projects and even information technology systems.⁶⁴ This example shows changing practices of religion that are not simply changed by technology, but also themselves change technological practices, creating a particular nexus between technology and religion that is specific to their local situation. In the next section I will talk about changing religious practices in Christianity that relate to technology.

⁵⁹ Antoinette E. DeNapoli, “‘Dharm is Technology’: The Theologizing of Technology in the Experimental Hinduism of Renouncers in Contemporary North India,” *International Journal of Dharma Studies* 5-1 (2017): 9.

⁶⁰ DeNapoli, “Dharm is Technology,” 10.

⁶¹ Jeremy Stolow, *Deus in Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 4.

⁶² Stolow, *Deus in Machina*, 19.

⁶³ Kirin Narayan and Kenneth M. George, “Vishwakarma: God of Technology,” In *Religions and Technology in India: Spaces, Practices and Authorities*, edited by Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 9.

⁶⁴ Narayan and George, “Vishwakarma,” 21.

3.4 Technology and Christian Religious Practices

At the beginning of this thesis, we briefly talked about Benny Hinn's 'Festival of Blessing' which took place in Mumbai in 2004 and attracted over 4.2 million people over the course of three days.⁶⁵ We talked about the way in which this relates to globalization and how we can see the influence of Christian preachers from other countries, most importantly America, in India. This already touches on the technological aspect of the story, but there is more to that.

"[O]ver 75% of the audience were there as a result of their regular viewing of the UK-based GOD channel; 35 giant LCD screens, along with the accompanying audio-visual technology, ensured high quality transmission of the event to every corner of the massive venue".⁶⁶

In short, there are two parts to the technological side of the story; technology led most people to come to the event, as they watched or listened to Hinn's broadcasts on television and radio. Technology also helped to maintain such a large-scale event as without it, the massive venue would not be useful in any way. Large screens and audio-visual technologies made it possible for everyone in the venue to hear and see Benny Hinn.

Additionally, we see that certain localized forms of religions arise as people adopt to it in locally specific ways, bringing their indigenous background into an interpretation of the religion. Using the example of Eastern Orthodoxy, Guglielmi (2018) explains how a certain balance is necessary in the study of religion. Researchers have to look at both the religious universalism, which dictates the general direction of the religion and the local particularism, which generates locally specific differences within a religion.⁶⁷ This underlines the importance of locally particular aspects of religions, which express themselves within the context of a community. "Sikh converts prefer to retain their turbans; low caste converts incorporate drums in their worship of Christ; tribal converts express their spiritual worship with uninhibited exuberance in traditional dance forms".⁶⁸ These localized forms of Christianity are examples of the interaction and intertwinement of the global and the local, which was discussed in the previous chapter. While there are certainly numerous other examples of the way in which technology has influence on Christianity, we will leave it at this for now and turn to televangelism in the next chapter. We have now set a basic background for a case study of Christian televangelism in India after exploring both processes of globalization and the general influences of technology on religious practices.

⁶⁵ James and Shoesmith, "The Anointing of the Airwaves," 2.

⁶⁶ Ivan Satyavrata, "'Glocalization' and Leadership Development for Transforming Mission in India," *Transformation* 21-4 (2004): 215.

⁶⁷ Marco Guglielmi, "Globalization and Orthodox Christianity: A Glocal Perspective," *Religions* 9-7 (2018): 2.

⁶⁸ Satyavrata, "'Glocalization' and Leadership Development," 215.

4. Christian Televangelism: A Case of Glocalization in Practice

Now that we have discussed the concept of globalization and the way in which technology relates to religious practices, it is time to turn towards televangelism. While my case study itself is situated in India, I will begin by describing televangelism in America. This will be useful in providing us with a point of reference to compare Indian televangelism to. This way we can potentially see how the phenomenon has changed moving into the context of India, adopting a mix of global and local aspects. After discussing the emergence of Christian televangelism in America, I will talk about its global spread before finally discussing its arrival in India. I will then discuss the way in which Christian televangelism was localized in India. Finally, it is important to understand that televangelism is not an exclusively Christian phenomenon. Other religions such as Hinduism and Islam also practice televangelism, which will be discussed briefly to show the widespread presence of the phenomenon. Before we get further into that, we will now turn to Christian televangelism and its origins in America.

