

RELIGION AND GLOBALIZATION

(Religious view of globalization)

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Introduction

Even though the concepts of religion and globalization seems like two subjects which have opposite connections when present situation is considered a deep and hidden connection can be seen between these two. The major intention of the paper is to discuss them by going through the different views which have been given by the texts and the scholars.

Objectives

The major objective of this paper is to discuss and to primarily define the term globalization and religion and their relationship. The quite important thing is these two subject fields are covered on a wide and different range and this is seen to be an uncommon topic which follows two basic concepts which very different from each other. Those things are going to be highlighted through this paper by gradually discussing the relationship between globalization and religion, through critically studying the positive and negative interactions (possibilities and challenges) and repercussions (or the conflicts) upon each other. Finally, the paper is going to conclude all explained factors from the perspective of both Religion and globalization by introducing some suggestions for controversial areas which are explained through the paper.

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Methodology

The data for the study has been collected from the both primary and secondary resources and the relevant monographs and in fields of both religious and non-religious texts. Lexical sources are also analyzed critically in examining the derivation and general meaning of the terms “Globalization” and “Religion”.

Discussion

The term **Religion** can be simply defined as a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and world views that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and to moral values.

When we consider about the etymology of the term Religion according to **dictionary.com** it has been derived from Latin term “**religare**” which means “*to bind together again that which was once bound but has since been torn apart or broken*”. However the term religion can be interpreted as “*system of beliefs and practices*”. When a religion is considered the way that it is believed can be changed country to country, culture to culture and tradition to tradition even though it is a same religion.

Most of the religions in the world talks much about the spiritual development and the life after death. But it can be changed how a religion talks about the spiritual life when each religion in the world is explored separately. However in some religions such as Theraveda Buddhism and Hinduism the part of the spiritual life has been domained. But when a religion like Islamic is considered much attention of that religion has paid for the part of the secular life. Most of the concepts in that religion is simple and explains what the way is to be succeed the worldly life.

As well as when the deeply analyzes the term, it clearly mentions that all religions contain a common core of values. Opening our minds and hearts to this truth allows us to

realize that all religions arose from a common human search for connection with something greater than ourselves.

Likewise the term or the concept of religion can be simply explained.

Even though the major characteristics of religions are like that, when consider about the concept of globalization, it has bared some different attitudes rather than the attitudes which have been bared by the concept of religion.

The term globalization is a combination of two English words of “*global*” and suffix “*ization*”. It was widely used by economists and social scientists by the 1960s. However the term globalization can be connoted as “The worldwide movement toward economic, financial, trade, and communications integration”. Even though anything can be globalized this term is mostly used with the field of economic and politics.

The term has been defined by many texts and scholars. Specially the *Wikipedia* says that “Globalization is an umbrella term that refers to increasing global connectivity, integration and interdependence in the economic, social, technological, cultural, political, and ecological spheres. It is a unitary process inclusive of many such sub-processes, perhaps as best understood as enhanced economic interdependence, increased cultural influence, rapid advances of information technology, and novel governance and geopolitical challenges”.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says that globalization is the "process by which the experience of everyday life ... is becoming standardized around the world."

Recently an international forum on globalization stated that "it is not the latest phase of human progress but rather an ideology imposed on the world by transnational corporations and their followers in governments and universities" (Jay Walljasper, 1996).

As well as Globalization is the good news to some who are capable of international competition, but not so good news for those who fall behind. It is argued by some third-world theologians that the bride groom in "The Parable of the Ten Virgins" cannot be

Christ because forsaking the "have-nots" is not in Christ's nature. It is more like the behavior of a multinational corporation's CEO (chief executive officer).

