

Social Relationship Patterns in Multicultural Society and The Role of Media

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Abstract

Religion is playing a crucial role in multicultural country like India. The social relationship patterns among respondents heavily depend upon their religion and cultural traditions. Here the social convergence and communal harmony is very important in development of the nation. The role of media is also important in multicultural society to bring all the people under one roof. So, here researcher identifies the responsibility of media in presenting the content in the form of creating towards a secular society.

Keywords: Religion, Multicultural Society, Media, Convergence, Culture

Introduction

Indian society is unique with its diverse and distinctive traditions and cultures. India is a country of cultural plurality. It is a land of various religions. It is the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Islam, Christianity, Parsi and other religions came and got rooted and spread in India.

Indian culture is a composite mixture of varying styles and influences. The diversity runs through various races, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies and ideologies. In the matter of cuisine, for instance, the north and south are totally different.

Festivals in India are characterized by color, gaiety, enthusiasm, prayers and rituals. In the realm of music, there are varieties of folk pop, Classical music. The culture of India is one of the oldest and unique. In India, there is amazing cultural diversity throughout the country. The south, north and northeast have their own distinct cultures and almost every state has carved out its own cultural identity. There is hardly any culture in the world that is as varied and unique as that in India (Culture India.net, 2017).

Communication is an effective tool in multicultural society. The development of society and social change is heavily depending upon the successful communication. The world come together to exchange each other's cultural and social aspects of life. With the help of communication now a day world is become a small village. Trough the technology the social practices of all the people around the world going to converge themselves in a one roof (Sawyer Rebecca, 2011).

India is a country of multicultural society. Here, communication has to play a key role in inclusive growth of all section of the society. Unity and social harmony is conducive for socio economic growth and development. So, it is very important in creating awareness about social harmony in maintain brotherhood relationship through an effective communication.

James Carey (1975) proposed an alternative to the dominant view of communication as transmission in the form of a ritual model. He also advocated an approach to communication and society in which culture is allotted a more central place. Social life is more than power and trade. It also includes the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious, ideas, personal values and sentiments and intellectual notions- a ritual order.

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So, the present study researcher tries to identify the role of communication in creating awareness and breaking the barriers between religions and culture. It helps to know the social discourse patterns among the people. The study identifies the media content that reaches the people, and results in convergence or divergence.

Literature Review

Media playing a very crucial role in converging the society. The mass media is working as an active tool in blending various cultures. Many studies have been conducted on the role of media in social relationship patterns in multicultural and multi religious societies.

Sawyer Rebecca (2011) stated that, "Social media strengthen, build and maintain a good relationship among different people. The interactions and conversations establish interconnectedness, which is an important content for communicating with people in the host and home countries. The connections and relationships are important for overcoming adjustments and establish a sense of community."

Chen G M (2012) opined that, "New media provides a space in which people of different cultures can freely express their opinions and establish relationships. It also challenge the existence of human communication in intercultural and intracultural context. The relationship between new media and intercultural communication can help in investigation of co-cultural variation and intercultural dialogue. The potential use of new media will resolve the intercultural conflicts."

Kumar Rajesh (2011) stated that, "press has to play a positive role in countries by highlighting criticism against governments and regimes. After independence, the country had to face different types of problems such as communal riots, migration and the refugee problem. In coping with these problems mass media became closely involved in playing an important role in handling news of the riots, by stressing the need for communal harmony and a secular approach. The press played an important role by communicating them and bringing the people under one roof."

Pathak (2016) opined that, "problem of communalism has adversely affected the progress of the country. In the present scenario widely recognized that, television,

electronic and other social media can effectively play a very significant role to promote communal harmony and unity in diversity. Media is perhaps the most powerful and single influence in mould public opinion with regard to the need of fostering friendly and harmonious relationship between various communities and religious groups to maintain solidarity."

Objectives of the research

Social discourse patterns are very important aspect in multicultural society. All the traditional and religious interchange in society is depend upon the communication. Communication is providing an opportunity for all the people to come together and exchange their ideas.

The present research investigates the religious and cultural openness among the respondents. It also studied the role of media in converging the people towards developing the communal harmony in the society. As all respondents lived in close geographical proximity, the exposure to practices of other religions was very high. Most of them partook in the religious festivals of other religions. Everyone was aware of each other's food habits, life styles and religious traditions.