4.1 The Emergence of Christian Televangelism in America

From the very start of radio, religious messages have been sent back and forth over the airwaves. Both the first voice transmission in 1906 and the first remote broadcast in 1920 were religious messages.⁶⁹ This trend continued as radio broadcast evangelism become more and more popular in the United States. By the time televisions become popular household objects shortly after World War II, broadcasts naturally spread out to television and radio broadcast evangelism became television angelism, which is also known as televangelism.⁷⁰ While institutional religion had been struggling in a world that was increasingly non-religious, televangelism adapted to shifting trends in popular culture and managed to remain profitable.⁷¹ This sudden emergence of broadcast evangelism did not emerge out of nowhere, but instead it was built upon organizational and strategic roots of the revivalist traditions of the 19th and 20th centuries.

“Out of the great American nineteenth century urban revivals and the sweeping cultural transformation that historians term religious Great Awakenings arose new groups to plan, promote, and stage evangelistic crusades. These groups were different from existing churches and denominations. They were totally independent and autonomous. But they crossed sectarian

⁶⁹ Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527-1 (1993): 115.

⁷⁰ Hadden, “The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism,” 116.

⁷¹ Pratishtha Kohli, Emmalin Buajitti and Javeria Zia, “A history of Christian televangelism: How does it survive?,” November 18, 2015, <https://medium.com/@rlg233g6/a-history-of-christian-televangelism-how-does-it-survive-4fdea9d6ebd6>.

boundaries and drew their support from Christians who belonged to a wide variety of churches. They were *parachurches*".⁷²

These *parachurches* set the base of organizational strategies, improving techniques to raise money and mobilize believers in large numbers. "Mass media provides the opportunity for mass evangelism."⁷³ Televangelists took these organizational strategies and applied them to radio and television broadcasts which provided new opportunities to attract large numbers of followers and raise the necessary money to maintain airtime through their preaching. This covers the problem of the expenses preachers have through their broadcasting. An additional problem with broadcasting in most countries was the policies of governments. We see for example that the Indian government only opened up the airwaves in the mid-1990s.⁷⁴ While broadcasting was regulated in the United States as well, the regulatory policies still left a lot of freedom to what was being broadcast and networks could basically broadcast whatever they wished, as long as it was not too offensive and a small part of their programming was devoted to the 'public interest'. Religious broadcasts were seen as being in the 'public interest', so religious networks only had to make sure their broadcasts were not too offensive to be allowed to broadcast their preaching.⁷⁵ A combination of the legacy of *parachurches* and the relatively easy access to broadcasting for religious preachers contributed to the rise of televangelists in America. They were able to build up a large number of followers and, eventually, spread their broadcasts worldwide to a global audience.

4.2 The Global Spread of Televangelism

While the changes in American televangelism and the transformation from its starting point to its current form may be an interesting topic for another study, I will now move onto the globalization of American televangelism. The process of globalization is often seen as a continuation of imperialism and a new form of colonialism, serving the economic interests of 'the developed Western countries', in particular the United States.⁷⁶ As we have seen in chapter one, the interactions between the global and the local create locally specific 'glocal' situations on which both sides have influence. While this remains important to consider, it is also interesting to look at the overarching political situations which shows that certain countries have a more dominant position than others. The United States in

⁷² Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe, "Televangelism in America," *Social Compass* 34-1 (1987): 61.

⁷³ Kristy L. Slominski, "Televangelism," In *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, edited by Wade C. Roof and Mark Juergensmeyer (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), 1268.

Kevin Ward, "Christianity, Colonialism and Missions," In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Hugh McLeod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83.

⁷⁴ James and Shoesmith, "The Anointing of the Airwaves," 8.

⁷⁵ Hadden and Shupe, "Televangelism in America," 62-63.

⁷⁶ Kema Irogbe, *The Effects of Globalization in Latin America, Africa, and Asia: A Global South Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 2.

particular have had a dominant position in the global system since the second world war. While this United States system of hegemony faced a crisis in the 1970s, George H. W. Bush, president of the United States from 1989 until 1993, declared “the advent of a “new world order” led by the United States”⁷⁷ after the failure of European socialisms and the fall of the Soviet Union. My point here is that while there have been difficult times for the United States, they have remained an important player in the global economic and political fields since the end of the second world war in 1945.

