


Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives
Professor R. Santhosh
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Madras


Lecture 50
Religion and Globalization Part – III

(Refer Slide Time: 00:15)



Ontological Security and Existential Anxiety

- Ontological security refers to a "person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety (Giddens 1993).
- For Giddens then, self-identity consists of the development of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity where the individual is able to sustain a narrative about the self and answer questions about doing, acting, and being.
- The fact that many people find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure often gives rise to a politics of resistance and the growth of local identities



Welcome back to the class. This is the final session on this section on religion and globalization. In the previous session we were discussing about some of the interesting arguments about religion and globalization. And whether stating that the drastic transformations of the contemporary society, as elaborated by Giddens and Bouman and Beck half necessitated that people look for something as a point of anchorage, as a point of belonging.

Or whether it is the argument about religion being a source of consumerism satisfaction, Religion becoming a source of identity, all these things are what we discussed in the previous class. So, in this session, we are continuing that same discussion, bringing in this concept of ontological security and existential anxiety, something in the similar line, but here we are, depending more on Anthony Giddens, in order to make sense of that.

So, ontological security refers to a person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes the basic trust of other people. Obtaining such a trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological wellbeing and avoid existential anxiety. So, ontological security, a kind of sense of security, sense of, of safety, about one's own existence and that is derived through a trust of other people.

And obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological wellbeing, we have seen people with paranoia, paranoia is a kind of a baseless fear of, anything that can happen, people are paranoid about various aspects. And if you look at, in a more societal level, there is increasing anxiety about people about their life, about a perennial sense of insecurity, a perennial sense of ruthlessness, a perennial sense of unpredictability of the world.

And I hope you will make, it will become more easier when you compare it with the other extreme example say of a, of a traditional society or a tribal society, where of course, there

could be a sense of insecurity and unpredictability, say about weather or about the crops about some natural calamities. But they never experienced the kind of unpredictability and insecurity the way a modern man or a modern woman leading a kind of an isolated life experiences.

So, for Giddens then, self-identity consists of the development of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity, where the individual is able to sustain a narrative about the self and answer questions about doing acting and being. What are you doing, why are you doing certain things, on what basis are you doing certain things, these are become extremely problematic questions that are confronting our society now?

Take the case of say for example, ethics. To what extent are we able to do things ethically in our society. Whether you are talking about ethics to fellow human beings, or if you are talking about certain ethical principles towards the world to the environment, we find ourself in a very, very difficult situation even, even when you want to lead a very ethically sound life, ethically fine life, things are simply beyond us.

Even if you want to consume ethically, you can avoid a host of things which are premised or which are built on unethical grounds, if you, if you turn to become a vegetarian, in order to have a more ethical life, you know that it is not again a simple solution, because the kind of food that you eat even if it is vegetarian food, none of these things could be completely produced in a very ethical manner or what exactly is ethically produced food.

How do we ensure that nobody is exploited in that, in that process? How do we ensure that it has not really led to a host of other negative consequences to the environment? How do we, how do we ensure that? So, starting with that to the kind of very specific selections that we want to make in terms of our sexuality, in terms of our political predispositions, in terms of our life decisions, chances, employment you are bombarded with options and contradictory positions.

So, that to sustain a narrative about the self and answer questions about doing, acting and being. The fact that many people find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure offer gives rise to politics of resistance and the growth of local identities.

And this is what we, are quite often referred to as, resistance identities or counter civil societies or a host of other groups, because such identities once you, the people find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure, often gives rise to politics of resistance and the growth of local identity.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:49)

Globalization and New Religious Movements (NRMs) and Transnational Religious Movements (TRMs)

NRMs are characterized by a number of shared traits. These religions are, by definition, "new"; they offer innovative religious responses to the conditions of the modern world, despite the fact that most NRMs represent themselves as rooted in ancient traditions. NRMs are also usually regarded as "countercultural", that is, they are perceived (by others and by themselves) to be alternatives to the mainstream religions of Western society, especially Christianity in its normative forms. These movements are often highly eclectic, pluralistic, and syncretistic; they freely combine doctrines and practices from diverse sources within their belief systems.

