

**CONVERGENCE OF RELIGION, MEDIA AND  
MARKETING: THE RESURGENCE OF THEOPHOBIA  
AND MASS HYSTERIA**

**ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

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# **Convergence of Religion, Media and Marketing: The Resurgence of Theophobia and Mass Hysteria**

## **Introduction**

With the ever expanding communication dynamics and available platforms, the present epoch is decorated with phrases like ‘the information age’, ‘the age of interaction’, ‘the age of networks’, ‘the media age’, ‘postmodernity’, ‘globalization’, ‘late capitalism’, ‘culturalism’, ‘hyper-reality’, et al. The ornate description might puzzle one’s cognition, the covert idea is that media is changing with modernity; why and decisively how.

The apparent need to visit a pandit (Hindu priest), astrologers or fortune predictors is certainly not on the cards. Hindi news/entertainment channels are serving them all, even live.

The stretch from 7 A.M. to 10 A.M. on the sought-after Hindi news channels is brimming with shows fixated around Astrology, Numerology, Vastu predictions, pleasing Godly figure, etc., a banal trend. Not to miss out how much the news channels are in love with the program genre, content assembled around akin subjects find spots in the programming itinerary in multifarious time bands. To reckon in the epiphany, the sister concern of a valued news channel revamped its demeanor and had thoroughly imbibed the trend; questioning the core principles of the operational ethics and norms. Such a shift in the programming ideology is presenting a stiff competition to TV channels solely serving religious/spiritual communication.

As a consumer one might find the content attention-grabbing, alluring and cohesive (culturally); but in a latent guise, is engineering alter truths and strengthening beliefs; formulating a newer reality both observable in attitudes and actions. The representation of concepts, religious codes, and knowledge in the narratives of the content is highly manipulative and are steering audiences towards Theophobia and hysteria.

Once assimilation of the introductory comment is over, the thrust shifts to define the elements involved in the research for an acceptable understanding.

How do we define religion? Looking for an exact expression about religion isn't possible. The root behind this gesture is that since religion serves different purposes in an individual's life and society. However, **Religion** is 'that reference of man's life to a world-governing power which seeks to grow into a living union with it'<sup>1</sup>, as defined by Pfleiderer. Christopher Dawson writes: 'Whenever and wherever man has a sense of dependence on external powers which are conceived as mysterious and higher than man's own, there is religion, and the feelings of awe and self-abasement with which man is filled in the presence of such powers is essentially a religious emotion, the root of worship and prayer'<sup>2</sup>.

Acc. to Webster's New World Dictionary (Third College Edition): "any specific system of belief and worship, often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy." It implies that there are usually two important components to religion:

- One's belief in and worship of a deity or deities, and
- One's ethical behavior towards other persons.

**Theophobia**, which stems from a prominent discipline of Theology<sup>3</sup> (The study of God and God's relation to the world); can be defined as "the condition where the Fear of God or deities results in extreme anxiety over the possibility of Divine Retribution as a result of perceived acts of sin, a religiously defined act of violating God's will"<sup>4</sup>. Like other phobias, Theophobia negatively impacts the life of the sufferer.

In the periphery of social engineering and behavioral science, one can find mass hysteria/collective hysteria/collective obsessional behavior as a phenomenon that transmits collective delusions of threats, whether real or imaginary, through a population in society as a result of rumors and fear<sup>5</sup>. In medicine, the term is used to describe the spontaneous manifestation of the same or similar hysterical physical symptoms by more than one person.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by G. Galloway, *The Principles of Religious Development* (London: Macmillan, 1909), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dawson, *The Age of the Gods* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theology>

<sup>4</sup> Doctor, R. M., Kahn, A. P., & Adamec, C. (2010). *The Encyclopedia of Phobias, Fears, and Anxieties* (Third ed.). Infobase Publishing.

<sup>5</sup> Wolf, M. (1976). *Witchcraft and Mass Hysteria in Terms of Current Psychological Theories*. *Journal of Practical Nursing and Mental Health Services* 14. 23–28.