Methodology

The researcher found Bhadravati city in Shivamogga district as an ideal study site for this study. The city was chosen as the locale of study as it is considered as a microcosm of the Indian social mosaic. People of all religions, castes, political lineage, ethnic diversity and language live there. Respondents from the four major religions and cultural groups in the study site – Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Jain – were chosen for closer observation and in-depth study.

The survey questionnaire was used in this study for gathered the data. Observation, ethnography, interviews and survey questionnaire was used in the study. The study was designed as a qualitative research with inputs collected from the research tools.

Results and Discussions

Respondents who lived in Bhadravati, and in a close geographical proximity had been exposed to various cultural and religious practices and traditions. The research found that most of the respondents had a mixture of opinion about traditional and cultural beliefs.

Table 1. Notion of Interreligious marriage

Religion	Yes	No	Total
Hindu	12	38	50
Muslim	01	49	50
Christian	04	46	50
Jain	02	47	50
Total	19	181	200

Respondents level of religious and cultural openness

Table 1 shows the opinion of respondents about Interreligious marriage. Fifty respondents each from four religions were chosen for the study.

Perception of Interreligious marriage

Interreligious marriage is one of the way to build the multicultural society. In Indian society marriage is considered as important aspect of culture in all the religions. From the historical Vedic era arranged marriages are normal in Indian society. Parents chose prospective bride and groom from their religion for their son or daughter to marry. Most of the respondents are against of Interreligious marriage system.

Notion of Interreligious marriage

When researcher asked about the Interreligious marriage, only 19 (9.5%) respondents of various religions accepted approved it, and 90.5% were against it. The supporters were led by Hindus and opposition was led by Muslims, Jains and Christians.

Opposition to inter-religious marriage was greater than inter-caste marriage in general. However, Hindus considered caste more important than religion when it came to marriage. Among the Muslims, the two groups—Shiya and Sunni—preferred to have relationship between only among the sub-group.

There were also respondents who opined that that interreligious and inter caste marriage is good to have a healthy society during the interview.

One of the Hindu person aged 40 revealed that, *“Having marital relationship with other religion is not sensible. Because, those who come from other religion don’t know the cultural and religious practices of Hindu religion. This may lead to a misunderstanding and complexes between couples in family”*.

A Christian respondent aged 38 said that, *“Interreligious and intercaste marriage is a healthy move to understand each other. Understanding is the only thing is very important to construct a beautiful life. Caste and group system is a tool which created by fundamentalist to divide the society. People should know the secret behind these kinds of religious and cultural blunders”*.

Table 2. Experience of visiting religious places of other religions

Religion	Yes	No	Total
Hindu	30	20	50
Muslim	16	34	50
Christian	23	27	50
Jain	35	15	50
Total	104	96	200

The above table shows that majority of the respondents from different religions visit other religious places like Temple, Church, Mosque and Basadi. 104 (52%) respondents had visited some holy places of other religions. The practice was more among Hindu and Jain respondents than Muslim and Christian respondents. However, 96 (48%) respondents had never visited other religious places.

Respondents were interested in visiting other religious places. Muslims opined that they visit rarely shrines of

other religion people. Christian and Jain religion people said that they visit their own religion holy places, than those of others. Some respondents thought that visiting other religious places is not good for the development of their own religion. Entry restrictions and dress code turn many away from visiting Basadi and Mosque.

A Christian person aged 48 said that, *“Visiting other religious places like Temple, Basadi and Mosque is not an offensive. In multicultural society it is very important to maintain*

peace and harmony. If we visit these kinds of places may improve religions positively. It is also important to bridge the gap between different religion people to maintain good atmosphere”.

Table 3.Appreciating various traditions/ beliefs of other religions

Religion	Festivals	Caste System	Culture	Food Style	Dress	God	Total	Percentage
Hindu	22	01	28	04	04	22	81	40.5
Muslim	20	02	17	15	07	00	61	30.5
Christian	22	03	18	31	08	06	88	44
Jain	23	04	37	24	06	07	101	50.5
Total	87	10	100	74	25	35	331	165.5

The above table shows the nature of appreciation of respondents towards other peoples' religious beliefs and traditions. The traditions like festival, caste system, culture, food style, dress, god and other things were provided to gather their opinion. The data showed that 87 respondents (44%) of various religions liked the festivals, followed by 10 (5%) caste, 100 (50%) culture, 74 (37%) food style, 25 (12.5%) dress and 35 (17.5%) the understanding of God.

