

ORAL LITERATURE AND NEW MEDIA AS VIABLE MECHANISMS FOR CHANGING THE RELIGIOUS KILLING FOR BLASPHEMY

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Abstract

The evolving dynamics of blasphemy in contemporary time, as evidenced in the recent killing of Deborah Yakubu and Ahmad Usman in Nigeria for blasphemy, signals unquantifiable dangers from the trend of killing for blasphemy. To be proactive and check against the trend in the nearest future, this study proposes effective use of oral literature and new media by religious bodies to widely reorient the faithful of various religions about killing blasphemers or not, since blasphemy is a crime against God and 'religious legends', not living humans. Besides observation, the study drew from library, internet and new media sources. Using qualitative approach and content analysis, the study shows that oral literature and new media are viable means of communicating to the masses that blasphemy is a sin to be punished by God. So, God, not humans, ought not to punish blasphemers. Next, those who punish blasphemers with capital punishments get worse ones from God and human authorities. The reconstruction of blasphemy through these mechanisms would avert the rising tendency of using blasphemy to dab and frame-up an enemy in order for a mob to kill him/her. The study concludes that the commonly attested nature and role of oral literature and new media make them viable mechanisms for changing the emerging religious killing of fellows in the name of blasphemy.

Keywords: Oral literature, New media, Mechanisms, Changing, Religious killing, Blasphemy

Introduction

The extreme understanding of blasphemy as a crime that attracts capital punishment for the blasphemer had informed the 'draconic laws made for the offence of blasphemy' among some religious nations, such as Pakistan (Noor, 2016; Raouf, 2015; Lidsky, 2012). Such is the internalised orientation of the religious who insist

on and engage in killing perceived or proven blasphemers for the crime or sin of blasphemy. Among the question that ever beg for answers is: Why do the faithful of some religions believe that blasphemers must be killed, while other categories of sinners including them, who also commit sins against God and their most venerated religious heroes (and heroines, if there is ever anyone recorded in the Holy writs), should not be killed or given capital punishment by humans and/or God? If blasphemers must be punished with instant killing or other forms of capital punishment, as in the cases of Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu and Ahmed Usman, then other sinners have to be killed too. If so be it, such Puritan religious killers have to kill themselves for their own grievous sins against God. This is simply because human imperfection applies to all human beings and so even the holiest of the holiest commits sins at least 3-7 times per day.

Also, if instantaneous judgement and punishment rather than correction and penance are (to be) justified and sustained as norms, then the Holy writs among the religious of various religions are being rewritten and changes made to the teachings about forgiveness and God's mercy. That means the contemporary court has to drop the clause 'temper justice with mercy'. Among others, one question to that is: If mercy and forgiveness are nullified in contemporary time, not even by non-religious bodies and persons, but by religious bodies and persons, what becomes the fate and the pattern of interpersonal and intergroup relations between/among human beings, as regard human frailties? Critical and creative reflections on the foregoing complex situations and probable practices, which trigger various interrogations, present various complexities. The complexities make it impossible to justify the killing of blasphemers by fellow human beings, who are also mortal and sinful beings like the sinful blasphemers.

Given the foregoing backdrop, this study rises to make some clarifications on blasphemy; argue for the abolition of blasphemy laws, since it is not an offence that requires human but God's punishment for it; and explain how oral literature and new media could be used by religious bodies as viable mechanisms for changing the rising religious killing for blasphemy, as in the cases of Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu and Ahmed Usman, who were accused of blaspheming against Prophet Muhammad and thereby killed in Sokoto and Abuja (both in Nigeria) respectively. In doing these, the study shall engage in conceptual, theoretical and empirical exposition and analysis, which together lead to the overall conclusion at the end of the work.