Also some scholars have pointed out that 'globalization is defined as a process through which an increasing proportion of economic, social and cultural transactions take place directly or indirectly between parties in different countries' (Radice, 3). One of the most prominent arguments against globalization has been that states held to exercise sovereignty have lost control of these processes, and therefore consequential outcomes (Evans, 201). State Sovereignty is defined in the pillars of state autonomy in the Westphalia international system. They are 'low levels of economic interdependence that do not require strong international collaborations, low information flows that limit the growth in economic interdependence, a predominance of authoritarian or non-democratic governments that limit the flow of information and people and are not morally constraint to use force against other states, and lastly, a maintenance of high degree of cultural, political, and economic heterogeneity among states that makes the coordination of policies difficult because the differences sustain a nationalist commitment to autonomy, promote varied interests and hinder communication' (Zacher, 62). The core Westphalian norm of sovereignty is no longer operative; nor can it be retrieved in the present globalizing world. So there is nothing about the phenomenon of globalization that is new. One can argue that globalization has always existed; the trade between empires and their colonies could be perceived as globalization. And one can state that was the origins of its process and that today we live in an undoubted advanced stage of globalization with demolished of the bipolar world. Marxist would say that without an alternative system to challenge capitalism, capitalism is the intrinsic nature that has led to globalization. Capitalism is a key ingredient in the dialectical process that leads to Marxism and then Communism. But with the failure of Communism in Soviet Union, we can no longer evaluate the next stage of the application of Communism. Therefore, would it be too far-fetched to imply that globalization is the next natural state in the dialectical process? With no alternative system to oppose it, globalization has risen and taken a substantive

stand after the collapse of USSR and no matter how we may try to distinguish ourselves from it we are part of this process.

According to above mentioned definitions it is crystal clear that Globalization can create an interdependent world where political, economic, social, and cultural relationships are not limited to territorial boundaries. Therefore globalization has much to do with conflict or impact on cultures.

Also Due to the globalization a homogenized “global culture” can be created. The process of globalization truly made a similar world in which political, social, and economic events elsewhere affect individuals anywhere. As a result of that individuals search for something which is not changing such a world which is changing day by day. That phenomenon is religion.

Especially in thinking about the relationship between religion and globalization these days, one of two views immediately comes to mind. First, there is the way in which globalization flattens out cultural differences, erodes local customs and beliefs, and spreads a secular, capitalist way of life that is at odds with religions of all sorts. At the same time, there is the way in which religion serves as the source of globalization’s greatest resistance and as a haven for those standing in opposition to its ubiquitous yet often subtle power. In both of these views, the relationship between religion and globalization is antagonistic one of struggle and conflict. While opposition is an important aspect of the relationship between religion and globalization, to see them only as foes misses some of the complexities of their interaction, not only in the past but in the postmodern world as well. Religion and globalization can also be seen as partners in historical change. In times past, religion, in various manifestations, has been a carrier of globalizing tendencies in the world. The history of Christianity, of course, can be understood in part as an early effort to create a global network of believers. Its extraordinary growth and influence as a world religion was a result of a link between its own global ambitions and the expansion of various political and economic regimes. It succeeded as a globalizing force long before there was a phenomenon called

“globalization.” Elements of this historical pattern can be found in Buddhism, Islam, and other faiths as well.

However, the relationship between globalization and religion is one with new possibilities and furthering challenges. On the one hand, while religion takes advantage of communication and transportation technology, it can be affected by the globalization largely. At the early period people were born, lived and died in the same village. They did not know that there were another cultures and religions. Only thing that they believed and knew their religion, culture and tradition. But with the development of the communication and transportation technologies the process of globalization began. With the development of transportation technologies people began to move place to place and with the elapse of time they came to know and they could build some relationships with the people from different cultures, religions and traditions.

However with the development of global communication people don't even need to move to be exposed to other cultures and religious views. We need only to turn on T.V or the computer to come to know huge numbers of issues, people and cultures from all over the world. As a result of that their religious beliefs and practices will conflict or clash with our beliefs and practices. All of them because of globalization. On the other hand, because globalization allows for daily contact, religion enters a circle of conflict in which religions become “more self-conscious of themselves as being world religions.

Moreover relationship between globalization and religion is complex since it is a vast field. As it is mentioned earlier anything in this world can be globalized and there can be a religious aspect also to that globalized phenomenon. Therefore relationship between globalization and religion has spread along the complex area. Not only direct way, globalization and religion can be connected through the subjects like economic and politics as well.

The relationship of both fields can be explained as above way and when discussing about the possibilities of these two fields it can be connoted as follows.