The new movement is usually founded by a charismatic and sometimes highly authoritarian leader who is thought to have extraordinary powers or insights.



Ontological Security and Existential Anxiety

- Ontological security refers to a "person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety (Giddens 1993).
- For Giddens then, self-identity consists of the development of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity where the individual is able to sustain a narrative about the self and answer questions about doing, acting, and being.
- The fact that many people find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure often gives rise to a politics of resistance and the growth of local identities



So, many times, the, the kind of connection that people attach with, especially with violent forms of resistance are people who find themselves as the kind of a marginal groups. For example, if you look at the number of people who fled European countries and joined the ISIS, many of them or was majority of them come from poor background, poor educational and financial background.

So, this point, what we discussed right now, is something that must be seen as a part of the larger discussion that we had in the previous class. Now, let me come to the final section of the class where we discussed this new religious movements and or they are not excluded, transnational religious movement. So, what are these new religious movements? New religious movements are characterized by a number of shared traits.

These religions are by definition new, new in the sense again, there is no specific date which we can say as a thing, but usually from say from 1960s and 1970s onwards, the new they offer innovative religious responses to the condition of the modern world, despite the fact that most new NRMs represent themselves as rooted in ancient traditions.

Maybe I can give you examples where we, you must have heard a host of new religious movements like say, a Iskcon moment, Hare Krishna moment, or the moment the religious cult established by Matha Amritanandamayi or something again, the Sai Baba's the, note that should Shirdi Sai Baba, Sai Baba in Puttaparthi.

And a host of, you know, Protestant groups as well as and Catholic groups, a host of Sufi related Islamic groups, they are all examples of such kind of things. So, NRMs also usually regarded as counter cultural are perceived by others and by themselves to be alternative to the mainstream religions of Western society, especially Christianity in the normative forms.


Very important argument because all of them present as examples of counter cultural one. They of course might be part of, you might be able to say that okay it is a Hindu moment or a Christian moment, but they would have fought with the established religious leaders and established religious traditions they want to present something as different. These moments are often highly eclectic, pluralistic, and syncretic, syncretistic; they freely combined doctrines and practices from diverse sources within their belief system.

That is another very interesting thing. They are never Puritan in that sense, not quite often, but many times they very freely combine elements from different religious traditions and a host of


other things, there are, you can, you can find out n number of examples from your own locality, we have had n number of cases in India, in other places.

The new movement is usually founded by a charismatic and sometimes highly authoritarian leader who is taught to have extraordinary powers or insights, it revolves around a charismatic figure, charismatic leader. Baba Ram Singh could be another example. So, these leaders are considered to be quite powerful, quite charismatic, and their followers believe that these people have certain kind of extraordinary powers or such.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:42)



- Thomas Robbins: "some acute and distinctively modern dislocation which is said to be producing some mode of alienation, anomie or deprivation to which Americans [and Europeans] are responding by searching for new structures of meaning and community."
- (1) changes in values, (2) changes in social structure; (3) changes in the role and character of religious institutions (i.e., secularization).
- links the rise of NRMs to a more diffuse spectre of cognitive and affective disorientation stemming from the "de-institutionalization" of many aspects of modern "private" life, hand in hand with a more alienating pattern of mass institutionalization of modern public life.
- In the face of this social dissonance, the proliferating NRMs provide a more holistic sense of self; a sense of self that transcends the constellation of limited instrumental roles recognized by modern mass society and anchored in a greater sense of moral community and purpose.



So, Thomas Robbins says that, some acute and distinctively modern dislocation, which is said to be producing some modes of alienation, anomie and deprivation to which Americans and Europeans are responding by searching for a new structure of meaning and community. Something very similar to that, but here, the point is, they are bringing in the element of ontological security and the causes of existential anxiety, using the term but the idea is more or less same.

So, it could include changes in values very, very different set of values become more competitive, cutthroat competition becomes the norm of the day, then changes in social structure, families undergo significant changes, the crumbling of family, as a system women started going to work and increasing levels of divorce. So, single parent families, so same sex kind of family.