The important political and economic situation of the United States also had impact on the way American televangelism was perceived by foreigners. “[L]ike its ally commercial television, [televangelism] is dependent on audience support, works best with strong and media-savvy personalities, and it reflects aspects of the American culture in its materialistic and consumerist value system”.⁷⁸ While the United States often sees itself as superior and dominant, there is a lot of resistance against the country and its domination of the global stage which is visible in certain local forms of televangelism that provide alternatives to American televangelism. “They’re just thinking about the dollar bill”.⁷⁹ While American televangelists started out with preaching about health, their focus has shifted to wealth and more specifically, their own wealth. Here localized forms of televangelism come in to provide an alternative specific to the local situation. Hadden (1990) explains these locally specific changes by identifying three separate strategies for broadcasting evangelism. The first one method, ‘transnational strategy’, is to simply broadcast its programs into countries without authorization from local officials. The second strategy, ‘syndicated programming’, relies on working together with local authorities, adapting their programs to the specific local audience. This can range from the creation of whole new shows to simply translating existing programs into local languages. The third and final strategy is to work with indigenous leaders, providing technical and financial supports to successful indigenous evangelists to broadcast their shows on radio and television.⁸⁰ These three different forms of televangelism were also introduced in India, which I will discuss in the next section. In particular the first and second strategies lead to interesting situations as we can see the differences between international televangelism that is simply broadcast to other nations without any adjustments and localized forms of televangelism that have adapted to the local situation.

⁷⁷ Salazar, Luis S, “The New Pan-American Order: The Crisis and Reconstruction of the U.S. System of Global Domination,” Translated by Mariana O. Breña, *Latin American Perspectives* 34-1 (2007): 102.

⁷⁸ James and Shoesmith, “The Anointing of the Airwaves,” 8.

⁷⁹ Marla F. Frederick, “For the Love of Money? Distributing the Go\$pel Beyond the United States,” *Callaloo* 36-3 (2013): 613.

⁸⁰ Hadden, “Precursors to the Globalization of American Televangelism,” 164-165.

4.3 The Glocalization of Christian Televangelism

The three different forms of televangelism that Hadden (1990) describes in his article can be identified in the context of India. While Hadden identifies three separate strategies, it is important to realize that most televangelists will not fit into just one of these categories, but they rather have some aspects from multiple strategies. First off we have televangelists following the transnational strategy. Popular American televangelist Joel Osteen is an example of a pastor that uses this strategy. According to the website of Osteen's ministry, his preaching reaches over 100 nations and his weekly podcasts are also listened to worldwide.⁸¹ This unaltered form of American televangelism shows how popular televangelists spread their programs and reach a global audience. The second strategy, 'syndicated programming' can be exemplified by the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), who also broadcast their programs to over 100 nations, but do this in a different manner. While Joel Osteen's ministry simply broadcasts his programs without any altering, CBN broadcasts their content in 122 different languages, ranging "from Mandarin to Spanish and from Turkish to Welsh".⁸² In India, CBN broadcasts their programs in various local languages. "CBN International, India, telecasts programmes in the following languages to cater for India's multi-linguistic population—English, Hindi, Tamil and Telegu".⁸³ Alongside the translation of American shows, CBN also produces programs specifically catered towards their Indian audience.⁸⁴ The combination of translating and creating new, localized programs is already a big step away from the unaltered broadcasting of Joel Osteen's ministry.

The third strategy of televangelism takes the process of localization one step further and simply enables successful indigenous evangelists to broadcast their preachings and programs on television. This is done by supporting them financially and providing technical help to get their broadcasts started in an attempt to promote Christianity in that specific local situation. I do want to note that maybe in 1990, when Hadden wrote his article, American support was a necessity for indigenous evangelists who wanted to broadcast their preaching, however this is not the case anymore nowadays. 'Christ For India' is an example of an organization that has strong ties to the international community and was set up with the help of American resources. Its founder, Dr. P.J. Titus, moved to America and returned to India after 18 years to preach.⁸⁵ While the organization

⁸¹ Joel Osteen Ministries, "Our Ministry," accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/About.aspx>.