The Killing of Deborah Yakubu and Ahmed Usman for Blasphemy

Different definitions of blasphemy abound in the literature, with some having the conceptual inadequacy of misrepresentation causing the misunderstanding of what blasphemy is all about. Only several definitions, which directly reflect our concern,

shall be presented at here. Raouf (2015) defines blasphemy as what 'includes denigrating and insulting expressions targeted toward[s] God and other aspects of religion.' This definition implicitly shares the position of this work that blasphemy is a sin against God, not man, and so punishment for it should be the exclusive affair of God. Raouf (2015) goes on to inform that what constitutes blasphemy varies from one society to another, with respect to the variances in values among different peoples and groups. The implication of this statement includes the fact that it is out of place for blasphemy to be generalised and laws made against it in general terms. For example, there are draconic laws against blasphemy in Pakistan (Raouf, 2015, pp. 77-88), which are based on the religious values of the Pakistani nation. As such, a secular nation like Nigeria, with religious, linguistic and ethnic pluralism, cannot adopt same religious laws, including laws against blasphemy and generalise the laws to apply to every Nigerian. It ought not to be so because Nigerians are of different religions.

Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu was a student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, while Ahmad Usman was an officer of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Tipper Garage, Lugbe Command, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. Both of them were distinctly alleged of having blasphemed against Prophet Mohammed (SAW) and thereby murdered gruesomely. Deborah was killed on 12th May, 2022, while Ahmad was killed on 4th June, 2022, both for alleged blasphemy. With social media, news and comments, these incidents went viral far and wide, with mixed views and feelings among individuals and groups online and offline alike. By implication, the variances in views on blasphemy are informed by mixed feelings and views held, shared and expressed by the religious of different religions.

After a few days of lynching Deborah in Sokoto, 'Naomi Goni, a student in Borno state, was alleged to have made a blasphemous statement against the Prophet Muhammed on her Facebook page' (Uthman, 2022). As some youths threatened to take action against her, the Government of Borno was urged by the public to intervene with immediate effect. Similarly, on 21st May, 2022, a pastor was alleged to have blasphemed against the same prophet of Islam and thereby got attacked and injured at Katangan, Warji Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria (Uthman, 2022). The case of Ahmad's killing is more disheartening in that no single recorded or verbally affirmed evidenced proved him guilty of blasphemy. Lawan, a cleric, only framed him up, and a mob mobilised by him killed him and tagged Ahmad Usman 'a blasphemer'. No evidence against him whatsoever! The implication is that blasphemy is gaining currency in misconstrued reconstruction and misuse against perceived and/or real enemies. If this rising trend is not quickly checked and put to an abrupt end, it would soon become a contemporary religiously made easy tool for killing perceived and real enemies by many. Religiously, one

thing is certain here. That thing is the fact that the same Allah, who both Mallam Lawan, Ahmad Usman and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) serve(d), knows the truth and would pass His judgement at last.

Facebook sources posted that Ahmad said he would not release a detained person, even if God came down. Saying so was soon tagged a blasphemy. His boss narrated what happened a bit differently, though still exonerating Ahmad Usman that he never blasphemed against Prophet Muhammad or Allah. His boss, the Patrol Commander of Lugbe/Airport for the Vigilante Group, Abdulahi Umar, told THISDAY that the late Usman was framed up by Lawan, a Muslim, who had threatened the deceased officer the previous night around 12 midnight for attempting to arrest and detain his boys found at that time of the night perambulating Lugbe garage. His words to THISDAY read:

I sent Usman to patrol the garage... [to] ensure the place was secure. Then he met Malam Lawan and directed that all the boys that were with him should be arrested and detained in the Vigilante Office. But the Malam resisted and accused the deceased of unruliness. There was an argument and he threatened to kill my boy on that night. ...After the misunderstanding was resolved... I am surprised that on Saturday morning [the following day], about six of them gathered in front of our office at about 8 a.m. and said they came in connection with the issue that happened the previous day. I asked, 'which issue?' They said my boy had blasphemed Prophet Mohammed. I categorically said 'No.' ...They (a mob of over 200) over powered us and dragged him from our office. He was beaten to death and burned in front of our office. The allegation that he insulted the Prophet is not true. They just used the opportunity of the disagreement to kill him (Ajimotokan, 2022).