**Marketing** is the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large<sup>6</sup>.

**Media** though has a vast connotation, the researcher caps media to TV news channels (Hindi) and the advertisements aka TVC's (Television Commercials) appearing on General Entertainment Channels carrying content related to astrology, fortune predictions, product promotion.

Discounting scholars from sociology and Theologists, the conjunction amidst religion and media is keenly observed by media researchers. The current research banks on the notion that religion (clubbed with its constituent fragments; mythology, astrology, figures of reverence, rituals, practices, and beliefs) propagated through TV news channels is unquestionably going off on a tangent; to impregnate the audience with fear, panic and mutilating rational outlook.

A medium or a media tool is efficient enough to regulate perception, sentiments, apprehensions and guide thought pattern through the implementation of content and essential form on its end users.

Spirituality and supernatural sanctity are the imperative and fundamental elements under which religion is viewed. Because television, by nature is worldly, the integration of these two would result in turning a holy concept to a materialistic ritual. Implicitly, Postman holds that desires are different from needs; this separation is important and crucial to media studies. Postman believes that prophets and messengers never offered the people what they wanted or desired, but gave them what was necessary to survive. The function of television is to support consumerism, only satisfying people's desires<sup>7</sup>.

A considerable section of society invests its faith in future predictions by the astrologers against the technological leaps like Mars mission. The deliberations on how valid and

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<sup>6</sup> American Marketing Association, Defining Marketing. Retrieved from [www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx](http://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> Postman, N. (1985). *Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business*. New York: Penguin Books.

credible astrology is will continue for decades. Media content across platforms carry future predictions, forecasts, and the likes. Despite the fact that those who do not believe in such content will ignore, but it is alarming that as the private channels in the space grew the number of shows grew accordingly and in turn jacked up the popularity.

The ethics and guidelines of programming code to be followed went for a toss when a Kannada news channel crossing all the boundaries of wisdom went on to telecast an episode on the likelihood of being raped for the sun signs. The show focused on during which time frame an individual might get raped and by whom. Extending the regressive and nonsensical action, out of box remedies was even suggested to avert rape and similar events. Fueled by such irresponsible endeavour ON AIR, an online petition was circulated to gather people solidarity on discontinuing such shows and compel authorities to ban the absurdity and forms promoting prejudice and superstition.

The fact, it is not just uninformed people who tend to seek the refuge of Baba, Godmen, etc., people with considerable better educational backdrops like doctors, professors and physicists even can be found engaged in acts preventing misfortune during eclipses and pleading to Shani (Lord of Justice) to be generous and kind.

An advisory dated June 7, 2013 by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting notified that programs encourage superstition and blind belief are telecasted without fail by a number of channels. The ministry is of the view that unsubstantiated claims made by advertisements on the impact of products may trap the audience and therefore mislead them believe in them. Further, the channels involved in such telecast are being directed to send a compliance report, failing to which will attract penal punishment. Despite such a clear warning by the ministry, the channels seem to be indifferent.

In a commitment to build a rationalistic and practical society, (Shukla, Rakesh, 2011)<sup>8</sup> comments how there is a brawl amidst public faith and science. '*Spirits and demons are only projections of man's own emotional impulses.*' Jawahar Lal Nehru's vision of modern India where its citizens were thought to widen scientific temper and the character to question and reason, is well challenged by people who throng to babas,

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<sup>8</sup> Mondal, P. (2012). *Essay on Religion: Its Kinds and Impact on Indian Society*. Retrieved February 22, 2015, from Your Article Library: <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/religion/essay-on-religion-its-kinds-and-impact-on-indian-society-religion/4635>

tantriks and the likes in the quest of gaining a probable solution to their problems or ailments.

Sites not only in the small towns and villages boasting about the sheer powers of famous *Tantrik Baba* and problems solving, as well as in major cities are very common. Wall writing, speakers, crying out loud and pamphlets flying from households to households are some common measures adopted by such Babas. Such prolific promotions mock the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act of 1954. In a country like India, where religion finds unison with history, under the impression that power of legends surpasses all logical questioning, incidents like locating the exact spot of Lord Ram's birth, demolition of Babri structure, hunting for the origins of the ancient river Saraswati and public outcry on destruction of Ram Setu are a common site.