So, we are witnessing a very radical change, and changes in the role and character of religious institutions, secularization. So, all these processes have very significant impact on the way in which we perceive ourselves, the kind of sense of ontological security that we have and to the extent of how anxious we are about our own existence.

So, the rise of new religious movements to a more diffuse spectre of cognitive and affective disorientation stemming from the deinstitutionalization of many aspects of modern private life, hand in hand with the more alienating patterns of mass institutionalization of modern public life. The same point that we discussed the kind of deinstitutionalization of many aspects of modern private life, our families, our say marriage systems, our religious things have become kind of a deinstitutionalized.

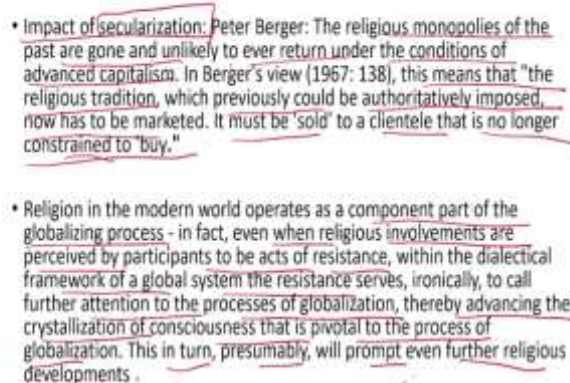
And more alienating patterns of mass the institutionalization of modern public life or public life becomes more active and it becomes more institutionalized. So, so this countervailing processes bring in quite a lot of tension. In the face of this social dissonance, the proliferating NRMs provide a more holistic sense of the self, a sense of self that transcends the constellation of limited instrumental roles recognized by modern mass society and anchored in a greater sense of moral community and purpose.

You, if you ever had an opportunity to meet with volunteers of this new religious movements, whether it is Iskcon or Hare Krishna movement, or any of these movements, active volunteers, if you talk to them, you will realize that they have deep convictions in which they are preaching. So, they might have been volunteering in that, they must have handed over all their wealth to those people, but they have some deep faith in certain higher values, certain higher ideals, and they are, they, they would have been deeply disappointed with their life in the so-called normal society.

And you know that if you meet many of these volunteers, many of them would be highly educated people professionals, who must have left their high paying jobs to become a volunteer in many of these, ashrams and in institutions. So, they would present themselves as the people who have given up everything for certain higher goals and certain, certain higher ideals. So, they identify themselves as a part of a larger virtuous moral community, because they think that, that is what is lacking elsewhere.

They would tell you a number of cases about the outside world being filled with, selfish people of cut throat competition, of reckless consumerism, hedonism. So, they would present themselves as staying away from all those negative wilds of society, the ills of society and then trying to create a kind of a moral system. So, it is anchored in a greater sense of moral community and purpose.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:56)

- 
- Impact of secularization: Peter Berger: The religious monopolies of the past are gone and unlikely to ever return under the conditions of advanced capitalism. In Berger's view (1967: 138), this means that "the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed. It must be 'sold' to a clientele that is no longer constrained to 'buy.'"
 - Religion in the modern world operates as a component part of the globalizing process - in fact, even when religious involvements are perceived by participants to be acts of resistance, within the dialectical framework of a global system the resistance serves, ironically, to call further attention to the processes of globalization, thereby advancing the crystallization of consciousness that is pivotal to the process of globalization. This in turn, presumably, will prompt even further religious developments.

So, now, what are the kind of impact of secularization of on these things, Peter Berger another very important sociologists would argue that the religious monopolies of these past are gone and unlike to ever return under the conditions of advanced capitalism. In Berger's view, this means that the religious tradition which previously could be authoritatively imposed now has to be marketed, it must be sold to a clientele that is no longer constrained to buy.

This is exactly what, we were talking about out on the see the, the point about secularization is quite conflicting. On the one side, I myself said that centralization as a thesis failed, but if you look at the other scenario, a lot of other studies for example, there are very interesting studies we say that, in many societies, especially in Western Europe, in Nordic societies in Finland, Sweden, Norway, the number of people who declared themselves as irreligious or non-religious is above 40 percent.