Oral Literature

Oral literature, as a concept, is considered by Ong (1982, p. 11) to be a 'strictly preposterous term', and traces its etymology to the Latin term 'litera', 'letter of the alphabet'. He notes that beyond the traditional usage of literature to refer to works in writing, the term has come to be used for phenomena that involve traditional oral narrative (Ong, 1982, p. 12). What this implies is that the definition of oral literature only differs from that of written literature in terms of its nature and constituent elements. For Ong (1982, p. 12), every term has a way of carrying its etymological features forever, regardless of the changes over time.

Oral literature is noted to have emerged as a means for keeping or storing stretches of language (discourse) for both present and future uses either in oral or written form, and from where what is or has been kept gets developed into writing (Bahr, Paul &

Joseph, 1997, p. 174-5). It is a means for 'fixing thoughts and ideas in memorable, recoverable and keep-able forms through the medium of language,' whereby what has been kept (in memory) is 're-enacted, re-told and re-read' (Bahr, Paul & Joseph, 1997, p. 175). It follows that the human memory is the base of oral literature. Song, one form or aspect of oral literature, is said to be the highest level of memorisation (Bahr et al., 1997, p. 175; Webster, 2006, p. 297). Song, chants, rites, rituals, poems, myths, tales, legends, proverbs, jokes, idioms, oral drama, dance, etc. are all what make up oral literature (Ong, 1982; Briggs, 1988; Robert, 2016; Robert, Abubakar & Besong, 2016; Robert & Anura, 2018; Robert, 2022).

Sherzer (1990) has shown that oral literature has variety of forms. Oral literature is literature in its spoken form, also regarded as 'orature'. It is orally rendered and transmitted from generation to generation (NOUN, 2013, p. 118). It is affirmed that drama is both oral literature and a performance (NOUN, 2013, p. 153). It follows that drama and all other aspects of oral literature could be deployed and put to judicious use in the campaign against killing human beings for the sin of blasphemy, which is supposed to be punished by God alone. Oral and written forms of literature correlate, relate extensively with each other and are similar, which are why Sherzer (1990, p. 43) says that 'there is no strict division between orality and literacy' and they both 'use devices freely'. Oral literature is the base of oral tradition, which oral history is part of. Oral tradition is of various forms. Vasina (1965, p. 142) identifies the following forms of oral tradition: formulae, poetry, list, tales and commentaries. Others, which his classification leaves out, include folktales, legend, myths, historical narrative and epic tales.

Accordingly, titles, slogans, didactic formulae and ritual formulae constitute his classified group of oral tradition called formulae. The poetry works considered oral tradition by Vasina (1965, pp. 142-164) are historical, panegyric, religious and personal poems. To him, list refers to personal names and those of places (Vasina, 1965, p. 142). Local and family tales, etiological myths, artistic tales and personal memories are what make up the class of oral tradition he termed tales. Further, commentaries include legal precedents, auxiliary explanations and occasional comments. The implication of the foregoing categorisation by Vasina (1965) is that oral traditions derive from a whole lot of sources. Interestingly, oral literature is one of the sources. The categorisation reflects what many other scholars consider or group as integral parts of the whole oral tradition. On his part, Andah (1987, p. 13) notes that oral traditions comprise folktales, historical narrative, didactic tales, myths and epic tales. Folktales share a lot in common with myths, but they are still quite different. These also include fables, semi-drama, tales, didactic stories, and several other forms of true and untrue, and believable and unbelievable narrations

(Andah, 1987; Webster, 2006; Robert, 2016; Robert, Abubakar & Besong, 2016; Robert & Anura, 2018).