(Mondal, 2012) while tracing the trail of religion, puts forward that, society is built up by many institutions; religion being the one. A social coordination where the constituent populace has common faith, customs and practices, ritualistic practices, patterns of worship and traditions. In her write-up, she identifies Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Farsi, Jainism and Sikhism as major religions of the world.

She identifies the impact of religion on Indian society under four major heads viz, solidarity, ethical values, social control and basis of laws. People practicing similar beliefs closely associate themselves and religion aids them to shape ethical values to impart in times. Apart from these impacts, religion do serves ground for some negative entities resembling groupism which may result dividing communities. Religion may spark conflict within society in the race to prove dominance. Dogmatism and blocking social change, another aspect that thrives under religion deterring development.

In a note published by (Grabmeier, 2015)<sup>9</sup> he argues that over the decade's scholars and researchers have found that fear of death and morality is what leads people to be attracted towards religion. But in a recent progress, religion draws cohorts because it

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<sup>9</sup> Grabmeier, J. (2015, 10 5). *The psychology behind religious belief*. Retrieved May 2016, from The Ohio State University: <https://news.osu.edu/news/2015/10/05/the-psychology-behind-religious-belief/>

serves 16 of the human desires known\*. He further quotes Steven Reiss's opinion as public usually gets linked with the religion of the reason that it offers its believers the prospect to satisfy their basic desires over and over again. Religion just can't be downsized to serve only a lone purpose. The 16 desires, the bent, and repulsion towards them define an individual's view towards a religion or belief set. *Religion attracts all kinds, including peacemakers and those who want a vengeful God.*

(Luhmann, 2013)<sup>10</sup> puts across her experience as a participant observer in an evangelical church ceremony that people were convinced that God acts as a therapist. People expected to experience God as a person. They even shared how they have a personal rapport with God. She shares an incident of an individual, of how the verse in Bible on the importance of prayer grabs the attention and a few weeks later she was invited by a friend to be on the prayer team. To deliver a message God uses people's mind and plants the communication in their thought train. One needs to tutor the faculty (mind) to decipher thoughts that contain God's remark.

Believers open their darkest secrets, fears and insecurities with God in the sheer hope that he will accept their rage and still be calm, welcoming and understanding. With God, people can be childish, insecure, and irritable but convinced by the notion that God's sentiments are intact. The conversation and problem-solving inter-communication is termed as "*Imaginal Dialogues*" and has therapeutic outcomes. God in the role of a therapist differs from a practicing psychotherapist in the notion of being more powerful and also perfect than human therapist interested in ripping client's money.

(Phadnis, 2014)<sup>11</sup> reporting on the Indian spiritual and religious market finds that the business thriving on public faith has crossed the mark of 30 billion US dollars. The primary drivers for the thriving market are low penetration of technology and the market fragmentation. Eyeing the potential start-ups and online ventures are flooding

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<sup>10</sup> Luhmann, T. (2013, October). : Some mechanisms through which prayer may contribute to healing. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 50(5), 707-725.

<sup>11</sup> Phadnis, S. (2014, February 23). *India's spiritual and religious market*. Retrieved 2016, from THE TIMES OF INDIA: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indias-spiritual-and-religious-market-is-estimated-to-be-over-30-billion/articleshow/30881651.cms>

the space. The minting of faith market is not limited to just selling Prasad of different temples or auspicious yantras, hair locks that are shed in the temples on various ceremonies are collected and sold in the international market at great prices.

With a population over 1.2 billion and as many as 330 million godly figures, the market forces will tap its potential for a probable manifold profit. For Muslims, there's ProudUmmah. Hyderabad-based mechanical engineer Abid Khan quit Google to launch this startup that provides customized kits with 24 products related to Islamic pilgrimages Hajj and Umrah. The kits are priced at Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,500 and contain prayer beads, maps of the pilgrimage, prayer mat, cloth, etc.

