

# Search for Identity in Globalized Era: Sociological Interpretation of Religion in Globalized World

## Abstract

Globalization is not simply about the rise of a global culture that all people of the world supposedly share, rather it is more about how people increasingly form local cultures, traditions and identities in term of general global model. It broadly refers to the conditions of complex connectivity, currently finds in the world and sees in terms of both the compression of the world and the intensification of global consciousness. By the 1990s, this connectivity was seen largely in terms of rise of global markets. Today, this connectivity is being looked at in terms of rise of global culture. Cultural approaches to globalization have focused on several factors; one of them is being religion. Religion had played a significant role in the process of globalization, initially through the expansion of the world religion of Islam and Christianity and later through the secularization process of Protestantism. Religion became one of the bases of social transformation both at the level of people's everyday lives and at the national & international level. Religion seems one of the most fundamental means of organizing social life, than the seed of globalization could be found in religion itself. One of the myths of modernity was that religion would abolish, i.e., the world would be secularized. But the globalization not only accelerated the process of emergence of new religious movements and the awareness of the religion not be abolished, it led to religion is taking a new character, the emergence of fundamental movements and religious insurgency. The emergence of fundamentalism and religious insurgency in religions is a search for a new consciousness, the search for an identity in response to the new globalised world of globalised era. Cultural survival is one of the main causes of religious revivalism.

**Keywords:** Religion, Identity, Globalization, Secularization, Religious Insurgency, Fundamentalism, Global Consciousness,

## Introduction

Globalization is a modern myth and is not simply about the rise of a global market system and global culture that all people of the world supposedly share. It is more about how people increasingly form local cultures, traditions and identities in term of general global model, Glucolization. It broadly refers to the conditions of complex connectivity, currently finds in the world and sees in terms of both the compression of the world and the intensification of global consciousness. Today, this connectivity of the world is being looked at in terms of rise of global culture. Cultural approaches to globalization have focused on several factors; one of them is being religion. Religion had played a significant role in the process of globalization (but this globalization was not as we have now), initially through the expansion of the world religion of Islam and Christianity and later through the secularization process of Protestantism. This secularization is threatened by resurgence of religion in terms of what were being called fundamentalism of religion.

## Fundamentalism of Religion

Fundamentalism is an embattled term first arose in the United States in about 1920s as a term of self reference, adopted by a group of Protestants Christians who supported a series of pamphlets called 'The Fundamentals'. These writings criticized the civil modernism, especially scientific rationalism. They favored returning to the fundamentals of Christians belief and practices, the eternal pillars of an idealized past. The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, put the term fundamentalism into wide use for the first time. It referred to religious groups that took political action to reject western secular modernism in its various forms. Islamic

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fundamentalism represented a delayed reaction the hegemony of European colonial rule after they became independent nation-state. Religious identity was used as a protective shield against the onslaught of globalization which was marked by the entry of integrated market system which came along with a variety of commodities, values, beliefs and style of being.

The fundamentalism of religion is an attempt to social identity, a search for a new consciousness in the fact of the infinite fragmentation that was taking place in global society (Robertson 1998). For Scott fundamentalism is a modern form of a politicized religion, an attempt by those who called themselves true believers, to resist the marginalization of religion in a globalized society (Scott 1998).

### Globalization and Religion

In globalized society religion has become one of the important bases of social transformation both at the level of people's everyday lives and at the national & international level. Religion seems one of the most fundamental means of organizing social life, than the seed of globalization could be found in religion itself. The idea of globalization was put forward by the 'hyper globalization' of some religions such as the Catholic Church supported the idea of the world as one place (Hopkins 2001). One of the myths of modernity was that religion would abolish, i.e., the world would be secularized. Instead there emerged a proliferation of religion. For Mendieta globalization not only accelerated that proves of emergence of new religious movements and the awareness that religion could not be abolished, it also led to religion taking on a new character, i.e., movements of both religious revival and religious activism (Mendieta 2001).

These fundamental movements that are emerging are regarded as a search for a new consciousness, the search for an identity in response to the new demands of globalised world of globalised era. Cultural survival is one of the main causes of religious revivalism. According Robertson, the expansion of the world religions of Islam and Christianity had an important role in the process of globalization of religion. The expansion of Islam took place with the expansion of the Arab and the Ottoman Empires from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries while the expansion of the Christianity took place in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the expansion of Military and colonial Europe (Robertson 1998). In modern world, since 1960s the religion in western world had become increasingly privatized. The globalization of society was in the favor of privatization of religion.

In the nineteenth century, the emergence and development of national freedom movement in India, Hindu nationalism emerged, where religion was sought to be made the basis, not just the political struggle for freedom, but also as the basis of the emerging identity of India. At the turn of this century Bal Gangadhar Tilak sought to politically mobilize the masses of India, in order to achieve political freedom, and he used religious symbols for the same. The marriage of politics and religion was complete in the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha. The pro-Muslim bias of the British administration- granting of various concessions and setting up of separate electorates in 1909 led to

Arya Samaj in Punjab taking nationalist turn. In 1909 Lala Lajpat Rai, declared that 'the Hindu are a nation in themselves because they represent a type of civilization all their own' (Jafferlot 1996).

The fear of extinction and the threat to survival both as a people and as a culture and the loss of distinctiveness in the rise of hegemony resulted in the introduction of a comprehensive social system based upon religious principles that embraced law, policy, society, economy and culture. Religion is declared not just a faith but also a way of life.

In all the cultures around the world, religion remained a permanent constituent of human life. The religion had remained on one hand the foundation of national differences, and on the other hand the basis of achievement of full humanity. Religion both furthered and resisted globalization; in fact globalization had revitalized religion (Mendieta 2001). Religion and politics had been separated in the post-Enlightenment period of the secular west, which may not have been viewed in this manner in a pre Enlightenment period of western culture. Socio-cultural gaps of our uneven modern world would continue to evoke varied responses from both religious and secular ideologies. The present role of religion in a globalized society may be then require a shift from the Enlightenment period paradigm, without a reductionist approach in any direction- religion, politics and culture. Religious nationalisms that are more political expressions by religious leaders are seeking a political identity for religious culture. Religious nationalists are not just religious fanatics; they are political activists, who are seriously attempting to reformulate the modern language of politics in order to provide a new basis for nation state. When a religious perspective was fused with the political and social identity of a nation, it was referred as a religious nationalism (Juergensmeyer 1994). Robertson saw this religious nationalism as an assertion of a deep particularly, a declaration by a local group of a political identity in the face of globalization (Robertson 1998), Nikkie Keddie proposed the term as new religious politics (D' Souza 2005).

### Conclusion

Globalization in the present scenery is not only leading to socio-economic and cultural integration of the world but socio-economic and cultural consciousness also. Religion is becoming one of the important aspects of globalized era. In this era most of the religions are worried about their position and facing identity crisis in the new emerged globalized world. This identity crisis and consciousness is the search for identity and is global and in all major religions rather than a single religion.

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**P: ISSN NO.: 2394-0344**

**E: ISSN NO.: 2455-0817**

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## ***Remarking***

**Vol-III \* Issue- I\* June - 2016**

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