Further, the deeds of certain members of a society make them carve a niche for themselves. Such members of the society are legends. Their deeds remain known and celebrated by members of the society across generations (Andah, 1987; Webster, 2006; Robert, 2016; Robert, Abubakar & Besong, 2016; Robert & Anura, 2018). Historical narrative describes several dramatised stories of the past, involving songs, direct speech, didactic tales and no audience participation (Andah, 1987; Webster, 2006). A people's beliefs, worldviews, origin, migration and historical exploits that have some metaphysical elements are what make up their myths (Webster, 2006; Robert, 2016; Wesley, 2022). Epic tales are didactic, instructive about the lives, using the examples of past heroes and heroines for heroic entertainment (Andah, 1987; Webster, 2006). They have dramatic features and historical foundation of deviations due to the mixture of facts, the desire to please a prince or a princess, mirroring of details, exaggeration of deeds and the strength of the liar. Yoruba praise song, called Oriki, is an example (Webster, 2006; Wesley, 2022).

According to Robert (2022, p. 32), arts, such as dance, performance, drama, poetry, folklores, myths, pictures, sculptures, writing, carving, etc., have been the mediums or media of philosophy of media from time immemorial. Here, it follows that oral literature is not only a viable mechanism for philosophy and media (old and new media alike), but also for religion, culture, and various other spheres. These and other aspects/forms of oral literature are mechanisms for keeping a whole lot of the embodiments of these spheres in the memory for both present and future uses, re-enactment re-telling and re-reading. Be it so, it is quite clear that oral literature is a viable mechanism for re-enacting, re-telling and re-reading stories about blasphemy, so as to do away with the untrue stories and keep back the true ones for present and future generations. Interestingly, re-telling the stories, with a view to correcting the extant anomalies, would make it viable, sustainable, widespread and cross-generational because even the illiterate and those who have no (or poor) reading culture would still be aware of the re-enacted and re-told stories and/or information about blasphemy.

The New Media

The concept of new media is said to be used ubiquitously in many different ways (Friedman & Friedman, 2008, p. 3). The phrase 'new media' is used to refer to the technology-based and -driven means of communication between and among individuals and groups, who are either far away from or near to each other. New media have been described as the combination of words with visuals and cartoons for symbolic communication, learning, teaching and entertainment (Ravi, 2012; Wiest

& Eltantawy, 2015). The new media are characterised by the internet (Ravi, 2012; Wiest & Eltantawy, 2015). For Manovich (2006), new media are cultural objects that make use of digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition. This definition relates to the concern of this current work in that it lends credence to the fact that new media could serve as computer-based and technological objects (mechanisms) for changing religion, literature, communication and other aspects of culture.

The internet is an integral part of the new media. Basically, new media concern internet and computer and technology-based means of and gadgets for communication, which are beyond the boundaries of the traditional media. They involve internet, web sites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs and DVD, and virtual reality. They have changed and keep changing a lot of things and ways of life. There are different categories of media. These include blogs (Blogger.com; technorati.com), social networking (Myspace.com; facebook.com; friendster.com), social bookmarking (del.icio.us), Wikis (Wikipedia.com), P2P filesharing (Bittorrent.com), video clips, mashups (YouTube.com; Google video), and virtual worlds (SecondLife.com; webkinz.com) (Friedman & Friedman, 2008, p. 3). The internet is the base of the new media. It performs many roles for the users such as, serving individual or group purposes of use, sending and receiving electronic mails, transferring files, chatting, surfing and remote access of computers, to access files and programmes. It can (Joseph, 2009, p. 551).

Theoretical Framework

As a discourse on socio-linguistic phenomenon, this study is anchored on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This is because language use and misuse are involved in the situations of blasphemy and veneration of religious legends. Van Dijk (2001), Schäffner (1997 & 2010), Gee (2014) and Ahmed (2017), among others, have shown the all-important place of (critical) discourse analysis in social relationships and matters of social practices, power, equity, ownership and distribution of social goods and so on. Thus, the choice of CDA for this study lies in its importance in our discourse–subject matter. Orwell (1946, p. 2) has posited that 'all issues are political issues.' This assertion tallies with Seidel's (1985, p. 45) view that all kinds of discourse are political, because each discourse serves as a site of struggle, whereby there is a 'semantic space in which meanings are produced and/or challenged.' By implication, the discourses between individuals and groups of two religions (say, Christianity and Islam) get political at some point in time, and the semantic spaces created in their speeches give room for communication mishap that lead first to interpersonal conflict and later to intergroup violent conflict– religious crisis and violence.