(Noorani, 2011)<sup>12</sup> writes, Katju, Markanday after assuming the office of Chairman, PCI in an interaction with the media fraternity tabled that media needs to boot its setup under the scanner of introspection and try to fall in the reign of responsibility and being accountable.

He questions media's role in forming a rational opinion amongst the masses, sticking to providing truthful and objective information. In the continuum he speaks about how media is busy twisting facts, creating waves of sensation, paid news a defect that gained prominence, promoting non-news issues as issues of importance while pulling stories of real concern in the programming backyard and predisposition to brand events inflicted by certain communities.

The defects can be repealed in a two-way working method, one involving a democratic process entwining discussion, consultations, and persuasion. The other working to inflict monetary punishment, suspending licenses, banning govt. Ads to appear and so on. Press Council of India will exercise its role as a mediator to resolve the defects in the most democratic approach, rolling incompetent govt. agencies/ministries. Since India is in transit phase of becoming a modern industrial setup from feudal agrarian structure, the media must help in curbing the menace of casteism, communalism and promoting modern scientific ideas.

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<sup>12</sup> Noorani, A. (2011, December 2). *Reforming the Press Council*. Retrieved March 2015, from FRONTLINE: <https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30177896.ece>

(Rao, 2011)<sup>13</sup> writing under *Glocal media practice* sub-head comments, with the increased use of globalized news formats and news gathering technologies, the local news content has started to flourish. The local news carries content about what people are interested in, their care and concern issues and their day to day confrontations.

Astrology is one such subject which drives people's zeal. Examining under the journalistic principles, astrology which covers newsworthy space and airtime; their exactness, neutrality, and truthfulness is beyond question.

With a significant count of news channels' reeling in astrologers in morning shows predicting planetary strolls is a common practice with people glue to comments subjected to their particular sun sign. Practitioners may call such a presentation unethical or morally crippled but for a profession binding to ethics and model includes a healthier know-how of a culture operating in.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The overcrowding of astrology-based programs as news content, the programming schedule of TV news channels supporting the overnight rise of Godly figures and the human haste to please them, endorsements / claims to settle the life-based ruckus; restoring fate; customized maneuvering of ailed destiny through products, the sloppy stance of TV content-guiding agencies have collectively resulted in the rise of public hysteria and theophobia among the masses.

"The level to which this TV programming is influencing and percolating among the general population is still a mystery/blinding/unknown. If you believe and practice your religion, you have a vital right that must not be violated. There isn't any wiggle room here. Is freedom of religion inclusive of the right to promote, encourage, and profit from the practice of superstition?"

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<sup>13</sup> Rao, S. (2011). Glocal Media Ethics. In P. M. Robert S. Fortner, *The Handbook of Global Communication and Media Ethics*, I (pp. 154-170).

## **Aim of the Study**

Public discourse and public knowledge have been defined, structured, and delimited in large part by the impact of the mass media. Map public reaction and investigate narratives about TV programs weaved around God, astrology and the like in light of media impact theories (Agenda Setting, Cultivation and Uses and Gratification) that together grope individuals under Theophobia and public panic. To that end, where does religion stop and superstition begin.

## **Significance of the Study**

The effects believed to be created can't be analyzed explicitly under bullet theory or the limited-effects model due to the growing areas of message composition, the medium (technology upgrades and operations), audience qualities, and overlapping media consumption patterns. This study is aimed at determining whether or not customers are affected by cultivating a strong or weak sense of self-worth. Micro-level and macro-level impacts, content-specific and diffuse-general effects, attitudinal vs behavioral versus cognitive change, and modification versus stability will be examined in depth.

Content, program forms, and news collecting tactics from the West are being adopted by the Indian news media landscape. What they haven't copied is the adherence to ethical standards, norms, and best practices in the media industry. According to this research, the content broadcasters (who are really the content producers) are being scrutinized for their use of astrology, God, and human connections as news sources and for the structure of their programs. Product makers' marketing and promotion tactics that purport to alter fate or bestow good fortune.