Or there has been statistically proven, statistics show that by some say, a host of studies that the number of people who consider religion as insignificant is always on the rise, especially in developed societies, especially in developed societies you will find their number increasing in India, you will find their number increasing in Japan, in the US, in in Europe, especially more in the Nordic Region.

So, there is a very strong argument that there is a connection between economic well-being with that of religion, that people in these societies they are, Nordic societies have the lowest crime rate, they are the most peaceful societies, at least for their own people, more kind of homogeneous societies.

So there, they have identified alternative modes of, alternative forms of ethicality and morality. So, their morality is not based on religion, but there is a morality, it is not that religious people live without any sense of morality. So, their morality may be based on some deeper respect to fellow human beings, a deeper aspect to certain human values, so that can bind a society together, that can make a society for a peaceful and less aggressive and, and more peaceful society.

So, secularization, Peter Berger argues that is a historical fact that the religious institutions have lost much of its power that it earlier had. Of course, now you talk about, religion and politics coming together and then, but, but they are not concerned more with religion, but they are more concerned with politics. You, you take the case of every such kind of formations they are, they are taking religion, for political purposes, it is not the other way around.

It is not that they want to assume political power, so for the greater service of their religion, it is, it is not, it does not happen that way. So, religion, the institutionalized role of religion has gone down, we no longer will have to have a scenario where, religious heads will dictate on everything, but now religion has to be sold to a clientele, that is no longer constrained to buy that you can either choose to buy, you can choose not to buy as well.

So, religion in the modern world operates as a component part of the globalizing process. In fact, even religious involvements are perceived by participants to be acts of resistance within the dialectical framework of a global system, system, the resistance serves ironically, to call further attention to the process of globalization, thereby advancing the crystallization of consciousness that is pivotal to the process of globalization.

This in turn, presumably will prompt even further religious developments. So, when you are involved in a religious movement as a fight against these disrupting elements of globalization, it is actually, happening as a dialectical process, because, you identify something as global, as something other, as something against, and then you create your own sense as opposed to that.

So, this dialectical process really shapes both, both the global as well as the local, we have had discussions about that. So, even how you consider your own religious self in opposition to that of this global other is always a product of this dialectical process.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:51)



- The religious in the transnational movements, brings to mind the particular power of religious iconography and symbolism that is used to mobilise persons in diverse countries and continents as also to the fact that their normative agendas are grounded in sacred, rather than secular visions.

- Mandaville points to the following features of TRMs: that they occupy a particular political space but not necessarily a specific place; that many of these movements operate across borders and without exclusive reference to a specific nation, state or region. Further that a certain variant of these movements are often engaged in activities, which are explicitly critical of state regimes or traditional aspects of state sovereignty



The religious in the transnational movements bring to mind the particular power of religious iconography and symbolism, that is used to mobilize persons in diverse countries and continents, as also add to the fact that their normative agendas are grounded in sacred, rather than secular vision. These large, transnational movements or new religious movements, their iconography and symbolism are very interesting to mobilize persons from diverse countries and continents, as also the fact that their normative agendas are grounded in sacred, rather than the secular vision.

Now, another sociologist Mandaville points out to the following features of transnational religious moments. Now, new religious movements can either be confined to a particular region or they can become transnational. And maybe in the contemporary time, there could be very hardly any such kind of cults or any such kind of moments which are not transnational.

So, this connection you need to make it very clear, this transnational and new religious moments. In India, you know that there are quite a lot of foreigners are attracted to many of these, whether it is this very curious Case of Swami Nithyananda, I am sure that all of you are familiar with him, who is supposed to have now established his own kingdom somewhere else.


So, he had hundreds of foreigners as his followers. Or Amritanandamayi has thousands of foreigners across the globe, she has her own Ashrams or Osho had, Rajneesh had things and then then Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, this art of living, though we may not be able to call it as a typical religious thing, but it is something very close to that.

So, all of them can be both local as well as transnational in its character. So, they occupy a peculiar political space, but not necessarily a specified a place, they have become transnational. For example, Amritanandamayi has her headquarter in Kerala, whereas Ravishankar has his headquarters in Bangalore, but they occupy a much larger political space. That many of these movements operate across borders and without exclusive reference to a specific nation-state or region. Further, a certain variant of these movements is often engaged in activities which are explicitly critical of state regimes or traditional aspects of state sovereignty.