Richness of general culture and festivals of religious were two aspects that were well appreciated and welcomed. The above table also shows that 100 (50%) respondents from all the religion liked the culture system of others in high number. Jains and Hindus were found to appreciate and liked the culture system of others more than Muslim and Christian respondents. Festivals also were well appreciated (44%). These two aspects were found to be bringing in unity and interreligious harmony and appreciation.

The table also shows that 10 (5%) of the respondents from all the four main religions strongly not liked the caste system practiced in other religions. They strongly denied the caste

and class system practiced in other religions. It indicates that majority of the respondents from different religions liked each other style of traditions in different manner.

A person from Hindu religion aged 43 said that, “I understand that there are various traditions. I greatly value my traditions. But, the food habits in some religions can harm relationships. So, respecting other practices, traditions and believes are very important in a multicultural society”.

Perception about media

The role media have to play to bring people together, establish harmony and peace in the society is significant for the nation's development. Further, giving the correct and adequate information to the people, taking into consideration that India is a multicultural and religiously plural society is equally important. Media shall never be biased to a culture or religion. This cultural openness and inter-religious orientation are necessary for interreligious understanding, appreciation and acceptance in the society.

Table 4.Perception about media, encouraging interreligious acceptance and understanding

Religion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Can't Say	Total
Hindu	32	09	01	04	04	50
Muslim	00	47	02	00	01	50
Christian	00	36	01	00	13	50
Jain	01	17	04	01	27	50
Total (%)	33 (16.5)	109 (54.5)	08 (4)	05 (2.5)	45 (22.5)	200

The above table shows that 33 (16.5%) respondents from different religion strongly agreed that media is encouraging the interreligious acceptance and understanding. 109 (54.5%) agreed, 08 (4%) disagree, 05 (2.5%) strongly disagree and 45 (22.5%) respondents from all the four religions denied expressing their opinion about the topic.

The data also shows that 32 respondents from Hindu religion strongly agreed that media is encouraging the interreligious acceptance and understanding. But, other religions didn't strongly agree about the media encouragement. Muslim and Christian respondents just agreed in a high number

of 47 and 36 correspondingly. It is important note that 45 respondents from all the four religion did not give a clear answer.

A Jain person aged 38 opined that, “Media is an important tool between people to know the information around the world. But, today media is focusing only on creating the conflict between people. Especially the issues related to religious are sensationalizing. It is indirectly showing the failure of media in maintaining the social responsibility”.

It is also important to note most of the respondent opined

that media is promoting interreligious acceptance and understanding through various programmes like Films, Serials, Reality shows and Special programmes related to country and its unity. But, they also demanded media to spotlight on all the cultures and traditional activities related to different religion.

Thus, the study found that communication is influencing on the social relationship patterns in multicultural society. The role of media is also very crucial in building the social harmony through cultural interchange in the society.

Conclusion

Multicultural society is a mixture of bowl. Here, the traditional and cultural aspects playing a crucial role in building the strong bondage between people. Media is also part took in the process of binding the people in the name of communal harmony. It should give equal opportunity to all the religion and cultural background to understand each other. But, today the media is not involving in the process of developing the bondage between different cultures. It is focusing on the majority of the people and their culture to grab the attention.

The same situation had resulted in a lack of social relationship among different religions in the study area. Majority respondents disapproved interreligious marriages. Visiting shrines and holy places of the same religion was a regular practice among respondents. Occasional visits to holy places of other religion was not that much there. Dress codes discouraged the practice in some shrines and holy places. It shows that religion and cultural traditions moving people towards more ethnocentric.

Respondents appreciate festivals of other religions. Participating and partaking dinners was not a worrying problem, except when it was a veg – non- veg issue. They strongly denied the caste and class system practiced in other religions. It indicates that majority of the respondents from different religions liked each other style of traditions in different manner.

The respondents appreciated that media is creating awareness about social harmony. Most of the people also express their views about media are building the nation as a responsible fourth estate to maintain the harmony. But, some respondents revealed their regret that media is giving importance for majority of the religion and cultural issues in all aspects of entertainment.

The researcher advised that media should create awareness about the importance of social relationship pattern in multicultural society. It should encourage understanding between the people related to social harmony and cultural divergence. It is a responsibility of all the citizens of multicultural society to respect and appreciate of each other cultures.

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