

Censoring literary works and new media (with a special focus on the Catholic religious censorship in Sri Lanka)

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This research study is based on two Sri Lankan creations which challenged the holiness and divine motherhood of the controversial figure of Mother Mary in theology which were initially censored by the Catholic Church but which later came into public knowledge through new media. The objective of the study is to examine whether censorship of literature represents common religious aims and to investigate whether the works censored by print media are actually censored. The conclusions were developed after studying the instances of censorship involving the works, “Mary and Human Liberation” by Rev. Thissa Balasooriya and “Maria called Mary” by Manjula Wediwardana. The sample was selected from missions in Sri Lanka that had a 100% Christian population. The public viewpoints were analyzed through a questionnaire as well as a series of interviews. The finding of the study was that the creations that had initially been censored by the Catholic Church in general or by Sri Lankan Catholic Church and later published through new media created more popular interest. Expert discussions pointed out that while such censorship was positive on certain occasions, it might be negative on other instances. When examining the public opinion, it became clear that general Catholic community was not aware of religious censorship and the majority was of the opinion that rather than censoring works, it was better to make them available for public. Therefore, the conclusion of the study is that the censorship of works focusing on the subject of Mother Mary does not represent the aims and viewpoints of the general Catholic population and the works which are censored in print media which later become available for public through new media have a stronger impact on the public. The main recommendation of the study is that in relation to religious censorship, rather than taking a rigid and an extremist stance, the Catholic Church should adopt a more democratic and flexible approach.

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