With the misuse of language against the other religion (e.g. Islam) and in favour of this religion (say Christianity or Judaism), bitter reprisal feelings arise and cause religious intolerance. Then, the intolerance gives rise to religious contestation, conflict and violence. In view of the foregoing, it is quite clear that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) evolved as an attempt to merge or harmonise social theory and discourse analysis into one, describe, interpret and explain the ways in which discourse constructs get constructed and represented by the social world (Rogers et al., 2005). By implication, CDA tells of how religious registers and laws get constructed and represented by both social and religious worlds, which stretch up to the political world. Andrus (2013, p. 4976) also affirms the imperative of CDA. In the words of Andrus (2013, p. 4976), [Critical] Discourse Analysis (C/DA) is one of the 'tools for theorising persuasion, authority, asymmetrical power relationship, and political activity.' It follows that with CDA, changes to issues of blasphemy, over veneration of religious legends, religious conflict and so on could be achieved.

The importance of CDA has been reiterated by Ahmed (2017, p. 96), who notes that 'a critical perspective drives the linguistic tradition.' That drive applies to other fields, inclusive of literature. Similarly, Weiss and Wodak (2003, p. 3) point out that 'language gains power by the use powerful people make of it.' By implication, religious language of blasphemy had made this concept to gain powerful conceptual, semantic and pragmatic constructions among language users in religious contexts, where legal and political systems are *religionised* and given prominence. Being *religionised* and made prominent, blasphemy had for long become a contested concept and practice. For this study, blasphemy is being reconstructed and popularised religiously particularly in religious nations, where religion takes precedence over other facets of the society. The linguistic constructions of the faithful of different religions are made stereotypical and so religious that their linguistic relevance becomes silenced. Then, new meanings are constructed and new practices emerge. These are followed up with constructed moral code.

The constructed moral code becomes the base of determining acceptability and unacceptability of all that concerns these linguistic-turned stereotypical and so religious constructions. To that end, the evolved moral code is given legal backing, as in the case of some Muslims backing up blasphemy with Sharia law and making references to some verses in the Quran, even though most Muslims repeatedly say there is no verse in the Quran that stipulates or justifies punishing blasphemers. Consider the data below:

So, Sharia law, not Islam or Qur'an, permits legal prosecution of such defaulter.	Sharia law is just a nomenclature, it's the same as Islamic or Quran law	Of course, yes. But Islam is phenomenon, not a human. That's why it is a practice, which does not practise itself. Every religion is an abstract phenomenon, only realistic by humans' concrete practice of it.
That's where such people drew their inspiration and support from.	This country had been Islaminised long ago. Why such legal clauses in a plural	

Source: Author, Field Survey, 2022

Chilton (2004), Chivvis (2015) and Ahmed (2017) agree that ideological and hegemonic struggles are discursively constructed. Leaning on this shared view, this study posits that ideological and hegemonic struggles remain among the major factors behind religious, linguistic, socio-cultural and political conflicts confronting individuals, groups and nations, such as those in West Africa under study herein. Kinchloe and McLaren (2003) point out that injustice and oppression in various social contexts are some of the major factors that pushed scholars of various fields to engage with critical theory, with a view to making efforts to locate the multiple ways in which power and domination are achieved. Then, solutions are found and proffered. The foregoing analytical explications of CDA make it imperative to be a suitable theory for this study.