The study is an effort to find reasons; why they haven't taken self-awareness in matters that might have significant implications, not to single out the accountability of the TV programming controlling authority. Identifying the loopholes in broadcasting norms and legislation that motivated content producers/broadcasters to provide such material is essential in the performance of the research.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study and analyse the religiosity of people.
2. To assess the impact of programs on the audience and the prolific spread across the study area.
3. To ascertain whether the advertisements selling products or services promote superstitions or not.
4. To find out whether the shows based on astrology or Gods can be considered news.
5. To identify and analyze factors why people watch and believe in astrology and God based shows.
6. To know the opinion of media educators and media professionals about the ethical concerns challenged by the shows based on astrology and Gods.
7. To know the opinion of psychologists and counsellors on whether such shows are causing Theophobia and mass hysteria.

## **Methodology**

The preceding projects carried under media effects (TV/cinema promoting crime and violence) extensively revolved around the Cultivation Theory to support notions of inclusion of certain attitude and conduct in public behavior patterns, primarily gathered their inferences either through experimental study set-up or observation or in-depth interview or a blend of the mentioned ways.

To mention, as the research is an attempt to check upon whether and how media has assisted in the creation/re-surfacing of the social phenomenon of public hysteria and Theophobia, a multi-modal investigative approach will be employed. The research aims to provide a detailed view of the observable facts both in quantifiable terms and qualitative description.

The study is commissioned to review the AV content dealing with astrology, God and products or services offered in the name of God to break chains of your bad luck and to bring prosperity. Though it may be termed as “Chewing gum for the eye”, has lasting impacts. Certainly, the degree of influence and impact is yet undocumented. The research is exploratory in its approach.

The inquiry to pick up on the right foot wishes to gain audience opinion and illicit response in the periphery of how they deem such AV content, following of the content, effectiveness, their connect and proximity to the situations staged, explicable commentary, influencing beliefs, replicability of the measures suggested, reinforcing the fear of encountering misfortune and ones’ affinity to believe that the content is accurate not misleading.

### **Universe of the study**

The universe comprises of all the residents of the city of Lucknow who are 18 years old or above who are/were viewers of Hindi news channels.

### **Sample size**

The primary data was collected from 500 sample units, which were selected using a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The researcher tried to select the samples from varied age groups, educational standings, occupations and income groups.

As per census 2011, total population of Lucknow is 28.17 lakh. The city Lucknow city is divided into six zones and further sub divided into 110 administrative wards. 7 wards out of the 110 were selected through lottery method giving equal probability to each ward to be included in the study.

Upon random selection Ward No. 12, Ward No. 18, Ward No. 36, Ward No. 39, Ward No. 62, Ward No. 81 and Ward No. 109 were included. The 500 sample size was evenly divided in two quota groups based on gender, i.e. male and female.

## **Tools and techniques of data collection**

The study was done using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. For the collection of quantitative data, the researcher employed survey method to gain responses pertaining to the objectives of the study from 500 participants.

A structured, organised and standardized questionnaire was formulated as a tool to gather responses from people surveyed. The respondents were given the opportunity to ask the researcher if/where they encountered any confusion or issues relating to the questions in the data collection tool. The respondents were also informed that they can deny to answer any question or part of the question/s as per their will.

To meet the qualitative goals of the study, subject experts from the field of media education, clinical psychology and behavioural counselling were included. In-depth interview sessions were carried out with the experts, where a non-structured interview approach was followed to gain their views, opinions and perspectives on the subject. The researcher has tried the best to keep the personal biases at bay while questioning the experts and refrained from putting across any leading question.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The research study undertaken to uncover the possibility of news channel's programming interest in creating fear of God among the masses and fuelling events of mass hysteria under the line of religious paranoia arrived at the under mentioned deductions:

- People validate the presence of a higher power in their social and intimate setup. They associate with the power by fostering different relationships or close-knit connections, which may be exclusive to an individual or is a shared belief. People identified the higher power with universally defined/accepted names and imagery, while a few were content with the idea that the higher power is formless and did not associate with the popular opinion.