⁸² The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc., "About CBN," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www1.cbn.com/about/cbn-partners-history>.

⁸³ Jonathan D. James, *McDonaldization, Masala McGospel and Om Economics: Televangelism in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010), 70.

⁸⁴ James, *McDonaldization, Masala McGospel and Om Economics*, 150.

⁸⁵ Christ For India, "Our Founders," accessed October 25, 2019, <https://www.christforindia.org/about-cfi/who-we-are/our-founders/>.

itself is Indian, its strong ties to the international community become clear when looking at the “contact” section of their website which has links not only to the Indian ministry, but also to their American, Australian, Canadian, German, Swiss, and English ministries, all with their own websites and local contact information.⁸⁶ This organization started in India and later branched out to other countries, providing them with financial and technological support from India, instead of from America which was the case at the founding of the organization. ‘Jesus Calls International’, which is led by Dr. Paul Dhinakaran and his family, is another example of an Indian organization that has received foreign funds in order to broadcast its content. New independent churches are on the rise in India, attracting followers with charismatic evangelists such as Dr. P.J. Titus and Dr. Paul Dhinakaran. When we relate these different televangelists back to the debate about globalization, we can clearly see the interaction between the global and the local in the case of India. Through localization, the American processes of televangelism have changed into a new and unique Indian situation. On the one hand we can see the global influences that are present in these forms of televangelism. “Evangelical and charismatic churches [are] passionate addressed by articulate pastors and emotional sessions conducted for “miracle healing” of terminal ailments”.⁸⁷ Healing sessions, like the one conducted by Dr. Paul Dhinakaran⁸⁸ can be directly linked to American televangelist like Joel Osteen⁸⁹.

On the other hand, there are local aspects to Indian televangelism that are not present in its American form. “In Punjab [...] churches are using the local language and traditions to assimilate faster. Pastors are encouraged to retain their Hindu or Sikh first names”.⁹⁰ This can be seen in the fact that many Indian televangelists preach in local languages and follow local traditions instead of incorporating foreign ones. Another difference between Indian and American televangelism is the focus on developmental work. While in American televangelism the focus is often on the individual, ‘Indianised’ forms often focus more on broader communities with a focus on developmental work. CBN has a foundation in India (CBN Foundation or CBNF) which focuses on developmental aid along with various disaster relief programs and several other forms of development. Examples of this are the distribution of boats to fishermen in Kerala after flood waters devastated the area⁹¹, the digging

⁸⁶ Christ For India, “Contact,” accessed October 25, 2019, <https://www.christforindia.org/contact/>.

⁸⁷ M.G. Radhakrishnan, “Independent Churches Mushroom Across India Attracting Foreign Funds,” last modified May 9, 2011, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20110509-independent-churches-mushroom-across-india-attracting-foreign-funds-745900-2011-04-30>.

⁸⁸ Dr. Paul Dhinakaran, “Prayer for Healing,” July 29, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZsegHUFzxM>.

⁸⁹ Joel Osteen, “Healing Words,” November 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIlxZ587s3Y>.

⁹⁰ Radhakrishnan, “Independent Churches Mushroom Across India Attracting Foreign Funds.”

⁹¹ CBN Foundation, “Boat Distribution in Kerala,” May 9, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVIOJyoDwyc>.

of wells near villages that have contaminated water supplies⁹², and programs to educate children in villages on the importance of hygiene.⁹³ A major time slot in CBN's programming is devoted to CBN's disaster relief work, informing the audience of disaster relief operations through CBN's 'Operation Blessing'.⁹⁴ CBN "is the forerunner in the development of what I term 'indigenous or localized televangelism' in India".⁹⁵ This focus on developmental aid and disaster relief provides an interesting difference with more 'traditional' televangelism that focus on preaching and individual healing.