Religions, Oral Literature, New Media and Change Imperative on Blasphemy

The central message here is that all religions should make good use of oral literature and new media to positively reconstruct blasphemy and give the right information about it to the public. Following the two-side clashing opinions held by Muslims about blasphemy, Iffatkhalid and Munawar (2015, p. 50) purport that Muslim scholars and Ulema unanimously agree that anyone guilty of blasphemy against 'Prophets of Allah' should be punished; the punishment for the crime of blasphemy is according to Qur'an and Sunnah; and there are misunderstanding and misconceptions about blasphemy these days. The point to be drawn from the foregoing statement is that contemporary Islamic scholars, not Allah or Prophet Muhammad, preach, teach and carry out or support the killing of blasphemers. Thus, it is a practice that religiously has no specified immediate but later punishment from God. Rather, some human beings, for the sake of their status and influence, come up with human penalties for blasphemy and extend the sin of blasphemy beyond its traditional scope and meaning.

It is averred that myth, religion and art along with cognition make up the world in which we live (Alić, 2010; Cassirer, 1985). The world is not merely a world of pure impressions, but rather a product of language, science, myths, religion and art (Alić, 2010; Cassirer, 1985). This assertion tells volume of the place of oral literature in other human endeavours. The place of literature in the society cannot be over

emphasised. Literature plays significant role in all human endeavours. This reality is made manifest by the famous African novel *Things Fall Apart*. Oral literature is made use of in this Achebe's famous novel, as some characters note that their culture forbids humans from punishing blasphemers, because doing so implies standing between God and the blasphemer. Consequently, the punisher of the blasphemer gets more punished than the blasphemer (Achebe, 1995, p. 57). It could be recalled that philosophy has a trace to poetry. This tells of how philosophy came to being poetical, whereby poetry was one of its foundational instruments of communication.

Poetry, myth (mythology), folktale, and legendary, which philosophers across all periods agreed to be the mother of philosophy (Udofia, 2014, pp. 14-9; Uduigwomen, 2014, pp. 2-6, 8-12; Lawhead, 2002, p. 6; Robert, 2022, p. 33), are the elements, aspects or thrust of oral literature. Just as Robert (2022, p. 33) notes, it is quite interesting that 'these days in contemporary times, science and technology have put forward new media. The new media cannot do away with the old communication media. The old media only got silenced by the new media and have become less in vogue.' It is because the old media have got silenced by the new media that this study proposes the use of new media rather than the old media to reconstruct blasphemy, correct age-long wrong notions about blasphemy, and reorient individuals on what blasphemy entails and who is supposed to punish a blasphemer.

It is an indisputable fact that new media offers a wide range of benefits to users. Many scholars have affirmed the benefits of the new media (Ahmed & Qazi, 2011; Connolly, 2011; Zwart, Lindsay, Henderson & Phillips, 2011; Omeje, 2018; among others), with the highest benefits seemingly being from social media. The benefits include offering wide range of opportunities for interaction, journalism, learning, teaching, businesses, information and communication, and so on. Pursuing and realising a new world order such as reorienting the masses (the faithful of various religions) on realities, tales and myths about blasphemy are bound to be easily obtained through the new media, especially the social media. Of course, new media could bridge the gap between religion and modernity (Poveda, 2016). Bridging the gap would do away with the religiosity of killing some persons in the name of blasphemy, not minding the deprivation of their right to freedom of expression. Just as some Muslims did with video clips and new (social) media posts when Deborah was killed, clarifying that the killing was not Islamic, as the Quran has no verses for such an act, they emphasise that the Holy Quran does not charge one to kill a fellow. Even animals for Sallah and other purposes are not supposed to be killed in ways that would cause the given animals and them more pain than necessary. The new media could be made or used to extend their affirmed silent revolution (Ravi, 2012) to all that concerns blasphemy. Evidently, all categories of persons make use of these media, ranging from professionals, governments, organisations and groups to the

individual common man. E-books, blogs, internet newspapers and magazines, television and radio transmission online, social media, etc. are forms of new media that have digitalised, transformed and changed the ways people work in various spheres of life these days (Ravi, 2012). The changes are evidenced in mass communication and journalism, public relations, publicity and advertisement, teaching and learning and educational administration and planning in the field of education, government, administration, policy making, democratisation and diplomacy, social advocacy, activism and new orders, etc. E-learning is a technological breakthrough in the education sector, which exemplifies the change brought forth by the new media in contemporary society.

