

# Pakistan People Watching in Pin-Drop Silence

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The only studio of the Catholic Church in Pakistan is WAVE studio - it is 18 years old - the first 12 years (1977-1989) were restricted to audio-media only.

Then in 1989, we began to experiment with video on a SONY Handycam but no other editing equipment. We made a video called "Hamsafar" about the Stations of the Cross - a blend of the traditional 14 stations, but the meditations were applied to the contemporary situation - the sufferings of people in our world today. This 45-minute video in Urdu, shot entirely in Pakistan, was well liked and is still used in many parishes and homes.

Since 1992 a special video department

In 1992 we moved into our new studio building and decided to set up a special video department. We acquired a SONY Hi8 camera and editing console and high quality VCR and monitors. In the last three years, we have produced several VHS productions - three catechetical films, on the Eucharist, one on Baptism and one on Creation. We attempted to make a Christmas play and dubbed a Christmas animated film.

Help form the faith of our simple people

Basically our aim is pastoral - to help form the faith of our simple people, 70% of them being illiterate. Over the past five years we can divide our productions into five categories:

1. Promotional films for religious institutes - congregations asked us to help to make a film about their activities. We made one about Radio Veritas and our own National office.
2. Films for media education (TV and Family)
3. Catechetical films - three films (on Eucharist, Baptism and Creation) and even one on St. Anthony of Padua. The one on Creation has been used often for prayer and meditation by youth groups.

4. Social animation - about the status of women in our society. Our latest film called "Feminine Voices". It must be mentioned that we have made "discussion guides" to accompany our videos but these are seldom used!
5. Music videos: Right brain stuff, aimed at the ordinary people, especially the youth. A music video features popular singers, Muslims and Christians - while inserts from films, stills etc., help to add variety. There is no commentary, just straightforward singing and this appeals to the simple people.

Two popular such productions are: Folk singer "Mansha" singing songs in honour of Our Lady in a typical country music style! And the second is "Geet mala" (Song Festival) featuring top singers like Ghulam Abbas, Samina Zahid and Arif Lohar. Indeed this film, when shown at the annual pilgrimage at the national Marian shrine of Mariamabad (80 km. north of Lahore) was the attraction of the day and large crowds gathered outside the WAVE stall to watch - and many copies were sold.

I must mention a "teaching video" that I made in 1988 for the national catechetical commission to demonstrate the methodology of the new catechetical syllabus - it showed how to teach a lesson to Class 4. This video has been used successfully in many dioceses to teach the teachers the new method of using the book.

#### Some Problems and Difficulties

Basically, people see films to escape from harsh reality - they are only for entertainment and relaxation and the longer the better! They do not imagine that films can be tools for education and change. Perhaps they do not see that any change is possible in their situation. To discuss a film is still quite unknown to them. In Karachi, we have our agent Mr. Joseph, who says that people ask for long films of three hours, they do not want short, 20-minute films. They would like to sit for hours before the TV set!

The simple poor people do not own their own video players. They often have to hire them. Only a few middle-class, well-to-do families possess their own VCR sets.

Catechists and priests still are not aware of the potential of the video as a medium for faith formation. In theory, the best persons to use the movies for education and animation would be the catechists - they move among the people and they could recommend the films to them. The Baptism film was made in Punjabi, the language of the simplest people, so that they could understand. Sr. Daniela of the Daughters of St. Paul told me that she tried very hard to convince the priests and catechists to make use of this film for their pastoral work. But they refused to do so.

However, one priest who is convinced about the power of the media, showed this Baptism film in Church, and remarked that the people watched in pin-drop silence, taking in every word and image.

Similarly, there is one foreign-born Sister who makes the students reflect on the video and draw many lessons from it, e.g. the Creation video was used for awareness about pollution.

Distribution outlets are poor. Many people do not know about the existence of the videos. If we had more people going into the working colonies selling the videos, there would be a better sale. The Daughters of St. Paul prefer to publicise their own videos. Neither are they announced from the pulpit.