To look more closely at the differences and similarities between American and Indian televangelism, I will be analyzing a preaching from 2018 by indigenous Indian televangelist Dr. Paul Dhinakaran from Jesus Calls International. In this preaching, Dr. Dhinakaran talks about healing and prays for his viewers and listeners to be healed through the power of god and Jesus Christ. This vision of healing through prayer is a common aspect of Christianity all around the world, which was taken over by Indian televangelists like Dr. Dhinakaran. Before analyzing this preaching, I will be looking at a preaching by American televangelist Benny Hinn, who was one of the first and most popular American televangelists in India and he can therefore be seen as one of the forerunners of Indian televangelism. I will be analyzing his preaching on the same topic of healing the sick from 2009 to set an example of American televangelism against which I will be able to compare Dr. Dhinakaran's preachings.

Benny Hinn starts his preaching by reading a quote from the bible that explains how people can get healed: by fearing god and trusting in him. He then goes on to say that Jesus Christ is dependable, and people can count on him. After that, Hinn goes on to name diseases that specific people watching supposedly have, he praises god for healing these people. Specifically, he names "a young man named Gilbert"⁹⁶ who has been drinking a lot. To 'prove' that it is real, Hinn goes on to describe the outfit that this Gilbert is supposedly wearing. Subsequently he goes on to talk to Silvia, a woman with cancer who is also watching, claiming that in three days she will be healed in her sleep. Hinn then says: "that's what god is telling me to tell you."⁹⁷ Here he claims that god is speaking directly to him and god is using Benny Hinn as a vessel to talk to the people. This exemplifies the way in which new figures of religious authority have replaced older institutionalized churches. This can be seen as an example of the mediation of religious authority based on new forms of communication

⁹² CBN Foundation, "Imagine Risking Your Life for Clean Drinking Water!," June 13, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGhrVaD97sA>.

⁹³ CBN Foundation, "Health in Your Hands," October 19, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldlz38BPYqs>.

⁹⁴ James, *McDonaldization, Masala McGospel and Om Economics*, 152.

⁹⁵ James, *McDonaldization, Masala McGospel and Om Economics*, 106.

⁹⁶ Benny Hinn, "Benny Hinn Prays for the Sick," July 28, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7c2i08DxNE>.

⁹⁷ Hinn, "Benny Hinn Prays for the Sick."

that we discussed in the previous chapter. Hinn's religious authority rests on both himself being a vessel to talk to god and the bible, which he is holding the entire time, occasionally reading from it. When he is praying, Hinn keeps his eyes closed, but during the rest of his talk he keeps them open, looking at the camera.

Dr. Paul Dhinakaran starts his preaching by saying "my friend, god wants to bless you."⁹⁸ Right away this expresses familiarity between Dr. Dhinakaran and the viewer, as he calls them his friends. He then asks: "shall we pray together?"⁹⁹ This question makes Dr. Dhinakaran feel even more familiar to his audience, as he asks them to pray, instead of simply starting to pray himself like Hinn does. This makes the relationship between Dr. Dhinakaran and the viewer seem equal. Another thing he does to make himself feel closer to the audience is translation; after Dr. Dhinakaran talks, his words are repeated in Hindi so that more people will be able to understand his preachings. Dr. Dhinakaran keeps his eye closed during almost the entire video, indicating that the entirety of the video is a prayer. While praying, he occasionally focuses on various organs and sicknesses that should be healed, but this is not focused on one specific individual person. He also encourages people to lay their hands on either the screen or the place of the sickness to heal them through him. This indicates that Dr. Dhinakaran has religious authority, as people are being healed through him. While he does talk about specific diseases and organs that are being healed, he also prays for people's families, instead of only individual people: "let the children speak fluently from today."¹⁰⁰ This makes the whole praying and healing experience a collective one rather than an individual experience as is the case in Hinn's preaching.

The focus on the collective rather than individuals is an interesting difference between Benny Hinn and Dr. Paul Dhinakaran. Hinn addresses people in person, or references one particular instance of a disease that is being healed as he speaks. Dr. Dhinakaran provides a more collective experience, as he does not address anyone in particular, but instead everyone watching the video. Where Hinn relies on both his own religious authority and the bible to justify healing through him, Dr. Dhinakaran tries to address his viewers as his friends, relying on his own words instead of the bible. This way Dr. Dhinakaran imagines himself as one of the people, while Hinn portrays himself as a religious authority who stands above the people, as can be exemplified by the way he addresses Gilbert: "the lord Jesus is reaching out to you, don't shut me out."¹⁰¹ While Hinn talks to the people watching the video, he also addresses god: "now lord, deliver everyone calling on your name today."¹⁰² Dr. Dhinakaran on the other hand only talks to the people: "I command you to be healed in

⁹⁸ Dhinakaran, "Prayer for Healing."