Faith and reverence in/for the universal life force is an integral part of their self-expression and individuality. The reliance on faith helps people to establish their

distinctiveness amongst others. People's faith and conviction in God or the higher power assist them to sail through the ebbs and flow of life, while they stand tall coursing through adversities and sufferings. Faith and religious beliefs offer meaning and purpose to answer any existential questions faced by people.

- In the event of establishing and conserving the comprehensible, coherent and distinct image of God in their minds, people were comfortable and found it simple and effortless if asked about it at any given point in time. It is noticeable that in a conventional family set-up, where religious traditions, rituals and lifestyle practices are passed on to the generation further without many alterations, people living agreed that they adopt the traditions and beliefs without fail. And it is important and expected of them to follow their parental religious beliefs. Questioning the order is seen as an attempt of disrespect and disregard. Adherence to passed on religious practices and dictum is integral to one's faith and moral values.
- When coming across newer knowledge and expanding the logical ability, it is evident that newer information challenges the existing and established norms. When facing disagreement with religious beliefs, the majority share of people included in the study were of the opinion that they don't question their beliefs constantly and let slide the confusion to be addressed later.

Being skeptical about the religious tenet is somewhat difficult for most people, the underlying thought of not investigating the teachings is that they are not experts to delve deep or since it is being followed by generations, the teachings are sacred and beyond scrutiny. The emotional investment in the faith supersedes the logical faculty.

- The concept of Karmic Cycle/Karmic Debt which dictates the occurrence of various events, life conditions, circumstances, and social interactions is widely accepted by people. The karma accumulated over past lives has a significant influence on the present. One cannot escape the karmic debt resulting in a positive or negative outcome.
- Though being spiritual and abiding by the religious rituals, a large part of the community dwells under the fear that they will meet the divine punishment

someday. The thought is prominent that they think about Godly penance several times during the day. People offer their devotion and offerings to the almighty while praying. The prayers to the divine are primarily spun around the thought to avert any mishap, hardship and personal adversity. Being thankful for providing security, prosperity and growth to the divine is a secondary motive to offer prayers.

- Regarding the media consumption habits concerning the study's ambit, the majority of the respondents watched Hindi news channels daily or every other day. Most people on average watched news channels for 2 hours in their routine. The preferred time to watch news content was during the morning 7 AM-10 AM and evening 4 PM - 8 PM. A major share of the respondents included in the study were aware of the shows based on astrology and Gods on Hindi news channels and have been an audience. The distinctive reason behind, a number of shows were aired on news channels across the channel's timeline, with a special focus during the morning and evening when there is maximum audience engagement.
- TV Today Network's Aaj Tak and Tez were the most recognized channels by the people. India TV was closely competing in the recognition race. Of the eight given choices, *Astro Uncle* was the most recalled show, followed by *Aapke Taare* on Aaj Tak and *Bhavishyawani* on India TV. Most people were able to recollect the names of popular astrology based shows on Hindi news channels. No astrology based show was aired on NDTV India.
- People strongly side with the notion that horoscope readings shown on news shows are fruitful and do not qualify as superstitious activity. Their faith in astrological advice is equivalent to that of believing in the higher power. Advices given on the shows are messages sent from the divine to humankind for their betterment and good. People find greater similarities between the astrological content and their present circumstances, life events and issues faced. That's the reason they find the guidance helpful and invaluable. The respondents consider that planets in the astrological charts impact people's lives in a positive or negative manner depending upon their positions and relationship with each other. So the depiction on the news shows based on astrology is credible.