#### Future Prospects

We are in touch with a team of puppet players and they are willing to put their talents at our disposal. It is for us to come up with a suitable theme and script. We are preparing a "Christmas Geet mala" with Christian songs.

Music videos without commentary  
appeal to the people

People want to relax and be entertained  
- and not discuss about programmes

Animators are not aware of the  
potential of video

Video: a powerful and exciting medium

In conclusion: I can say that video still remains a new, powerful and exciting medium. We need to use it for different occasions and audiences:

1. For strictly educational and animation sessions.
2. For light sessions of entertainment and enjoyment when families can be entertained.
3. For learning more about Jesus Christ and the Bible (feature films).

But our experience is that pastoral leaders and animators do not see their potential and do not make use of the available videos.

I think that animators, field workers, seminarians and catechists should be taught how to run a discussion session after viewing a film. Only then can the real message of the film be understood and absorbed. We need to bring them into the process of planning a video.

Teach to animate discussion groups

Experience of Daughters of St. Paul

WAVE did not enter the field of "feature films", but the Daughters of St. Paul have hired Muslim professionals to make a dubbing of several films like The Ten Commandments, Jesus of Nazareth, The Robe and the story of Creation. These have not been too successful because the Sisters, being foreigners, were not able to control the language and there have been objections about the translations made by these Muslims.

The Sisters tried to start a lending library. But people often refused to return the movies. So great is the fascination with religious films among the ordinary simple people! The Sisters have now stopped lending out films.

Other Video Films in Circulation

It must be mentioned that the Catholic Indian film on Christ (Dayasagar) has enjoyed more popularity than western films because it is in Hindi and the cultural setting is close to the experience of the Pakistani audience.

Similarly, an American film on the Gospel of Luke, dubbed into Punjabi (the dialect of the simple people) has been in great demand. The translation is very accurate and well presented, and touches the heart of the ordinary people.

The Good News (Evangelistic) group spent a lot of money to make a feature video film called "Sarguzashta". It was meant for general circulation in video shops but did not enjoy a great success.

Pastoral Videos: a new Venture

In 1994, the Bishop of Rawalpindi embarked on a video project whereby he has set up a small studio, and plans to make a series about pastoral themes. The first is a film about the problems of Christian nurses working in government hospitals.

RESUMEN

"Wave" ["Onda"], el único estudio audiovisual católico en Pakistán, empezó a trabajar con video en 1989. Entretanto "Wave" ya pudo ganar experiencias importantes en la producción de video tanto para fines pastorales como para la promoción de desarrollo. Sin embargo, el público ve video sobre todo como medio de entretenimiento y no está acostumbrado a utilizarlos para fines educativos. Al mismo tiempo, los animadores no se dan cuenta de las grandes posibilidades de video como medio de formación. Por eso, en Pakistán video sigue siendo un medio nuevo que necesita promoción entre los evangelizadores y promotores para poder aprovecharlo como herramienta preciosa para la pastoral y el desarrollo del pueblo.

RESUME

Ce n'est que très récemment, en 1989, que l'Eglise catholique au Pakistan s'est lancée dans l'aventure de la vidéo, par l'établissement d'un studio à Lahore équipé tout d'abord d'un simple Handycam Sony. Mais au Pakistan la vidéo est essentiellement un moyen de divertissement. Dans un tel contexte, en dépit des progrès techniques, la production et la distribution de programmes religieux ou à thèmes éducatifs et de développement restent difficiles. De plus, la plupart des utilisateurs potentiels, tels les catéchistes et les prêtres, ne sont pas conscients des possibilités qu'offre la vidéo. Aussi l'auteur en conclut-il que la vidéo au Pakistan reste un nouveau média dont les éducateurs et animateurs de la foi doivent encore découvrir les énormes potentialités pour leur travail d'évangélisation et au service du développement des populations.