⁹⁹ Dhinakaran, "Prayer for Healing."

¹⁰⁰ Dhinakaran, "Prayer for Healing."

¹⁰¹ Hinn, "Benny Hinn Prays for the Sick."

¹⁰² Hinn, "Benny Hinn Prays for the Sick."

Jesus name.”¹⁰³ This can be seen as another way to bring the religion closer to the people, as opposed to religion through the bible. By asking people to lay their hands on the screen or the place that is hurting, Dr. Dhinakaran does maintain religious authority as he says that people will be healed by god through him.

Ultimately when we compare these two televangelists and see them as two different forms of televangelism, an American form and a localized, Indian form, we can see both similarities and differences between the two. They are similar in their methods, using videos to attempt to reach a broader audience. Preaching in this way also increases the availability of the content, as it can be replayed at any time. While the topic of both preachings is healing, the focus is different as American televangelism is mainly focused on individuals, focusing on one’s own problems compared to Indian televangelism which focuses more on groups as can be seen in this quote from the preaching of Dr. Dhinakaran: “lord lay your hands upon them and heal them lord.”¹⁰⁴ This difference can be explained by looking at cultural differences between American and Indian society, American society is often seen as individualistic¹⁰⁵, whereas Indian society is instead seen as more collectivist.¹⁰⁶ In this way, cultural differences are made visible through the global phenomenon of televangelism, which has adapted itself to the specific local context of India. It is important to note that televangelism is not an exclusively Christian phenomenon as it is also present in many other religions. The next section will briefly cover Indian televangelism in other religions as an illustration of the widespread presence of the phenomenon.

4.4 Televangelism in Other Religions

While televangelism started with the Christian tradition in America, it has been adopted into multiple other religious traditions such as Islam and Hinduism. I will give two examples here of how Christian televangelism has been adopted into other religions, to show the ways in which it has been changed. Starting with Hindu televangelism, it is important to note that Christian and Hindu evangelism are not simply the same. Where Christian evangelism is focused on the theology of the faith, Hinduism is usually promoted in the context of the practice.¹⁰⁷ This means that Hindu televangelism is more focused on Hindu channels that promote Hindu lifestyles and practices, rather than the theology of the faith itself. The two types of evangelism are comparable because Hindu broadcasters have taken

¹⁰³ Dhinakaran, “Prayer for Healing.”

¹⁰⁴ Dhinakaran, “Prayer for Healing.”

¹⁰⁵ Suraj Kapoor, Patrick C. Hughes, John R. Baldwin and Janet Blue, “The Relationship of Individualism-Collectivism and Self-Construals to Communication Styles in India and the United States,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 27-1 (2003): 689.

¹⁰⁶ Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin and Blue, “The Relationship of Individualism-Collectivism,” 695.

¹⁰⁷ James, *McDonaldization, Masala McGospel and Om Economics*, 115.

over and adapted modes of communication that are being used by Christian televangelists. This expresses itself in movies, shows, series and other content that deal with Hindu lifestyles and practices being broadcast on India's main public television station, Doordarshan.¹⁰⁸ This can be contrasted with Christian televangelism in India, which is broadcast through secular, often foreign and privately-owned networks.¹⁰⁹

Christian televangelism has also been adopted into Islamic religious practices in India. Much like Christian televangelism, Islamic televangelism also plays a role in "undercutting the dominance of established players such as state institutions seeking to regulate religion."¹¹⁰ In their place, televangelists gain religious authority such as the Mumbai-based Zakir Naik of Peace TV in India. Naik is the most popular Indian Islamic televangelist who focuses on using his broadcasts to compare religions, often citing from Christian and Hindu scriptures. "Zakir Naik draws on a rhetoric of reason and logic to promote the universal character of Islam."¹¹¹ Naik fled India in July 2016, when he was related to a terrorist attack in Bangladesh. He is now wanted by the Indian state for various charges such as hate speech and funding terror. After both Britain and Canada has denied him visas, Naik has taken shelter in Malaysia.¹¹² The controversy around Zakir Naik revolves around issues of freedom of speech and hate speech as he continues to play around the fine line between the two in his speeches. Overall this exemplifies the way in which the Islamic tradition has adopted Christian televangelism and uses it in its own way.