The possibilities of the connection of the religion and globalization is considered greater religious tolerance can be caused by it. Pluralism of culture can be caused by globalization which means religions that have distinctive ethics and interests interact with one another with the overlapping. When world's leading religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam is considered they teach values such as human dignity, equality, freedom, peace, and solidarity. Especially, a religion teaches a golden rule to a person "what you should do and what should not be done". Therefore through such religious values, greater religious tolerance can be built.

- **The Holy Quran states:** *'O Mankind, we have created you male and female, and have made you races and tribes, that you may know each other' (Al Quran 49:13).*
- **In the Old Testament,** it states: *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44)*
- *"May God...grant you to be of the same mind with one another" (Romans 15: 5-6)*
- **Buddhism states:**
*"Nahiverenaverani - sammantidakadācanā
Averencasammanti - esadhammosanttano"- Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred appeased by non-hatred. (dhammapada, yamaka vagga, verse no 05, khuddaka nikāya)*

A global political forum that collect and integrate cultural, ethnic, and religious differences have been built by the globalization in political area. Through a large number of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well regional organizations like the European Union (EU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), or the African Union (AU). When discussing issues such as international peace and security, health issues, poverty, and environment, these organizations generally share many of the same basic commitments as

religious traditions. Mainly peace, human dignity, and human equality, as well as conflict resolution in which they actively engage in negotiation.

Religious communities such as the Roman Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches, and the Jewish Diaspora also participate in international affairs. For instance when the services of these religious communities are considered,

- They have done a great effort internationally to cancel the third world debt by 2000.
- The World Faiths Development Dialogue
- An effort of international faith leaders along with the World Bank to support development agendas corresponding to the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

When the possibilities of the globalization and religion are discussed economic factors can be considered as a major part of the globalization. If the economic condition of a country is good the main religions of each of those countries have also grown financially, providing more financial resources for religions to spread their beliefs. Missionary work can be taken as an instance though it is an old concept. Many religious representatives can be seen in the third world countries and they convert natives to their religion. As a result of that many religions today have spread across the globe. This process can be concluded as Christianity turning "southern" and "black," Islam turning "Asian," and Buddhism turning "white" and "western". Religions are fulfilling their general purpose of spreading their beliefs to people all over the world and that is how a religion is globalized. When the early situation is considered though religion was an isolated subject from one another, with the globalization now having regular and unavoidable contact.

Even though there are possibilities can be seen in these two fields, there are some conflicts also can be seen in between these two as well. Specially these two are focusing on two different fields as while religions focus on the Spiritual life (Pali-dhamma) globalization focuses on Worldly life (Pali-lokottara). Which means the main aim of religions is to engage with the spiritual life and the globalization always engages with the

material life than the spirituality. Because of these kinds of things these two have been created some considerable conflicts.

Especially globalization can be considered as a revolution and all the revolutions destroy the traditions and customs of a people. As globalization disrupts traditional communities, causes economic marginalization, and brings mental stress, individuals feel these less desirable consequences of globalization. However religion can convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers” through stories and beliefs that cannot be given through the economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations. As a result of these conflicts individuals turn to religion.

However the process of globalization pay its much attention on material development and the secular world. Indeed, with the globalization of economics and politics, individuals feel insecure. To maintain person’s sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety individuals turn to scripture stories and teachings that provide a vision about how they can be bound to a “meaningful world”.

With the globalization some issues arise such as loss of ethical values and increase corruptions. When these kinds of issues are arisen religious groups help people to find answers for those issues preaching that “the only answer to the current ‘decay’ is a return to traditional values and religious norms.”

Religions paly a social role by responding to individuals’ desire for welfare, as well as acting as a cultural protection against globalization especially in third world countries. For instance, religious organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, World Vision International, and Islamic Relief Worldwide help serve the disadvantaged in areas such as poverty relief, health care, the HIV/AIDs crisis, and environment problems.

Finally what happens is globalization cause for mental illnesses. Individuals worrying about losing work, status, or other privileges. As a result of globalization material things such as house, car, cloths or any objects will be focused more than inner peace. After achieving those material prosperity they come to know that they are having an empty

inside and, therefore, realize that inner peace can never be achieved through material possessions. Inner peace can only be achieved through the religion. Because of these kinds of things there are many conflicts have been arose in between these two subject fields.