- With the developed faith in the astrological predictions and readings, a majority of people were of the opinion that the remedies/solutions or the countermeasure suggested by the experts are authentic, genuine and credible. They can put their trust in while expediting the solutions to get relief from their issues. The resource person and the gurus on the God based or astrology shows are seen as specialists possessing high skills, knowledge and accomplished beings. So their credibility stakes are pretty high given their professional experience spreads across decades, and therefore their scrutiny is beyond thought. The specialists/gurus are perceived as God-like entities and saviours.
- Bearing so many similarities with the current scenarios of people with what is being talked about in the news shows; people agreed that a sense of fear lingers in their minds with the possibility of meeting their fears and odd situations. People want to evade the bad/wrong that they might face and for that, they seek probable solutions to tackle. The solutions given are for their betterment, if people fail to exact the remedies suggested in the shows the chances to meet an ill fate are on the higher side.
- The desire to protect members of the family or their loved ones from adversities is deeply rooted in our social system and psyche. One keeps striving or employing any available method or action plan to mitigate the crisis. So to achieve peace and security, elderly members or close relatives have coerced people to follow rules or suggestions prescribed in the shows. The riding force to make people follow the rules is to avoid outcomes that aren't pleasing and feared.
- Advertisements selling remedies or solutions for life problems of any magnitude or diverse issues were noticed by the respondents on a large scale. The advertisements talked about the general issues of stunted personal growth, sour social and family relations, loss of confidence, self-esteem issues, hexing carried out by peers etc. The adverts claimed that the products such as precious stone wearable or items to keep with a person were charged by powerful rituals and were blessed by the cosmic powers. The respondents believed the claims and were convinced that the items or products have miraculous strengths to change the course of events in their lives.

- The dominant feeling about the product advertisements is that people think that they are informative, giving valuable details so that people can review their life situations to make a decision to purchase them. The advertisements do carry some entertainment value for a limited audience. While a considerable share of people felt that the advertisements are misleading since the claims made are likely to be unreliable.
- The advertisements are crafted in such a fashion; the writing, presentation, storytelling techniques, reciting anecdotes, people get assured and satisfied that the product possesses powers to bring the desired change in their lives. Moreover, the presence of popular names in the TV and film industry in advertisements establishes the credibility of the product or service offered. People tend to accept the endorsements made by celebrities in the faith that celebrities won't promote products that don't hold value or are not beneficial.
- On the question of buying the products seen in the advertisements, people in the majority denied to have bought any. The decision to refrain from buying the product is contrary to their opinion that they believe in such products and their miraculous powers. The advertisements failed to translate people's interest in sales.
- People who bought the products/items advertised, when asked about the after-experience most of the people included in the study agreed that the products work and the claims made are justified. People who denied having bought any such product or item, on the pretext of dropping the price to half, most of them showed interest to buy items/products. A considerable share of people was of the idea that they will recommend to their peers and known associates to buy the products. People want to know the product usage experience of others so that they can make a choice whether to buy or not.
- It is evident from the study that while watching shows based on astrology and pleasing God, most people felt a surge of negative emotions associated with the human psyche. Emotions and feelings of fear and scare were prominently felt by people. A sense of sadness and doubt about the prevailing conditions and future were faced by the users. People even felt angry or frustrated when they

compared their life circumstances with what the programs were talking about. The shows have certainly contributed people to face their fears and uncertainties.

- People usually avoid discussing the content of the news programs with their peers or family members. Most of them keep their thoughts and opinions to themselves but in the hindsight keep a stern check on how they and others operate drawing comparisons with what they have seen in the shows. People who regularly watch the shows admitted that they have turned superstitious, they pay heed to the advice given by experts and execute their acts depending upon their ability, circumstances and ease of operation.
- The inquisitiveness and the hunger to know all the future events lead people to watch the shows on Hindi news channels. The fact came to highlight that the shows have contributed to raising the levels of stress and anxiety in the lives of people. The possibility of facing the worst or unknown keeps people distressed. In the hypothetical assumption, if the shows did not exist a majority of people believed that their lives would be better with lesser bouts of stress or anxiety to be faced.
- There are 3 main reasons why people read or watch horoscope, first looking for answers. Horoscopes can lend guidance to people when it comes time to make a decision. Second for entertainment, many people read astrological columns for fun and don't necessarily consider them valid predictors of events and emotions. Additionally, avid readers who consider these forecasts as reliable predictors may still find entertainment value within in them as well. And third, out of habit.
- The news presentations are successful because, when people are experiencing deprivation, scarcity, or a lack of resources, these shows provide an outlet for them to address their concerns and seek a viable solution. People are highly drawn to solutions that are easily available. People get a false sense of control over things and situations in their lives, reducing tension and worry. When confronted with challenging problems, the shows or content provide emotional first-aid, reassuring viewers that they can be dealt with effectively. For most

people, the advice and answers provided serve as an instant or near-instant recipe for success. The desire to know what events will occur in the future or to learn more about pressing issues people engage with such shows.