Doing these involves using various forms of the new media. These days, a whole lot of things can be done online via e-mails, fax, telephones, social media, and so on. Social media affect our lives in profound ways. These include shaping our understanding of various phenomena (e.g. space) and activities, and changing the traditional practice of media content being the exclusive affair of the press to being what the masses also do, as both producers and consumers of media content. Social media also encourages multi-tasking; promotes visual activity and development and invites super saturation. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) concentrate on the message (i.e., the communication and its practices), the technology (i.e., the medium), and the social context in which the concept of new media is used. Friedman and Friedman (2008, p. 4) note that 'these three aspects of the new media show up repeatedly in the literature along with other more specific technologies and practices, such as collaboration, digitisation and telecommunication.'

Additional to the three aspects of the new media mentioned by Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) above is 'the time period', pointed out Friedman and Friedman (2008, p. 4). The four aspects are the message, the medium, the technology, the time period, and the social context. Technology (medium), McLuhan (1964) has argued, is more valuable to the society than the content of the message. Friedman and Friedman (2008) say the use of the word 'new' media suggests newness or change from the old media to a new one. Thus, new improved or advanced ways of life and doing things have evolved with the new media. Television and radios before now were the major media that occupied the mind of students, but today, the internet is used almost everywhere and every second. Phones, ipods, laptops, etc. are all connected to the internet and these have displaced much of the socialising influence that once came from parents. It is an indisputable fact that these media deal more with oral media content than the written content, despite combining both.

Conclusion

Religious beliefs differ and manifest pragmatically in the use of the word 'blasphemy'. Consequently, the word is now widely misused, having been reconstructed exclusively on religious lane. To that end, it is pragmatically misrepresented. For these, acts that do not pass for blasphemy are now christened 'blasphemy'. With a critical analysis of the cases of Deborah Yakubu and Ahmad Usman, whose killings were master-minded by their adversaries who labelled them for blasphemy, the study demonstrates that blasphemy is acquiring new constructions among believers, especially some Muslims. Blasphemy is becoming a tool for dabbing or setting up an enemy, or any anyone who opposes certain detects, to get lynched by a religious fanatical mob or group of individuals sharing the same misconceptions about blasphemy. The study maintains that human beings are not supposed to punish their fellows for committing blasphemy, as punishment for such a crime is the exclusive affair of God (Allah). There is no justification for killing someone who God is the one to judge and punish for his or her crime.

Blasphemy is not the highest sin on earth. The persons who kill any blasphemers are also sinners in all other regards, as human beings, and as killers of a person they can never create. The killers are not God and should not pass capital punishment on the blasphemers, because God (Allah) or His Prophet may forgive the persons, unlike humans. That is why such dedicated servants, who are being venerated by the living faithful, forgave those who hurt them and said ill-words about and to them. If they forgave, just as God does and demands from humans, blasphemers could be forgiven too. Killing them prevents them from repentance and teaching others in ignorance to avoid blasphemy. Those who counter the view that there is no verse in the Quran (and the Bible) that permits the killing of blasphemers should study the Holy writ(s) well, seeking God's wisdom and knowledge for a better understanding. Those who already know the truth should not hesitate to tell the world, so that those who do not know would become aware and thus refuse to join anyone who attempts to kill a fellow for blasphemy. The truth should be consistently spread on new media and oral literature. The nature and the role of oral literature and the new media make them to be indeed viable mechanisms for changing the emerging religious killing of fellows in the name of blasphemy.

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