And none of these examples that I mentioned are of that character, we know that they never question the state authority, they always try to work within the state parameters, but there are a number of other examples, Ram Rahim who is currently in jail in the part of Punjab is an example, we can say that the challenged the state's sovereignty to a larger extent. So, there are

number of examples, where while some of them tried to be confined within the larger logical state, some others try to move beyond that.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:13)

- 
- Globalisation aids the work of the TRMs even as they themselves constitute the phenomenon that we describe as globalisation. Intermediaries including professionals such as lawyers and management consultants, specialists in media and cultural production have become involved in heritage creation the world over.
 - TRMs leave local contexts considerably altered and have very serious implications for cultural diversity. They work with and through local communities and individuals, empower and even capture tribal, caste and other local associations. They create boundaries within communities that are often divided into supporters and antagonists, collaborators and opponents. The obverse side of this is that they also have to do with the unmaking of other boundaries as they work across borders of locality, region and nation.



So, globalization aids the work of this transnational religious moments even as they themselves constitute the phenomenon that we describe as globalization. Intermediaries, including professionals such as lawyers, and management consultants, specialist in media and cultural production have become involved in their heritage creations, heritage the world over.

So, how modern they are, we have been discussing how modern they are, how efficiently they make use of these modern technologies and modern systems, because all these types actually these moments are quite professionally run, they have the best of the accounting system, best of the advertisement, best of public relations mechanism.

They are on the top of every technological advancement. So, TRMs leave local context considerably altered, and have very serious implications for cultural diversity. They work with and through local communities, and individuals empower and even capture tribal caste and other local associations. They create boundaries within communities that are often divided into supporters and antagonists, collaborators and opponents.

The obverse side of this is that they also have to do with the unmasking, unmaking of other boundaries as they work across borders of locality, region and nation. Very important arguments how they have to really create a space for themselves and identity for themselves. And how do they create that identity. Many times, people can be distinguished on the basis of the attire that they wear, the kind of a uniform that they wear, or the kind of specific hair style that they want to put on.

So, all these things really provide a sense of boundary, a sense of boundedness to these people. And, and that comes with consequences that comes with many a times conflicts with others, but that is how they survive.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:21)



- TRMs and state power: Many a times, religion is used only instrumentally as a pool of symbols to be drawn upon, but also as an object that is to be moulded and reformatted keeping in mind political ends. TRMs constitute sources of violence particularly when they are able to conjoin with state power.

• VHP and Tablighi Jamaat as examples of TRMs by Shail Mayaram



And the TRMs and state power: Many times, religion is used only as instruments, as a pool of symbols to be drawn upon, but also as an object that is to be moulded and reformatted keeping in mind political ends. TRMs constitute sources of violence particularly when they are able to conjoin with the state power.

You can take a number of examples whether it is in Sinhala nationalism or Islamic moments or, or Hindu moments or Christian moments where this connection between the power and politics becomes very intermingled. And here as I mentioned in the beginning of the first lecture in the series, essays taken by this sociologist Shail Mayaram and her work, which appeared in EPW where she analyses Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Tablighi Jamaat, as examples of transnational movements in India, both started in India, both expanded to the global scenario in a big way.

Now, the Tablighi Jamaat is the largest Muslim organization in the world, they have the largest Muslim congregation that they have every year in Nizamuddin, in Delhi. And VHP you know is founded in India, and it represents as a platform of all Hindus across the globe. And especially the branches of VHP are very active and powerful in western countries, in the US and in many of the European societies.

So how they influence the home country, how many a times they shape the politics of the home country, how they cling on to certain ideas and identities of India in the US. And so, they are very fascinating sets of readings. If anybody wants to read more closely, I thought it is not required to go into the details of these because they are case studies.

But if any one of us are interested in exploring more, you are always welcome to read these things. So let us stop this class, I hope you would have got some general idea about some glimpse of literature on globalization and religion. I did not want to give too much of theoretically loaded sessions, but just give you some brief overview about some of the important arguments about religion and globalization. So, hope it was useful. So, let us wind up the class now. And we will meet you for the next class. Thank you.