- Because people are sensitive, impressionable, and fragile, these shows provide them with the assurance that their concerns are being heard and addressed. The experts on the shows are respected as divine beings with whom they can communicate. People in trouble require a figure to which they can turn for help. Another factor that makes such performances successful is the fear of being alone.
- The astrology shows and the product ads can be studied as movie narrative or - compares their life standings with the story shown in the shows and empathizes. The quest to find the solution of issues is met in a logical order during the show.
- Believing in astrology means believing that a planet's position, type, and relationship with other planets affect humans at a psychological level. A way to not be accountable and responsible - planets control you, this had to happen. If something terrible happens, it's emotionally easier to hold something supernatural accountable than something real. Astrology simply gives the illusion of having power of prediction through manipulation. Horoscopes are used to verify self-concept.
- This has come to the highlight that Hindi news channels are producing such content because of heavy audience engagement. News channels are fully aware of the interests of the masses; the eagerness to know the things ahead of time is always present in people. Being organisations that have to earn profit, religion and God are interests that connect people across geographical boundaries and socio-economic background. The channels saw opportunity and scope to mint huge loads of money. So the profit driven motives prevailed. Another point to consider is the production cost of the shows. Producing shows based on Gods and astrology involves lesser manpower and resources compared to other news shows. News channels can produce such shows with a greater ease.
- Talking about have Hindi news channels assisted resurgence of Theophobia and mass hysteria there are two valid arguments that come in the light. First, the fear

of God as a phenomenon was already present in people, given the fact that religion and its practices have been passed on generations to generations. Hindi news channels have not introduced this fear of unknown or uncertainty. News channels have simply tapped the opportunity that people are God fearing and translated the fear for their business goals.

- The other argument states that, whatever content one consumes become a part of their system (belief and knowledge). The audience views news channels as a credible source of information and knowledge, so they tend to believe in the content served to them for viewing. An individual may not know when and what idea or information settles in the subconscious that later paves way for fear or stress to appear. Regular and habit-based consumption of shows makes one addicted to the information. People start to correlate their actions, thoughts, and circumstances with what is being communicated in the shows. Fear easily stems when there is a higher probability of people engaging in comparison.
- The news content monitoring agencies, the law enforcement agencies must seek self-cognizance when it comes to shows based on astrology and pleasing Gods on the fact that they are flouting rules established under various acts and broadcasting laws. The news channels have to answer their moral and social obligations towards masses and society.

## **Suggestions**

Since the study undertaken was to be completed in a time bound manner, significant areas and topics were covered. Many other components and elements associated with the study were left unexplored. Future attempts may try to include the following suggestions:

- While gathering responses through questionnaire for subjects, *Distress scale* questions must be included to understand the level of stress they are operating under and functional.

- Behavioural observations must be recorded of the people who throng temples or sacred spaces while participating with masses in the rituals. Techniques of *Transactional analysis* can be applied.
- Experiments based on *Forer effect* and/or *Barnum effect* to be included to find out the reasons why people associate with horoscopic readings and how strongly they associate with the opinions.
- The content of the shows based on Gods and astrology to be analysed through *Rhetoric Analysis*.
- Screening of such shows for a limited group to be undertaken to record and analyse the response of group members under the aegis of *Learning theories (Social Psychology)*.
- Content of the news shows to be analysed for greater understanding under *Marslow's hierarchy of effects theory*.
- A similar study must be carried out in semi-urban or rural areas to get a grasp how people in the mentioned areas function around Gods and astrological predictions.