¹⁰⁸ James, *McDonaldization, Masala McGospel and Om Economics*, 116.

¹⁰⁹ Kohli, Buajitti and Zia, "A History of Christian Televangelism."

¹¹⁰ Patrick Eisenlohr, "Reconsidering Mediatization of Religion: Islamic Televangelism in India," *Media, Culture and Society* 39-6 (2017): 874.

¹¹¹ Eisenlohr, "Reconsidering Mediatization of Religion: Islamic Televangelism in India," 876.

¹¹² Prabhash K. Dutta, "Why Zakir Naik is a Wanted Man," August 20, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/why-zakir-naik-is-a-wanted-man-1582774-2019-08-20>.

5. Conclusion

This section will come back to the main themes of this master thesis that were presented in the introduction and connect them to the data that was collected throughout this study. During my research I have attempted to explore the nexus between technology and religious practices by looking at the case of televangelism in India. This nexus can be used to explain new forms of communication that have provided religious preachers with new platforms for preaching. Televangelism uses television, which is one of these new platforms, to broadcast preachings to a global audience. Processes of globalization have helped to make televangelist content available worldwide, which has helped Indian preachers to adopt the methods of global televangelists and adapt it to their own specific local context. This process of localization has produced an indigenous form of televangelism in India that is influenced by both global and local processes. In the first-place Christian televangelism was made available in India through processes of globalization, but it was then changed through localization processes, resulting in a locally specific form of the global phenomenon.

The problems of the term globalization have been discussed, but it remains important to see Christian televangelism within its framework. Instead of going along with its homogenizing presumptions, I have looked at the way in which globalization allows us to examine different forms of a global phenomenon like televangelism. American televangelists broadcast their content worldwide which is how India has been introduced to the phenomenon. Their preachings reach India with little to no adjustments, which stands in contrast to the indigenous Indian televangelists who have been influenced by these American televangelists. These indigenous Indian televangelists use the same methods of broadcasting that American televangelists use, but they have altered their content to fit the specific context of India. These processes of localization have resulted in a localized form of the global phenomenon of televangelism, which supports the argument that globalization does not equal global homogenization. Global phenomena are not simply imitated by new communities, instead they are adjusted to the specific context of these local communities, which results in a combination of global and local aspects.

After considering globalization, I have discussed the changes in religious practices in India that can be related to technology. New forms of communication such as the gramophone, radio and television have brought about significant changes in religion due to their role in the broadcasting of religious content. As information has become more readily available, people have started to rely less on traditional religious authorities, which in turn has created space for alternative religious authorities who rely on modern styles of preaching using new forms of communication. Broadcast evangelists and later televangelists have become new religious authorities which leads us to examine

these new religious authorities through an analysis of televangelism. Modern styles of preaching have been adopted by indigenous Indian religious leaders as they have followed the broadcasting methods of American televangelists. In India, like in America, preaching on television has become commonplace. It is however not done in the same way, as the process has been adjusted to local contexts. Where the American form of televangelism focuses on individuals, Indian televangelism is focused on collectivism. This can be seen as a cultural difference, as American society is often described as individualistic¹¹³, whereas Indian society is seen as more collectivist.¹¹⁴ As we can see, cultural differences are made visible through the way in which a global phenomenon, in this case televangelism, becomes localized according to locally specific contexts.

While these conclusions may be convincing for the case that I have examined, it remains important to continue doing research on these topics. Due to the limited time I had available for this study, my focus has been limited to only a few televangelists. Future studies could broaden the scope of the research and include more televangelists, possibly comparing the topic more extensively to other countries and other religions as well. Another interesting angle for future research is related to the language. While I only had the ability to explore English language sources, future research could look at other languages such as Hindi and Telugu to determine in what ways televangelism changes when the language is changed to a local one.

¹¹³ Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin and Blue, "The Relationship of Individualism-Collectivism," 689.

¹¹⁴ Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin and Blue, "The Relationship of Individualism-Collectivism," 695.

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