The considerable thing is because of these kinds of things both these fields have face some challengers.

Since God has set the rules and has made them difficult to challenge, religion provides answers to questions concerning self-identity. However, in providing such answers, religion also institutes a notion of “truth,” which implies an automatic exclusion of the one who does not adhere to such “truth.” In times of uncertainty like globalization, therefore, collective identity is reduced to a number of cultural religious characteristics

Globalization has affected religious and cultural values, whereby its process is seen as a threat to these traditions. Major interface between religion and globalization in India has been stated in the Economic and Political Weekly on March 27, 2004 as, “(1) the major consequences of globalization have been the transmogrification of traditional religions and belief systems and (2) the beginning of the disintegration of the traditional social fabrics and shared norms by the invasion of consumerism, cyber culture, newfangled religions, social fads, and changing work ethics and work rhythms, (3) allowing people to fall back on religion for moral and social support, attributing to religion the creation and acceleration of extremist, fundamentalist, and terrorist tendencies in the third world countries, which are intended to destabilize them, and strike at the root of their civilization, and multicultural and pluralistic nature.

Religious fanaticism can be caused by the globalization since when a religion is globalized people tend to compare their religion with other religions and with that comparison they may come to a conclusion that our religion is the only religion that is right and it is the only religion which should exist in this world. Some concepts in the religious and sacred texts also affect to this situation. For instant **Quran** says that,

“fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the later day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and his messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgement of superiority and they are in a state of subjection” (Qur’an 9:29)

These are the burning challengers which can be identified when the present situation of the world is considered pertaining into religion and globalization.

Suggestions

- Leader of a country should give priority for the religious harmony by emphasizing valuable concepts and mottos that can be caught from a religion.
- Any religion should not be discriminated politically since religious wars can be caused by it.
- Economic and political fields which can be considered as the core of the process of globalization should be combined with the religious values.
- Greater religious tolerance should be built through the globalization having prevented its bad aspects as religious fanaticism.

Conclusion

Even though the concepts of religion and globalization seems like two subjects which have opposite connections, which means religions focusses on spiritual life by going through the worldly life (the concept has been well explained in Buddhist suttas like in Viyaggapajja Sutta-AN, Sigālovāda Sutta-DN, Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta-DN, Ina sutta-AN, Dālidda Sutta-AN..etc.) And Globalization only focusses on the wordily life or the material life. But even though both religion and globalization focus on two different areas these two fields have a deep and hided connection in between these two.

Especially modern communication techniques have become very helpful for the missionary activities of every religion. TV evangelists can now be heard by any number

of people in any part of the world. People are attracted to mammoth meetings where they are offered sensational and emotional satisfaction rather than any real change of heart. The modern missionaries link belief with prosperity. Riches are taken as the sign of God's blessing, and poverty and sufferings as the result of his curse. This is in accordance with the pragmatic approach of globalization in which a thing has value only if it has any utility.

Also as transnational corporations increasingly become actors in the international system, one could argue that religious communities have agreed on “the emerging global ethic” which consists of three major components: 1) Corporations are prohibited from involving in bribes and corruption, 2) Corporations are prohibited from discriminating on the grounds of race, religion, ethnicity, or gender in the conduct of business, and 3) Corporations are prohibited from activities that pose a significant threat to human life and health.

Simply put, these components are, in themselves, religious values used to regulate the way transnational corporations increasingly engage in the global market. The bottom line is that the pieces of interreligious dialogue to manage religious diversity and to avoid violence are there, but the problem may be of globalization's intentional and/or unintentional consequence of making religions more conscious of themselves as “world religions,” as well as the undesirable consequences of disrupting traditional communities, causing economic marginalization, and bringing individuals mental stress all reinforcing religious cultural characteristics and identities. Hence, the relationship between religion and globalization has brought new possibilities but also furthering challenges as well.

With the given interpretations it is quite clear that globalization has a great impact on religion. As people and cultures move across the globe, as ideas are mobilized and transported by media technology and other considerable ways, the religious globalization will go on and on. So the utmost important thing is people must cope with the flow of information and choose their own and peaceful way.

Key words: Religion, Globalization, Relationship, Possibilities, Conflicts, Challengers, Suggestions

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